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MASS CULTURE, HISTORY AND MEMORY AND THE IMAGE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY

VOLUME I

By

Michael B. Kassel

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

MASS CULTURE, HISTORY AND MEMORY,
AND THE IMAGE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY

By

Michael B. Kassel

Concentrating on the pre-history, history, and legacy of a 1950s family-based situation comedy, this work combines cultural, intellectual, and oral history with culture theory to explore the ways in which cultural producers, consumers, and various political forces have utilized this program over time. While a television sitcom may seem an unlikely subject of a history dissertation, ideas and ideals matter. Over the past fifty years, those ideas and ideals have increasingly been shaped by popular culture artifacts—particularly television. While academics and popular critics have tended to dismiss these series as little more than a nostalgic relic of a past that never was, I have found that the series *Leave it to Beaver*, viewed within its historical context, addressed issues of Cold War society, changing gender roles, and, most important, an emerging youth culture that was often depicted as being wise to the hypocrisy and problems of the adult world. That so many have chosen to ignore this transitional aspect of the series makes for a compelling cultural and historical question—how do social and cultural forces work to change, over time, the perception of a mass media artifact?

Part of the answer lies in the intense social and cultural changes that began at the time of the series' cancellation in 1963. Viewed in opposition to Michael Harrington's exploration of poverty, Betty Friedan's discovery of the *Feminine Mystique*, the growing

civil rights movement, and the rise of the Vietnam War, the series seemed immediately dated. By placing the series in its post-1963 context, this work attempts to show how various forces came to divest the series of its complexity and posit it as a simplistic relic to cherish, mock, or despise. Ostensibly a cultural history of a domestic family situation comedy, this work explores topics as race, gender, family, youth culture, suburbia, mass media, and twentieth-century social and cultural change.

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This work is dedicated in memory of my father, David Kassel, whose love, honesty, and selfless dedication to his family greatly exceeded that of any idealized TV dad.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1
Selecting the Artifact 7
Worried About the Beaver: Significant Literature 11
History, Memory, and Culture: Theoretical Foundations 17
Reading the Beaver: Project Overview and Sources 32

CHAPTER ONE: THE CULTURE OF THE AFFECTIVE FAMILY 37
The Comic Strip and the Family Ideal 42
Film and the American Family 46
"The Chainless Chain": Network Radio 52
TV Domestication 60

CHAPTER TWO: CULTURAL PRODUCERS 76
Creating the Beaver 97
Casting the Beaver 102
"It's A Small World" 107

CHAPTER THREE: THE CLEAVERS IN 1950'S AMERICA 116
"All you gotta worry about is washing your feet..." 118
The Organization Dad 128
Private Life 132
"The Ultimate in Suburban Living" 142
Religion 151

CHAPTER FOUR: PARENTING IN MAYFIELD 156
Ward and June in Fact and Fiction 157
"Don't be your father's kind of father..." 160
Scientific Parenting in Mayfield 170
Parenting in Mayfield 182
"Parents Are No Good" 191
"They're always yelling at me..." 200

CHAPTER FIVE: RACE AND GENDER 210
Race and Difference in Mayfield 211
Gender 223
Industrial Revolution and the Family 224
"Girls usually make me sick..." 236
Momism, bad girls, and predatory females 248
"I'm gonna' marry a girl with a horse" 255
"I wouldn't let a dead chicken push me around" 262
Fatherhood and Masculinity 270
From Boy to Man 281

CHAPTER SIX: YOUTH CULTURE & GENERATIONAL CONFLICT 298
Characteristics of Youth 299
"We couldn't be so cruel as to force him to be different" 309
Us and Them 320
The Cruel World 336
Navigating the System 346
Eddie Haskell 349

CHAPTER SEVEN: *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER* AND POPULAR CULTURE 363
Popular Culture in *Leave it to Beaver* 364
Leave it to Beaver in Popular Culture 389

CHAPTER EIGHT: LEAVE IT TO BEAVER AND EDUCATION 401
"Don't they teach you any manners..." 421
Do the Right Thing 426
"For your own good" 434
Growing Up 438
"Wouldn't it be neat if a guy could stay a kid all his life?" 447

CHAPTER NINE: THE DAY JERRY MATHERS DIDN'T DIE IN VIETNAM .. 451
The "Vast Wasteland" 454
The Other America and *The Feminine Mystique* 457
"Quit jerking us off and give us something real" 467
"But is Eddie Haskell Really Alice Cooper?" 488
"the warts...its progenitors ignored" 499
"Roll-Over, Ward Cleaver..." 506

CHAPTER TEN: *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER* IN POPULAR MEMORY 511
"Whatever Became of...?" 512
Still the Beaver 520
"...the end of all our childhoods" 530
Merchandising 532
Escaping the Image 538

CHAPTER ELEVEN: "A CULTURAL MISDEMEANOR" 542
The "...symbol of everything ...wrong with America" 543
"Common decency, where are you?" 558
Arriving at a Middle Ground 571

APPENDIX 581

BIBLIOGRAPHY 583

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: AFFECTIVE, ETHNIC, SUBURBAN AND NUCLEAR STATUS OF NETWORK TELEVISION FAMILY SITCOMS DEBUTING 1947-1957..... 555

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

LITB *Leave it to Beaver*
JWT J. Walter Thompson Collection at Duke University

INTRODUCTION

"When a mystique is strong, it makes its own fiction of fact. It feeds on the very facts which might contradict it, and seeps into every corner of culture, bemusing even the social critics"[1]

-- Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*

On March 3, 2002, the cable television network MTV debuted its reality series, *The Osbornes*, featuring the family life of British rock star Ozzy Osbourne. As one might have imagined, The Osbourne household looked quite different from the television households American viewers had been used to—even such contemporary family shows as *Roseanne*, *Married with Children*, and *The Simpsons*, which, themselves, had been noted for "pushing the envelop" on realism in regard to the depiction of the American family. Father Ozzy, mother Sharon, and teenage kids Jack and Kelly made for quite an unusual family. Ozzy, while proving to be quite loveable, stumbled through his role as father, hampered by his problems with substance abuse. Son Jack was depicted as having a penchant for guns, knives, and drinking, while daughter Kelly, perhaps the most normal of the bunch, wore the clothing and styles of her most outrageous contemporaries. What set the Osbournes apart from previous TV families was their language, which was so explicit, it was often hard to understand the dialogue for all the deleted expletives. Nevertheless, by early April, over five million viewers had tuned in, making *The Osbournes* one of MTV's highest rated series and the Osbournes one of America's most celebrated families.[2] While there are many explanations for the series success,[3] part of its

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[1] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963; reprint, New York: Laurel, 1983), 60.

[2] Nancy Miller, "American Gothic: How the Osbournes, A Simple Headbanging British Family, Became Our Nation's Latest Reality TV Addicition," *Entertainment Weekly*, 19 April 2002, 25.

allure lies in its juxtaposition to a fifty year old model of polite, affective domestic family sitcoms. This difference was not lost on MTV's publicity people, who, in their pre-air promotion of the series, directly compared Ozzy Osborne to Ozzie Nelson, whose *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*—along with *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver*—define the family situation comedy of the 1950s and early-1960s.

As different as *The Osbournes* was from the older sitcoms, it was not the first program to poke holes in the supposedly placid, "unrealistic" sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s, for example, there was *All in the Family,* a family sitcom centered on the dynamic between a conservative bigoted father and his liberal son-in-law. The PBS documentary *An American Family*, which debuted in the 1970s, documented the lives of the Loud family, an actual family whose lives—between their son's homosexuality and the husband and wife's divorce—was also very different from the fictional families of the 1950s. The 1980s brought such shows as *Married with Children*, *Roseanne*, and *The Simpsons*, which each took their individual swipes at the supposed unrestrained euphoria of the white middle-class suburban sitcoms that had preceded them.

Perhaps the best measure of the cultural understanding of the 1950's and early-1960s family sitcoms is seen through the 1998 Gary Ross film, *Pleasantville,* in which David and Jennifer, a pair of teenagers from the 1990s, find themselves transported to the black and white world of a "typical" 1950s sitcom. To David, who is depicted as the depressed son of a divorced mom who longs for the nuclear bliss portrayed by his favorite old sitcom, *Pleasantville,* life in *Pleasantville* indeed seemed pleasant. A happy

[3] Ibid. MTV Entertainment president Brian Graden said that The Osborne's success lies in its "juxtaposition of the fantastical rock-star life with the ordinary and the everyday" (25).

world in which bountiful amounts of milk and meat made their way to the breakfast, lunch and dinner tables each day, it was a place where the weather was always perfect and nothing ever changed. Geography lessons in Pleasantville taught of a world that began and ended with Elm and Main streets, the hometown basketball team never lost a game, kids never talked back to their parents, and, unlike David's sexually-active sister Jennifer, who reluctantly stumbled into the old sitcom along with her brother, no one—absolutely no one—was having sex in *Pleasantville*. As David soon learns, *Pleasantville*, with its bland, "black and white" sameness is not only boring but oppressive. As David and Jennifer began changing *Pleasantville* by introducing such things as reading, sex, and a greater knowledge of the world, the *Pleasantville* "powers that be" revolted in an attempt to keep their secluded, narrow world the way it was.[4] While David eventually leaves *Pleasantville* with a new appreciation for his more complicated present, his sister Jennifer, having learned that there is more to life than dating, sex, and partying, decides to stay behind. At bottom, *Pleasantville* does much of the culture has done with these sitcoms—simultaneously scorn and idealize them.

While *The Osbournes* and *Pleasantville* speak to the popular idea of the 1950s sitcom in two different ways—*The Osbournes* as a super-realistic variation of the form, *Pleasantville* as parody—they are both leveling what has become a commonplace criticism of the 1950s domestic family sitcom: that these stories spoke of a simple, narrow world that failed to take in a wider view of the world. Such criticism is particularly leveled at *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Leave it to Beaver*,

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[4] Gary Ross, director, *Pleasantville*, New Line Cinema, 1998.

which appeared on television between 1952 and 1957 and have remianed on the air in re-runs ever since.

To many critics, the ubiquity of these images is not just fodder for humorous parodies, but a psychologically damaging distortion of the historical record of 1950s America.[5] To make this case, academic and public discourse portrays affective family sitcoms as simplistic visions of the world that have no past or context. While historians have taken great pains to understand the greater complexity of the lived-experience of the 1950s, few have bothered to look at the complexity of these idealized family images. Perhaps the most complex of these televised family sitcoms was the 1957-1963 series, *Leave it to Beaver.*

As a story centered around the lives of baby boom children and parents, *Leave it to Beaver* spoke to its historical period in a way that begs exploration by the cultural historian. Far from being removed from the issues of its day, as many have argued, *Leave it to Beaver* either reflected or engaged such topics as parenting, suburbia, the space age, the Cold War, youth culture, consumerism, and education. But *Leave it to Beaver* is more than a static window on a vista of social and cultural change—it, like other artifacts which spoke to the family ideal—is part of the change itself. As will be argued throughout the work, the series, in its first run, made various changes to the sitcom that resulted in a more complicated depiction of modern American life and its discontents. Emerging from the minds and world view of writers Joe Connelly and Bob

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[5] While there are a number of academic works which portray *Leave it to Beaver* as problematic and simplistic, see Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), who specifically states, "Leave it to Beaver was not a documentary" (29). See also her introduction and first two chapters which specifically posit family sitcoms as artifacts which led Americans to believe in a "traditional" family past that never was. See also David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), who posits *Leave it to Beaver* and similar sitcoms as simplistic, happy images that seemed "to be beamed from a foreign country" (511).

Mosher, *Leave it to Beaver* was also re-worked by numerous cultural producers (with the term "cultural producers" referring to series producers including creators and writers, as well as the institutions, practices, and executives of production companies, networks, and local affiliates) and millions of diverse viewers. Even in its own time, the *Leave it to Beaver* property, while never a top twenty-five hit, appeared in a variety of forms, from a series of paperback books, to toys, games, coloring books, comic books, and product packaging with Beaver and Wally's likenesses. Children's magazines were infatuated with Jerry Mathers, who played the Beaver, and the growing teen culture, which the series tried to mime as well as lead. These magazines were also inundated with pin-ups and articles featuring teenage heartthrob Tony Dow, who played Beaver's brother Wally.

By the end of its initial run in 1963, which coincided with such events as the assassination of President Kennedy, the rise of the civil rights movement, America's involvement in Vietnam, and the appearance of both Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique* and Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, the series was instantly dated. As the series was displaced, over the next ten years, by programming that engaged the political and social issues of *its* time, *Leave it to Beaver* and series of its type were dismissed as little more than nostalgic relics that had led American viewers to believe in a past that never was. As Jerry Mathers observed in his autobiography, by the late-1960s, he and the show had become a symbol of everything that was wrong with America.[6]

While academics have pummeled the series in various monographs over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the popular media of the Reagan era was somewhat

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[6] Jerry Mathers with Herb Fagen. *...And Jerry Mathers as "The Beaver"* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1998), 142.

kinder to the Cleavers. In 1983, screenwriter and producer Brian Levant revived the series through the popular TV movie, *Still the Beaver*. Soon, the Disney Channel made the telefilm into a series, production and broadcast of which was later assumed by Ted Turner's cable station WTBS. In the meantime, there appeared a new line of *Leave it to Beaver* collectibles, fan sites sprouted up on the world wide web, and items related to the series continue to be popular sellers at flea markets and on Ebay. Almost all of the actors related to the series—except for Hugh Beaumont, who died in the 1980s—revived their characters, not only in the new telefilm and series, but in cameo roles in numerous films that spoofed or lauded the original. In the 1990s, Levant brought an updated version of the series to the big screen. In the end, *Leave it to Beaver* has lived on as a virtual shorthand for a more simplistic, less politically involved America.

This work is not so much a story of a sitcom as it is of a mystique—the Mayfield Mystique (named for the fictional town in which the Cleavers of *Leave it to Beaver* lived), in which the many ideas and images of the series run in conflict with the actuality of the series. *The American Heritage Dictionary* describes a mystique as a "body of mystical attitudes and beliefs associated with a particular...idea."[7] Few popular culture artifacts are as surrounded by such a diverse set of beliefs as *Leave it to Beaver*. In its initial form, the Mayfield mystique spoke to the fantasy of a series in which happy characters lived out their lives in the uncomplicated bliss of a timeless time. To many academics and cultural critics, this optimistic picture posed great psychlogical harm to those viewers who were never able to attain the sort of happiness purveyed by the series. Indeed, there are those who look to the series with awe, wishing for a family as happy as

[7] *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2d college ed.., s.v. "mystique."

content. At the same time, there are those who are fully aware that the series was just an ideal—a hopeful one that could never be fulfilled. In order to understand how these diverse views of the series have come to co-exist, this work will subject the series to the following historical questions: What were the immediate and long-term cultural contexts in which the series emerged? What sort of issues did the series address during its first run? How has the presentation of the series changed over time, and, most significantly, why has a series that was more complicated than is presently perceived recalled as such a simplistic, uninvolved relic of the past? By coming to grips with the idealized image of the 1950s as portrayed by *Leave it to Beaver*, we may come to more clearly understand the social, cultural, and political changes which it both reflected and constructed.

Selecting the Artifact

Because the domestic family sitcom genre, circa 1946-1957, is actually composed of a variety of sub-genres, *Leave it to Beaver* is part of what can best be described as the affective, white middle-class, nuclear, suburban family sitcom, which became a growing trend in television after 1949. Looking at the twenty-nine family-based television sitcoms that appeared 1946 to 1957, the year in which *Leave it to Beaver* debuted, one can code them by their family relationships, particularly in terms of the relationship between husband and wife (either contentious or affective), the family's ethnicity (ethnic, white middle-class, or white working class), the family's basic configuration (either nuclear or non-nuclear, which can include families either headed by a single parent or guardian, or a family that includes extended family members such as an aunt, uncle, or grandparent) and the family's setting (either urban, suburban, or rural). Thus, while a

contentious, urban, nuclear family with an ethnic character such as *I Love Lucy* was wildly successful in the early to mid-1950s, by the time *Leave it to Beaver* appeared, the norm had shifted toward the affective, white middle-class, suburban nuclear family.[8]

While one could approach the study of this sub-genre in toto, I feel that a case study approach to a particular sitcom allows the historian the greatest opportunity to gain the exhaustive understanding demanded by these artifacts. While there is much to commend genre study, even one of its most ardent supporters, John Cawelti has argued that there are things specific to particular artifacts that genre studies muddy.[9] By exhausting the construction, life, and legacy of a set of particular images—images that have remained culturally active—one is able to pay attention to the many facets of the ideal and how it was made, and, at bottom, how it came to be remade over time.

While the use of a singular popular culture artifact is, in some ways, problematic it is not without precedent. Perhaps one of the most famous such works is *Down with the Old Canoe*, a cultural history of the Titanic. M. M. Manring's *Slave in a Box* explored the cultural history of the Aunt Jemima trade name. While there are numerous popular histories of individual television series, perhaps the most significant, in terms of this study, is social historian Melvin P. Ely's *The Adventures of Amos and Andy*, which

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[8] Based on authors coding of 26 family-based sitcoms that had debuted in the Fall season schedules of the four (and, later, three) major television networks between 1947 to 1957, details of which can be seen in the Appendix. For a more detailed history of the development of the sitcom over time, also turn to David Marc, *Comic Visions* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989) and Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home: Sitcoms, Selling the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

[9] See John Cawelti's cautions on the use of genre studies in his essay, "The Question of Popular Genres Revisited," in Gary Edgerton, Michael Marsden, and John Nachbar, eds., *In the Eye of the Beholder: Critical Perspectives on Popular Film and Television* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997) 68; see also Lynn Spigel's *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and the Postwar Suburbs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), in which she argues, "Too often studies of popular media are based on one or two examples, or else on a scientific sampling of texts, as if the whole of popular media were so banal and so redundant that each text always said the same thing" (13).

divided the history of the series among three historic phases. In "Lineage," Ely placed the series and its creators in historical context. In "Life," he explored the series in its own time, paying attention to both mimesis and construction of the series. In "Legacy," Ely showed what the series came to mean to various groups over time. Throughout the work, Ely paid great attention to reader-response in showing how assumptions made in regard to *Amos 'n' Andy*, as racist and wholly unrealistic, denied the more complicated view that both white and black audiences held about the series. By exploring how diverse black and white audiences responded to the series over time, Ely provided a more complete picture of this cultural phenomenon. Ely's approach serves as a model for my own work.[10]

While there are a number of affective family sitcoms from which to choose, from *The Aldrich Family*, *Leave it to Larry*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Pride of the Family*, *Ethel and Albert*, *Father Knows Best*, *Life with Father*, and *That's My Boy* (*Donna Reed* and *Dennis the Menace*, conspicuously absent from this list, did not debut until 1958 and 1959, respectively), few of these series have sustained as high a level of cultural currency as *Leave it to Beaver*. According to Steven Stark, author of *Glued to the Set*, there are roughly a thousand references to the series in popular media each year.[11] Historian Nina Claire Liebman, who looked at the narrative differences between film and television representations of the family, wrote that *Leave it to Beaver's* "longevity has

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[10] Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of An American Phenomenon* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

[11] Steven D. Stark, *Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today* (New York: Delta Books, 1997), 109.

been remarkable and nearly cult-like."[12] Ella Taylor, author of *Prime Time Families*, wrote of the series that "Beaver Cleaver remains a national symbol among viewers who were not yet born during his first incarnation....Like other family comedies form the 1950s and 1960s, Leave it to Beaver has achieved considerable success in reruns in the 1980s, and a cereal commercial featured both Beaver and brother Wall as adults, evidently without needing to mention their names."[13] Former series star Stephen Talbot, who played Beaver's friend Gilbert, noted in a 1997 interview that "The series itself was kind of quietly unassuming, and in its way a good show, which I loved doing at the time because I liked being a kid actor. . . . Little did I know that this show that I did was going to turn into this symbol of an entire generation and survive for 40 years and be referred to in shorthand as a symbol for the nuclear family.'"[14] Indeed, while *Leave it to Beaver* never made it into the top ten, the show, as Liebman argued, tended to win its share of viewers during the night which it was aired. Also, while a top show in its day may have drawn some 40-million viewers, even a lower ranked show would could net some 16-million, making the series well viewed.[15]

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[12] Nina C. Liebman, *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995), 22.

[13] Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 26.

[14] Leah Garlick, "Leah Garchik's Personals," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Monday, August 25, 1997, page E-8.

[15] "Television: The New Cyclops," *Business Week*, 10 March 1956, 94. This article provided a retrospective on the first ten years of television as a commercial medium and has a number of revealing details on viewership at the point right before *Leave it to Beaver* debuted.

Worried About the Beaver: Significant Literature

This work is not the first attempt to come to terms with the affective family sitcom; since the 1970s and 1980s, academics and popular writers exploring the social and cultural life of the 1950s and early-1960s have examined the domestic sitcom, including *Leave it to Beaver*. Much of the discourse surrounding the series and those of its kind has centered around its sins of omission and its preoccupation with middle-class suburbia. In 1988, Elaine Tyler May, writing in *Homeward Bound*, posited sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver* as little more than cultural symbols of the domestication and containment which defined the era.[16] While May did not write a great deal about the sitcom nor speak to any single sitcom specifically, her arguments that 1950s Americans had retreated into family and domesticity because of Cold War fears and its accompanying rhetoric of containment influenced a generation of scholars who took her observations as fact. A year later, media scholar David Marc, in his work *Comic Visions*, likened domestic sitcoms such as *Leave it to Beaver* as "benign Aryan" melodramas.[17] While Marc specifically noted that *Leave it to Beaver* contained some very interesting messages pertaining to progressive parenting (as did many of the sitcoms of its day), Marc found very little else to commend the series, which, to him, seemed far removed from the historic time and place in which the series had aired. Journalist David Halberstam, who tried to offer a more complicated view on the social, political, and

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[16] May, Elaine Tyler, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 146.

[17] Marc, *Comic Visions*, 52.

cultural life of the 1950s, concurred in 1993 with Marc's assessment of the series, noting that "These shows often seemed to be beamed from a foreign country, but one that the viewers longed to be part of."[18] Ironically, while Halberstam would complicate the decade itself, he perpetuated the rather innocent, simplistic view of the affective family sitcom. For example, while he wrote that none of these sitcoms mentioned divorce, one *Leave it to Beaver* episode specifically dealt with the issue while several others mentioned it. Likewise, while Halberstam emphatically stated that neither money nor "the dark shadow of poverty" was ever discussed, several *Leave it to Beaver* episodes—as will be seen in chapters three through eight—were aware, through more than one episode that homelessness existed and that there was an "across the tracks" part of town even in dear old Mayfield.[19]

Ella Taylor, in her 1989 work *Prime Time Families* presented the affective family sitcoms of the 1950s were simple devices that avoided relevant discussions or issues. According to Taylor:

> The family comedies of the 1950s articulated not so much the realities of postwar affluence as the received wisdom of post-New Deal capitalism: the end of ideology, a liberal-conservative dream of a harmonious society in which the conditions for social conflict would disappear because there would be plenty of everything to go round. It did not matter much if Ralph Kramden's money-making schemes collapsed; and the small mishaps of Beaver Cleaver and Ricky Nelson played themselves out unclouded by financial troubles, street violence, drug abuse, or marital discord. The television children of the 1950s and 1960s inhabited a universe in which mild sibling quarrels were quickly but fairly adjudicated by sage, kindly parents equipped with endless reserves of time and patience—marital teams offering clear-cut rules for moral guidance. Taken together, these shows proposed family life as a charming excursion into modernity, but resting on the unshakeable stability of tradition. Parents would

[18] Halberstam, 511.

[19] Ibid., 510.

> love and respect each other and their children forever. The children would grow up, go to college, and take up lives identical in most respects to those of their parents"[20]

While much of Taylor's argument is true—marital teams did offer guidance and the Cleavers, along with the Nelsons of *Ozzie and Harriet* and the Andersons of *Father Knows Best*, certainly did expect their children to be carbon copies of themselves—the series addressed more than "mild sibling quarrels."

More problematic than the sins of omission were the unrealistic and unattainable ideals of family and affluence that these series purveyed. Taylor, along with Halberstam and others, popularized the idea—first advanced by Betty Friedan and Michael Harrington in the early 1960s (see chapter nine), that these shows amounted to little more than cruel taunts for those who failed to measure up to their example. As Halberstam wrote, "To millions of other Americans, coming from flawed homes, it often seemed hopelessly unfair to look in on families like this. Millions of kids growing up in homes filled with anger and tension often felt the failure was theirs. It was their fault that their homes were messier, their parents less human...and less understanding than the television parents in whose homes they so often longed to live."[21]

Such harm supposedly continued long after first run. According to sociologist Stephanie Coontz, this happy image of the 1950s family, played out in countless re-runs day after day, was particularly troubling in that it gave viewers a perverted sense of the actual lived experience of the 1950s. As Coontz argued in *The Way We Never Were*, *Leave it to Beaver* and shows of its type snared American viewers in a "nostalgia trap" in

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[20] Taylor, 26-27.

[21] Halberstam, 512.

which they began to believe in a family past that actually never had been as happy or carefree.[22] No wonder that, by 1994, historian Joanne Meyerowitz could title her collection of essays on the complicated lives of 1950s American women with the simple invective, "Not June Cleaver."[23]

Not that academics did not try to come to terms with the complexity of such series. Lynn Spiegel, in *Make Room for TV* (1992), for instance, attempted to provide a greater historical context to the family image espoused by the 1950s-1960's family sitcom.[24] While her work failed to include the multiple histories that informed these sitcoms (hers is based on the convergence of the history of family and mass communication technologies), her work speaks to a central point of my thesis—that popular cultural artifacts have a history. Perhaps the most complicated of the academic works was Nina Claire Liebman's *Living Room Lectures* (1995), which explored the divergent ways in which film and television explored the family. While Liebman clearly believed that film more readily addressed the darker side of family life, primarily because of the venue in which it was shown (theater versus home), Liebman also acknowledged that, for the most part, many of the sitcoms were much more complicated than previous works had assumed. Writing in direct opposition to Marc, Liebman noted that "The Nelsons, Cleavers, et al., were not insulated from 1950s social problems, and their dilemmas were not the innocuous problems of picking a date or a prom dress—a belief

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[22] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 29.

[23] JoAnne Meyerowitz, in "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *Journal of American History* (March 1993).

[24] Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11-35.

that, as incorrect as it is, is widely circulated."[25] Nevertheless, for all her careful attention to the series—an attention certainly more careful than that of Marc—she still fails to acknowledge the more complicated role most characters, including June Cleaver, played in the series. She also fails to acknowledge how gender roles were just as rigid for boys as they were for women and girls in the Cleaver's Mayfield, a topic I will address in detail in chapter five.[26]

Gerard Jones also complicated the view of *Leave it to Beaver*. In *Honey I'm Home* (1992), Jones observed that, save for the Cleavers, the characters who populated Mayfield were all members of highly dysfunctional families who failed to conform to the family ideal espoused by the series.[27] In his 1997 work *Glued to the Set*, Steven D. Stark has laid bare two myths that have surrounded the series; first, that while many authors have typified 1950's television as being dominated by family sitcoms, *Leave it to Beaver*, along with other family series, were not nearly as popular as were other genres, such as Westerns. More importantly, while people have come to view the Cleaver family as wholly unrealistic, Stark argued that contemporary viewer response may have been low because of the show's obsession with a brand of realism that bordered on the mundane (although I do not agree completely with Stark's assessment, as will become evident in chapters three through eight).[28] The greatest failing of Jones and Stark's work is that both rely heavily on subjective speculation and generalization.

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[25] Liebman, 158.

[26] Ibid., 125-26.

[27] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home,* 126-127.

[28] Stark, 112-114.

Neil Lillico's 1993 Ottawa University master's thesis, "Television as Popular Culture: An attempt to influence North American Society? An Ideological analysis of *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1961)," explored *Leave it to Beaver* as a pedagogical tool which served as a guide to such issues as parenting, interpersonal relationships, education, and morality.[29] While Lillico did make an attempt to locate the series within its historical context, his primary objective was to provide an interpretation of the series' content. Lillico, more than any of these other authors, presented a more balanced—if not, at some times—apologetic role for the series. By the late 1990s, there was, within the popular media, a new sense that existed about the series which had not been there before. In the April 1993 fortieth Anniversary Issue of *TV Guide*, which choose *Leave it to Beaver* as one of their best family shows of the 1950s, the editors wrote:

> Beaver refuses to eat his Brussels sprouts: that was an actual predicament in an episode of Leave it to Beaver, a gentle comedy that has passed into pop myth as an icon of '50s apple-pie normalcy. At the time, its everyday, "real" quality was a radical departure for sitcoms, most of which featured caricatures—the wacky, bumbling wife (I Love Lucy), the cantankerous patriarch (Life with Father), the babbling mother-in-law (December Bride). This series, unlike most, was built around events that could actually happen. Beaver's innocence seems almost comically unreal today, but it was genuine enough for its time, and it was what set the show apart.[30]

This current work builds upon the groundwork set by Liebman, Stark, and Jones. Unlike the previous works, however, it places the series within a historical context to show how it both reflected and, in some ways, constructed its contemporary and later period, arguing that it not only captured the mundane nature of life, as Stark argued, but that it

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[29] Neil B. Lillco, "Television as Popular Culture: An Attempt to Influence North American Society? An Ideological Analysis of *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1961) (Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1993), as published at www.leaveittobeaver.org/thesis/.

[30] "TV Guide Presents 40 years of the Best: The Best family Shows," *TV Guide*, 17 April 1993, 17.

spoke to many of the issues of its time in a way quite different than most have bothered or cared to remember.

History, Memory, and Culture: Theoretical Foundations

While the above works spurred my interest in and informed my particular take on this series, I am also influenced by a diverse theoretical literature. While I am particularly interested in how those in anthropology and cultural studies explore cultural artifacts, I am well aware that cultural studies and history are often at odds. The major difference between the two disciplines involve determining the role of the artifact in history. To many historians, cultural artifacts are often judged as existing apart from some lived history or experience, with the historian judging how closely the artifact mimes or deviates from the historical record. To those in cultural studies, however, concentrating on the reflective aspect of cultural artifacts is telling a story already told.[31] As Raymond Williams observed in "Problems in Materialism," "we cannot separate literature from other kinds of social practice, in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws."[32] Stuart Hall, speaking more specifically to mass media, observed:

> what cultural studies has helped me to understand is that the media play a part in the formation, in the constitution, of the things that they reflect. It is not that there

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[31] See John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), who argues that the study of media can never be merely about reflection, but must also include the way mass media artifacts constitute the very sense of reality itself (2-3).

[32] Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 407-423.

> is a work outside, 'out there,' which exists free of the discourses of representation. What is 'out there' is, in part, constituted by how it is represented.[33]

Hall's understanding of textual context, of course, need not run counter to historical investigation, which is an essential part of providing such context. Indeed, the cultural artifact, whether it be a classic work of literature of half-hour situation comedy, has a reflective aspect which speaks, in some way to the context in which it arrived, as well as a constructive aspect in which the artifact becomes part of the process which informs history.

Discovering the cultural context of a particular artifact is not always easy. In "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," Raymond Williams alludes to the existence of the problems of "residual culture" and "emergent culture." While the emergent culture represents the culture being addressed or created by the culture of the time, the residual culture refers to cultural elements that have persisted, remained popular, or have cultural significance within what he labels the dominant culture.[34] Writing specifically about English literature, Williams noted that "A great deal of writing is of the residual kind..." and that "Some of its fundamental meanings and values have belonged to the cultural achievements of long-past stages of society."[35] A wonderful example of the intermingling of long-term and immediate cultures was forwarded several years before Williams' writing by sociologist Herbert Gans in *The Levittowners* (1967). Convinced that the late-1950s negative attributes of suburbia had been over-inflated by conservative social and cultural critics, Gans took his family to live in the new

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[33] Hall, as cited in Storey, *Cultural Studies*, 3.

[34] Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," 407-423.

[35] Ibid., 407-423

community of Levittown, Pennsylvania. Over the course of two years, Gans, acting as participant-observer, measured various aspects of Levittown life, from initial purchase decisions to the formation of local community and political affiliations.[36] While Gans learned that people moved to Levittown primarily to get a good home for the money, he came to believe that the lives of suburbanites were not any more deprived or depraved than those of their city counterparts. Gans also believed that while Levittown certainly represented a new community, the people of Levittown were following cultural patterns and habits that Alex de Toqueville had observed some 100 years earlier, with Levittowners adhering to traditional values of "individual honesty, thrift, religiously inspired morality, Franklinesque individualism, and Victorian prudery...."[37] According to Gans, suburban "improvements and innovations" were "added to old cultural patterns, giving affluent Americans a foot in several worlds. As Gans observed:

> They have more knowledge and a broader outlook than their ancestors, and they enjoy the advantages of technology, but these are superimposed on old ways. While conservative critics rail about technology's dehumanization of modern man, the Levittowners who spend their days programming computers come home at night to practice the very homely and old-fashioned virtues these critics defend. For example, they have television sets, but they watch much the same popular comedies and melodramas their ancestors saw on the nineteenth century stage.[38]

Gans concept of a foot in several worlds is of great value in exploring the history of the fifties in general, and of domestic sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver* in particular.

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[36] Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) xv-xxix.

[37] Ibid., 419.

[38] Ibid., 419-20.

In order to tease out long-term and contemporary cultural influences, as well as to place the series within its cultural context, I, like Ely, attempt to show, where appropriate, the various histories which have fed into the structure and tenor of the domestic family sitcom. To understand the domestic sitcom and its obsession with suburban/small town America, for example, one must also understand the nineteenth-century literature which so effectively promoted the suburban ideal. Likewise, *Leave it to Beaver's* obsession with gender roles makes little sense unless one understands the changing nature of male-female relations that took shape after the industrial revolution. The progressive parenting techniques used by Ward and June Cleaver in the series also grew out of a progressive psychology that dates back to the late-nineteenth century. The 1950s' family—and its resulting televised representation—cannot be divorced from the loss and devastation of the Great Depression and World War II, nor can it be understood without an understanding of the G.I. Bill, the rise of modern suburbia, and the insecurities of the Cold War which left its own unique mark on American culture. The baby boom and the rise of youth culture, as cultural events in their own right, were perhaps the most significant reasons for television programs that paid attention to family life. Thus, long before *Leave it to Beaver*, there existed the historical circumstances and seeds of an ideal which became a staple product of the small screens that so rapidly dominated American living rooms. By coming to terms with this historical context one discovers that many of the ideals attributed to *Leave it to Beaver* and series of its sort were actually older ideals—many of them from the Victorian era—that harkened nostalgically to its own memories of a simpler, golden age. By placing the series in its historical context we find that the ideals espoused by *Leave it to Beaver* are, in part, "ideals within ideals"—ideals

that were not being created so much at the time, but being grafted onto the back of other ideals existing within American and western culture.

At the same time, *Leave it to Beaver* did construct something very new. While collective memory sees *Leave it to Beaver* as the resurgence of patriarchy—indeed, all domestic sitcoms were obsessed with the role and importance of the father—Lillico has found a surprising level of shared responsibility among mother and father, not only in terms of some household chores (which did remain predominately gendered), but in making decisions that affected their children's lives. As a series that focused as much on kids as it did on parents, it was also one in which the hypocrisies of the adult world, as well as the emptiness of many of its customs and traditions, were often revealed. The series also brought into sharp focus the way that child and parent relations became one of negotiation as opposed to arbitrary parental rule. John Aldridge, a cultural critic who, in 1969 wrote a scathing diatribe on modern youth, *Country of the Young*, may very well have been talking about the Cleavers as much as any "real" American household when he scolded parents who had replaced good old-fashioned discipline with consumer age of negotiation.[39] That consumer age—particularly the cost of "things"—seemed to be an obsession with *Leave it to Beaver* scripts which often spoke to the consumer culture of the baby boom.[40]

Series creators Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher seemed to want the series to ring true with its audience. Connelly and Mosher's commitment to achieving what they felt was a sense of family realism has become part of television legend. Jerry Mathers, a

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[39] John Aldridge, *In the Country of the Young* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1970), 92-7.

[40] Consumer culture will be addressed in detail in chapter seven.

seasoned Hollywood veteran at age eight, arrived at his casting meeting wearing a Cub Scout uniform and appeared more interested in making the scout meeting than auditioning for the role of Beaver. Connelly and Mosher later cited this incident as the main reason behind Mathers' casting; Mathers commitment to his scout meeting made him seem *more* like a "real kid."[41] The filming of the first episode also showed the sense of realism for which Connelly and Mosher were striving. Intent on including a shot of a toilet bowl which housed a pet alligator that Beaver and Wally were hiding from their parents, the producers had to reach a compromise with CBS, which ultimately allowed Connelly and Mosher to show a tight shot of its tank.[42] The inclusion of the Cleaver boy's bathroom itself was seemingly important to the show producers, who featured a shot of it in the vast majority of the series' 234 episodes. Throughout the series, Connelly and Mosher, as well as other writers who contributed to the series, noted with pride that many of the situations came from real life incidents that happened to their own kids. Just as Ely found with Freedman Godson and Charles Correll—the creators of *Amos and Andy* and the very people under whom Connelly and Mosher did the bulk of their early radio and television writing—it was very important to Connelly and Mosher to prove that they were bringing fact to fiction. To ignore this commitment to mimesis is to miss an important part of the story of the series and its construction of the image of the family.[43]

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[41] This story is noted in Mathers, *...And Jerry Mathers as the Beaver*, 53-55, in which Mathers recalls "I got it because they were looking for someone who was a real little boy; one who would be more interested in going to a Cub Scout meeting than doing a TV show" (55). This story appears in a number of other sources as well, including Irwyn Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver* (New York: TV Books, 1984), 1.

[42] See Mathers, 4, and Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver*, 22.

[43] Ely, 126-7.

Contrary to Marc's claim that domestic sitcoms were often located the better part of a century from their time, *Leave it to Beaver* often presented the decade as a complex period of change which included acknowledgment of the Cold War itself.[44] This inclusion of the lived-experience of 1950's family life is most clearly evident through the series' transitional dialogue—that time-dated dialogue which takes place at the beginning or end of a scene to help the contemporary viewer achieve a level of identification with the characters and situations. Indeed, while many scholars have studied the domestic sitcom from the aspect of plot, lesson, or *mise-en-scene*, the historian cannot afford to ignore the transitional dialogue that so often speaks to the complicated, changing, and challenging tenor of the 1950s. Examining this dialogue is not only important because it allows the modern observer to see how the sitcom commented upon its contemporary period, but because it provides an opportunity for the historian to examine the way the cultural producers were thinking about and commenting on their own time.

The mimetic function of *Leave it to Beaver* was, of course, always uneven; the ideals espoused through the series, while often speaking to the changing role of the family and modern America, also led to images that ran counter to the lived-experience of its viewers. While the series did seem to attempt to offer greater realism in its depiction of the family, the series also posited the Cleavers as timeless towers of virtue and values reacting to the change itself. For example, in a time of TV dinners and fast food, not only did the Cleaver family sit down to a Victorian-style, middle-class dinner, but they did so with clean hands, clean shirts, and, in the case of Ward, a clean suit and tie (although Ward dressed a bit more casually in the fist season of the series). While the

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[44] Marc, *Comic Visions*, 53.

majority of 1950s suburbanites lived in modest suburban settings, the Cleavers inhabited a pre-war, first-ring suburb (or small town) with mature trees and curvilinear streets. At a time when the average father was growing more and more absent from the home, Ward Cleaver seemed to have a great deal of time to spend with his family. In a time when pre-adolescent boys and girls were playing together, the Cleaver's Mayfield, like the "Mayfields" of other domestic sitcoms, remained sharply divided by gender.

There are many theories which attempt to explain how the various shades of lived experience come to be represented on a television show—or in any work of popular culture, for that matter—but perhaps none as significant as those built upon Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory. While Gramsci, writing about politics, proposed how dominant groups win the consent of subordinate groups, his work has been modified by those who study popular culture. One of the most significant scholars in this area is John Fiske, who argued that mass media cannot be looked at simply as an all-powerful force that has complete control over a supposedly mindless and helpless mass. According to Fiske, popular culture is a "site of struggle" in which the audience works to replace media homogeneity with the heterogeneity of the lived experience.[45] David Thorburn, a media scholar influenced by Fiske, expanded upon Fiske's theory of audience agency, arguing that every society in every age has, what Thorburn called, a "consensus narrative," which operates at the very center of cultural life to "articulate the culture's central mythologies,"

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[45] See John Fiske, "British Cultural Studies in Television," in Robert C. Allen, ed., *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 254-289.

rehearsing, testing and revising a society's central beliefs.[46] For Thorburn, the most crucial feature of the consensus narrative is that it is a deeply collaborative enterprise:

> Such stories are created by an elaborate web of transactions or interactions or contested collaborations: between the text and its audience, which brings to the story experience an essential historical and aesthetic literacy; between the individual text and its ancestors and competitors in the same genres; between the texts and the rules and constraints as to subject matter and form imposed by the dominant economic and social order; and even between or among the community of creators...who actually produce the text.[47]

While Thorburn's use of the term "consensus," with its empty promise of a unified and contented culture, is highly problematic, his theory is not nearly as optimistic as it appears on the surface. Indeed, the above passage shows a highly nuanced approach to the study of the incorporation of ideas within popular culture artifacts, a process that is not simply between author and text, but, as Thorburn states, among texts and producers themselves. While Thorburn gets us to a more complicated picture of the process, he fails to acknowledge the various things that can happen as these producers make these selections. While it is true that differing ideas and opinions reach cultural producers in a variety of ways, the ideas are not presented in cultural productions, such as television sitcoms, in their full complexity, but are, for any number of reasons—from dramatic considerations to objections from corporate executives—diminished, embellished, or discarded.[48]

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[46] David Thorburn, "Television as an Aesthetic Medium," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4, (1987), 168.

[47] Ibid., 170.

[48] For an extended discussion of corporate effects on television products, see Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1985). For an excellent summary of this topic, see Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 4-19.

To better understand the producers selection process, one can again turn to Williams, who argues that "in any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective. This implies no presumption about its value. All I am saying is that it is central." Because this central system comprises a "a set of meanings and values which appear as reciprocally confirming," Williams argues that it "thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives." To Williams, this dynamic "process of incorporation" selects certain meanings and practices while negating others. Some of these meanings and practices, according to Williams, are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture." These incorporations are constantly being adjusted, sometimes allowing oppositional or alternative views to be "accommodated and tolerated within a particular effective and dominant culture." At bottom, Williams argues that the modes of domination "select from and exclude the full range of actual and possible human practice"[49]

While the dominant culture is combined of all social institutions, the filter for mass media products, since the progressive era and the rise of a professional class, has been the mass media apparatus that, over time, has strayed neither too left nor too right. It is through this filter, which itself has changed in composition over time, that the meanings and practiced of the lived experience are, in some form or another, incorporated or excluded. While popular culture is a site of struggle, it is an uneven

[49] Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," 407-23.

struggle in which a relatively small number of privileged cultural producers own the means of cultural reproduction.[50] Thus, rather than view popular culture as a "consensus narrative," as had Thorburn, it may be more useful—and more accurate—to view it as a "reaction narrative."

The term "reaction," as used above, is neither positive or negative. Cultural producers have a range of reactions to matters of the lived experience that they can incorporate into their fictional works. The range of such reactions can include anything from denial, conditional inclusion, inclusion, embellishment/exaggeration, or promotion/endorsement. While I will test this theory at several points in the work at large, here are a few examples from *Leave it to Beaver* that will illustrate some of these potential reactions:

> *Denial*: Petting and parking were major elements of teen dating life which Connelly and Mosher not only ignored but, in one episode, made appear against the norm of society, at least as it was being played out in Mayfield.
>
> *Conditional Inclusion*: Teens can be shown to be mouthy and pushy, or parents can be shown to prefer corporal punishment to sound psychological parenting, but both groups are always depicted as wrong to engage in such practices. In other words, the lived-experience of some—of maybe even the majority—becomes a negative example to enforce the ideal.
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> *Inclusion*: As will be discussed in chapter three, Connelly and Mosher appeared to have insisted that the series would appear more realistic if they included a bathroom. As we shall discover, the use of the bathroom was a turning point in television history which has—for whatever inane reason—come to represent a greater sense of realism. From *Beaver's* alligator to *All in the Family's* toilet flush to *Seinfeld's* full-on shot of a urinal, the increasing prominence of the toilet has come to mean (and may indeed be a fitting symbol of) media progress.

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[50] See T. J. Jackson Lears, "Making Fun of Popular Culture," *American Historical Review*, (December 1992), 1423.

Embellishment/exaggeration: While there certainly remained in the 1950s a certain sense of animosity between little boys and girls, that animosity emerged ubiquitous in *Leave it to Beaver*.

Promotion/Endorsement: Despite the show's conservative tone in various matters, particularly gender roles (although even those roles were not as rigidly endorsed as has been commonly assumed), the series supported modern parenting techniques that eschewed all forms of corporal punishment, as well as participatory family relations in which father, wife, and child each had a say.

For all the importance placed on understanding how a cultural artifact reflects reality, it is not my intent to rest this study on the series' verisimilitude or lack of it. While it has been argued that attention to the lived experience outside of the artifact is important, one cannot deny the cultural artifact's constructive effect. While *Leave it to Beaver* did not cause many of the negative images it perpetuated, its reaction to the lived events of its time did contribute to a family ideal that has continued to be played out in American culture to this day. Just as historical context, existing ideals, and contemporary reflection inform the artifact, the artifact informs history and has an effect on everyday life. Thus, a young working mother who leaves her children in day care may believe, with some guilt, that she is "no June Cleaver." Another woman who has chosen to be a stay-at-home mom in the 1990s works hard to fight the stereotype that she is nothing *more* than June Cleaver. Modern magazines refer to perfect fathers as Ward Cleavers. People yearn to return to a "simpler" 1950s, knowing or not caring that such times were also marked by racial segregation and scant opportunity for women. Comedians, television programs, movies, and commercials look back to *Leave it to Beaver* with a hip wink and a nod, earning themselves an instant sense of validity and purpose whether they deserve it or not. A person escapes the daily grind by returning to Mayfield for a half-hour each day on networks that have made a business out of nostalgia. Mention of the

series winds up in the strangest places, from an online personal ad in which a lesbian seeks her perfect "June Cleaver," to 1950s items sold on *Ebay* that purport to be right out of the "*Leave it to Beaver Era.*" Through these and countless other examples, *Leave it to Beaver* has left the domain of fiction to become part of the lived experience—to become, as Hall argued, part of the discourse.

How people incorporate that discourse into their present depends in part on how they choose to remember it. In his introduction to *Searching for Memory*, Daniel L. Schacter observes:

> ...we do not store judgment-free snapshots of our past experiences, but rather hold onto the meaning, sense, and emotions these experiences provided us. Although serious errors and distortions occur relatively infrequently, they furnish significant clues about how we remember the past because they arise from, and provide a window on, some of the fundamental properties of our memory system.[51]

Schacter's thesis can be useful when applied to the nation's collective memory and how cultural producers and consumers choose to interpret the past and utilize it in the present. In terms of the study at hand, perhaps the most compelling question is Why have cultural producers and consumers taken a series like *Leave it to Beaver*—a series that I will attempt to prove *did* speak to the problems of its time, in one way or another—and posit it, first and foremost, as the story of a simpler, more innocent past?

To Depression-Era historian Robert S. McElvaine, the answer is quite simple: "The 'bad days" are more readily forgotten than the good"[52] To Michael Kammen,

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[51] Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 5.

[52] Robert S. McElvaine, *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the "Forgotten Man,"* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 4.

author of numerous essays and books on the topic of history and memory, the answer to this question lies in the understanding that collective memories consist of things we have chosen to remember—and, more importantly, things we have chosen to forget—about a particular event, or, in this case, artifact. In the conclusion of *Mystic Chords of Memory*, Kammen argues that people tend to depoliticize the past and historicize the present.[53] This depoliticization certainly seems to be going on in *Leave it to Beaver*, with viewers forgetting or ignoring the political messages of the series—those messages which spoke to the fears, insecurities, and disappointments experienced by conservatives of its time—and remembering only the innocent little "messes" that dominated the series. However, there are also political imperatives which account for why the image of the series remains as it is. As will be argued in chapter eleven, conservatives who believe in the existence of such things as "traditional" family depend on the images of such shows as *Leave it to Beaver* to serve as a beacon for those they wish to inculcate. At the same time, liberals derive gain from a simplistic image that can help advance their diverse agenda. Finally, networks, always under fire for being too inattentive to cultural currents, use the simplistic image of the series as "proof" that they have indeed offered a more realistic view of family life.

There are other reasons, however, that also explain why people have forgotten the complexity and social commentary of *Leave it to Beaver*. In her 1999 dissertation on filmic representations of the 1950s, Christine Sprengler, argues that "Often, the 1950s

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[53] See Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), in which he writes, "So it has been, so it is, so the pattern very likely shall continue. Americans will historicize the present in a somewhat facile, sometimes inadvertent way, and they will continue to depoliticize the past as a means of minimizing conflict" (704).

that emerge in film are based on television and filmic stereotypes, suggesting that our particular memory of this particular moment of the past is in part based on accessible recorded entertainment."[54] In many ways, this is exactly what Stephanie Coontz is arguing—that these black and white images of the past have created for many a past that never was. Another reason people—particularly aging baby boomers—look back to this series and others like it as comforting and simplistic is because people tend to believe that they are living in a more precarious, dangerous, or, at least troubled time that their predecessors. People who are adults around the turn of the Twenty-first century may look back on *Leave it to Beaver* as just one element of their childhood, which, whether it was or was not in its own time, may certainly seem happier than it does today. According to Schacter, our memories are influenced by our present concerns;[55] perhaps a troubled present—and what present is not troubled?—demands an innocent past.

Another reason may lie in the process of memory itself. While the use of history and memory varies wildly among its various practitioners, it is not without its problems. From Kammen's various works on the topic to Peter Novick's problematic *The Holocaust in American Life*, each tends to find fault in the way subsequent generations have put historical fact and artifact to work. While it is certainly true that events do, in fact, take place at a certain time, and that these events, through diligent historical study, can be recaptured with some precision (followed by debate and revision), these works on history and memory fail to realize that the changing perception of an event or artifact is, itself, a historical process. As psychology is discovering, the adaptation of memories—of

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[54] Christine Springer, "Imag(in)ing the Fifties: Recent Filmic Representations of a Decade," (Masters Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1999).

[55] Schacter, 5.

history, if you will—to present use is a natural part of the human memory system. Part of history consists of distance and deviation from the historical facts. While there are those who distort memories or knowingly deviate from fact for vile purposes (Holocaust revisionists spring to mind), most people do it as part of the natural process of memory, which is as much about distortion, dislocation, and forgetting as it is about remembering. These distortions are encouraged by perhaps the most important factor in this equation, and that is the ambiguity of the event or artifact itself. Thus, the conservative who wants to recall the Cleavers and Mayfield as an idyllic family and community is not really reaching much farther from the original text of the series than is the liberal who views the sitcom's images as the height of sexism and the celebration of segregation. Consequently, *Leave it to Beaver* becomes a relic to despise, an ideal to hold onto, a past to mock, a half-hour to enjoy, a collectible to cherish, or whatever other use satisfies the culture's present concern.

Reading the Beaver: Project Overview and Sources

As an in-depth study of a single cultural artifact, this work actually traces the past half-century of an image that arose out of both long-term and immediate historical contexts. In order to describe the arrival of the affective family sitcoms which, like *Leave it to Beaver*, were comprised of white, successful, middle-class nuclear families which used love and respect to guide them through their troubles, I begin with a brief history of the representation of family within twentieth-century mass media. The second chapter provides a brief biography of the two principal creators of the series, Joe

Connelly and Bob Mosher, who proudly proclaimed their hands-on role in the creation of each and every episode. While the lives of these two men are perhaps two of the best kept secrets in Hollywood, help from family members, along with the personnel records of Connelly and Mosher from the J. Walter Thompson agency, for which they worked in the early 1940s, have helped provide what I believe to be the most complete picture thus far assembled of Connelly and Mosher. As revealed through the biography, Connelly and Mosher were both products of a single-guardian homes headed by women. While it is tempting to see the resulting series and its strong father figures as some sort of psychological fulfillment of a past the writers never had, there is no historical evidence to support such a claim. What one finds in Connelly and Mosher's past, however, are two men committed to popular writing who became experts of the sitcom form, with such expertise no doubt accounting for a great deal of the series' continued staying power.

One of the goals the writers had in the series, if one is to believe press account of the time, was to affect a sense of realism and provide a child's-eye-view of the world. While cultural studies eschews the examination of popular culture as a mere reflective of its time, Connelly and Mosher's emphasis on effecting a sense of realism is key to understanding the basic irony of *Leave it to Beaver*, a complicated comment on 1950s life that has been turned into little more than a simplistic relic of a supposedly simple time. Thus, chapters three through eight, posit the series within various historical contexts to see how it explores the various important issues of its time, which includes 1950s life and culture, parenting, gender roles, youth culture, consumer culture, and formal education and character education. It is not my goal here to argue that *Leave it to Beaver* provided

a realistic portrayal of its times—although, at times, it actually did. I am simply arguing that it was much more connected with its time than has been assumed.

The heart of my research is based on viewing the series pilot and 234 *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, which represent, at roughly 40 pages per script, the equivalent of 9,400 pages of text or 117 hours of programming. For several months, I watched episodes of the series and took notes of topics, revealed primarily through transitional dialogue, that spoke to it historic period, paying particular attention to those statements which kept reappearing within the series: parenting, gender, youth culture, material culture, education, and character education. I was not concerned with plots or hidden meanings embedded in the mise-en-scene as much as with the overt lines which seemed to speak directly to twentieth-century culture. Thus, rather than try to comment on plots or lessons, I am much more interested in commenting on the sort of time-dated lines and dialogue that place the series within its historical context. After doing this, I then examine how such lines appeared to reflect or fail to reflect their times.

The final section of this work, comprised of chapters nine through eleven, looks at the way in which *Leave it to Beaver* has come to make "cultural work," 1963-present. The section is divided into three chapters that track the series both chronologically and by topic. The sources for this chapter include contemporary writings, novels, plays, articles, products, films, records, programming, and rhetoric that serve as examples of the way in which the series has been put to use by a diverse group of cultural producers and consumers.

Because *Leave it to Beaver* left the air during a period of great social change, its overly optimistic image made it seem severely out of step with the time, and the series

quickly and logically became the target of liberal groups and feminists. Chapter nine will examine the series within that new context, as well as show how the other cultural artifacts of the day worked in opposition to the perceived simplicity of the series. I will also argue in chapter nine that the media, by positing *Leave it to Beaver* as the opposite of modern "progressive" programming, has allowed networks to make their current product seem more progressive than it actually is. At bottom, this chapter argues that despite greater inclusion and occasional nods to important social issues, the media is still obsessed with the mainstream, middling stories it was telling back in the 1950s. By framing *Leave it to Beaver* as nostalgia—and by robbing it of its complexity—the media is able to create an idealized present that looks much more progressive than it actually is.

Chapter ten looks at the way in which *Leave it to Beaver* has been used by both cultural producers and viewers, particularly in the context of an emerging nostalgia industry. In his autobiography, Jerry Mathers speaks to how viewers have used his past—both real and imagined—to suit their present: "People seem to expect, even demand, a certain public persona from me," writes Mathers. "Perhaps they need to remember Beaver Cleaver as he was. They need the youthful innocence and a bygone era to remain just as it was in time."[56] By making Beaver the constant from which the present has moved, *Leave it to Beaver's* Mayfield becomes the place to which a troubled world could return. Watching the series, purveyed along with other domestic sitcoms, on Viacom's Nick at Nite and TV Land, or purchasing a product with a Cleaver character likeness, or collecting artifacts from the series has allowed viewers the opportunity to hold onto their past as they have willed it to be.

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[56] Mathers, 10.

Chapter eleven explores the political uses to which both liberals and conservatives have put the series. To liberals, for examples, *Leave it to Beaver* quickly became the symbol of a "past that never was." Seen through the lens of civil rights, integration, the rise of feminism, and the war in Vietnam, *Leave it to Beaver* and shows of its type became symbols of all that was wrong with America. The chapter also explores how conservatives use the same series as a reinforcement of family values that they have deemed traditional and worthy of recapturing. Finally, this chapter shows how my more complicated reading of the series is not idiosyncratic, but similar to a number of other cultural observers, academics, and popular writers who are coming to see the series in much the same way.

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In his 1998 autobiography, Jerry Mathers wrote "... my story is also the saga of a changing America that has survived ten U.S. presidents, the legacy of Korea and Sputnik, of Vietnam and Watergate. It provides a graphic historical time line of evolving institutions and expanding times. It is the story of a society in flux."[57] Mathers proceeds to insert himself in the context of a changing world and show how he changed and *did not* change—in the process. It is the goal of this work to place *Leave it to Beaver* amidst that same "society in flux" and show how the artifact—coupled with the Mayfield Mystique which has grown out of it—has not only changed over time but has, indeed, changed the times.

[57] Ibid., 2.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE CULTURE OF THE AFFECTIVE FAMILY

In the *Leave it to Beaver* episode "Ward's Golf Clubs," Beaver, at the insistence of his friend Gilbert, plays with one of Ward's golf clubs. After a couple of humorous moments, Beaver swings the club, only to see the head fly right off the shaft. Unaware that Ward had actually broken the club the previous Saturday, Beaver is convinced it was his fault. Worried about facing his father with such bad news, Beaver puts the club back in its bag to forestall the inevitable trouble. In a later scene, Beaver, at Wally's urging, has decides to tell Ward about the problem. Just as he is about to confess, however, Ward notices that Wally is wearing one of Ward's shirts. Upset that Wally did so without his permission, Ward delivers a stern lecture on the importance of respecting personal property. This, of course, scares Beaver, who decides to keep the matter of the club a secret.[1]

The above exchange between Ward and Wally provides a number of insights into the series, but, most importantly, serves as a warning for those who explore this or other television series. Indeed, while it is tempting to try and interpret the above scene as evidence of the writers' desire to enforce a moral lesson on the respect of private property, one should not ignore the fact that Ward's outburst had less to do with advancing a child-rearing ideology than it did with advancing the episode plot. Indeed, if Ward does not yell at Wally, Beaver tells the truth and the story is over in ten minutes. This simple fact of the importance of plot speaks to an important understanding required of students of popular culture: that the obvious reading of a particular scene may have its

[1] Bob Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," LITB, 1962.

roots in such mundane things as plot requirements, humor, or the confines of the medium and industry out of which the story comes. To best understand *Leave it to Beaver*, it is important to understand its context within the family sitcom genre.

While academic critics may have overestimated the supposed simplicity of *Leave it to Beaver* and similar affective family sitcoms of the 1950s and early-1960s, they have displayed a remarkable understanding of the media's turn, circa 1950-1960, toward servicing the largest possible demographic with seemingly innocuous images.[2] While the late-1960s would usher in a new age of studio executives who placed more emphasis on demographic data that favored certain viewer characteristics over the raw numbers of viewers, *Leave it to Beaver* and its contemporary affective family sitcoms were part of a mass media that had, in part, come to assume that the safest, most profitable TV families would be those which looked like the assumed white, middle-class, suburban families that constituted the vast majority of the contemporary television audience.

This is not to say that every family-based sitcom of the 1950s centered on the affective family. If one looks at the 26 family sitcoms which appeared in prime time between 1946 and 1957, one finds shows which included combinations of ethnic characters, urban locations, contentious marital relationships (such as those that existed within shows like *I Love Lucy* or *The Honeymooners*), single-parent or guardianship households, showbiz families, and, as the decade neared its end, a variety of wacky families featuring monsters, talking horses, and animated families from the prehistoric past and space-age future. While some of these sub-genres of family-based sitcoms co-

[2] See David Marc, *Comic Visions* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), chapter 2, "Waking Up to Television," 49-81, which looks at the arrival of the sitcom within the suburban milieu. See also Taylor, who discusses the mass media's adoption of "least objectionable programming," which was designed to deliver the most viewers to advertisers who strived to avoid controversy (40).

existed through the 1950s and 1960s, certain generalizations can be made. First, ethnic family-based shows, such as *Beulah*, the *Goldbergs*, and *Amos 'n' Andy*, either by network decisions or public pressure all but disappeared from the small screen by 1954 (although ethnic actors Danny Thomas and Jack Benny maintained successful shows throughout the decade). Likewise, overtly contentious families, such as *I Love Lucy*, *My Favorite Husband*, and *The Honeymooners*, had vanished from television by 1956. Displacing these shows were the affective families such as *The Aldrich Family* and *Ozzie and Harriet*, which were transplanted to television from radio between the late-1940s and early-1950s. While these affective family sitcoms were not the most popular shows, the family type contained in them predominated at the time *Leave it to Beaver* debuted in 1957.[3]

There are many historical events which explain the arrival of these affective family sitcoms. Seemingly homogenous in tone (although more complicated under the surface), one can argue that these "All-American" suburban families fit perfectly the needs of modern consumer society and the advertising industry.[4] In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, advertising and industry leaders worked to change the habits of Americans and move them toward consumerism. To sell mass items in what was—and remains—a truly diverse America, some industry leaders believed that they needed to create an undifferentiated consumer type. As sociologist Stewart Ewen observed, mass

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[3] See Appendix.

[4] For an excellent introduction to the growth of modern advertising, see Roland Marchand's "Visions of Classlessness, Quests for Dominion: American Popular Culture," in *Major Problems in American History*, 2nd edition, edited by Robert Griffith and Paula Baker (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 143-146. For more information of the J. Walter Thompson Agency see Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Press Syndicate of the Cambridge University Press, 1990), 100.

marketing and mass production led the manufacturer to "create an ideological bridge across traditional social gaps—region, taste, need and class—which would narrow prejudices in his favor."[5] By the 1930s, NBC Chairman Pat Weaver announced his vision of a broadcasting system which transcended the "tribalism" of a differentiated mass to draw them together in a single national culture.[6]

Not that such a homogenous culture was ever really accomplished. As Lizabeth Cohen argued in her work on the Chicago working class's response to mass culture, one did not give up their individuality simply because they heard a network radio program or bought a mass manufactured appliance. Indeed, it was the economic changes and new methods of product distribution that emerged at the end of the Depression that made it nearly impossible for local merchants, including those who catered to ethnic and regional differences, to remain competitive. Thus, by the end of World War II, ethnic and regional cultural institutions, such as native support organizations and localized or specialized forms of entertainment, including ethnic radio stations, gave way to an "Atlantic and Pacific" sort of bigness that saw the rise of chain stores, chain theaters, and, more importantly, the loss of local media outlets that catered to difference.[7] By the

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[5] See Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), 25.

[6] Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home: Sitcoms, Selling the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 35-37.

[7] See Lizabeth Cohen, chapter three, "Encounter Mass Culture," which argues that immigrant adoption of national brands and mass media was part of a gradual process (99-158). An example of the decline of ethnic popular culture materials can also be found in Eric A. Goldman, *Visions Images and Dream: Yiddish Film Past and Present*, (Teaneck, NJ: Ergo Media, 1988), who noted the declining market for Yiddish films after it had reached a Gold Age in the 1940s (132). See also Ewen, who explains how the diverse press that existed in America before 1930 was replaced by mass media organizations, a with immigrant newspapers being the hardest hit; remaining immigrant and ethnic papers were also carrying more national advertising, which, according to Ewen, allowed greater corporate control of that press, 62-3. See a similar, albeit less specific discussion of the collapse of ethnic newspapers in Lizabeth Cohen, 327.

1950s, President Eisenhower's call for a society in which people ignored class differences and steered toward the "middle of the road" also fed a consensus mentality in the political arena which was reflected on the American public through the mass media.[8]

The affective family sitcom also drew upon various cultural changes which had been taking place through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, none the least of which was the rise of social science and psychological-based parenting and child-rearing techniques. These series also drew upon the image of the companionate marriage which had become popular during the 1920s, as well the ideal of the "new fatherhood," in which ideal post World War I fathers were transformed from breadwinners and arbiters of moral guidance to "pals" who became involved with the day-to-day affairs of their children. As family historian Robert Griswold argued, this new fatherhood grew out of a sense of dislocation that the modern family felt in the wake of industrialization, as well as out of a focus on the psychology of adjustment which argued that "tolerant, nonauthoritarian families...enhanced the emotional fulfillment and psychological security of each member." [9] While most fathers failed to perform to this ideal in its time,

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[8] See Paul S. Boyer, *Promises to Keep: The United States Since World War II*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), who wrote about Eisenhower's calls for the Republican party to avoid political extremes and "hew to the center of the road 'where the traction is best and where you can bring the most people along with you.' This was the 'middle way,' and he embraced it devoutly. To Eisenhower's admirers, his moderation provided a needed respite after the traumas of depression and war" (102).

[9] Robert Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A Brief History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 92-93. This is not the first appearance of the affective father. See Daniel Blake Smith, "Autonomy and Affection: Parents and Children in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Families," in N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, *Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), who argues that eighteenth-century planter class fathers in the Chesapeake had close emotional ties to their children; as Smith wrote, "fathers, far from remaining indifferent to young children, entered their affective world very early on, perhaps earlier than fathers do in modern families" (57).

it became a pivotal part of the affective family sitcom in which mom was always second to dad.[10]

The rise of a modern post-war suburban setting also helps explain the suburban nature of the vast number of affective family sitcoms. Although the suburban/small town setting existed in a variety of radio and film representations of the family over the course of the twentieth century, the dramatic rise of affordable suburban homes—and the white, middle and working class-exodus to those setting—helped producers identify what appeared to be the "norm" of its audience.[11] Thus, by the 1950s, there emerged what appeared to happy, white suburban families who used their bonds of love, respect and affection to solve all of life's problems, big and small. While the affective family was not the only, or even the most popular ideal family type, it did represent a departure, in many ways, from the comedic family forms that had existed in a variety of mass media forms since the early 1900s.

The Comic Strip and the Family Ideal

Dramatic and melodramatic interest in the family is not particular to modern popular culture or to the United States. Early Greek melodrama had used themes from family relations, as have most Western plays. As durable a topic as the family has been, however, its depiction has not been static, particularly as it has appeared in twentieth-century mass media. One of the first forms of mass media to feature the domestic setting

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[10] See Griswold's chapter on the new Fatherhood, 91-118.

[11] As Marchand notes, suburban migration came from those on the top forty percent of family income, including professional and technological elites. "Since writers, academics, and advertising executives came from the very segment of society making the most rapid gains [in post World War II America], they found it easy to believe everyone was riding the same wave of prosperity. The idea of a consummated classlessness struck them with the force of a revelation" (147).

were the early comic strips, pioneered by Richard Felton Outcault for the Hearst newspapers. Outcault's *Yellow Kid*, which combined successive pictures with a narrative form, appeared in the mid 1890s.[12] While the "Yellow Kid" was one of the early "demon children" type of comics, in which children wrought terror on the adult world, families soon joined the medium, with "The Dingbat Family," created by George Herriman in 1910, "The Bungle Family," created by Harry Tuthill, and "Mutt and Jeff," crated by Bud Fisher. These strips focused on stories of proud-yet-bumbling, brow-beaten male breadwinners in single-family dwellings dominated by towering, possessive wives with rolling pins poised for attack.[13] An example of this can be seen in a 1911 strip, "The Family Upstairs," also created by Herriman. The husband, trying to catch a rattlesnake, shrugs off his wife's suggestions, saying, "Look here, woman, I'm running this job. The best thing you can do is attend to your domestic duties. I'll look after the man's work of the establishment, y'understand." As was required by the form and time, the husband

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[12] Bill Blackbeard and Martin Williams, *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977) 13-14. This work provides commentary on selected comics, as well as a brief history of the development of the comic strip. The primary value of the book is that it reprints actual representative cartoons from a number of sources.

[13] See Mary Rene Hughes, *What's So Funny? Families in the Comics*, (Masters thesis, University of Michigan Horace H. Rackham School for Graduate Studies, Program in American Culture, 1992), which shows how the family conflicts depicted in these earlier strips centered around issues of money, entertainment, jealousy, or problems with extended relations (22). According to Hughes, the comedy of the early strips was more based on slapstick, with much of the humor derived from comic strip wives who "were almost always larger or fatter or stronger than their husbands. The physical disparity in size contributed to the visual nature of the humor, since it was generally clear that, in any real combat, the Mrs. would prevail"(23). Although the strips were not always set in a domestic family setting, Hughes argued that there was no doubt that comic strip women owned the domestic sphere (25-26). Hughes also argued that much of the humor of these early strips was derived by American's discomfort with modernity and industrialization. In her commentary on "Maggie and Jiggs," for example, Hughes noted that "Maggie and Jiggs were funny because they were fish out of water, just like all the other families trying to cope with new social forms being superimposed on the old, familiar family" (38).

was bitten by the rattlesnake, making it clear that there was no reward for the proud husband.[14]

Perhaps the two most significant of the early family-based strips were George McManus's "Bringing Up Father," which ran from 1913 to 1954, and Sidney Smith's popular "The Gumps."[15] "Bringing up Father," which debuted in the Heart newspapers in 1913, featured Jiggs, an Irish American bricklayer who became wealthy after winning the Irish Sweepstakes, and his wife Maggie, who longed to fit into the new socio-economic sphere in which she found herself.[16] As with the "Family Upstairs," the sexual battle was prominent; in the banner of one 1918 strip, Jiggs is depicted as listening to a recording of the song "No Place Like Home" as a barrage of kitchen utensils are about to strike him. To Jiggs, being trapped in a marriage was worse than being at war or in prison.[17]

Family life was a bit more idealistically presented in "The Gumps," which first appeared in 1917. Husband Andrew, wife Minerva, and son Chester Gump lived in a single-family home with a cat and a dog. While later comedic family homes would be shrouded in security and safety, the first Gumps' strip quipped that the seemingly innocent Gump's home was either haunted, a fence for stolen cars, or—in the wake of the Russian Revolution and Red Scare—a hideout for Russian spies.[18] In early "Gumps" strips, Andrew was depicted like most comic strip husbands; in one strip, for example,

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[14] Blackbeard and Williams, strip 52, p. 60.

[15] Ibid., 52.

[16] Ibid, 326.

[17] Ibid., strip 144-5, pp. 100-101.

[18] Ibid., strip 96, p. 70

Andrew tried to assert his dominance by replacing his wife's favorite artwork with a portrait of himself. Sounding much like the husband in "The Family Upstairs," Andrew argued that "As long as I'm payin' the rent here I'm gonna be boss..." In the next panel, Andrew was seen laying on the ground, his portrait smashed over his head.[19]

One of the first affective comic strip families, still under matriarchal control, was Murat "Chic" Young's "Blondie," first published in 1930. Originally conceived as a "girlie" strip, "Blondie" was soon converted from a vivacious Gold digger who desperately tried to fit in with the wealthy Bumstead family to Dagwood Bumstead's controlling-yet-loving wife.[20] Young and Marschall, in their work on *Blondie*, wrote that "Chic Young's formula for Blondie was to focus on what he considered the four basic aspects of family life, at least from Dagwood's perspective. These were eating, sleeping, making a living, and raising a family."[21] According to Mary Rini Hughes, whose master thesis explored the history of the family-based comic strip, every strip "was meant to appeal to the average person, and, given the popularity of the strip and its worldwide distribution, Young achieved his goal."[22] While the humor was derived from impossible situations with an unambitious, doltish husband led by a controlling wife, Blondie and Dagwood were an affectionate family who were depicted as happy lovers. By the 1930s, the days of flying frying pans and rolling pins had seemingly been replaced by a greater

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[19] Ibid., strip 99, p 71.

[20] Ibid., 326; see also strip 173, p. 129.

[21] Dean Young and Rick Marschall, *Blondie and Dagwood's America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 29, cited in Hughes, 17.

[22] Hughes, 17; according to Hughes, Blondie is "suburban, self-consciously middle class, purposely all-American, and, intentionally, typical" (18).

sense of ease with marriage and the family.[23] The Bumstead family bonds were further advance by Young's addition of two Bumstead children during the 1930s. Unlike the static nature of most comic strip kids, who remained forever young, Blondie's kids grew up in front of the readers eyes.[24] Thus, while Dagwood was a bumbler, he was also part of a loving family.

Film and the American Family

The family was as important to film as it was to the comics.[25] As with early comics, early films tended to see the family and family life as problematic and confrontational. In 1904, the film "The Suburbanite," based on the New Jersey Central Railroad magazine of the same title which promoted suburban travel service through glowing images of suburbia, lampooned the supposedly happy suburban life in a series of vignettes that revealed the lie behind such phrases as "A Sweet Little Home in the Country," "Such a Nice Place for Children," and "Within Easy Reach of the City."[26] Marriage was also the target of early film, with such shorts as "A House Divided," which revolved around a couple who communicated through a series of humorous notes that were flashed upon the screen. Film historian Audrey E. Kupferberg, in her historical assessment of the film, argued that "A House Divided" was, in many ways, "a precursor

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[23] Ibid., 49.

[24] As Hughes noted, "Other family strips had children in them, and there were several comic strips about children; but Blondie was the first comic strip mother to bear children and then raise them. Alexander and Cookie grew up, at least into late adolescence, right on the funny pages" (50-51).

[25] Nina C. Liebman, *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995), 5-6.

[26] Ibid., 119.

of the scatter-brained domestic comedy epitomized by the "I Love Lucy" series..."[27], which would combine the slapstick of such early comedy along with the more affective family tone of a troubled-yet-happy couple in love. By 1915, film also boasted animated versions of some of the more popular comic strip domestic comedies, including George McManus's "The Newlyweds."[28]

Children also became a specific focus of film as well, from dramatizations of the evils of child labor as seen in producer Edwin Thanhauser's "The Cry of the Children" to the comic antics of children that appeared in Hal Roache's series of "Our Gang" comedies. While *Leave it to Beaver* creators Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher may have provided television's first child's-eye view of life, Hal Roach's "Our Gang" comedies, along with films featuring such child stars as Jackie Coogan, were among the first to offer a glimpse into the way adult producers perception of how children viewed the world. As Leonard Maltin and Richard Bann observed in their popular history of "The Little Rascals," the Our Gang comedies stood for "all the best of collective American boyhood. From a kid's point of view. As timeless as childhood itself, Our Gang represents the kind of adventures kids yearn for, and the ones grown-ups wish they could have." While their hyperbole exposes the book's less-than-critical approach to the series, Maltin and Bann did hint at more important elements of these films, including their class-conscious nature in which street kids were pitted against those of privilege. Like Connelly and Mosher would later do with *Leave it to Beaver*, Roach's two-reel comedies explored the Little Rascals' difficulty in comprehending the pretensions and rule-hardened nature of the

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[27] Ibid., 151.

[28] Ibid., 160.

adult world.[29] The series, which debuted in 1922, comprised some 221 films by the end of its production run in 1944.[30]

While film families could often be seen struggling with complicated issues, as in *Imitation of Life* (1934), more often than not, they were presented for laughs, as in the popular "Andy Hardy" film series starring Mickey Rooney, as well as in the "Blondie" film series, which starred Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake as Blondie and Dagwood. The Andy Hardy series began with the 1937 release of *A Family Affair*, which was based on Aurania Rouverol's play "Skidding." The film, which was made as a stand-alone project, proved popular and became a series. In the fourth film, *Love Finds Andy Hardy*, Rooney's spirited portrayal of a red-blooded American teenager began to captivate audiences, Andy Hardy became the focus of ten of the fifteen films in the series. In 1943, the series was given a special Academy Award for "its achievement in representing the American way of life..."[31] Meanwhile, the popular Blondie series grew to 27 films produced between 1938 and 1950. Like the strip, it was an affective family relationship with Blondie securely in charge of things, not only at home, but in her ability to extricate Dagwood out of trouble at work.

Perhaps no event vaulted the film family to such cultural prominence as World War II. As cultural historian George Lipsitz observed in his work on 1940's America, the normalized, single-house dwelling nuclear family became a symbol of al that was sacred in modern America. According to Lipsitz:

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[29] Leonard Maltin and Richard W. Bann. *The Little Rascals: The Life and Times of Our Gang*, (1977; reprint, New York: Three Rivers Press, 1992), 4.

[30] Ibid., 4.

[31] See www.classicmoviemusicals.com/hardy1.htm; a sixteenth film, *Andy Hardy Comes Home*, was made in 1958 as a retrospective on the series.

> Many mainstream films of the postwar period retrospectively rewrote the history of World War II as a battle fought to ensure the future of free enterprise. The freedom preserved in combat in these films has little to do with free elections, free expression, or freedom from racist oppression. Instead, in these articulations freedom comes to mean the freedom to own more commodities, to experience upward mobility, and to form nuclear families built upon male authority and female domesticity.[32]

One can find elements of such elevation of the family in films such as Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. George Bailey, played by James Stewart, is portrayed as a young man who wants to "shake the dust" of his hometown, Bedford Falls, and see the world. When circumstances beyond his control keep George at home to run the family "building and loan" business, George begins to see his life as a failure. Just as he is about to end it all, Clarence, George's Guardian Angel, appears to show George the positive effect his life of sacrifice has had on the people of Bedford Falls. Among those achievements is George's building of a suburban housing project which saves the town from urban squalor and debauchery. Confronted with the good work he has done, George comes to realize that staying in Bedford Falls has, indeed, made for a wonderful life—one that placed a priority on home, family, and children.[33]

While it is difficult to assign any one message or meaning to a particular work, home and family certainly emerge as important themes in this and earlier Capra films.[34] As film historian Andrew Bergman argued, Capra's earlier work, such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and *Meet John Doe*, used various archetypical characters of the American

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[32] George Lipsitz, *The Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 280.

[33] Frank Capra, *It's a Wonderful Life*, Liberty Films, 1947

[34] Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 254.

dream to forge the myths of an ideal American society. According to Bergman, by the time Americans came to fight in World War II, one of the things they were fighting for was not necessarily the reality of America, but the image that Frank Capra had created. An image which had included the sanctity of the American home.[35]

Perhaps one of the reasons the family was of such concern to home front producers was because of the social changes taking place during the war.[36] Of particular concern to World War II era image-makers was the growing problem of juvenile delinquency that had risen during the Depression and World War II.[37] While many films looked at this problem, a ten-minute informational film, "As the Twig is Bent," produced in 1943 by the Affiliated Aetna Life Companies, captured the mood of family and child care concerns that arose during World War II. Taking its title from the Alexander Pope epigram, "'Tis education forms the common mind. Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined,"[38] the film proceeded from the idea that strong parenting and family were the keys to a better world post-War world. Placing the future of the nation squarely upon the shoulders of well adjusted children, the film opens with the following narration voiced-over a scene of happy, playful American youths:

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[35] See Andrew Bergman, *We're In the Money: Depression America and its Films* (New York: Harper, 1972), who, speaking of Capra's films through 1941, noted that "By the time he started the Why We Fight series, Capra could know that America was fighting for, among other things, Frank Capra films" (148), arguing that America had adopted, by World War II, values espoused by Capra's works.

[36] For a full discussion on the problems of families during the war, see William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Daddy's Gone to War: The Second World War in the Lives of American Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); see also Griswold, 161-84.

[37] Concern over the juvenile delinquent was a popular topic of films of the 1930s, including *Dead End*, *Angles with Dirty Faces*, and a film series which ran through the 1940s featuring the comic antics of "The Bowery Boys." For more information on such films, see Bergman, 149-166.

[38] *As the Twig is Bent*, Motion Picture Bureau of the Affiliated Aetna Life Insurance Companies, Hartford, Connecticut, 1944.

> Narrator: These are America's future citizens, the kids they are fighting for all over the world. These are the boys and girls to whom we must look for leadership in our postwar democracy. These are America's hope for the future.[39]

Having established the child's importance, the film shows how their future is threatened by war-time delinquency fostered not by social or economic problems but a lack of parental love and attention:

> Narrator: Behind every hardened criminal is a shadow of youthful lawbreaker. Into the pattern of every major crime is woven a story of parental neglect, of misguided youth, just as a twig is bent, the tree's inclined.[40]

The problem is directly related to what the producers perceive as the war-time collapse of the "traditional" American home, which the narrator says is "fast becoming home in name only." The narrator continued:

> Thousands of families migrating to industrial areas are faced with inadequate housing and recreation facilities. Parents working side by side in essential factories, offices, and shipyards sacrifice the equally essential jobs of maintaining a normal home life.[41]

As more parents work, the children are left to their own devices, playing hooky or getting involved in other exciting-yet-illicit activities. Young girls being lured by G.I.s into quick sex, as well as young couples entering hastily into marriage are of particular interest to the film, which then delineates the values parents need to enforce: respect of

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

the law; a proper savings plan; reading good literature; becoming members of the PTA; and, regardless of religious affiliation, regular church attendance.

> Narrator: As parents you can render no greater service to your country than by providing a wholesome, normal home life for your children. Give them the parental guidance and supervision they need to become good American citizens. Able to take their places as leaders in the new world that will be theirs.[42]

"As the Twig is Bent" was probably seen by very few people, and it is certainly not important as a film that moved people to action; nevertheless, it does serve as an indication of the prescriptive ideas of family that existed in the popular culture preceding the arrival of the televised domestic sitcom. While the family was always important in American popular culture, Depression and World War II-era interest in the problem of keeping the family intact fed into the reality of a culture which would, in 1946, come to celebrate the family in very real terms through the arrival of the baby boom. The move of many middle and working class into suburbia, coupled with the spike in child birth and family size, would not be lost on the cultural producers whose programming would come to reflect—sometimes accurately, sometimes inaccurately—what appeared to be a new, affective, family ideal.

"The Chainless Chain": Network Radio

To understand that change and how it took place on such a large scale, one needs to first understand the sort of programming that had developed on network television's

[42] Ibid.

precursor—network radio.[43] As the nation's first home-based form of mass entertainment outside of the phonograph, radio was aware of its place in the home and acted accordingly, with programs that included a focus on the family. Having grown out of an amateur wireless medium, the first commercially licensed station, KDKA, debuted on November 20, 1920, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, followed by WJZ in Newark, New Jersey. While both stations primarily featured music and information programming,[44] comedy became a part of early radio when announcers would attempt to break the monotony of the day with jokes.[45] One of the earliest comedies dealing with the family in the domestic setting was a radio version of the popular comic strip, "The Smith Family," which appeared on WNER in Chicago.[46] In 1925, Henry Selinger, the station manager at rival Chicago station WGN, owned by the *Chicago Tribune*, decided to sponsor a serialized comedy to attract listeners and appeal to advertisers. Selinger, who decided to follow WNER's lead and adapt their *Tribune* strip "The Gumps" to radio, approached Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, who had recently been hired by WGN after the pair had proved popular in a song and patter show on Chicago's WEBH.[47] Gosden, who was born in a racially diverse area of Virginia, and Correll, who was raised

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[43] For background and pre-history of radio, see Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). See Lizabeth Cohen, 323-33, who discusses how network radio, by the 1930s, came to displace other elements of immigrant culture in Chicago, 323-33.

[44] Arthur Frank Wertheim, *Radio Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3.

[45] Ibid., 5-8

[46] Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 10-11. Also see Wertheim's discussion of the comic bungler family-based series *Fibber McGee and Molly*, which debuted in 1932 on NBC, starring Jim Jordan as a bungling clown who, much like Andrew Gump, was known for his false bravado and boastfulness that was met by inevitable humiliation (213-30).

[47] See Bart Andrews and Ahrgus Julliard, *Holy Mackerel: The Amos 'n' Andy Show* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1986), 4-5, as well as Ely, 47-63.

in Peoria, Illinois[48] met while working in Chicago for the Bren Production Company, a theatrical agency which booked minstrel shows nationwide to play to local organizations, groups and clubs. While Gosden and Correll worked as directors for the company, they often doubled as talent. When approached to do a serialized version of "The Gumps," the pair opted for a series based on the racialized characters with which they were more comfortable. *Sam 'n' Henry*, the resulting series, featuring the comic exploits of two Afro-Americans who had migrated north to Chicago; the series debuted on WGN on January 12, 1926.[49]

When Gosden and Correll asked WGN if they could record and syndicate the series, a novel idea at the time, WGN refused. In 1928, Gosden and Correll took their series, renamed *Amos 'n' Andy*, to Chicago's WMAQ. It was through WMAQ that they began their famous "chainless chain," sending recordings of their programs to stations who, after a thirty-day free trial period, could opt to pick up the transcribed programs for broadcast. By 1929, the show had proven so popular, NBC offered the pair $100,000 per year for six weekly fifteen-minute episodes.[50] While "The Gumps," which became a short-lived CBS show in 1934,[51] and "The Smiths" faded from memory,[52] *Amos 'n' Andy* emerged as the first successful, serialized, syndicated situation comedy.[53]

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[48] The most exhaustive treatment of Gosden and Correll's early life appears in Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of An American Phenomenon* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 11-24. Wertheim also has extended discussions of the evolution of *Sam 'n' Henry* (18-33) and *Amos 'n' Andy* (35-58).

[49] See Wertheim 29; Ely, 54; and Andrews and Julliard, 5.

[50] See Ely, 57-60.

[51] Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, *The Big Broadcast: 1920-1950* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), 135

[52] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 10-11.

[53] Wertheim, 24-25.

While *Amos 'n' Andy* certainly featured domestic elements in their comedy, with family life and marriage depicted as a trap from which men must extricate themselves, another radio series, *The Goldbergs*, which debuted in 1929, was more grounded in an affective, domestic setting, as Jewish immigrant Molly Goldberg and her husband tried to adapt to the American ways of their adopted home and their children. A serialized drama, it, like *Amos 'n' Andy*, became a social phenomenon, combining humor with pathos to provide one of radio's first intimate portraits of the family. As Gerard Jones, in his work on the history of the family sitcom observed, interpreted the message of *The Goldbergs*, "The family is paramount in human life and the foundation of a good society."[54] While the series was based on Jewish characters created, written, directed and acted by Gertrude Berg, the series' emphasis on affective family relations allowed it to appeal to a wider audience.[55]

While *Amos 'n' Andy* and *The Goldbergs* had a decidedly eastern, urban flavor, *Vic and Sade*, a daytime serial created and written by Paul Rhymer, was one of the first domestic based radio serials to focus on the Midwestern family. Rhymer, born in the Midwest, was approached by NBC to create a family show for Proctor and Gamble, which had become interested in breaking into daytime radio to help sell their line of household products. Over its fourteen year run, from 1932 through 1945, Rhymer wrote more than 3,500 scripts about small town life as lived out by Vic and Sade Gook and their son Rush.[56] Right from the show's opening credits, Rhymer fixed his family

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[54] Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 15-16.

[55] Buxton and Owen, 126.

[56] Wertheim, 241-259.

literally in the middle of the road, opening each episode by describing Vic and Sade as the married couple who lived "halfway up in the next block." Vic, like many men affected by Midwestern industrialization, had an anonymous job in "Plant Number 14" in the equally non-descript "Consolidated Kitchenware Company."[57] According to media historian Arthur Frank Wirtheim, Rhymer, a master of colloquialisms, was particularly adept at catching the rhythm of everyday speech in his dialogue. Rhymer also tried his hand at social commentary, commenting on the problems of bureaucracy, fraud and humbug.[58] In many ways, Rhymer's middling Midwestern characters were the prototypical radio version of the affective family.

If anyone proved the appeal and durability of the domestic setting in radio situation comedy it was Jack Benny. Born Benjamin Kubelsky, the son of a Russian Jewish immigrant, Benny's mother insisted on her son becoming a serious musician. After showing initial talent and interest in the piano, Benny's mother had Jack switch to the violin, an instrument at which he proved quite adept. As a teenager, Benny had played violin in the orchestra pit at one of the vaudeville theaters in his hometown of Waukegan, Illinois. Having done poorly in high school and washing out of bookkeeping school, Benny turned to vaudeville. Although his parents were very much against Benny making such a move (in 1911 they forbade their son to take a job as a violinist with the Marx Brothers), Benny eventually took to the stage and, by 1920, became a popular performer. The suave persona he developed, augmented by his comedic violin performances, earned Benny a job as emcee on the NBC *Canada Dry Ginger Ale*

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[57] Buxton and Owen, 321-322.

[58] See Wertheim 242-247, and Buxton and Owen, 321-322.

Program in 1932. From there, Benny built upon his experience in vaudeville while making the necessary changes demanded by radio.[59] As David Marc observed in an essay on Benny's brand of character derived comedy, Benny was keenly aware of the family nature of the new medium:

> Benny astutely realized that the shift in performance space from public stage to private living room had created new aesthetic conditions for comedy: radio took place not in the exotic, elevated world of theater, but in the home, where the ordinary and even the banal took precedence. Instead of trying to wow the audience with the fantastic, he gradually built an intimate and familiar (if slightly ridiculous) world with "himself" at its center. It was a place that a listener could visit rather than attend.[60]

By 1934, Benny's radio (and later television) programs, underwritten by a variety of sponsors over the years, moved from variety acts and movie spoofs to comic glimpses of his persona's home life which took place within Benny's unique show-within-a-show (in which Benny prepared for the weekly show within the confines of a make-believe, at times surreal, domestic setting). Unlike the zaniness of popular contemporary radio comedians like Joe Penner and Fred Wynn, Benny's series, like *Amos 'n' Andy* and *The Goldbergs* before it, derived its humor from character-based humor.[61]

George Burns and Gracie Allen, who like Benny, had their roots in vaudeville, also proved the domestic theme viable for garnering a national audience. When Burns

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[59] For early biographical material on Jack Benny, up to and including his entry into radio, see Wertheim, 131-156. For other biographical information, see Jack Benny and Joan Benny, *Sunday Nights at Seven: The Jack Benny Story* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 5-28. For a brief overview of Benny's life and career, see William A. Henry III, "Mr. Benny and America: The Long Romance," in *Jack Benny: The Radio and Television Work* (New York: The Museum of Television and Radio, 1991), 5-22.

[60] David Marc, "Lending Character to American Comedy," in *Jack Benny: The Radio and Television Work*, 33.

[61] Wertheim, 131-156.

and Allen changed their format from a young flirtatious couple to married couple, their ratings, which had been faltering in the early 1930s, improved.[62] Married couples of course, had already been a part of radio comedy and drama. In 1939, before Burns and Allen revamped their series, *Blondie* had already made the transition from newspaper and film to radio, with Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake reprising their film roles.[63] That same year saw the debut of *The Aldrich Family*. Based on Clifford Goldsmith's 1937 play "What a Life," the show centered around the antics of "America's favorite teenager," Henry Aldrich, played by Ezra Stone. After being featured as a series of short skits on *The Rudy Vallee Hour* and *The Kate Smith Hour*, *The Aldrich Family* debuted as its own program in July, 1939.[64] Norman Tokar, who would become one of *Leave it to Beaver's* most prolific directors, replaced Stone in the role of Henry Aldrich after Stone was drafted in the military in 1941. While shows preceding *The Aldrich Family* each flirted with elements of home and family life, Jones considered this series to be the first sitcom to contain all the elements that would later surface in televised domestic comedies. As Jones observed:

> *The Aldrich Family* was a synthesis of programs which had preceded it, taking its shape and its gag-heavy dialogue from Jack Benny, Fibber McGee, and taking its plot concerns from family serials as well as Andy Hardy movies. It had no ongoing serial plots, just as it had no announcers tromping through the scenes, no commercials woven into dialogue, no musical breaks. It was self-contained, domestic, mildly funny, reassuring. It was the first true domestic situation comedy.[65]

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[62] Ibid., 27.

[63] Buxton and Owen, 40-1.

[64] Ibid., 9.

[65] Gerard Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 25.

Perhaps the most significant moment in the development of the affective family situation comedy occurred when Ozzie Nelson merged his life as a musician and father in *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, which debuted on radio in 1944.[66] The series, which centered around the often mundane home life of Ozzie and Harriet and their All-American sons David and Ricky, became the "model of the postwar couple," demonstrating, as Jones observed, how "a snazzy modern life-style was compatible with a solid family."[67] The arrival of *Ozzie and Harriet*, which debuted at a time when first-generation immigrant listeners were being displaced by their Americanized sons and daughters, coincided with the collapse of such shows as *The Goldbergs*. Indeed, while Berg's program had launched a Broadway play, a couple of books, and a comic strip, its popularity waned as radio moved to a more nationalized culture.[68] The same was happening with film, in which ethnic characters were being displaced by a more national family culture, with family melodramas undergoing a "transition from a focus on ethnicity and class to a focus on parent-child tensions and coming-of-age stories."[69] In the end, it would be people who looked and sounded like the Nelsons, not Amos, Andy or Molly Goldberg, who would win ownership of the new medium—an audio and visual medium perfectly suited for the national culture's affective family.

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[66] see Buxton and Owen, 4-5.

[67] Ibid., 27.

[68] Gerard Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 46.

[69] Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 281.

TV Domestication

Perhaps the biggest change that took place in 1950s culture involved the rapid rise and acceptance of what has become the most powerful medium in the world—television. In 1949, television penetrated only six-percent of the American market, confined mostly to the Northeast. By 1957, the year in which *Leave it to Beaver* debuted, over seventy-percent of United States households received television broadcasts.[70] The vast coverage, saturated by commercial messages and programming that reinforced the commercials, made for a powerful new force in American life.[71] As popular historian John Brooks observed:

> The most startling thing about the arrival of television on the American scene was certainly the almost apocalyptic suddenness with which it became a fully established part of our national life, complete with a huge audience and an established minority opposition, affecting not only all our other communication media and the whole world of our popular arts but also our manners, morals, habits, ways of thinking.[72]

New as it was, television did not arrive out of nowhere. Like radio, it had a greater historical context. While the visual aspect of television was new, commercial television shared much in common with its corporate predecessor, commercial radio.[73]

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[70]See Leo Bogart, *The Age of Television: A Study of Viewing Habits and the Impact of Television on American Life*, (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1956), table 5, page 15. This volume serves as an excellent insight into viewing habits right at the moment of my study.

[71] See John Brooks, *The Giant Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), who argued that "The giant corporation, in alliance with the most efficacious advertising medium ever invented, the television screen, has done more than anything else to establish our present buying habits of consumption and thus to a great extent set the style and pattern of our lives" (46).

[72] Ibid., 161.

[73] Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting*, shows how Marconi's 1899 wireless became a disputed property among government, entrepreneurs, hobbyists, the military, and the broadcasting industry, which

As radio historian Susan Douglas observed, "Major corporations controlled both broadcasting technology and access to the spectrum, and they shaped what kinds of messages we get and the range of ideas to which we are exposed in the public sphere."[74] This corporate control was firmly established during the pre-history of television, which Joseph Udelson, in his seminal *The Great Television Race*, dates between 1925 and1941. According to Udelson, television did not rise "Athena-like, fully developed in the post war period," but was the result of thoughts, ideas, and serious development that were actually founded in the late 19th century.[75] Showing television's development as a complex "interweaving of engineering achievements and rivalries, of corporate ambitions and competitions, and of government regulations, antitrust actions, and patent decisions,"[76] Udelson explored how economics, politics, industry and culture conspired to make a workable, albeit flawed, system by 1941.[77]

While television's basic technological, institutional, and economic format was in place by 1941, the new medium lay dormant until the end of World War II. When it reappeared, it was accepted with such suddenness that a 1956 observer in *Business Week* noted that "Video dropped into the middle of a new social revolution: the mass exodus to

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eventually won out. At bottom, Douglas argues that while radio had changed since 1922, much of what was "established between 1899 and 1922 remains the same" in terms of its basic economic and industrial structure (322).

[74] Ibid. 322

[75] Joseph Udelson, *The Great Television Race: A History of the American Television Industry 1925-1941* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1982), ix. For additional pre-history of television, see also Michael Ritchie, *Please Stand By: A Prehistory of Television* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1994), as well as Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[76] Udelson, 1.

[77] Ibid., 158.

the suburbs, new realms of leisure, rising incomes, and a tremendous demand both for things and for entertainment that had been pent up by war and depression"[78] While only 8,000 sets were sold in 1946, nearly 3.9 million were sold by 1950.[79] Between 1952 and 1956, the number of TV stations quadrupled from 108 to 496,[80] with TV in ninety-five percent of homes receiving television coverage.[81] Television was becoming a major economic force as well, with advertising expenditures reaching nearly 1.3 billion in 1957, the first year in which broadcast network revenues reached nearly one billion dollars.[82] In 1955, two billion of the 3.3 billion for home entertainment purchases was spent on television, while a total of 4 billion dollars was spent for newspapers, magazines, movies, legitimate theater and other live attractions and sports combined. According to the AC Nielson company, 2.6 billion person hours were spent every week watching TV in 1956.[83] "In five years," observed *Business Week*, "watching television has steadily become more and more ingrained as the nation's strongest social habit."[84]

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[78] "Television: The New Cyclops," *Business Week*, 10 March 1956, 77.

[79] See Series R 93-105, "Radio and Television Stations, Sets Produced, and Households with Sets: 1921 to 70," in *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial Edition, Volume II (Washington DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975), 796.

[80] Ibid.

[81] "Television: The New Cyclops," 78.

[82] See Series R 123-139, "Television Advertising Expenditures, Finances, and Employment: 1945-1970," *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Volume II, 798.

[83] "Television: The New Cyclops," 77.

[84] Ibid., 78. Positing television as the new "social habit," the article featured numerous reprints of editorial cartoons commenting on television, including one from a 1955 issue of *Saturday Evening Post* that showed a young couple's living room, which was furnished with only a TV set on a table; the caption read, "We're starting out with just the bare essentials" (78).

Setting the tone for programming was the broadcasting industry, which made various demands on what programming would look like.[85] Industry restrictions, sensitive to issues of consumerism, program length, and advertisers needs, shaped the programs.[86] In many ways, television's creative personnel were hampered by the networks' fears of offending either advertisers, the industry, or the viewers. Mel Diamond, a television writer whose credits included *Bachelor Father*, observed:

> Television was playing a game and we had to adjust. We had to make up lines we would never say in real life. We knew what life was about, but you couldn't say it on television. I'm not just talking about bad words, I'm talking about the mature concepts about how people relate to each other. I wrote "Bachelor Father," which was truly a show of its time. Bentley Gregg dated all the time, but he wasn't screwing anybody. That was the big lie.
>
> As a writer, if you had experience and balls you got neutered very fast. [writer] Harry Crane had his own take on what we did for a living. He used to sing a little parody of "Love and Marriage," which he called "Lies and Bullshit," and which was mainly what we did to satisfy the insipid requirements of the advertising agencies, not to mention the imbeciles running the standards and practices departments at the networks.[87]

According to Diamond, television was not for rebels. "I never came out here to be a rebel," recalled Diamond. "Guys were making a lot of bread, writing all the sitcom crap,

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[85] Network ubiquity was clearly noted in "Television: The New Cyclops," which said that "...the group that sets the tone for TV is probably more cohesive than in any other major art. It is the composite management of the three video networks...all headquartered in New York." See also J. Fred MacDonald, *One Nation Under Television: The Rise and Decline of Network TV* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990) who picks up a similar theme, arguing that "The surrender of U.S. radio and television to mass marketing and mass communication limited program diversity and audience experience, this in an industry severely restricted by a scarcity of stations" (28).

[86] According to Leibman, who looked at materials from the collections of *Father Knows Best* producer Gene Rodney and *My Three Sons* producer Don Fedderson, consumerism, length restrictions, and advertisers "dictated family narratives which not only did not threaten the hegemonic positions of postwar industrial capitalism, but continually underscored capitalistic superiority in stories designed specifically to promote sensible consumerism" (61).

[87] Mel Diamond interview in Jeff Kisseloff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 346.

and I took the check and gave them what they wanted."[88] Such self-censorship became the norm of television writers, who knew their were limits to what they could produce.[89] In case they did forget, the National Association of Broadcaster's 1952 Seal of Good Practices, whose preamble reads as an ode to the sanctity of the family, was there to remind them:

> It is the responsibility of television to bear constantly in mind that the audience is primarily a home audience, and consequently that televisions relationship to viewers is that between guest and host....
>
> Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect for the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for the advancement of education and culture, for the acceptability of the program materials chosen, for decency and decorum in production, and for propriety in advertising. This responsibility...can be discharged only through the highest standards of respect for the American home, applied to every moment of every program presented by television...[90]

Television was, indeed, in a precarious position, and, much like today, was attacked when it stepped beyond Puritanical ideals of good taste. Journalist Jack O'Brian, in a 1955 article in *TV Star Parade*, one of the many popular fan magazines of the time, complained of TV's lascivious nature, which, according to O'Brian had become obsessed with women's breasts and body shapes. Bemoaning the fact that Hedda Hopper had, in her televised interview show, called attention to Mamie Van Doren and Shelly Winter's breasts, O'Brian argued "This might have been funny in a burlesque house; but on TV, at a time where even in the East kiddies could not have been hustled off to beddie-bye as

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[88] Ibid., 346.

[89] See Leibman, who discusses the effect the government, television sponsors, industry and networks had on these sitcoms (93-113—direct quote from 113). As Liebman states, "Ultimately, both the film and televisions texts created a sui generis system of regulation—that of the family and its values. As potent as the external restrictions were, internal, generic conventions compelled the domestic melodrama to repeatedly propose successful family life as the means to fulfillment and social harmony" (113).

[90] *International Television Almanac*, 1962, as cited in Leibman, 105-106.

yet—and it was lots earlier with even more and younger citizens still up and watching in the time zones to the West—it was unmistakably tasteless."[91] O'Brian continued, claiming that people from all walks of life had written to him to complain of such sexual incidents and the "vulgarity" was taking place in the nation's living rooms. "It's the embarrassment of a parent with offspring, even if they are grown up or nearly so," wrote O'Brian. "Parents write me they are embarrassed in front of their children. Young boys, men, girls, mature women say they feel ashamed to be watching such fare—and they are embarrassed not so much for themselves as for their parents!"[92]

With such an overt interest in maintaining family sensibilities—real or imagined—the idealized family seem an ideal vehicle of television entertainment. Television historian Ella Taylor agrees that the attention television paid to family was an outgrowth of its very technology.[93] As Taylor observed:

> The domesticity that from the beginning was bred into the forms and structures of the episodic series was shaped by the industrial, technical, and aesthetic traditions that television inherited from earlier media. With its small screen, talking-heads format, and interior settings, television combines the looming proximity of film with the constraining space of theater. It lends itself to the intimacy of character and relationship rather than to action, to the routinized intimacy of domestic life rather than to the melodramatic, eventful intensity of live theater or film. Going to the movies or to a show remains an outing, a ritualized public activity that feels special. Television sits in the home, both part of the furniture and part of the family; in many homes the television set remains on for most of the day, whether people are actively watching or not. In its own glamorous way, television

[91] Jack O'Brian, "Too Much Sex in TV?" *TV Star Parade*, November 1955, 8.

[92] Ibid., 10.

[93] This is also discussed in Spigel, *Make Room for TV*; also, see Leibman, who argues that TV was marketed as a family medium to families to be received in home by the nuclear family unit (81).

> celebrates the ordinary; and by doing so it suggests that certain versions of family life are normal and others deviant, strange, of (by exclusion) nonexistent.[94]

Horace Newcomb also observed that it was not just the domestic sitcoms, per se, that focused on the family, but all of the various television genres, including Westerns like *Bonanza*, which was not just a story of the frontier, but of the family on the frontier.[95] No wonder, then, that the family sitcoms which had become staples of radio, were being transplanted (some successfully, some not) to television. Former radio shows such as *The Goldbergs* (1949), *The Aldrich Family* (1949), *Life of Riley* (1949) and *Life With Father*, *Ozzie and Harriet* (1952), and *Father Knows Best* (1954) began appearing on the small screen.[96] While some shows remained urban, at least for a time, many, including the *Goldbergs*, either debuted with or adopted the suburban setting assumed by producers to represent the American norm.[97]

The selection of suburbia for the family sitcom followed a British and American cultural tradition which, since the nineteenth century, came to value the suburban setting as the ideal place for the post-Industrial family. This ideal stood in sharp relief to the

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[94] Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 18-19. See also Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, and Cecelia Tichi, *The Electronic Hearth: Creating an American Television Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[95] See Horace Newcomb, *TV: The Most Popular Art* (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), who notes through his work that the emphasis on family was not limited to the sitcom, but evident in the TV western (77), mystery (106) and doctor and lawyer series (130), which, in a variety of ways, revolved around a family setting; also see Spigel, particularly her section on addressing the family audience (142-154); and Taylor's second chapter, "Television as Family," which, like Newcomb, argues that the episodic television series, regardless of genre, was first and foremost a vehicle of the family (17-41).

[96] Wertheim, 393.

[97] It should be noted that the term suburb is being used rather loosely in this context, as the suburban settings of the domestic sitcoms looked less like the mass suburbia of post-WWII, and more like a successful, pre-war, first-ring suburb that would have been the domain of the most affluent of Americans.

majority of European history, in which suburbs had been viewed primarily as slums.[98] The modern image of the suburbs, like that of the modern family, was an outgrowth of the rise of industrial capitalism and the resulting Industrial Revolution, which, with its urbanized industrial centers, provided the impetus for the wealthiest of the middle class to find new ground upon which to live. It was not until 1815 that Great Britain and the United States began to look at the suburb as an area of choice.[99] According to historian Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontiers*, between 1820 to 1870, the "single-family dwelling became the paragon of middle-class housing, the most visible symbol of having arrived at a fixed place in society, the goal to which every decent family aspired."[100] John Stilgoe, who explored the history of the upscale suburb in nineteenth and twentieth century America, concurs, noted that "by the 1880s, indeed as early as the 1870s...every thinking man, woman, and child in...almost every...large American city...knew that only in the borderlands lay beauty, fresh air, and a hundred other forces tending toward health and virtue."[101]

By the early twentieth century, suburbia became an important demographic factor in Britain and American.[102] Early expansion was very exclusive, with planned developments like Frederic Law Olmstead's Forest Hills Gardens in New York and the

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[98] See Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontiers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), who notes that, previous to 1815, "suburbs...were socially and economically inferior to cities when wind, muscle, and water were the prime movers of civilization" (19); see also Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), and John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[99] Jackson, 13.

[100] Ibid., 50.

[101] Stilgoe, 64.

[102] Scott Donaldson. *The Suburban Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 35.

Van Swerignen brothers Shaker Heights—the same suburb which *Leave it to Beaver's* Ward Cleaver would once claim he hailed from—in Cleveland. Again, the hallmark of these planned communities, which enforced strict guidelines on house design and set-backs, were open to white middle-class Protestants only. While Andrew Jackson Downing had argued for a more democratized form of suburbia since 1840,[103] it was not until the post-World War II era, with the arrival of mass suburbia and a G.I. Bill which allowed massive numbers of veterans to purchase homes on low-cost loans, that people were finally able to share in a more democratize, albeit highly watered-down form of suburbia. Indeed, part of the progress of post-World War II suburbia was tied up in the idea of home ownership, which came to represent for the middle and working class sense of arrival into the age of affluence.[104] Perhaps no one was more instrumental in this new development that Bill Levitt, the son of a custom home developer, who, taking advantage of the massive housing shortage that followed World War II, built low-cost, affordable homes in a number of east coast locations. These new suburbs were not known for their opulence as much as for their affordability. According to Jackson, Levitt-type subdivisions had, by 1955, represented seventy-five-percent of new housing starts.[105] Although Levitt's prediction that the custom home market "no longer existed" proved far

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[103] Jackson, 117.

[104] See David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), who wrote that, "After World War Two most Americans had a vision of a better life just ahead. At the core of it was owning one's own house..." (131); see also Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington: Brassey's, 1996), who noted that, at the same time, that post-World War II Americans were making themselves into a new people in a social culture defined, above all, by home ownership in the suburbs" (279).

[105] Jackson , 233.

from true,[106] Levitt and other developers created a popular vision of a new suburban postwar world. Fueling this boom was new government aid to returning veterans through the G.I. Bill. According to Michael J. Bennett's *When Dreams Came True*, the GI Bill helped people believe that individual homeownership was possible.[107] Indeed, between 1945 to 1954, 13 million new houses were built, with VA mortgages accounting for a significant amount of that total.[108] To Bennett, this massive move to suburban homeownership became the realization of Jefferson's dream of an America based on the independent yeoman.[109] Bennett's assertion echoed that of literature scholar Scott Donaldson, who, in his *Suburban Myth* (1969), noted that the arrival of the suburb in industrial America was in many ways an accommodation to the American paradox of a continued "worship of rural, countrified life" which coexisted in a nation "where the pull of progress has created an unmistakably urban civilization." To Donaldson, the suburb came to "represent the best of both worlds, which would preserve rural values in an urbanizing world, which would enable the individual to pursue wealth while retaining the amenities of country life."[110] Of course, one cannot see the adoption of suburbia in the post-war era as merely the extension of such an ideal. As Herbert Gans observed in his

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[106]Eric Larrabee "6,00 House that Leavitt Built," *Harpers*, September 1948, 84

[107] Bennett, 16.

[108] Bennett, 24, citing US census bureau historical statistics. According to Bennett, between 1945-1954, more than 13 million houses were built; VA mortgages accounted for a lot of this building, from 43,000 of 324,900 in 1945 (7.5 percent) to 542,000 of the 1,265,100 total for 1947 (42.8-percent) (287).

[109] Bennett, 27.

[110] Donaldson, 24.

work on Levittown, Pennsylvania, people were not looking to capture a "rural idyll" as much as they were looking for a good, affordable home.[111]

Regardless of the reason people adopted suburbia, suburbanization was a historic reality that worked its way into the televised image of the family. One of the earliest programs to move to the suburbs was *The Goldbergs,* which was transplanted to television in 1949. Shortly after its debut, the *Goldbergs* moved from New York row houses to the fictional suburb of "Haverville," which, according to Marc, connotes "The Village of the Haves."[112] To Marc, this move was predicated by television's desire to whiten the ethnic images that had been part of television's golden age, but as noted above, this move toward a national, homogenized family was at work long before Television's arrival. Furthermore, ethnic moves to the suburbs, especially for Jews, were a historic reality, with Jews seeing such moves as a sign of arrival into the American dream.[113] Acceptance into the national family, easier for those who more easily looked the part, was key. As Jones observed:

> If you could look like a solid all-American family and dress like a solid all-American family and act like a solid all-American family, then no one really cared about your roots. Whoever could leave this ethnicity at the gate could be admitted to the paradise of Levittown. Jake and Molly Goldberg moved to the

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[111] But one must be careful not to make too much of this. See Herbert Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967, who wrote of the Levittowners that "...they certainly did not move to 'suburbia' to find the social and spiritual qualities that various writers have assigned to it. They were not looking for roots or a rural idyll, not for a social ethic or a consumption centered life, not for the civic participation or 'sense of community.' They wanted the good or comfortable life for themselves and their families, and the anticipated peacefulness of outdoor living, but mainly they came 'for a house and not a social environment.'" (37).

[112] Marc, *Comic Visions*, 51.

[113] See Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1989), 316. For a specific case study, which shows the growth of Baltimore area Jewish Suburbs, see Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 581.

> suburbs in a last effort to save their sitcom; the ratings were cruel to them, but the neighbors were not. The suburbs were a place for fresh starts.[114]

Such fresh starts were being made into suburbia before television families settled there. As Gans observed:

> Admittedly, much of the popular fiction, in print and on television, takes place in locales which cross the nineteenth century small town with the modern suburb, but they do not therefore inspire their audiences to move to the suburbs. For one thing, research shows that the media are not very effective in changing important values. More important, a historical analysis of the media would show that they follow taste more often than they lead it...the dominant media audience had moved to the suburbs before the popular dramas and situation comedies followed them. Stories of upper class suburbanites have been a staple of American popular culture for several generations now, but media portrayal of lower middle class life has been located in the suburbs for only a few years.[115]

Demographic changes in the television audience also necessitated various changes in programming. As noted earlier, while TV penetration in 1949 was at six-percent, nationwide, it was thirteen percent in the Northeast; at the same time, there was only one-percent penetration in the South. Looked at in terms of population centers, in 1949 TV could not be found in cities with populations less than 500,000. By 1955, there was a marked narrowing of the differences in region and city size; for example, farm viewership moved from three-percent in 1950 to forty-three percent in 1955. While viewership in the Northeast was still dominant, even the South saw TV penetration rise to fifty-four percent by 1954.[116] One can argue that, as viewership went from Northeast

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[114] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 90.

[115] Gans, 286.

[116] Bogart, Table 5, 15.

urban areas to a national market, the more urban and diverse characters were replaced by a more homogenized national family—with the exception of *I Love Lucy's* Desi Arnaz (which, if the network would have had its way, would have been cast with a white, middle-class male).[117]

Another reason behind television's move from urban areas can be exemplified by the developing suburban values of two of the periods most powerful producers, Desi Arnaz and Danny Thomas, who were, for different reasons, seeking an escape from the hectic pace of life on the road. Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball believed that their suburban California ranch would help them better survive their tumultuous marriage.[118] Likewise, Danny Thomas sought more time with his family; the title of his successful series *Make Room for Daddy* was based on the line his children would say when their "occasional" show business father would return from road trips that often kept Thomas away for months at a time.[119] To pose an analogy, if working on the road was urban, the daily grind of weekly sitcoms was suburban.[120] Thus, long before Hollywood began selling

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[117] While it is interesting that America accepted, with open arms, this ethnically mixed couple, the reaction was a surprise to a network that had tried to whiten the series from its outset. Series creator Jess Oppenheimer, in *Laughs, Luck...and Lucy: How I Came to Create the Most Popular Sitcom of All Time* (written with Gregg Oppenheimer; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996) notes that one CBS executive did not believe the public would believe that an "All-American" girl like Lucy would be married to Desi (132). Coyne Steven Sanders and Tom Gilbert's *Desilu: The Story of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993) show how Lucy and Desi embarked on a public appearance tour designed to show CBS that Americans would accept them as a couple (27-29). The story of gaining CBS acceptance of Desi is also described in a number of other sources, including Bart Andrews, *The I Love Lucy Book* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 10-13.

[118] Desi Arnaz, *A Book*, (New York: Warner Books, 1976), 238; also see Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, who writes, "Ball wanted to find a regular gig for her husband to keep their household together" (64); see also Taylor, who notes that "The move from live production in new York to filmed production in Hollywood in the early 1950s took television out of the more flexible, innovative orbit of theater and into the rationalized, more single-mindedly commercial world of the movie industry" (22).

[119] Danny Thomas, *Make Room for Danny* (New York: Putnam, 1991), 12.

[120] See Tinky Weisblat, *Will the real George and Gracie and Ozzie and Harriet and Desi and Lucy please stand up? The function of popular biography in 1950s television*, (Doctoral dissertation, The University of

suburbia to America, its pivotal players had already sold it to themselves. [121] While the writer and producer's suburbia was a far cry from the $8,000 homes of Levittown, their settlement in suburbia allowed them to transfer the setting they enjoyed to America writ large.[122]

Nothing could have been more suburban, more national, and more calming than the image projected by *Father Knows Best*, which debuted in 1954. Not content with just portraying family life, series producers Robert Young and Eugene Rodney felt compelled to teach moralistic lessons on that family life. As Jones observed, "....*Father Knows Best*...flung itself into the task of demonstrating proper family conduct with all the ingenuous confidence of a Sunday school film."[123] Robert Young, star and series co-producer, had tired of being a B-player at MGM and was approached to do radio. Young, in turn, approached Rodney; as Young later recalled, he was interested in the idea of doing a family show, but he did not want to be another bumbling, hen-pecked father like Dagwood Bumstead or William Bendix, who was starring as a loveable yet fumbling

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Texas at Austin, 1991), whose dissertation explored media representations of 1950s television couples Lucy Ball and Desi Arnaz, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson, and George Burns and Gracie Allen. Weisblat's work argues that one has to be very careful in reading a performer's biography. Indeed, according to Weisblat, working women of the sitcoms felt a need to prove themselves part of the feminine norm; therefore, they overplayed their own domesticity in order to win over the domestic audience they assumed was out there. While it is true that one cannot take the star biography at face value (more on this as it relates to *Leave it to Beaver* in later chapters), and while it is true that these stay-at-home women were played by working moms, there is evidence that many of these stars also did try to have—or felt they should have—a more domesticated role

[121] To Gans, "even the ideal of the celebrities and performers who monopolize what little upper-class fashion exists is not apartment living, but a Manhattan townhouse and a weekend country mansion—also a single-family house aspiration" (287).

[122] Roland Marchand, in "Visions of Classlessness," writes that "Since writers, academics, and advertising executives came from the very segment of society making the most rapid gains, they found it easy to believe that everyone was riding the same wave of prosperity. The idea of a consummated classlessness struck them with the force of a revelation" (147).

[123] Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 97.

father in the popular series *Life of Riley*. Out of those discussions, Young and Rodney created *Father Knows Best*.[124]

Young and Rodney decided to do a series that would feature what they considered to be representative "of a middle-class American family."[125] As executive producers and owners of the series, Young and Rodney exercised a great deal of control over the script. As Billy Gray, who played son Bud in the series, recalled, "The kind of work Rodney and Young did was so different from regular television. They didn't cut any corners at all, except in what they were paying me, but there was carte balance for the director. He could have as many takes as he wanted to until he felt he got it right."[126] Jane Wyatt also recalled that *Father Knows Best* was "Gene Rodney's whole life." Wyatt continued:

> He was very strict about the scripts. You couldn't change one jot or one title. An "and," "if," or "but" would take a call to the front office, and Mr. Rodney would come down and discuss it with you. On live TV, scripts were being changed all the way through, but in Gene's office there were piles of scripts that had been finished and polished. That's why those scripts still hold up. They worked so hard over them."[127]

Years later, Young would insist that his and Rodney's vision of the idealized family rang true for many viewers. "People did perceive it as real life," observed Young. "I know that. I don't know if people compared themselves unfavorably to us, but maybe it helped with the realization that a family can exist without killing each other."[128]

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[124] Robert Young interview in Kisseloff, 337.

[125] Ibid., 344; in recalling the decision some years later, Young admitted that there probably was no such thing as a representative family. It is not clear from the quote if that was how he felt at the time.

[126] Billy Gray interview in Kisseloff, 342.

[127] Jane Wyatt interview in Kisseloff, 342.

[128] Robert Young interview in Kisseloff, 345

By the mid-1950s, *Father Knows Best*, along with other sitcoms, had replaced many of the more ethnically diverse series which became, for many viewers, a family or set of families to live by. As Sanford Pinsker observed in a 1995 article in *Judaism*, while "baseball and candy stores had Americanized an earlier generation of immigrant Jews, [1950s] television largely did the trick for mine."[129] Those television images Pinsker spoke of were not the ethnic images of Molly Goldberg and the characters who had come to mean so much to his mother and father, but the Nelsons and Andersons, who seemed the ideal American family. Consequently, by the late 1950s, more than sixty-percent of domestic comedies were middle-class and suburban.[130] The day of the affective, white middle-class suburban family had arrived. Could anyone be expected to refuse it? It was within this context that *Leave it to Beaver* appeared.

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[129] Sanford Pinsker, "My Immigrant Family, the Popular Culture, and Me," *Judaism* , V44 (Spring 1995) 245-52.

[130] Ibid., 7.

CHAPTER TWO:
CULTURAL PRODUCERS

"...they gotta get their stories from somewhere."
-- Wally Cleaver[1]

In May of 1937, Bob a Mosher, fresh out of college, applied for a position at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, a pioneer in market research and a giant among New York national advertising firms.[2] In addition to the comprehensive questions asked by the four-page application, Mosher, like other candidates, was asked to write a short autobiographical sketch. Mosher, twenty-two at the time, opened his autobiography with the following poignant line: "My life began in Auburn, NY on Jan 18, 1915 and resulted at same time in the death of my mother, whose memory I idealize."[3] Bob Mosher's father, Robert Livingston Mosher, gave his young son into the care of his sister, Mary.[4] Interestingly enough, Mosher's future writing partner, Joe Connelly, had also been

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[1] Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher (story by Mathilde and Theodore Ferro), "Friendship," LITB, 1959. After Ward tells Beaver and Wally about the story of Damon and Pithias, Beaver wonders why people told so many stories in the old days. Wally, often the bridge between the adult world of his parents and the childishness of Beaver (albeit, an often ill-informed bridge who also saw the world through the eyes of an adolescent), explains that older people, having no television, movies or radios, had to get "their stories from somewhere."

[2] For a good history on early advertising growth, including the emergence and significance of J. Walter Thompson, see Pamela Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[3] Much of the early history of Connelly and Mosher for this work comes from the biographical essays and job applications that Connelly and Mosher completed when applying to the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency, which are archived in the J. Walter Thompson archives personnel files held at Duke University. Information here is from Bob Mosher, autobiographical sketch, JWT application, 26 May 1937, JWT. There is a basic outline of Connelly and Mosher's lives in Irwyn Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver* (New York: TV Books, 1984), and in Jerry Mathers with Fagen, Herb. *...And Jerry Mathers as "The Beaver"* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1998), however both biographies are confined to birth place and a very sketchy outline of Connelly and Mosher's move from J. Walter Thompson to writing for *Amos 'n' Andy*. It should be noted that Applebaum incorrectly stated that Mosher's father had died shortly after Bob Mosher's birth (16). Mosher's birth date also appears in Mathers, 65.

[4] Mosher, autobiographical sketch.

estranged from his father during his childhood.[5] While no one can say whether the writers' lack of idealized nuclear families led them, knowingly or unknowingly, to create the rather idyllic Cleaver family, it is interesting to note that the family ideal they proposed may have been as unrealistic to them as it was to many of their viewers who watched the series over the years. Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher may have created a seemingly perfect nuclear family, but they were not writing from memory.[6]

Bob Mosher was born in Auburn, New York. Upon the death of his mother, Clara van Camp, Mosher's upbringing was placed "entirely in the hands of my aunt, who, never having married, devoted her life to me." Bob's Aunt Mary sustained the family by teaching at Public School 4 in the Bronx, the same grammar school that Bob Mosher attended. Young Bob felt great affection for his Aunt Mary, recalling her as a "charming woman of remarkable sense in dealing with children..." Mosher grew up in an apartment in New York city which, though quite humble, was filled with what Mosher described as his aunt's "cultural influences and refinement." Mary had a fondness for good books, music, and plays, and instilled that appreciation in her nephew. Even though Bob was

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[5] Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 16.

[6] For a comparable example see George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), who, in his essay on the TV series *I Remember Mama*, argues that the tone of the series, which had been converted, over a twenty year period, from story to play to movie to TV show, was based, in part, on ideals imagined by its creator Kathryn Forbes. According to Lipsitz, Forbes, the author of "Mama's Bank Account," the short story in which the characters first appeared, "spent much of her childhood in foster homes and felt deserted by her family. In her fiction, she 're-invented' her mother on the basis of a few stories she had heard about her grandmother and presented experiences that she wished had actually happened to her" (79). Lipsitz also argues that Frank Gabrielson, who wrote for the TV series *I Remember Mama*, "...portrayed a kind of family loyalty and responsibility that had nothing to do with his own life" (95). At bottom, Lipsitz argues that *Mama* presented the "past as people wish it had been rather than the past as they actually experienced it" (79).

never one of Mary's students at P.S. 4, Bob learned from her example, crediting her with his appreciation for fine literature as well as with his ability to speak and write correctly.[7]

Bob's childhood was not completely devoid of fatherly influence; in the summers, Mary and Bob would go to live with Robert's father in Auburn.[8] A few years after his wife's death, Bob's father married a woman named Marion who wished to take young Bob in and raise him as her own. The senior Mosher felt that taking Bob away would be devastating to his sister Mary, who remained Bob's guardian throughout Bob's childhood.[9]

While Bob's autobiographical sketch does not reveal much about his life as a child during the Depression, he does speak to his great mechanical interest and aptitude—Bob would later restore antique cars and clocks. Bob was fascinated by printing and, sometime during grade school, purchased and operated a small printing press which he used to make business cards and stationary.[10] Mosher was able to make enough money with his press to buy an outboard motor that he used during summer vacations.[11]

Between 1929 and 1932, in the midst of the Depression, Mosher attended Morris High School in New York City. Following his high school graduation, Mosher attended Susquehanna College, a small Lutheran college in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. While

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[7] Bob Mosher, autobiographical sketch, 1. The name Clara Van Camp does not appear in Mosher's autobiographical sketch, but comes from Bob Mosher's daughter-in-law, Pamilla Parker Mosher , interview with author, 27 February 2002.

[8] Bob Mosher, autobiographical sketch, 1.

[9] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview. Bob Mosher, in his autobiographical sketch, 2, mentions his father's marriage to another woman, although he does not refer to her by name.

[10] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview. Bob Mosher's fondness for tinkering is also mentioned in Mathers (64), Bob Mosher's JWT application, and Bob Mosher's autobiographical sketch.

[11] Bob Mosher, autobiographical sketch, 2.

Mosher's father, an insurance agent, was unable to afford the tuition, Bob's Aunt Mary paid for his education. It was at school where Mosher, an English major, demonstrated his literary talents. Beginning in his freshman year, Bob served on the staff of the weekly college newspaper, writing a 700-word weekly column which he continued to produce throughout his college career. Mosher, who modestly promoted himself as a hard worker in his biographical sketch, pointed proudly to the fact that he had never missed a deadline in his four years with the paper.[12] While a junior at Susquehanna, Mosher was elected managing editor of the paper, and, as a senior, he became its editor-in-chief. Mosher said he made several innovations to the paper, including a Burlesque issue that he produced "almost single-handedly." It was during college that Mosher also took an advertising class, in which he reportedly did quite well. During the summers, Mosher held various jobs, working as a gas station attendant in 1934, as a commissioned auto salesman in 1935, and as a spray-gun operator—spray painting metal radiator covers—in 1936. In his 1937 application to J. Walter Thompson, Mosher revealed that one of his proudest work achievements was having the ability to sell an "air-flow Desoto to an old gentleman who had no intention of buying a new car."[13] Perhaps Mosher saw this as the sort of talent that could earn him admission to the world of advertising.

During Bob's final year of college, in February of 1937, his Aunt Mary died suddenly of a stroke, leaving Mosher "with the wish that I had been more grateful during her lifetime." After Mary's death, Mosher grew closer to his step-mother, Marion, and,

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[12] Ibid., 2.

[13] Information on employment from Bob Mosher, application, 3. Information on college newspaper writing comes both Bob Mosher's four-page application form, which is also part of his JWT application file, as well as Bob Mosher's autobiographical sketch, 1-2.

in 1937, was living with her and his father in Auburn.[14] While at college, Mosher had met Rose Runk, who was born August 1, 1914. Rose had come from a well-to-do family in Philadelphia; her father held a professional position in a Philadelphia company, earning enough money to allow the family to live in Downingtown, then an affluent Philadelphia suburb.[15] Runk and Mosher fell in love and were soon married.

Another person who would have an important effect on Mosher's life was Joseph Edmund Connelly, who would become Mosher's writing and production partner. Connelly was born in Manhattan, New York, on August 22, 1917, to a Scots-Irish father and Irish mother, both of whom had been born in the United States.[16] Little would be easy in young Connelly's life—even his naming brought about a family argument. Connelly's mother wanted to name her young son Carroll Cecil, but one of the grandmothers objected. Inspired by a statue of St. Joseph, one of Connelly's grandmothers eventually suggested the name Joseph, thus ending the dispute.[17] More significant to Connelly's early life was his father's estrangement from the family.[18] While Connelly's parents were never officially divorced, Connelly was raised primarily by his mother and two beloved aunts, and reportedly did not get to know his father, a real

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[14] Bob Mosher, autobiographical sketch, 2.

[15] Pam Mosher in Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview, recalled his position as a CPA.

[16] Information on Connelly's date and place of birth, as well as information on his family ethnic and national origins, are from Joe Connelly, Application for Employment, 12 November 1940, 1, JWT. Other biographical information is also found in Mathers (64), as well as from Joe Connelly's daughter Karen C. Donovan, interview with author, 4 February 2001.

[17] This incident was related by Donovan, interview.

[18] Information on Connelly's father's employment from Connelly, application, 1.

estate agent who had also served in World War I.[19] While little is known about Connelly's aunts, it is doubtful that either of the middle-class women, who may have owned some property, worked outside of the home. Connelly's aunt's later recalled young Joseph as a creative boy who loved to read. Connelly apparently enjoyed his aunts as well, and had fond memories of them which he eventually shared with his own children.[20]

As with Mosher, the best source of information on Connelly's early childhood is his 1940 application to the J. Walter Thompson Agency, the nexus of Connelly and Mosher's fruitful association. Connelly appeared to affect a rather humorous and, at times, dramatic tone in his life story. While Mosher's sketch opens with the poignant, moving image of his mother's death, Connelly leads his application with a rather humorous story:

> At the age of five I was sent to Lady Cliff Academy, a military school now exclusively for girls. My two years there made a lasting impression on my mind. For more or less on my own, I soon learned that the ability to get along with my fellow humans was one of the most important steps in life. Leaving Lady Cliff, I spent the next ten years in school in Asbury Park, New Jersey. As a young lad I had two ambitions. First, to get out of short pants. Second, to win the half-mile in the Jersey [track and field] championships. I also wanted to attend the Naval academy. The fact that I was kept in short pants until I left grammar school taught me how to scrap. Later, when I won the championship, my original enthusiasm was gone.[21]

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[19] Donovan; information on estrangement also mentioned in Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 16.

[20] Donovan. Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, also mentioned that Connelly lived with his aunts (16). Interestingly, Connelly would write a short-lived series called *Bringing up Buddy*, in which an unmarried bachelor lived with two beloved aunts, details of which can be found in Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network Shows, 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine, 1992), 119.

[21] Connelly, autobiographical sketch, JWT, 1.

Indeed, the short pants incident Connelly referred to was of such importance in his young life that it later became the basis on one of the earlier *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, in which Beaver's kindly old aunt Martha (perhaps similar to Connelly's own aunts) makes Beaver wear short pants and a jacket and cap to school—much to Beaver's dismay.

As Connelly continued, he showed a talent for injecting the mundane elements of his life with a sense of drama. Notice the transition Connelly makes from discussing his school grades to recalling a summer adventure that he had with his brother, who was two or three years his senior:

> In high school my marks, with the expectation of French, were above average, but I succeeded in getting in my share of youthful difficulties. I remember one summer while fishing in the sailing canoe some four miles off the Jersey coast with my brother we had the misfortune to capsize. It was near dark and we were almost out of sight of land and in waters noted that summer for sharks. After five full hours in the water, we were picked up by market fisherman. Believe me that was an experience. [22]

Conspicuously absent from his autobiographical sketch is any mention of his estranged father, his life spent with his aunts, or the effect of the Great Depression on his childhood. The image Connelly paints of his youth is one of adventure, success, and happiness. Connelly's daughter, Karen Donovan, attributes her father's positive outlook to her father's Irish Catholic upbringing: "Irish people, if their families had illness, never told about it," said Donovan. "They painted a kind of different picture, and that was how they were....you don't look back. Your life is what it was. That's part of what he is and what he taught us. *This* is life—you go on."[23]

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[22] Ibid., 2.

[23] Donovan, interview.

One bad childhood memory that survived into Connelly family legend, according to Donovan, involved the third grade crush he had on a Protestant girl whose parents would not allow her to associate with the Catholic Connelly.[24] Years later, Donovan would describe this as a devastating moment in her father's life. Living in a time where being Irish and Catholic often brought discrimination, Connelly became aware, at a very young age, that he was marked by a difference that some refused to tolerate.[25]

Between 1932 and 1936, Connelly attended Asbury Park High School.[26] Connelly was a good student, getting above average marks in all of his subjects but French; English and science were his favorites.[27] An excellent runner, Connelly won a scholarship in his final year of high school to the exclusive Roxbury Academy, a private boarding school in Connecticut for Ivory league hopefuls.[28] Maintaining his competitive spirit forged in his early years of scrapping, Connelly, although ill with what he described as "intestinal grippe," decided to run in the 1936 National Track and Field Championships held at Madison Square Garden. While Connelly was leading near the finish, he eventually collapsed on the wooden track. Connelly also competed academically, and reportedly was mentioned for a science award while at Roxbury.[29]

Whether it was due to a lack of money or for some other reason, Connelly did not follow his dream of entering the Naval Academy. Instead, Connelly, in 1937, signed on

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Connelly, application, 3.

[27] Connelly, autobiographical sketch, 2.

[28] Connelly, autobiographical sketch, 1.

[29] Connelly, application, 1.

as a cadet for the Graceline Steamship Company. Never really explaining this decision within his application, Connelly depicts the adventure as a valuable life experience:

> My marks were generally good, but on graduating I had the unquenchable desire to see the world and shipped as cadet on the Graceline to South America. The next year was the most care free and at the same time the most instructive year of my life. The experience I gained was priceless. I had the opportunity to see all kinds of places, the good with the bad, and run up against all type of characters. I was 19 at the time and I supposed I did a great many things I wouldn't do now, but regret none of them. When I think of that year, a great many incidents flash through my mind. A sailor falling to his death from the foremast, another drowning alongside the ship, Caribbean sunsets, a night in a Peruvian Jail, the noon light at Ven Del Mar, but the time a drunken passenger attempting suicide threatened to take me along stands out. A ship mate and I finally got the gun away from him. [30]

While Connelly had planned to go to sea for another year with the hopes of sailing to the Near East, he took a position at the 1939 New York World's Fair, instead, where he worked as a cashier and assistant gate lieutenant.[31] While it is only conjecture as what affect the Fair would have on Connelly, he most certainly could not have avoided the Fair's overwhelming theme of a "better world of tomorrow," free of squalor and suffering. The 1939 Fair, unlike others before it, had been a massive celebration of not just technological progress, but consumerism, with numerous corporations, including General Motors and the Ford Motor Company, sponsoring exhibits. As Warren Sussman observed in his collection of essays, *Culture as History*, "This Fair, more than any previous effort, promoted as a major purpose the availability of consumer goods and services. It was a Fair that from the very start viewed the people not only as observers but

[30] Connelly, autobiographical sketch, 1-2.

[31] Connelly, application, 3.

also as potential customers of the products it displayed."[32] According to Sussman, the Fair also celebrated the humble, middle-American family, whose beaming image was depicted in print promotions for the Fair.[33]

Near the late 1930s, Connelly met Kathryn Scanlon, who also lived in New York. Having come into a small inheritance, Connelly eloped with Kathryn during early 1941. The young couple reportedly struggled during those early years, during which Kathryn and Connelly both worked to make ends meet.[34]

Connelly and Mosher shared a number of similarities. Not only were both men brought up in non-nuclear families, but Connelly and Mosher also shared an intense childhood interest in reading. As a young man, Connelly, who read an average of two books per week, loved Charles Dickens and Mark Twain.[35] Indeed, Connelly's aunts would recall young Joseph as a creative boy who loved to read and make up stories.[36] Connelly also kept a diary and recorded his experiences, a practice he continued into adulthood.[37] In his 1940 application to the J. Walter Thompson agency, Connelly indicated he had done considerable writing and research on such topics as sea stories,

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[32] Direct quote from Warren Sussman, "The People's Fair," in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 215. For more general information on the Fair, see Stanley Applebaum, *The New York World's Fair 1939/1940 in 155 Photographs by Richard Wurts and Others* (New York: Dover Publications, 1977).

[33] Sussman, 225.

[34] Connelly, autobiographical sketch, 3.

[35] Donovan, interview. Information on Connelly reading an average of two books per week came from Connelly, application, 1.

[36] Donovan, interview.

[37] Mathers, 65. Donovan recalled that Connelly would write material down in terms of children's speech patterns.

newspaper men, and tales of old New York. Connelly also indicated he had written a freelance radio script, although it is not known whether it was a speculative, sample script or one that was actually produced. Connelly also indicated in his sketch that he had received some encouraging letters from periodical publishers and was to have had an article published in *Reader's Digest*.[38]

Connelly also fancied himself a keen observer of human nature, writing in his J. Walter Thompson application, that "It has always been my policy, wherever I have been, to try and meet and talk to as many people as possible and try to understand how they act, think, and what motivates their daily life. I feel that in this way I have come to know a little of human nature, a knowledge that I think is of great value."[39] Connelly believed a writer had to write to a wide audience as opposed to a specific group. Later in life, when giving his children writing advice, he would often talk of the importance of writing from the heart, of writing naturally, and of not using words to impress but words that conveyed meaning—words that people understood.[40]

Bob Mosher's work on the school newspaper had, by the end of his college career, allowed him to collect an impressive number of writing clips. Mosher also became known for his scathing wit. As Mosher wrote in his J. Walter Thompson application, "my mind elaborates immediately on all sorts of everyday situations."[41] His daughter-in-law concurs, recalling that Mosher "...would make wise-cracks—that was

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[38] Connelly, application, 3; Connelly also talks about his freelance writing in Connelly, autobiographical sketch, 3.

[39] Connelly, autobiographical sketch, 3.

[40] Donovan, interview.

[41] Bob Mosher, application, 1.

his style of talk. Just funny wise-cracks. Comments about...what he was seeing in people...He was just a real wry observer of people....You [would] just hear a little blurb that would crack everybody up and then he could write a story about that and elaborate on it."[42] Referring in his application to an academic interest in advertising, Mosher noted that "I am convinced that advertising is the field I want to enter. I will do anything to get into it." Like Connelly, Mosher expressed a sense of confidence in his writing ability and, in answer to the question on perseverance noted that he was unrelenting, "forgetting meals and sleep" to pursue something that he liked. While Mosher admitted that he lacked aggressiveness and that he did not "thrust" himself forward, he felt at ease with people. Mosher described himself as one who did not take wild chances, was seldom pessimistic, and that he worked "hard to please."[43]

It was at J. Walter Thompson where these two would finally meet.[44] J. Walter Thompson, which started business in 1903, had become, in many ways, the pinnacle of the modern, scientific approach to advertising, having pioneered the practice of market research. It was also the advertising agency which developed the story and photo-realist editorial style in advertising, a corporate philosophy which may have had an influence on Connelly and Mosher, who used both market research and casual observations to effect a sense of realism in their later work.[45] Mosher began working at J. Walter Thompson on October 11, 1937, as a messenger through the company's apprenticeship group.

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[42] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[43] Bob Mosher, application, 2.

[44] See Mathers, 64.

[45] For information on J. Walter Thompson and its role in market research, see T. J. Jackson Lears, "Making fun of Popular Culture," *American Historical Review*, (December, 1992), 1423.

Connelly approached the firm in November of 1940 on the suggestion of an acquaintance. Connelly's answers to various application questions reveal a young adult who expressed an overwhelming sense of self-confidence that marked much of his life. In answer to whether he had initiative, Connelly wrote that he "was always willing to take initiative without waiting for leadership." In regards to his perseverance and energy, Connelly noted that he, in face of all odds, would stick to any objective or principal in which he believed. Connelly also felt himself to be conscientious, noting that "No matter what position I have ever held, I have always wanted to put my best into it and profit by it." Connelly also expressed his confidence in his writing and speaking ability and reported that he was confident he would be a success in the field of advertising. Admitting to having the same basic flaws as most people, he felt he "was usually able to offset them." The only flaw Connelly acknowledged on his application was in regards to the question on whether or not he had patience: "Alas," wrote Connelly, "at times not too much."[46]

As part of their application process, J. Walter Thompson required Connelly to look through an issue of a leading periodical—in this particular case, the November 1940 issue of *The Ladies Home Journal*—and choose and discuss three advertisements that he felt were particularly effective. One of the ads Connelly chose was for Listerine mouthwash headlined "The Making of a Gentleman Begins Early." Connelly's selection of this ad is quite telling, for, as the copy below indicates, the ad spoke to what would become a major theme of *Leave it to Beaver*—the awkward transformation that young men make from childhood to adolescence:

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[46] Connelly, application, 1-2.

> Now as the boy grows older comes dancing school, oh hated thought, where between emotional awakening and patient teaching the rough social edges begin to wear off. Though the girls he used to belabor are now strangely changed, mysterious, delicate and beautiful things to be attended, cared for and protected. For the small reward of her smile, his tie must be straight, his shoes aglow, his trousers pressed. For them he must rise, he must bow, and perform a hundred other little gallantries, which once he scorned.[47]

The ad goes on to discuss how the boy soon learns "the most important of truths": "That good looks, agreeable manners, and charm count for little when the brass is off color..." Consequently, the boy's mother, to whom the ad is targeted, is encouraged to get her son to begin using Listerine as soon as possible.

As noted above, Connelly's choice of this ad is interesting for a number of reasons. On the one hand, it shows how, long before Connelly began writing family sitcoms—and long before the feminine mystique took hold of American women in the 1950s—there was a strong sense of gender role identification in ads of the pre-World War II era. The ad also shows the mass media's assumed "natural" course that the average western, industrialized heterosexual male was to take during his life: from girl-hating rudeness to manners and courtesy that would win him the heart of the gendered being he once despised. Connelly could not have known it at the time, but the series he would create some seventeen years later would exploit this assumed progression. Indeed, the earliest episodes of *Leave it to Beaver* focused on Wally's developing interest in girls and Beaver's inability to understand it. Furthermore, several episodes would specifically feature dancing school as, indeed, a "hated thought."[48]

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[47] Listerine ad, from Connelly application folder, JWT.

[48] Ibid.

Although he had no experience in advertising, outside of reading a few popular books on the subject, Connelly's comments on the Listerine ad show an understanding of the psychology of advertising and how it affected the reader. As Connelly noted:

> Copy and photograph have personality and sentimental appeal. This simple story has personal appeal. It also has fear appeal. Fear of social offensiveness makes reader self-conscious and self-analytical. Social success and popularity are desired by all and copy offers simple precaution that will help to assure their success.[49]

Connelly also chose to comment on an Old Dutch Cleanser ad, which featured a cash prize and coupon, as well as an ad for Ivory soap ad which featured a picture of a woman and a baby who "congratulated" his mother for her wise choice of using Ivory soap on his delicate face. The ad also featured a separate comic strip at the bottom which promoted Ivory dishwashing liquid. Titled "The Young Married Set," the ad involved a woman who was embarrassed that her hands were not as soft as those of another woman she had encountered. The other woman's secret? She used Ivory liquid, of course. In his comments on the Ivory ad, Connelly again indicates his knowledge of the psychological functions of advertising:

> Ad sure stopper. It has combination the American public loves. Beautiful women and babies. This tie-up is sure fire. Baby and beauty contests are extremely successful. Pureness of product over Doctor's endorsement emphasized. Pictures Ivory soap familiar to readers. Registers. Ad also has comic strip copy. The wide success of the comic strip has proven this type of ad. It is the best example of low-pressure selling. The copy is produced in story form to appear as ordinary conversation. This story is familiar, has real life appeal, personality, and timeliness [timelessness].[50]

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[49] Listerine ad comments, Connelly application folder, JWT.

[50] Ivory ad comments, Connelly application folder, JWT. It is not clear from the comments whether Connelly wrote the word "timeliness" or "timelessness."

Connelly was hired as a radio writer for J. Walter Thompson on March 17, 1941, a position in which he would be writing copy for radio ads.

It is not certain how Connelly and Mosher met or how they broke into the creative side of radio programming. It is known that in the spring of 1942, both Connelly and Mosher went off the regular J. Walter Thompson budget, and presumably moved to Hollywood to begin working as writers for the Edgar Bergen radio show.[51] This move may have been spurred by Connelly and Mosher's commercial writing which they had done for Bergen's show while still at the agency in New York. According to Bob Mosher's daughter-in-law, Pam Mosher, Bob had a tendency to add funny material to his spots, which would often be read by Bergen himself (a common practice among radio stars of the 1930s and 1940s). One night, Mosher came home convinced that he had written one of the funniest gags of his career. As he and Rose listened to the commercial, they were surprised to find that Bergen had read the spot straight, seemingly rejecting Mosher's gag. Mosher was devastated that Bergen had apparently not liked his joke. As Bob and Rose continued listening to the show, however, they heard the gag Bob had written integrated within Bergen's routine. By the next day, the story goes, Mosher had gotten a call from Bergen's office saying that they wanted to fly him out to the west coast

[51] This information is based on notes on the J. Walter Thompson personnel files of Connelly and Mosher. According to the notes, Connelly went on the "Kraft budget-Hollywood" on March 31-1942. On January 27, 1942, Mosher went on an indefinite leave of absence, first working on the "C & S budget" and then, by May 7, 1942, on leave of absence without pay (notes attached to Connelly and Mosher's JWT application folders, JWT). An August 18, 1961 CBS press release noted that Connelly and Mosher both came out to Hollywood in 1940 to write for the Edgar Bergen Show. While this confirms that they began writing in Hollywood for Bergen, the release has the team working in Hollywood two years earlier ("Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher...Producers of Ichabod and Me," CBS press release, courtesy of the Museum of Television & Radio (MT&R), New York, New York).

and hire him as one of their joke writers.[52] Mosher and Connelly left J. Walter Thompson sometime around 1942, and either contributed to or wrote on a regular basis for Edgar Bergen and, later, radio star Phil Harris.[53]

As a writing team, the two were a study in contrasts. As Jerry Mathers, who played the title character Beaver, later recalled, "Connelly and Mosher were as different as the proverbial day and night....Connelly was clearly the flamboyant type, a big two-fisted Irishman who was known to like a drink or two."[54] Although Connelly and Mosher did not socialize much, family members have described the pair as being friends. In the early days of their career, they wrote much of their work in a small building on Mosher's lot, and Rose Mosher, according to her daughter-in-law, would recall hearing the two laughing and egging each other on, trying to top each others' jokes.[55] The team generally worked with Connelly providing the bulk of the story and Mosher coming up with many of the witty, memorable lines.[56]

Connelly and Mosher were not happy working for Bergen.[57] Back in 1939, Connelly had met Charles Correll, who, along with Freeman Gosden had created *Amos 'n' Andy*. The pair submitted material to Gosden and Correll, who reportedly loved their work and hired them as head writers for their radio show sometime in the early 1940s.[58]

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[52] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[53] From application information cited above, as well as Applebaum, 15.

[54] Mathers, 66.

[55] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[56] Donovan, interview, and Mosher, interview.

[57] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[58] It is not clear how Connelly and Mosher came to know Gosden and Correll, who were doing *Amos 'n' Andy* on radio; according to Donovan, Connelly and Mosher started writing for Gosden and Correll in New

If J. Walter Thompson's market research philosophy had encouraged Connelly and Mosher toward effecting realism with their writing, this practice may have been further enhanced by Gosden and Correll, who, in the face of charges of presenting stereotypical characters, went on a public relations campaign during the radio days of *Amos 'n' Andy* alleging that they based their show on research they had done on African-American life. Though the claim was dubious, at best, each episode of *Amos 'n' Andy* opened with the announcer saying that Gosden and Correll had an "intimate knowledge of Negro life," assuring fans that 'both men spend as much time as possible among Negroes, making a study of accents and witticisms and garnering ideas from situations." When *Amos 'n' Andy* changed their setting from Chicago to Harlem in 1929, Gosden and Correll tried to make it appear that they were aware of the differences of African Americans in the two cities. While much of this was public relations as opposed to fact, Connelly and Mosher would make actual research a part of their approach to writing for later series like *Leave it to Beaver*, a fact that they would emphasize in their press materials as well.[59]

While the issue of race can never be divorced from *Amos 'n' Andy*, the experience with the show may have aided Connelly and Mosher in other ways. On the one hand, the sheer volume of work, in terms of scripts—many of which revolved around comedy that had no dependence on race but on situation of established characters—must have helped

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York and then came out to California, further complicating the actual history of the pair's arrival in Hollywood. Mathers (64) and Applebaum (15) also discuss Connelly and Mosher's work with Gosden and Correll. According to Wertheim, *Amos 'n' Andy* did not change from its 15-minute to half-hour format until 1943; it is generally acknowledged that Gosden and Correll, who had written some 3,500 scripts for the series themselves, did not hire additional writers until that time (53).

[59] See Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of An American Phenomenon* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), for his discussion of Gosden and Correll's public relations effort to promote the idea that their work was based on actual, intensive research (115-129); the direct quote is from page 127.

Connelly and Mosher hone their comic art. Indeed, the two writers wrote between 1,200 to 1,500 radio scripts for *Amos 'n' Andy* before helping the series make its awkward and controversial turn toward television (the series was cancelled by CBS in 1953 due to pressure from the NAACP).[60] This sort of script production, while common in its day (consider the number of scripts Paul Rhymer wrote for his series *Vic and Sade*, discussed in chapter one), is tremendous by contemporary standards. The *Amos 'n' Andy* form of comedy, which was derived in part by pointing out the lack of facility characters had with navigating a seemingly complex world was also similar to that of *Leave it to Beaver*, which revolved around the perception of how kids viewed an equally complex and perplexing world. If one looks at some of Connelly and Mosher's other work, particularly *The Munsters*, in which a family of monsters are portrayed in sharp relief to the mainstream, this "fish-out-of-water" humor appeared to be the sort at which Connelly and Mosher were quite adept. Indeed, *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *The Munsters* derived their humor not only from certain characteristics, which were important to the humor, but the notion of difference—of otherness—juxtaposed against a mainstream norm.

The road from *Amos 'n' Andy* to *Leave it to Beaver* came via a failed anthology series that Connelly and Mosher wrote for Ray Milland in the early 1950s. According to a New York Times interview with Oscar Golbout, Connelly and Mosher were so disappointed by the Milland experience that they decided they would write about things that hit close to home. Nothing could be closer to home than their own families, which,

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[60] For a complete discussion of the NAACP case against *Amos 'n' Andy*, see "This Continuing Harm," in Ely, 194-244. It should be noted that, while the series was cancelled from prime-time in 1953, it was available in syndication through 1966, after which it finally disappeared from the airwaves (242).

unlike those of their childhood, revolved around the two-parent nuclear family.[61] Around 1956, Connelly, who had six children at the time, sent his oldest son Jay to military school. It was there that he came up with an idea for a script which, in 1957, would earn them an Academy Award nomination.[62] *The Private War of Major Benson*, suggested by a story by Connelly and Mosher, was written by William Roberts and Richard Alan Simmons, produced by Howard Pine and Directed by Jerry Hopper for Universal Pictures in 1955. The film stars Charleton Heston as tough Army major Barney Benson, whose harsh criticism of the modern army going soft landed him in trouble with the brass in Washington, D.C. At the insistence of his commanding office, General Ramsey, Benson was given a choice: leave the army or take a year-long position as the commandant of the Sheridan Military Academy, which was in danger of losing its ROTC rating. Humiliated, Benson reluctantly agreed and headed to Sheridan Academy, which he soon discovered was a Catholic military school run by the stern-yet-understanding Mother Redempta. Benson was quite uncomfortable in the milieu, stumbling awkwardly through his post. While the care-taker, John, played by William Demarest, was quite unimpressed by Benson, the school doctor, Kay Lambert (Julie Adams), known to the boys as "Lammy," fell in love with the brash Major. Through the course of the film, Benson moves from unrelenting leader to a more understanding sort who eventually won over the boys under his command. After helping the ROTC members regain their certification, Benson

[61] Oscar Golbout, "A Gift from the Children," *New York Times*, 8 December 1957. Also referred to in Peter Orlick, "Leave it to Beaver" www.museum.tv/archives/etv/L/htmlL/leavittob/leaveittob.htm

[62] Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver*, 16.

returns to the regular army with a renewed sense of sensitivity so important in a world convinced of the value of the psychology of adjustment.[63]

There are many elements of this film reminiscent of *Leave it to Beaver*, but the most obvious is the young Thomas Flaherty character, a boy of around eight-years-old whom the rest of the cadets have adopted as their mascot. In many ways, Connelly and Mosher's Beaver was very similar to Flaherty, not only in look, but in vocal quality and "cuteness." Director Hopper used several low-angle shots to expose the way a child of Flaherty's stature might perceive an imposing figure like Heston—a technique which was also used in early episodes of *Leave it to Beaver*. The script also tried to capture Flaherty's perception of Benson by exploring the child's thoughts as well. When Flaherty estimated Bensons height at ten-feet, Benson said he could understand how a child might see such an imposing figure in that way. This sort of child's impression of the adult world would show up quite frequently in episodes of *Leave it to Beaver*. Another interesting parallel between the film and series was found in Dr. Lambert, who challenged Benson's rough treatment of the boys. Not surprisingly, June Cleaver also took such stands with Ward, who she often saw as being too "hard on the Beaver." The sexism common to popular culture of the period—*Leave it to Beaver* included—was also found in *Private War of Major Benson*, with Benson delivering such lines as "women are ten-percent brains and ninety-percent emotions." The film also featured a domineering mother character, the type made infamous by Philip Wylie's scathing critique of American motherhood, *Generation of Vipers*.[64] Such characters would also appear on

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[63] Jerry Hopper, director, *The Private War of Major Benson*, Universal International Pictures, 1955.

[64] For a more in-depth discussion of Wylie and this work, see chapter five.

Leave it to Beaver, and June herself would occasionally be chided by Ward for pampering her children too much.

On the strength of the film, which reportedly did well at the box office, Connelly and Mosher were able to interest the Music Corporation of America—a growing talent agency which, under the leadership of Lew Wasserman, would soon merge with Universal pictures—into producing a television series. Connelly and Mosher coupled their own experience as parents with the success they enjoyed with *Major Benson* and created the pilot "It's a Small World," which concentrated on the antics of two brothers, Wally and Beaver Cleaver. Filmed by the production company, GOMALCO, (owned, in part, by popular comedian George Gobel and his business partner Peter O'Mally[65]), "It's A Small World" eventually became *Leave it to Beaver*.

Creating the Beaver

While *Leave it to Beaver* is considered by critics and academics to be just another domestic family suburban sitcom following in the tradition of *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Father Knows Best*, the key difference of *It's a Small World*, and the resulting series involved a greater focus on what the producers and writers assumed represented the child's perspective on adult life. As show biographer Larry Applebaum summarized in the 1980s:

> Connelly and Mosher's goal was to try and come up with a concept for their family comedy that was different from the other shows already on television. They wanted to do an adult story about kids which would present life the way they remembered seeing it when they were kids. The more they sat around and remised about their childhoods and exchanged stories about their own kids, the

[65] Golbout.

> more they believed that they had something fresh and entertaining that TV audiences might enjoy...[66]

Just as Rodney and Young of *Father Knows Best* tried to move away from the image of the bumbling father, Connelly and Mosher tried to move their childhood depictions beyond the wise-acre kids and contrived jokes to effect a more character-based humor.[67] As Applebaum observed, Connelly and Mosher also "tried to mold Beaver and Wally and their friends into believable little people with real shortcomings."[68] Connelly and Mosher also looked for stories from real-life to serve as the basis for their plots. Unlike Gosden and Correll, whose research of African-Americans was dubious at best, Connelly and Mosher, at the time the series began, had eight kids between them from which to draw such stories.[69]

General agreement is that Beaver was based on Connelly's son Rick, who, like his fictional counterpart, was eight years-old at the time the series debuted.[70] Much was made in the popular press and later books about Connelly borrowing Rick's mispronunciation of words, such as "'gots" for "forgot" and "'spelled" for "expelled," expressions that made their way into the pilot and early episodes of the series.[71] Wally, in turn, may have been based on Bob Mosher's son, who, like the Connelly children,

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[66] Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 19

[67] Ibid., 16-19.

[68] Ibid., 19

[69] Connelly and Mosher discussed using stories from their kid's lives in "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," *TV Guide*, 1 February 1958, 18-19, as well as in Golbout.

[70] Rick Connelly as the model for Beaver is noted in Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 16, and Mathers, 66.

[71] Golbout; Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver*, discusses this as well, 20.

were athletic.[72] As far as real-life inspiration for Eddie Haskell, while Wally once noted in the series that a guy like Eddie Haskell comes around only once every hundred years or so, there were actually a number of candidates from the Mosher and Connelly children's acquaintances who may have prompted the popular teen Janus.[73] Karen Donovan recalls that her brother Jay Connelly had an older friend who was very much like Haskell. "He'd come in," said Donovan, "and be so nice, and then kick me up the stairs."[74] Pam Mosher, on the other hand, feels that Eddie was based on one of Bob Mosher's son's friends. According to Pam, she and her husband were contacted by a childhood friend sometime after the series' first-run was over. The friend wanted to know whether or not Eddie had been based on him. According to Pam, Bob said that he was.[75] As Ken Osmond, who played Eddie Haskell, observed, one of the reasons Eddie Haskell was so popular was that everyone knew a kid like him. That may explain how both the Connelly and Mosher found models of the troubled teen so close to home.

While Beaver, Wally, and Eddie had real-world counterparts, there was no single model for June Cleaver, at least in terms of June's most obvious domestic attributes. As Karen Donovan is quick to note, her mother, Katherine, was not waiting at home with milk and cookies at the end of the day a la June. Indeed, Katherine Connelly usually picked up the kids after school to take them to stores or to eat in restaurants. Nevertheless, on a purely physical level, Katherine Connelly did dress well, as did June

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[72] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[73] Bob Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," LITB, 1962.

[74] Donovan, interview. An actual name was given, but it was held in interest of confidentiality.

[75] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

Cleaver.[76] Rose Mosher, Bob Mosher's wife, may have been closer to the June Cleaver model. Not only was Rose a stay-at-home mother, but she, like Katherine, was an impeccable dresser who kept her home immaculately clean.[77]

Ward Cleaver also had similarities to the show's creators, particularly Joe Connelly who gave Ward a seafaring background. Like Ward, Connelly and Mosher were also rather conservative dressers, always seen in public in a suit and tie. Joe Connelly was quite strict with his kids, as well, and always expected them to do their best.[78] Pam Mosher, who did not grow up with Bob Mosher, describes her father-in-law as a rather quiet and reserved man. However, just as with the June Cleaver character, neither Connelly nor Mosher were Ward Cleaver—and their children were quite aware of this. Long before critics lamented the lack of Cleaver realism, Connelly's kids would at times tease their father for not being more like Ward, saying that "Ward would not have handled it that way....He would have understood."[79] One popular account has Bob Mosher's son directly comparing his father's parenting style to that of Ward, once asking "Why don't you try some of the jazz on the show around here?"[80]

While one cannot say with accuracy how Connelly and Mosher family members found themselves characterized in *Leave it to Beaver*, Connelly and Mosher were quick to note, in interviews, that their own family experiences became fodder for various episode plots or situations. During the series run, Connelly told an interviewer, "If we

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[76] Donovan, interview.

[77] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 20.

hire a writer we tell him not to make up situations but to look into his own background. It's not a situation comedy where you have to create a situation for particular effect. Our emphasis is on a natural story line."[81] Media historian Nina Claire Liebman argued that the use of material from one's own family was little more than a publicity ploy designed to "further encourage audiences' connection between the shows and reality" as well as placate critics who found the storylines to be too mundane.[82] While that may be true, it cannot be denied that the writers did, indeed, draw stories from their own childhood, from their children, and from their children's friends.[83]

Wally's constant grooming of his hair was prompted by Connelly's observations of his son Jay. An early episode in which Wally gave Beaver a Mohawk haircut was based on an incident that happened to Bob Mosher's son.[84] An episode in which Ward helped Beaver write a poem may have been inspired by a similar situation in which Karen Donovan had asked her father to help her with her own writing. "If you ever asked him if he could help you write something," recalled Donovan, "he'd be furious if what didn't come out of you was what he wanted or thought was best. I can remember...he wrote a poem with me in fifth grade and he doesn't remember a lot of things [today] but he'll recite that poem for you because I think it took so much out of both of us to get it

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[81] Quoted in Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 19

[82] Liebman, 72.

[83] While numerous articles, which will be referenced specifically below, do show that Connelly and Mosher were interested in utilizing their research methods in public relations material, Donovan confirms that Connelly was always listening to kids to pick up authentic dialogue in Donovan, interview.

[84] See "Tom Sawyer, Junior Grade," 18, and Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, 20.

written."[85] Karen Donovan also recalls that while her mother did not cook, the family, whenever possible, always ate together, much like the Cleavers. There was also a sense of self-restraint and pride that ran through the Connelly family in terms of the kids knowing not to use their father's role to brag to their friends. "Oh, no, you never would," said Donovan. "I mean we just didn't do that."[86] Even a small family trait like the Mosher men's distaste for Cole slaw could end up being worked into an episode.[87] Thus, while Connelly and Mosher may have been aware that stories about using stories from their families gave them greater credibility with the audience, they were also writers who had the task of generating some 26 stories per year and took those stories from the sources they had at hand.

Casting the Beaver

The actors cast for the series added their own flavor to the show. Barbara Billingsley, who played June Cleaver, was a professional actress who had appeared in hundreds of film and TV roles previous to the series. Born Barbara Lillian Combs in California on December 22, 1923, she was raised by a single, working mom.[88] After graduating from Washington High,[89] Billingsley spent a year in junior college when

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[85] Donovan, interview; it should be noted that Donovan recalled this while reflecting on her father as a parent and not in terms of it prompting an episode.

[86] Donovan, interview.

[87] Pamilla Parker Mosher, interview.

[88] Billingsley's birth date was noted in Richard Lamparski, *Whatever Became Of...?*, eighth series (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1982) 28, as well as from "An Expert on the Male," *TV Guide*, 25 February 1961, 11; Billingsley revealed that her mother was a single mother in "TV Families Then and Now," *Oprah* (Harpo Productions, March 30, 1995), transcript prepared by Burrell Transcripts, 1995

[89] Washington High mentioned in Mathers' discussion of Billingsley, 57-58.

"Straw Hat," the Review she was in, was picked up for Broadway. Although the play closed within five days, Billingsley decided to stay in New York, where she got a modeling job that paid $60 per week. In 1941, she married Glenn Billingsley and moved with him to Florida, where she had her first son. The Billingsleys came back to California 18 months later, when Barbara had her second son. In 1947, Billingsley divorced her first husband and was remarried in 1953 to film director Roy Kellino. One of her roles was in a television series called *Professional Father*, a short-lived CBS show from 1955.[90] That year, a few days before she and Kellino were to leave for Spain, Billingsley read for a part in another series that was being cast by Connelly and Mosher. Three days later, while working in their garden, Kellino suffered a fatal heart attack and suddenly Billingsley was widowed. A few months later, Connelly and Mosher, casting *It's a Small World*, asked Billingsley to come to their office to see what she looked like. While Billingsley felt they hired her simply because they felt sorry for her recent loss, Connelly and Mosher were quick to point out they hired her because they had remembered her and felt she fit the part.[91]

Hugh Beaumont was not actually part of the pilot cast, which starred Casey Adams in the top-billed role of Ward Cleaver. Beaumont was a Midwesterner, born in Lawrence, Kansas on February 16, 1910.[92] Beaumont's father, who was in the promotions business, kept the family moving and young Hugh was raised in a number of places in the South, settling, during his early teens, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he

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[90] "Expert on the Male," 11.

[91] Ibid., 11.

[92] Lamparski, 28.

attended Baylor Military Academy and the University of Chattanooga.[93] Beaumont had been an athlete in high school and college and was a conscientious objector during World War II, in which he served as a medic.[94] After the war, Beaumont went to the University of Southern California, where he majored in religion and minored in social studies. He also became interested in acting and joined a local theater group.

His first break in radio came in 1941, when he appeared as a contestant on "Gateway to Hollywood," a radio show that showcased new actors. It was there where Beaumont met Kathryn Hohn, whom he married in 1941.[95] Upon graduation from theology school, Beaumont was sent to a poor community parish; he ended up becoming a radio personality to supplement his income. Beaumont continued to gain success in acting, playing tough guys in B-movies. He also worked briefly with Jerry Mathers, who went on to play Beaver, in a religious show he had filmed for television.[96] While Beaumont has been depicted as being slightly aloof in regards to his fellow actors, and while he supposedly had been very disappointed with being on the series through its first few years, he and Billingsley became good friends as the series progressed.[97] In addition to his sensitive portrayal as Ward Cleaver, Beaumont contributed to the series by writing one episode as well as directing many of the later season episodes. Outside of his work on *Leave it to Beaver*, Beaumont wrote a number of short stories that had been published in several periodicals.

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[93] "Hugh Beaumont," ABC Biography, press release, ABC television network, circa 1962, 1.

[94] Lamparski, 28, and Mathers, 58.

[95] "Hugh Beaumont," ABC biography, 1-2.

[96] Mathers 58-9

[97] Ibid., 59-60.

Like Beaumont, Tony Dow did not appear in the pilot. Unlike his fellow actors, Dow was also the only one in the series who was not a professional. Born in California on April 13, 1945, Dow's mother, Muriel Montrose, had been a former Mack Sennet bathing beauty and had worked as Clara Bow's double.[98] Montrose-Dow had no aspirations to be a major player in Hollywood, nor did she push acting on her son. Indeed, Dow got into the business through an older friend named Bill Bryant, a lifeguard at the pool frequented by Dow, who was a swimmer and diver. Bryant asked Dow to come along and read with him for the part of the father in a pilot called *Johnny Wildlife*. While Bryant was rejected, Dow ended up getting the part as the son. Dow filmed two episodes, but the pilot did not sell. Harry Ackerman, a producer who had been involved with *Johnny Wildlife*, was also working in the production of *Leave it to Beaver*. When the original Wally character from *It's A Small World* tested poorly and needed to be recast, Ackerman suggested Dow, who, competing against 270 other hopefuls for the role, won the part for this "non-actor" like quality.[99] Nevertheless, Karen Donovan feels that the Wally character, as it developed on the screen, was very similar to Tony Dow.[100]

To play the part of Beaver, the producers found Jerry Mathers, who, by 1957 was already a seasoned professional actor. Born in Sioux City Iowa on June 2, 1948, his father Norman and mother Marilyn soon moved to California, where Marilyn had been born. Norman was a school principal and later Los Angles area school superintendent.

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[98] Dow's birthdate noted in Lamparski, 88; information on Dow's mother from Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver*, 17.

[99] See Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver*, 17-18, and Mathers, 60-62. Information on 270 other actors competing for the role from Arthur J. Sasso, "Leave it to Beaver" *Calling All Girls*, October 1958, 21.

[100] Donovan.

The Mathers were devout Roman Catholics and raised Jerry, his sister, and three bothers with a loving brand of discipline that eschewed corporal punishment.[101]

Mathers was quite a precocious child who, to the surprise of parents and relatives, began talking in complete sentences at fifteen months. When Jerry was two, a woman who worked for the Broadway Department Store suggested to Jerry's mother that her son audition for a modeling job for the store's Christmas catalog, which became Jerry's first professional work. Mathers soon got an agent and landed his first TV role acting with Keenan Wynn in an episode of the *NBC All-Star Revue*. Mathers also appeared in an episode of *Ozzie and Harriet* and in several films, including Alfred Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, and *The Seven Little Foys*.[102] Auditioning for *It's a Small World,* Mathers moved successfully through several interviews with Connelly and Mosher. The story of Mathers' final casting has been told often since the debut of the series and in later recollections. As Connelly or Mosher (the attribute is unclear from the article) said in a promotional article for the series, casting consisted of "looking at hundreds of kids, most of whom are wise-guy little professionals with screwy haircuts. You just wait until a real one walks in, and you know he's it."[103] Mathers, a Cub Scout at the time, was much more interested in attending his scouting meeting than he was in the audition, and became quite fidgety. Mosher noticed Mathers' fidgeting and asked him if anything was wrong. Mathers told Mosher about the meeting, and Mosher suggested that Mathers attend it, which Mathers did. Later that evening, as the story goes, Mathers got the call from his

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[101] For family history, see Mathers, 14-23.

[102] For more background on Mathers pre-*Leave it to Beaver* career, see Mathers, 24-51.

[103] This casting story is Hollywood legend, and appeared in Golbout, as well as in a promotional article, Maureen Myers Remenih, "Leave it to Jerry," in *Jack and Jill Magazine*, October 1961, 9. It is also noted in Mathers, 55, Irwyn Applebaum, 1, and Lamparski, 200.

agent saying he had won the role of Beaver Cleaver. Apparently, Mathers interest in the Cub Scout meeting made him seem more "realistic"—more like a little boy—than the other professional actors competing for the part, and the sincerity rang true with Mosher. As Mathers recalled, "I got it because they were looking for someone who was a real little boy, one who would be more interested in going to a cub scout meeting than doing a TV show."[104]

Whether or not this story is true—it has been told several times with almost no variation and certainly seems the stuff that could be hatched by a publicity agent—the story speaks to a key point about the series. While all the kids who auditioned were, indeed, "real kids," there was something about Mathers that seemed not necessarily real but certainly average. Jerry Mathers, as a child, had a boundless sincerity to him and watching any of the early episodes reveals a very natural talent who was able to win the hearts of viewers. Part of this was in his middling nature. He could deliver lines with sincerity, yet never seemed to ham it up or overact. He was cute but not too cute, and neither too smart nor too dumb. While Mathers was no more "real" than any other actor who tired out for the role, he did fit Connelly and Mosher's conception of what an "real" kid looked and acted like. Just how "real" Mathers could appear was to be tested in the series' pilot.

"It's A Small World"

The original title says it all: *It's a Small World*, a world in which little kids, who had become such a prominent force in American society due to the baby boom, struggled to comprehend the adult world around them. In looking back at this episode, which has

[104] Mathers, 55

only been shown on television once since it first appeared in 1957, many elements of the series were present in the pilot. Through the detailed synopsis and evaluation that follows, one should gain a sense of how the pilot and the series dealt with its basic themes of parenting, child psychology, youth culture, materialism, gender, and adult and child foibles.

In the pilot, eight-year-old Beaver has heard from eighth-grader Frankie Bennett that the Franklin Milk Company is offering a bicycle to anyone who brings in 1,000 bottle caps. Enlisting the help of his twelve-year-old brother, Wally, Beaver goes through the neighborhood collecting caps. When the boys show up at the milk company, Mr. Baxter, the head of the local office, is unaware of any such contest, which, in fact, was invented by Bennett. After checking up the corporate line—which is equally unaware of the contest—Baxter is directed to show some "initiative" and handle the matter himself. Keeping with the company policy of never alienating the customer, Baxter sends his put-upon secretary, Miss Sims, to buy the boys a bike. Recalling that Ward had previously said that he did not think the boys were responsible enough to own a bike, Wally and Beaver decide to hide it in their room, sneaking it through their second floor bedroom window.

In the second act, Baxter learns from his Chicago supervisor, Mr. Crowley, that the company was, indeed, not sponsoring a bike contest. Meanwhile, Wally and Beaver find out that Frankie Bennett made up the story about the contest. As the boys return home, Baxter is headed to the Cleaver home to secure the return of the bike. Ward and June, still unaware of the bike and the contest, are very upset by Baxter's insinuation that their boys have swindled the milk company out of a bicycle. Proudly claiming that they

know what is going on in their own home, Ward and June are stopped in their tracks as they see the boys hoist the new bicycle to their second floor room (a comic device that would be used in several other *Leave it to Beaver* episodes). Ward tells the boys to bring the bike downstairs and give it back to Mr. Baxter.

Wally and Beaver are heartbroken over the matter as Ward tries to explain that the boys have no right to claim a prize through a contest that never existed. In the meantime, milk company executive Crowley calls Baxter to tell him how happy the head office is about the contest. Unaware that Baxter has already retrieved the bike, Crowley orders Baxter to go to the Cleavers and get publicity pictures of the happy contest winners. When Baxter arrives, however, Wally and Beaver, convinced by Ward that keeping the bike would be wrong, refuse to accept the bike. Baxter, not wanting to look like a fool to his superiors, begs the boys to take the bike, but to no avail. Ward is so proud of his boys, he surprises them with a brand new bike of their own—a well-deserved reward for their proven responsibility.[105]

Despite the cast changes and low-budget look common to most pilots, nearly every major theme of *Leave it to Beaver*—its attention to progressive parenting and psychology, its emphasis on gender differences, its characteristics of youth culture, material culture, education, and "doing the right thing," even its discomfort with modernity—appear in the pilot. Interestingly enough, the childhood discomfort with dancing school that Connelly singled out in the ad he examined at the time of his J. Walter Thompson application is used as one of the first gags in the pilot, with Beaver trying to explain how he lost his necktie on his way home from dancing school. The idea

[105] Connelly and Mosher, *It's A Small World*, TV pilot, 1957.

of children frequently losing things was just one of several childhood characteristics that Connelly and Mosher focused on. Another was childhood speech patterns and the vernacular of youth culture. Recalling his own son's habit of lopping off the first part of words, the writers tried to endow Beaver with a greater sense of realism by having him say such things as "gots" for "forgot" and "'sponsible" for "responsible." The pilot also used the words "copped" for stolen, as well as the word "creep."

Where a lack of facility with language fixed Beaver's age, an adolescent attention to grooming was ascribed to Wally; indeed, the first time Wally appears, he is standing in front of a mirror and combing his hair and complaining about Beaver's rather sloppy ways. This interest in grooming, also part of the ad Connelly had commented on in his J. Walter Thompson application, spoke to another element of many of the series' earliest episodes—Beaver coming to terms with Wally growing up and their growing apart. Indeed, Frankie Bennett, the boy who made up the story about the contest, later said that he did so to get rid of little Beaver, who was always hanging around with the older kids.

The pilot also explores the assumed "secret world" of the child that includes activities and friends of which parents like Ward and June are unaware. For example, in the first scene of the pilot, Beaver arrives home late because he had stopped to watch some anonymous workers at the power plant swat a bat with a broom (another antic that was to be attributed as "typical" of children). The very plot of the pilot depends upon Ward and June being unaware of Beaver and Wally's initial dealings with the milk company. This plot device added to the dramatic reveal of Ward and June's true ignorance of their child's troubles; as Wally and Beaver loft their bike past the living room window, June asks Mr. Baxter, "Are you trying to suggest that we don't know

what's going on in our own home?" Not that June had not tried to find out what the boys had been up to. When June suggested that Ward ask Wally and Beaver why they were collecting bottle caps, Ward shrugged off his concern with a nostalgic memory that showed his discomfort with modern life:

> Ward: In my day, the collecting instinct was strong in every boy worth his salt. I'm happy to see it has survived television, child psychology, and the inroads of progressive education.

As later parts of the pilot show, Ward was not against modern parenting and progressive education. Indeed, after June insists that Ward find out what the boys are up to, Ward notes that June is flying in the face of child expert "Dr. Brady," (a fictionalized version of Dr. Spock?) who says, as Ward quotes, "A child's world is his own sacred domain and his privacy must at all times be respected." June, who is often depicted as being at odds with Ward and the experts, foreshadows the conflict by reminding Ward that the last time they respected the boys privacy, the boys set fire to the attic. This dichotomy of accepting and rejecting modern life was a frequent tension played out through the series. Ward's suggestion was in line with contemporary parenting advice. Mary M. Thomson, a physician who had written a child rearing manual in the 1950s, argued that children did long for privacy and resented "sudden entry" into their rooms.[106]

The pilot was also as harsh as the series was in its rather cynical view of adults. For example, the corporate world represented by the Franklin Milk company is not that of an old-fashioned local dairy, but of a company so vast, its employees do not even know about its own promotions. The pilot also shows the milk company as being populated by

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[106] Mary M. Thomson, *Talk it Out with Your Child: Better Child Guidance through Family Conversations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 16.

a group of small men afraid to challenge the system or upset their superiors, a theme that must have resonated with viewers in the wake of William Whyte's *The Organization Man*, published in the same year the pilot debuted. Indeed, one of the funnier moments of the pilot involves a view of the sniveling chain of command as Baxter tries to find out about the bike contest. While Baxter is deferent to his superior, Crowley, who shouts at Baxter, is deferent to his superior, Mr. Higgins. After Crowley realizes that there is no bike contest, he phones Baxter, calls him an "idiot," and demands that Baxter secure the return of the bike. Baxter, in turn, bellows at his secretary, Miss Sims, the only decent adult—outside of Ward and June—in the pilot. Baxter's appeal toward the end of the episode that they boys ignore the facts and take the bike paints a very pathetic picture of the adult world.

While parents certainly fare better in the pilot, Connelly and Mosher's effort to explore the mind of the child leaves Ward and June seeming quite mean and arbitrary at times. For example, when Beaver asks Wally how they could prove that they were responsible enough to own a bike without having the actual opportunity to own one, Wally replies, "How do I know. That's how older people think." After Beaver reminds Wally that their father is still a "nice guy," Wally agrees, yet insists that he is "an older person," and, as such, one who cannot be easily understood. When Ward tries to convince Wally that giving back the bike was the right thing to do, Wally argues that Ward is only saying that because he did not want them to have a bike in the first place. When Ward emphatically states that the boys cannot keep the bike, Beaver gets upset as well, saying howwhile he normally liked his father, the current situation had left him rather angry.

The other kids in the pilot were also depicted in a rather negative light, foreshadowing the overall negative depiction of kids in the series. Indeed, the whole problem of the episode was predicated on the lie told by Wally's friend Frankie. When Wally yells at Frankie for making up such a story, Frankie calls Wally a "creep" and laughs at him for being gullible enough to believe the story himself.

The pilot, like the series, also spoke to an awareness of gender. As pubescent boys, both Frankie and Wally fancied themselves as men, referring to each other as such when they greeted each other. Beaver's supposedly "natural" little-boy dislike of girls is also noted in the pilot when Beaver, having developed a crush on Baxter's secretary, Miss Sims, admits that he normally does "not like girls at all." But the pilot—like the series—was not simply about gendered messages, modern parenting, spineless organization men, or mean little kids. It was about doing the "right thing," with the right thing usually defined through the most idealistic middle-class sensibilities. Key to such sensibilities was not only a Puritan work ethic but a idealized faith in a supposed functional meritocracy which guaranteed that one's efforts were rewarded. This lesson is made clear when Ward notes that a person is not supposed to take something that he has not earned.

Not that doing the right thing was always easy. Nevertheless, when Baxter comes back and asks the boys to "close" their "eyes to the facts" and take the bike, Wally knows that Baxter is asking them to be dishonest. The resolution itself vindicates Ward's lesson; stunned that the boys will not accept the bike, Baxter indicates that boys have changed a great deal from his own time. Baxter's Secretary, Miss Sims, takes a hard look at her boss and says, without missing a beat, calls that "one consolation." One can see

this exchange between Baxter and Sims as yet another optimistic view of the future that is to be entrusted to people like Wally and Beaver who have learned to accept the wisdom and honesty of their father. Living in a consumer society, such honesty was not just rewarded by the inner satisfaction of doing the right thing, but by the very material object the boys had desired all along—a shiny new bicycle.

This optimistic view of a better life to come, just as promised in the 1939 New York World's Fair, may not be all that surprising coming from a medium which avoided confrontation and from two men whose own childhoods involved challenges and disappointments. However, while growing up in the Depression and in non-nuclear families may have been singular experiences for Connelly and Mosher, its effect on Connelly and Mosher, given such little data on their early lives, cannot be accurately measured. So what is one to make of Connelly and Mosher's lives and their creation?

Part of the answer lies in the two men's deep interest in writing, as evidenced in their autobiographical sketches. Indeed, if there is one thing to be said about Connelly and Mosher, it is that they wrote an incredible volume of material between childhood and *Leave it to Beaver*. This writing was as much influenced by their work as advertisers and writers as it was by their participation in twentieth century American life and culture. While one cannot, at this late date, learn much about Connelly and Mosher's personal beliefs and traumas—as if an understanding of those could truly capture what the historian is after—one does come away with the evidence that Connelly and Mosher considered themselves incredibly adept at their craft. While this work will look at how *Leave it to Beaver* reflected and influenced its time, that goal is tempered with the belief that Connelly and Mosher's chief concern was in crafting saleable, funny, moving

comedies that conformed not just to their beliefs, but to the demands of the medium and the needs of their intended audience of parents and children.

Perhaps one clue as to how Connelly felt about his role as a writer lies in the *Leave it to Beaver* episode, "Wally the Businessman," in which Connelly and Mosher quote a line from Shakespeare: "neither a borrower nor a lender be." When Beaver expressed how impressed he is that Shakespeare's words fit perfectly with Wally's current predicament, Ward says that Shakespeare lives because he wrote about real things and real people. [107] To Connelly's daughter Karen Donovan, that line expressed Connelly's own approach to writing—to write about real things and real people in a way that would have meaning in their lives.[108] Connelly and Mosher may not have provided a fully realistic account of the contemporary period in which *Leave it to Beaver* was set, but their desire to capture the drama of the human experience did find them commenting on the cultural, society and even the politics of their time. Just how *Leave it to Beaver* did that is the topic of the next six chapters.

[107] Episode quote from Joe Connelly, Bob Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," LITB, 1959.

[108] Donovan, interview.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE CLEAVERS IN 1950'S AMERICA

"I gotta hang around here. Never tell when this whole town might go up in flames."[1]
--Gus the Fireman

On October 4, 1957, two seemingly unrelated events took place: the Soviet Union launched Sputnik and the CBS television network launched *Leave it to Beaver*. Of course, there is no doubt about the importance of the former; not only was Sputnik the first successful artificial earth satellite, but a symbol of Soviet technological achievement. While the United States, under the International Geophysical Year, had already committed to launching its own satellite, the fact that the Soviet Union was first into space made for grave political and cultural consequences.[2] While President Eisenhower would downplay Sputnik as simply "one small ball in the air," it became an issue in the 1960 presidential campaign and fueled the space and arms race.[3] Played big by the national media, the story quickly became one of America losing its lead in science and technology.[4] Occurring after the Russians had already acquired atomic weapons in 1949, the media were quickly able to fuel the fears of the possibility of the Soviets hurling

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[1] Joe Connelly, Bob Mosher, "Brotherly Love," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[2] While there are a number of excellent books on Sputnik and its political consequences, see John Logsdon, *The Decision to Go to the Moon: Project Apollo and the National Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 21. For the cultural implications of Sputnik, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 72-3.

[3] Quoted in Logsdon, 16.

[4] Already by 8 October 1957, just four days after the launch, *The New York Times* an a front page article titled, "Nation is Warned to Stress Science," with the sub heading, "Faces Doom Unless Youth Learn Its Importance, Chief Physicist Says."

ICBMs at points west. Followed shortly by Vietnam, domestic civil unrest, and a Cold War containment policy that would last until the early-1990s, Sputnik seemed to mark the beginning of the end of American confidence. Given the importance of Sputnik, why would a cultural historian choose to cover the second, seemingly trivial national event of that October day? As Susan Morgan observed in a 1986 issue of *The Village Voice*, while kids may have known little about Sputnik, all her friends at school were "talking about a beaver who had gotten expelled from second grade."[5]

The convergence of Cold War and *Leave it to Beaver* became clear in the 1960 episode "Beaver and Kenneth." After a number of missing student items were found in Beaver's school locker, June became concerned that Beaver might have stolen them from his classmates. Not wanting to come out and confront Beaver—a Cleaver trait that served as a comic device to mine humor from the resulting misunderstanding—June reminded Beaver that God watches over everyone, and that Beaver should never do anything to disappoint him. Beaver, who had not, in fact, taken the items, replied that he would never want to hurt God, especially since he was so preoccupied with the Russians.[6]

The above line reveals an important insight to the series that is pivotal to the thesis of this work; while the Cleavers and their fictional home of Mayfield are regarded by many as a picture-perfect image of confident, affluent America (and, in many ways, it was), material from the pilot and 234 episodes reveal a more complex world—a world

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[5] Susan Morgan, "Worried about the Beaver," *The Village Voice*, 27 May 1986.

[6] Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); this line was also recalled by Morgan in her *Village Voice* article.

which the show often reflected and, at times, engaged.[7] Indeed, the children of Mayfield—even its most innocent protagonist, Beaver Cleaver—were well aware that they lived in a world in which a Cold War, as well as changing social patterns, existed. While Stephanie Coontz argued that *Leave it to Beaver* was not a documentary, in a very strange way, that is exactly what it was.[8] Not a documentary of life as it was lived in its vast complexity, circa 1960, but of the underlying changes and concerns that shaped the series itself. Gerard Jones, in an essay on *Leave it to Beaver*, saw the series as a snapshot of a confident America.[9] It was also a document of fictional characters aware that they were part of a troubled, changing, world.

"All you gotta worry about is washing your feet..."

While while the film *Pleasantville* relegates sitcom geography lessons to two streets, Mayfield residents were keenly aware of the outside world. Sure, there was the occasional eerie shot of a license plate with no state name, but on Ward's garage wall one could find license plates from a variety of states.[10] Mayfield residents may not have known what state they were in, but they did know other states existed. They were also aware of the oceans, as well as places like South America, Japan, Africa, Belgium, and

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[7] See Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), who writes that "Not only comedies but also dramas and game shows were rife with anti-communist gags and homilies," 27.

[8] David Marc, *Comic Visions*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 53; Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 29.

[9] Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones, "Leave it to Beaver," *TV Gold*, Movieland Publishing, Inc., 1986, 5.

[10] License plates from a variety of states (Kansas, Utah, and Montana, for example) line the walls of Ward's garage In Dick Conway and Roland MacLane, "The Younger Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962),.

even Southeast Asia.[11] Geopolitical competition was also familiar to Mayfield residents, who were aware of the Olympic games.[12]

Mayfield was not just part of the world, but part of its contemporary world, which, in the 1950s was awash in new items. Commenting on the decade in *When Dreams Came True*, Michael Bennett observed that "Everything was new: new homes, new cars, new appliances, new markets, new foods, new friends, new ways of entertaining...new schools, even new churches....Rarely in the history of the world had so many people enjoyed so many new things so quickly."[13] Bennett, writing in the late 1990s, was not the first to note this change. John Brooks, in his polemic on the incredible changes that had taken place in America from 1939 to 1964, observed that change was not just the product of innovation, but being welcomed by modern Americans "without question or reservation, for its own sake."[14] Dave Halberstam's work, *The Fifties*, hinges

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[11] In Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher (story by Ed James), "Beaver's Ring," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver's class discusses the oceans of the world; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," there is a discussion of South American and Hawaiian projects for Beaver's class; in Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher (suggested by a story by Robert Paul Smith), "Next Door Indians," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver tries to pass off as authentic an Indian arrowhead marked "made in Japan;" in George Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally tells Beaver that Beaver will learn about monkeys when his class starts studying Africa in school; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally, for a class assignment, writes a letter to a student in Belgium; in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver wants an Alaskan Eskimo sweater, advertised in a store window as being "just in" from the new 49th state; Alaska is also mentioned in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Found Money," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); and in "Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963) Beaver, working on geography homework, asks Ward a question about Thailand.

[12] Mentions of the Olympics appear in Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[13] Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington: Brassey's, 1996), 279.

[14] John Brooks, *The Giant Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), 163. It is important to keep in mind that people had certainly expressed fears in regards to some of the changes, including nuclear weapons.

on the very idea that the decade was a period of immense political, social, technological, and commercial change. While all three popular writers were given to hyperbole, and while both Bennett and Halberstam brought little historical context to their treatments of the period, post-war America seemed to shake off the malaise of nearly twenty years of Depression and war with newness and change.

Through dialogue uttered across 234 episodes, *Leave it to Beaver* reflected this sense of newness. Sometimes the concerns were simply those that mass media had been making in regards to the modern world since the advent of the comic strip, as well as the more nuanced concerns covered by Robert and Helen Lynd's look at changing American values and lifestyles, circa 1920.[15] But in other ways, the concerns were very much a part of 1950s culture. There was the knowledge of the plastic age, with Beaver getting excited by such oxymoronic features as "genuine plastic" typewriter keys or a "genuine imitation leather diary."[16] Ward was aware of the tail fin fad in car styles, as well as of the auto industry's practice of planned obsolescence.[17] Post-Sputnik space age and space references were also part of Mayfield life: satellites, planets, and the rise of this new technology became part of the everyday patter that took place in the show. The people of

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[15] Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929; reprint, San Diego: Harvest, 1957). A good example of this, in terms of *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, is Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958)), in which Ward waxes nostalgic for a sort of world that, in actuality, was already disappearing during his childhood (see chapter four for a more detailed discussion of Ward and June's sense of nostalgia).

[16] Just a few of the many plastic age references are seen in William Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), which has a reference to a "genuine imitation" leather diary; and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), in which the knobs on a typewriter's keyboard are described as "genuine" plastic.

[17] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Fred Rutherford, known for giving into fads, has a car with lots of chrome and high tail fins; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Ward noted how the automakers had raised the tail fins on the new cars in order to make the current year's models appear obsolete.

Mayfield marveled at putting a man in space and idolized its new heroes and landmarks, including John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth, and Cape Canaveral, the nexus of this space-age excitement.[18] Beaver was also aware of the new satellite and transitior technologies.[19] Space had also entered the Mayfield lexicon, with the kids using terms like "blast-off" and "countdown" in their everyday speech. Larry Mondello carried a space-themed lunch box to school, and one local TV station cowboy married the old west to the new space frontier by hawking a candy-coated cereal called "Chocolate Rockets," which he claimed were "powerful good." When Wally and Beaver decided to try their hand in the stock market, they were attracted to the high-flying defense contractor "Jet-Electro." Space had become so ubiquitous, Wally once quipped that rules common to American society would soon be spread to places like the moon, whose surface would soon be dotted with signs like "No spitting in the craters."[20]

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[18] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver says that his dream is to land on the moon; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), when Wally suggests Beaver ask the coach about what he should wear to the football banquet, Beaver likens that to an astronaut calling to ask the President to let him come down from space; in Bob Ross, "Wally's License," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally feels June is treating his drivers license exam as if he was undergoing astronaut testing; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver, the Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally reminds Beaver, who has let a lucky catch during a football game go to his head, that there are people who are doing much more heroic things than catching footballs, after which Beaver brings up the example of the astronauts; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward notes that the government made less of a fuss of putting a man in space than Fred was making about preparations for his son's upcoming party; in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), John Glenn is mentioned; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), a neighbor, disgusted at Wally's jalopy, which has been sitting at the end of the Cleaver's driveway, sarcastically asks Ward if Cape Canaveral is aware of the contraption.

[19] Gus's comment is from Elan Packard, Harry Winter, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Newspaper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); In Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiancé," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver wants to find out what the word fiancé means, but hides any overt mention of this by going to Ward and making up a list of spelling words in which he has included "transistor," and "satellite"; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers," *Leave it to Beaver*, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver asks Eddie how Eddie suddenly appeared in his room, to which Eddie facetiously responds "I came from outer space on a ray of light."

[20] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), in which a character in the show uses the word "blast off" as he is about to ride on a roller coaster; in Conway, Maclane, Connelly and

The spread of inter-planetary commercialism showed that Mayfield folk, like their fictional mass media brethren, were not all that comfortable with the trappings of modern society. Just as the Lynds had observed a generation earlier, Mayfield was awash in a land of pecuniary interests and commercialism. While the Cleaver residence was known for its home-cooked meals, June was not above serving an occasional frozen dinner. Not that Ward and June were fully accepting of this trend; in one episode, June joked that the only ladies doing work in the kitchen today were the ones posing for the frozen food packages. In another episode, June commented that the phrase "old fashioned pot roast" was just a clever advertising slogan for the TV dinner industry.[21] Ward and June complained about the high cost of living, as well as the ubiquity of junk mail, phony offers, and impersonal form letters from a school system that had grown large and impersonal.[22] In "Beaver's Accordion," Ward laments the passing of a more personal age, saying, "I can remember when you used to get mail from people you knew."[23]

Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Lumpy likens Ward's dashboard to a control panel and also uses the word "blast off" before starting the car. Later in the episode, Lumpy mocks a countdown before driving through a deep puddle. Jet-Electro is referenced in See Conway and MacLane, Allan Manings, "Stocks and Bonds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Larry Mondello carried a space-themed lunch box in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); the TV cowboy host hawking Chocolate Rockets is in Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959);" in Conway, MacLane, Connelly, and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally says that his teacher, upset at his students lack of attention, refers to them as being "in orbit;" Wally mentions rules on the moon in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); there is a similar reference in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), in which Beaver, looking at moon through a cheap telescope, is disappointed by the view. Wally responds that for "$16.98" Beaver is not going to be able to "read the signs on the planets."

[21] Frozen food packaging and advertising comments found in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960). Not that the Cleaver's used frozen food all that often, as in Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), there is a pejorative reference to Eddie having to eat a TV dinner as opposed to a Cleaver-style home-cooked meal.

[22] Rising food prizes are discussed in Earl Bellamy, "Ward's Baseball;" Bill Manhoff, "The Haircut," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); and Bob Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs."

The arrival of consumer credit, which had its beginnings in the auto industry of the 1920s, also became a point of contention; contrary to enforcing the advertisers' goal of purchasing with abandon, the Cleavers, like many of their fictional fellows, were rarely comfortable with credit and installment buying.[24] Modern automation was greeted with caution as well, with disdain for three minute car washes that took ten minutes, as well as a Luddite's fear of computers and robots that threatened job security.[25]

Mayfield residents could get in trouble in a variety of ways. In one episode Wally reminded Beaver that Mayfield has "three whole buildings full of lawyers" because people got in trouble.[26] While sexuality was only cursively addressed in one episode (in which Wally dated a "woman of the world," as Beaver's friend Gilbert called her), Mayfield had its own spots for vice, with a "Mayfield after midnight" filled with adult movie theaters and bars. People got drunk on New Years Eve, or so the cops recalled, and a street gang named the Cobras, complete with slicked hair and jackets with colors,

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[23] Junk mail is discussed in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Bunny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963). In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward comments negatively on a form letter the school has sent referring to Beaver as "your son or daughter."

[24] In Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), a real estate agent, much to Ward's chagrin, says that a person can only know what they are able to afford after they put themselves in debt; in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," Wally jokingly tells Beaver that credit is a system designed for people to live beyond their means; and in Conway and Maclane, "The Credit Card," Eddie spends beyond his means using his new oil company credit card.

[25] See Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), in which Ward laments that a three-minute car wash takes ten minutes; in Connelly and Mosher, "The Bus Ride," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally humorously explains to Beaver how milk has to be handled by numerous people before it is healthy for consumption; and Ward tells a joke about a man fired by a computer in Conway and Maclane (story by William Gargaro, Jr.), "Wally's Car Accident," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[26] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," *Leave it to Beaver*, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

were also evident in one episode.[27] When Wally began sporting a modern haircut similar to the ducktail, June worried that he may even become involved with a motorcycle gang, a fear some American parents had adopted since *Life* magazine popualrized the 1947 Hollister Bash, in which the town of Hollister, California was overrun by motorcycle-riding toughs.[28]

Mayfield residents were also aware of the way government worked. A number of comic moments resulted from Wally trying to explain income tax to Beaver. Social security was alluded to, as well as the concept of people cheating on it.[29] Mayfield was also aware of politics, both in a general sense, as well as in terms of contemporary figures such as John and Jacquelyn Kennedy.[30] Indeed, Kennedy's name would be mentioned several times, from Jacquelyn Kennedy's hairstyle and its influence on younger girls (a

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[27] Mayfield bars appear in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Bunny," a police officer notes that they make arrests of drunks on New Year's Eve; and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Eddie asked Wally if he was planning on dressing up like an adult and sneaking into an adults only movie; the street gang children were mentioned in Connellt and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat."

[28] June worries about Wally joining a motorcycle gang in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); for more information on the Hollister Bash, see the July 21, 1947 issue of *Life*, as reprinted in Lou Kimzy, editor, *Earlyriders: Motorcycles Through the Years* (New York: Dell, 1982), 197.

[29] Withholding and taxes are mentioned in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally The Lifeguard," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions) 1960; and in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, The Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); social security, as money the government pays "old people to do nothing," is mentioned in Lou Breslow and Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); in Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large," the landlord at the boarding house in which Eddie has moved into implies that one of her other tenants may be lying about his age to collect social security; and in Ward talks about paying taxes.

[30] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," June says that Wally would make a good class president because he is good looking. Ward jokes that such thinking has put several people in that office; in Bellamy, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Mr. Langley, a wealthy golfer that Beaver caddies for, describes his golf shot in terms of his brother-in-law's politics—straight down the middle; in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, The Businessman," a mention is made of the concept of "equal time," but not in a political context; in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Gilbert and Beaver discuss the possibility of seeing congressmen fighting in session during their trip across America.

hairstyle eventually adopted by June in the post-1961 episodes), to a snide joke by June about Ward having a "Kennedy coloring book," to a surprisingly candid reference regarding Kennedy's Catholicism as an issue in the 1960 Presidential campaign.[31] Other governmental and world political figures referenced included J. Edgar Hoover, Nelson Rockefeller, Charles de Gaulle, Prince Charles, The Sultan of Morocco, and Chaing Kai-shek.[32] World problems were also discussed on occasion. In one episode, Beaver referred to a paper he was doing on dwindling natural resources.[33]

The problems of the world weighed most heavily on adults. Once, when Wally told Beaver that parents do not like to hear bad news anymore than kids do, Wally explained, "Well, look, they got the whole world to worry about. All you gotta' worry about is washing your feet and junk like that."[34] While Ward and June would go through their share of vacuous "Honey, I'm home," greetings, they also made mention, albeit in vague ways, to the troubled situation of the world:

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[31] In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver notes that classmate Angela Valentine got in trouble for wearing a Jackie Kennedy wig to school; in Wilton Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver, trying to help Wally convince his family to let him get a car, says Wally could use it to drive them to church, to which Ward, echoing Kennedy campaign of 1961, replies that Beaver should not bring the religious issue "in this campaign;" the reference to the Kennedy coloring book is in Conway and MacLane, "The Book Report," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when June says that she feels silly for being sentimental over her child leaving, Ward teases her saying that it is okay to feel that way, as he is sure it is the same way Joseph Kennedy felt when his son went to Washington.

[32] In Connelly and Mosher, "Child Care," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), a business associate of Wards likens leaving his daughter with Wally and Beaver as safe as if they had left her with J. Edgar Hoover; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," a girl Wally knows brings up the name of Charles DeGall; in Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962),a reference is made to Prince Charles and the Sultan of Morocco; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," Eddie references Nelson Rockefeller; Eddie mentions the Rockefeller Foundation in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble;" and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward mentions Chang Kai Shek.

[33] "The Silent Treatment."

[34] Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

June: How are the headlines?
Ward: Terrible
June: Well, it's nice to know that nothing's changed since yesterday.[35]

It was also a world that was aware it had been through a world war, with references to the war, including those from Ward, who referred to his experience in the Seabees.[36] When Beaver and an old friend played war, they referred to it as playing "Korea."[37] The appearance of Sputnik brought a certain Cold war imperative that filtered through the series.[38] When Ward gave Wally an advance on his allowance to fix a World War II surplus walkie-talkie, Ward jokingly said he was doing so in the interest of the country's science plan.[39] In "Wally's Present," Eddie gave Wally a microscope—the same type, said Eddie, that was used by the atomic scientists.[40] There was an emphasis placed on Wally going into a scientific career, as well as examples of Ward urging the

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[35] Quote from Connelly and Mosher (story by Frank Gabrielson), "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960). Headline references are also found in Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call;" and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business."

[36] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Fran van Hartesveldt), "The Perfect Father, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward mentions being in the South Pacific during WWII; Beaver makes a reference to Adolph Hitler in Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally notes how a character named Howie, who works at the Mayfield TV store, says that he used to fix walkie-talkies back in World War II.

[37] In Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver and his old friend refer to playing war as playing "Korea."

[38] See Brooks, 220-222, who discusses how, during the late 1950s, progressive education was being displaced by a "back-to-basics" educational imperative.

[39] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture."

[40] Connelly, Mosher, Keith Fowler and Norman Paul, "Wally's Present," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

Beaver to be more interested in studying for the future.[41] There was also an awareness of the military; on one occasion, the series mentioned a news article regarding the dwindling health conditions of the American military troops, and there was also a specific mention of a military budget.[42] The series was not only aware of the defense industry, but of Cold War military service as well.[43] In one scene—eerily prophetic when one considers the impending war in Vietnam—Wally said that he was staying home with his parents for the evening so that later Ward and June would have something to remember him by when he was in the Army "dodging missiles and stuff."[44]

Like the language of the plastic age and the space race, Cold War America became a part of Mayfield daily speech. To Eddie, the real "cold war" was that being waged between parent and child. Several references were made to holding summit meetings and, in one episode, after Wally kicked Eddie out of his room, Eddie asked "What is this, East Berlin? When Beaver sent a letter to a popular teenage column, protesting the conditions of his weekday evening curfew, one of Beaver's friends suggested Beaver sign the letter "Iron Curtain."[45] Real Cold war events were also

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[41] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[42] Ward's comment on the dwindling health of the military is in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q." Beaver talks about how he knows of one kid who went into the Army instead of going to college; in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckies New Shoes," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver figures that the government uses sales tax to buy military equipment; and in "School Picture," Wally, using his idiosyncratic sense of the way the world works, tells Beaver that selling army surplus is the way the army makes money when they are not involved in a war.

[43] Manings, "Stocks and Bonds."

[44] This line comes from Connelly and Mosher, "Larry's Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[45] Eddie refers to a Cold War with adults in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl;" the term summit meeting is referenced in Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds;" Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and in Earl Bellamy, Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Eddie makes a reference to East Berlin in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother;" the Iron Curtain is referenced in Conway and MacLane,

alluded to; in one scene Wally was listening closely to the transistor radio, noting that Lumpy Rutherford learned about the Cuban missile crisis by listing to radio news reports. There are also several indirect mentions of Khrushchev (Beaver personified Russians as people who often yelled, a la Khrushchev), and the space race.[46] While Beaver and Wally neither "ducked" nor "covered" nor awoke in cold sweats from nuclear nightmares, their world view was wider than Main street and Elm.

The Organization Dad

In 1956, William Whyte Jr. published his classic, *The Organization Man*, an indictment of the group mentality that had supposedly taken hold of postwar middle-class American life. One year later, Connelly and Mosher provided America with Ward Cleaver, who was perhaps television's greatest example of the organization type. Just like Whyte's organization man, Ward saw getting along with his fellows at work as not simply a matter of unknowing conformity, but as a moral imperative.[47] True to the organization type, Ward's time was not spent on tangible production, but on supervising

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"Tell it to Ella," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962). The United Nations is referenced in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and Beaver pretends to be under the North Pole in an atomic submarine in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[46] Radio news of Cuba mentioned in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed" (while Wally mentions the incident by saying only "what happened in Cuba," given the 1963 date of this episode, it was most likely a reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis); in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Beaver refers to Russians as people who are always yelling, no doubt a reference to Khrushchev. In that same episode, Beaver mentions that he is looking for a current events topic for his class. In Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), there is a reference to a Soviet spacecraft countdown.

[47] William Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 394.

the work of others.[48] Ward's specific job remained a mystery, but, unlike Ozzie Nelson, Ward was often seen behind a desk. While conjecture has it that Ward was most likely an accountant, there is the possibility his job included some aspects of advertising and marketing as well. Frequent swipes at the advertising and business world, particularly in the early episodes, may have been fed, in part, by Connelly and Mosher's own experience with Madison Avenue. In one early episode, Ward used ad-speak as he tried to explain to Wally and Beaver how they could go about selling a foul perfume. In another episode, Beaver acts surprised to learn that some people actually get paid to work in advertising. In "The Boat Builders," June became quite upset at the unflattering statistics male marketers at Ward's office had printed in a report that Ward had brought home.[49] In "Lumpy's Car Trouble," written, in part, by Connelly and Mosher, Ward depicted executives as people who waste time writing long, obtuse memos and eating even longer lunches.[50]

As in the pilot, the corporate world was far from perfect; indeed, Ward's organization life—and the business world in general—were depicted as being plagued with stress and worry. For example, when June noticed that Wally's job pushing an ice-cream hand cart left him looking worried, Ward said, "He's an American businessman.

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[48] Ward is yelling on the phone at an employee about "slipshod" work in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ward is also seen talking into a dictation machine referring to some rather difficult business negotiations in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky."

[49] Ward's ad-speak is in Mel Diamond and Ben Gershman, "The Perfume Salesmen," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); Diamond and Gersham continued their assault on advertising in "The Clubhouse," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), in which Beaver acts surprised to find that one of the richest men in Mayfield made his fortune through advertising; and June is upset with the findings of some male marketers at Ward's company in Connelly and Mosher, "The Boat Builders," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[50] Ward's comments on executive excess appears in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble."

It's obligatory to look worried."[51] The business world was also portrayed as "dog-eat-dog." While Ward's office was featured in only a few episodes, it was depicted as a place in which one had to remain on his toes so as not to be ambushed by ambitious co-workers. Indeed, the office could be quite a cruel place. While narcissistic Fred Rutherford, Ward's friend and co-worker, felt he navigated the corporate seas quite well, Ward once revealed to June that Fred was the subject of gossip and ridicule among the "girls" at the office.[52]

Whether it was in Eddie Haskell describing his father's advice for succeeding in business, Fred's coveting Ward's corner office, or Ward discussing his interests in getting to know his new neighbor—who Ward thought could be a valuable business connection—there was a palpable sense of urgency in getting ahead.[53] To that end,

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[51]Quoted from Connelly and Mosher, "Wally The Businessman; " Ward makes a similar comment in Connelly and Mosher, "The Cookie Fund," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959). In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Gilbert notes that his father became grouchy after he started his own business.

[52] Fred is worried his fellow workers will have ammunition to use against him if they find he was accidentally knocked down by Ward's two sons in Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy Rutherford," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother, Fred claims that he carries a briefcase back and forth to the office to keep the workers below him alert; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Arthur Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward notes that he has to drink coffee with the other men in the office so they do not get suspicious of him; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," Ward notes that being popular is the American Dream, likening Beaver's friend Kenneth—who stole items to win Beaver's friendship—to Fred Rutherford, who spends much of his day worrying about what the girls in the office think of him.

[53] In Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Eddie says his father says it is good for business for people to join clubs (in this case, a scouting organization); in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, the Businessman," Eddie says one gets ahead in the business world by "buttering up" the boss. More of Eddie Haskell's father's advice shows up in Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when Eddie says it is a waste of time to learn about people who you will never meet in the business world. Ward is not immune to this sort of social climbing. Ward notes he wants to meet the new neighbor, who is the manager of a new plant in Mayfield, In Diamond and Gersham, "Party Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Whitey notes that his dad has decided that Penny's father leaving work early either means he was fired or promoted; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," Fred Rutherford says that he will "never be the company man" that Ward is as they do some weekend work at the office; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), it is revealed that Ward

Ward was required to dress for the part, an act of conformity of which even the Cleaver kids were aware.[54] True to Whyte's model, June played a role in Ward's career, as well, going along in one episode to a company dinner and hoping to win the favor of her the other organization wives. In one episode, when Ward announced he was going to dinner with a business associate, Beaver asked, "don't you ever get to eat with people you like?"[55]

Work always represented a hard day, with a frazzled Ward—quite unlike Jim Anderson of *Father Knows Best*—coming home with the worries and cares of the day. Ward's rough day at the office was well known; when Ward asked June if she knew of "the routine I go through at the office," June quickly replied, "Of course I do. I know it by heart." The "hard day at work" was so ubiquitous, even Beaver was aware of it. While playing house with a little girl in "Beaver the Babysitter," Beaver mimed an angry father coming home from work.[56] Ward's trouble at work often manifested themselves at

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has the corner office, something that Fred envies; and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," when Ward pulls out a TV set at work to watch Beaver on a teen panel show, Fred cautions Ward that watching TV on company time is no way to win a promotion.

[54] In Raphael Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver asks Ward if people wear suits at the office everyday. After answering yes, Ward notes how it would look strange to run a business in "sport shirts and sweaters." Beaver agrees, saying it would "make it look to easy..."

[55] Ward is counting on June to go with him to a company outing in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); the in-text quote on eating with people you like is from Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[56] June accuses Ward of working late because he likes it at the office in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Henry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver's Tree," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions) 1958, Ward makes a snide comment regarding how difficult his day is at work; Ward also mentions having a hard day at the office in Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher, Dick Conway and Roland MacLane, "Beaver's Poem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny;" and in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961). In a similar vein, in Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Doll Buggy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward tells June about his plan to pretend that everything has gone well at the office so that, over time, he will begin to believe it (thought follows action)—by the end of the episode,

home. In "The Black Eye," Ward, upset over a territorial conflict with co-worker Fred Rutherford, urged Beaver to be more aggressive with a bully who had given Beaver a black eye. Unknown to Ward, this exchange resulted in Beaver threatening Fred's daughter, the girl who had been bullying Beaver.[57] Work affected the Cleaver's home life in other ways as well, with Ward demanding quiet in the house so he could get some office work done or Ward canceling a camping trip because of a business imperative. Wally and Beaver, as good organization kids, had learned how Ward's work could affect their father's mood, coming to the conclusion that when Ward carried his briefcase home it meant more trouble for them.[58]

Private Life

While Ward's business connections were more apparent than those of Ozzie Nelson or Jim Anderson of *Father Knows Best*, much of *Leave it to Beaver* was concerned with the family within the confines of the home.[59] While Connelly and

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Ward's plan has failed. June reveals that she is well aware of how hard Ward's day at work is in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); in a similar situation, June is convinced that Ward's gruff attitude is due to a hard day at work in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); When Ward tells June that things went as they usually do in the office in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), June replies that it is a shame; and in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), June comments to a friend that all husbands are tired when they come home. Beaver plays the harried father while babysitting in Hoffmann, "Beaver the Babysitter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[57] Connelly and Mosher (story by Rick Vollaerts), "The Black Eye," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[58] Ward has to miss a camping trip due to work in Connelly and Mosher (story by Bill Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ward is seen working at home in Connelly and Mosher (story by Dale and Katherine Eunson), "The Hypnotist;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize;" and, in Conway and MacLane (story by William Gargaro, Jr.), "Wally's Car Accident," Beaver and Wally try to determine Ward's mood by looking at whether or not he is carrying a briefcase home.

[59] Although, Jim Anderson's work as an insurance agent was a part of the show and everyone knew that Ozzie Nelson the dad was Ozzie Nelson the bandleader.

Mosher were certainly not the first writers to poke fun at the failings of their own medium, numerous episodes indicated that they had become wise to the spurious family ideal offered by television previous to their own series. Indeed, one can find examples of dialogue across the 234 *Leave it to Beaver* episodes that serve to undermine the idealism of previous family sitcoms, providing the Cleavers with a greater sense of realism than say the Andersons of *Father Knows Best* or the Nelsons of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.[60] Thus, within the television series itself, Wally can turn to Beaver and say that television fathers are the only ones who do not yell at their kids, or Ward can advise Beaver that life is not always like it is depicted on television.[61] In "Weekend Invitation," Ward describes a pair of nice parents as being similar to "those mythical parents you read about in magazines."[62]

This type of humor, inserted to help the series achieve a greater sense of realism, represented an "ideal within the ideal:" a humorous comment that, within the context of an idealized family, reverses or undermines previously existing cultural ideals to render them anachronistic. For example, while June Cleaver is remembered as the ideal mother who cooks all her own meals and greets her kids with milk and cookies—which she often does—she is also a modern female character who has grown with her times. In "Nobody

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[60] Although it must be acknowledged that closer attention to these series may reveal a more complicated message as well.

[61] Wally's comment is from Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," and Ward's comment is from Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet;" in the Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund," when Beaver is worried someone may steal his cookie fund money, Wally assures him that crooks, as exemplified on TV, do not go after small change, to which Beaver replies that he hopes the crooks in Mayfield have also learned that through watching the same TV shows; kids in Mayfield also had very little positive expectations of their parents. In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," when Eddie learns that Ward apologized to Wally for giving some bad advice, Eddie says no father would do that.

[62] Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

Loves Me," for example, when Ward sees June sitting at the kitchen table and asks her, sarcastically, why she is not slaving over a hot stove, June replies that she is waiting for the TV dinners to thaw.[63] In "Wally and Alma," June becomes upset when a wealthy woman assumes that her evening call upon the Cleavers has taken June away from her dishes. Later that night, Ward helps June wash the dishes, arguing that he feels he owes it to the image the wealthy woman had of their domestic situation.[64]

While the series is considered one of the many popular culture items that enforced the domestic ideal—which, in many ways, it did—Connelly and Mosher, in at least one episode, demonstrated that they were well aware of the psychological effects advertising had on the modern housewife. In "Beaver's Good Deed," When June told Ward that she was very embarrassed when she ran into a neighbor at the supermarket, Ward sarcastically replied echoing a common commercial message of the day: "Why? Did you buy the wrong kind of sink cleaner?"[65] In an example of perhaps the starkest dismissal of the TV family ideal, Ward, in "Beaver's I.Q." arrived home and asked June about her day:

> June: Why do you always ask me that when you come home?
> Ward: I thought I was supposed to.[66]

Dialogue in *Leave it Beaver* could also foreshadow the confrontational realism that became so important to late-1960s and early 1970s sitcoms. For example, divorce

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[63] Katherine and Dale Eunson, (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Nobody Loves Me," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[64] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma"

[65] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed."

[66] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q."

was not only the topic of an entire episode, it was also mentioned in another. Another episode alluded to the existence of single-parent families.[67] When Ward and June discussed the value of going to a family night in which parents would dance with one another, Ward said that it would do "some of these kids good to see their parents be polite to each other for a change."[68] In another episode, Beaver's friend Larry Mondello noted how his married brother often said "shut up" to his wife.[69] In "Beaver's House Guest," which featured a friend of Beaver's whose parents were divorced, June was embarrassed when she called the mother's boyfriend by the boy's last name. Ward, teasing June, said, "You should have known he wasn't the boy's father, dear; he was too nice to him."[70] In "Mistaken Identity," two police officers suspected Wally of doing something illegal; when one office commented that Wally's father was an upstanding citizen, the other officer said, "They're the ones who have the worst kids."[71]

As with many real families, perfection lay just beyond the Cleaver's grasp. "One of these days," said Ward to June, "I'm going to come home and find that everything is

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[67] We learn that there are skeletons in the Cleaver family in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Short Pants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), with reference to a relative that the family is not supposed to talk about; in Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Wally mentions it is hard to believe that blow-hard Uncle Billy is a member of the Cleaver family; divorce is mentioned in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when Eddie notes that his dad buys houses cheaply by looking in the newspaper for divorce notices; and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," June worries that Wally's worldly girlfriend may be a divorce; in "Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver notes that some of the kids in his class will have to "borrow fathers" for a father and son event, implying not all kids had a nuclear family.

[68] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth."

[69] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid."

[70] Arthur Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[71] Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

all right and both boys have been perfect and then I'll know I'm in the wrong house."[72] Indeed, Ward was often depicted as looking to idealized images that he found no more accurate than those ascribed to the series:

> Ward: I read an article today that said when the husband comes home from a hard day's work, he should not be immediately subjected to the cares and problems of the household.
> June: I heartily agree.
> Ward: It went on to say that he should relax for a time. Have a pleasant dinner and then, later, the problems of the day should be taken up in a quiet and orderly manner.
> June: True, but I'm afraid by that time Beaver's going to be awfully tired of being locked in the bathroom.
> Ward: Okay, forget the article. What are the gory details....That article read so beautifully, too.[73]

Family togetherness, which had become important in the wake of a 1954 McCall's article, was also treated cynically by Connelly and Mosher. In "Kite Day," Wally noted how a father and son contest sponsored by a local merchant was being used to help parents "think" they were becoming more involved with their children's lives.[74] In "Beaver Sees America," when Beaver expressed that he wanted to stay home to date a girl, Eddie advised Beaver to play up the "togetherness" angle.[75] Each of these examples carry many meanings and readings, as they reveal and poke fun, no matter how benignly, at the various elements of popular family ideology. In many ways, these lines are no different than the sponsor deflating comments of stars such as Jack Benny and, later,

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[72] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[73] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains."

[74] Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day."

[75] Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katehrine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America."

Alfred Hitchcock. Yet these lines, which may very well have been evident in other sitcoms of the time, show the theseshows spoke to more than just the domestic family ideal. While Connelly and Mosher and the series' writers no doubt created an idealized home and family, they were also aware of the ideals which lay behind them, and were not afraid to play with them to give viewers a brand of humor which offered, at times, an interesting commentary on the very ideals of which the series was a part.

But the series did more than play with family ideals to effect a greater sense of realism; it also purposely set about to change the level of realism allowed on television. Commenting on *Father Knows Best*, a disgruntled Billy Gray, who played son Bud Anderson, noted that "Scott paper was our sponsor, but we couldn't show toilet paper on the air, because that would suggest that people had assholes. If they did, they would have to admit that people take shits..."[76] Connelly and Mosher had also noticed television's timidity regarding the bathroom, becoming the first producers to show a toilet on TV. While showing a bathroom and its fixtures on television may seem rather trivial, this was actually a controversial step for a 1957 network show. As late as April, 1960, for example, Clark Blake, writing for *Reader's Digest*, complained about the dwindling decorum in television commercials that were making their way further into personal matters:

> Television critic Lawrence Laurent of the *Washington Post and Times Herald* recently reported that he had been visited by his father-in-law, a college professor who ordinarily saw little TV. After 60 minutes of entertainment one evening, interrupted by advertisements dramatizing tooth decay, stomach upsets and the use of deodorants, the professor rose from his chair. "I've seen enough of the

[76] Billy Gray interview in Jeff Kisseloff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 345.

> plumbing fixtures for one evening," he said. "What append to the privacy of the bathroom?"[77]

The article also looked at advertising for bathroom products, including toilet paper, noting that "hundreds of outraged viewers have complained about these distasteful ads to the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission." The commercials also pushed the envelope of the standards set by the Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters, who had already determined that the "advertising of intimately personal products which are generally regarded as unsuitable conversational topics in mixed social groups is not acceptable."[78] In *The People Look at Television*, a study of television audience attitudes conducted around the time of *Leave it to Beaver*, viewers admitted they were growing upset with exposure of private products about girdles, bras that "lift and separate" and deodorants for offensive odors; as one viewer observed, "Clorets for bad breath should be a personal problem, not to be discussed in public."[79] In his 1955 polemic on TV vulgarity in *TV Star Parade*, Jack O'Brian painted the media as something which had a growing vulgarity which had to be continuously weeded out:

> We've had a few stainless seasons, but the filth is creeping in again. It will be swept out—it always will be, eventually—but now's the time to tidy up, when the TV industry itself can do it and not wait for censor boards, pressure groups and such.[80]

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[77] Clark, Blake, "Must TV Bring the Bathroom Into Our Living Rooms?" *Reader's Digest*, April 1960, 61.

[78] Ibid., 62-63.

[79] Comments noted in text of Gary Steiner, *The People Look at Television: A Study of Audience Attitudes*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1963, 213.

[80] From Jack O'Brian, "Too Much Sex in TV?" *TV Star Parade*, November 1955. While the article primarily speaks to an abundance of sexual innuendo in television, focusing on revealing clothing and inappropriate body movement, the article also attacks daytime soap opera programming, which features

One should also recall that Jack Parr, as late as 1961, was censored by NBC executives for telling a story with the letters "W.C." (for water closet).[81]

It was in this context that Connelly and Mosher would strike, what *Leave it to Beaver* show biographer Irwyn Applebaum would later call a "small, liberating blow for TV realism," introducing American sitcom viewers to something they had not seen before in the sanitized world of television—the toilet (well, at least a part of the toilet).[82] In "Captain Jack," the first *Leave it to Beaver* episode filmed, Wally and Beaver sent away for what they thought was a six-foot alligator. Much to their surprise, the alligator was only several inches long. Inspired by Captain Jack, the owner of a nearby alligator farm, the boys decide to nurse the alligator to a healthy size. Afraid of what their parents would think of having a live alligator in the house, Wally and Beaver hide it under the lid of the toilet tank. While network officials reportedly balked at this, Connelly and Mosher were able to win their argument and, while not showing the whole toilet, were able to show the tank.[83]

"...tales of obstetrical detail downright shocking in their scope" (8). Interesting enough, the article is flanked, at one point, by print advertisements whose copy offers a product women can use to fight the "monthly distress of cramps" (10)—apparently obstetrical problems were only taboo for television.

[81] For a discussion of this incident, which resulted in Parr's walking off the show the day after the 1960 incident occurred, see Jack Parr, with John Reddy, *I Kid You Not* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 221-226. This incident is also discussed in Laurence Leamer, *King of the Night: The Life of Johnny Carson* (New York, William Morrow and Company, 1989), 134, as well as in Brooks and Marsh, 908.

[82] Irwyn Applebaum, *World According to Beaver*, (New York: TV Books, 1984).
Desi Arnaz, *A Book*, (New York: Warner Books, 1976), 22.

[83] Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions) 1957. While the bathroom would become a staple feature of the series in numerous scenes (see below), this was the one and only time the actual fixture—or, at least part of it—was shown on the series.

While popular series lore, as found in such books as *The World According to Beaver* and Mathers biography, *And Jerry Mathers as the Beaver*, lauds the exposure of the toilet tank as a liberating moment for television, this was not the only encounter the series would have with the bathroom. In a later first season episode, "Child Care," Wally and Beaver are babysitting for a two-year-old girl who ends up locking herself in the bathroom after claiming she needs to go visit "Mary Jane," her euphemism for the toilet.[84] Also, one of the major scenes in the first episode aired, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," took place in the bathroom that lay just off the boys bedroom. As the years progressed, the bathroom was not just the place to groom, wash up, or nurse alligators, it was also a place in which one got sick.[85] Contrary to Grey's comments, this series at least implied that the Cleavers did defecate.[86]

The role *Leave it to Beaver* played in presenting the bathroom to the American public was not confined to these few episodes. From the pilot on, the bathroom remained a ubiquitous part of the series, either through scenes taking place in the bathroom, or scenes in which the boys' bathroom was visible from the boys' bedroom.[87] The open

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[84] Connelly and Mosher, "Child Care."

[85] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in a similar vein, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem," Charles, a classmate of Beaver, requests to leave the room because he was going to be sick. See also Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), in which Wally, who is filling in as "man of the house" in Ward's absence, tells Ward that he will open the bathroom door if he sees Beaver getting sick or turning green.

[86] In Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), a girl tells Beaver that she is not allowed to lock herself in the bathroom because she has too many brothers and sisters, implying the room is used quite frequently and, at times, with urgency; in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," Beaver, looking at a brochure of a tour across America that he plans to take, asks his mom and dad what a "comfort stop" is. While it is not answered directly, the implication that it is a break to go to the bathroom.

[87] The bathroom door is open and the bathroom is clearly visible in numerous episodes, including Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver gets 'spelled," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack;" Gresham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); Connelly and Mosher (story by Rick Vollearts), "Part time Genius," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Diamond and

bathroom door was even featured in one of the early season title sequences.[88] While Barbara Billingsley would later recall that Ward and June's bedroom set was merely a bedroom door, there are several episodes in which the Cleavers are seen behind that door,

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Gersham, "Party Invitation;" Bill Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Connelly and Mosher (story by Jack Patrick), "Music Lesson," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job;" Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem;" Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Ward's Problem; " Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Richard Baer, "Lost Watch," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters;" Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959);Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted;" Tibbles, "Haunted House," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Connelly and Mosher, "The Bus Ride;" Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame;" Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Says Goodbye," LITB; Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath;" Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture;" Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk;" Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat;" Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," 1959; Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Andy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Bob Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet;" Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model;" Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Connelly and Mosher (story by Edward J. O'Connor), "Beaver's Team," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest;" Tibble, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard;" Connelly and Mosher (story by William Cowley and Peggy Chantler), "Beaver's Freckles," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Landers Fiancé;" Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960);" Connelly and Mosher (story by Alan Lipscott and Bob Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions;" William Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life;"Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet;" Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils;" Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Connelly and Mosher (story by Ellis Marcus), "Beaver's Poster," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Helper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club;" Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley;" Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat;" Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car;" Conway and MacLane (story by Bob Ross), "Beaver's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem;" Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear;" Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache;" and Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants."

[88] 1959-1960 season opening sequence.

in mussed, just-out-of-bed fashion.[89] Connelly and Mosher had other elements of realism they would have liked to have brought to the series, but were stopped by standards and practices. One such idea came from Connelly, who wanted to show Beaver laying on the bed while putting on his pants, an idea that was nixed by the network.[90] Nevertheless, in the depths of prudish, Cold War America, the idealized family's closed private life opened just a bit.

"The Ultimate in Suburban Living"

A subplot of the 1959 episode, "The Most Interesting Character," has the Cleavers looking for a new home (reflecting the casts' actual move from the smaller Revue studios to those of Universal between the second and third seasons). As June sat at the kitchen table, she ran across the following real estate advertisement:

> June: (reading) "Charming. Three bedrooms and den on beautifully landscaped grounds. Modern dream kitchen. Patio. Spacious....The ultimate in suburban living. Near schools and transportation."
> Ward: That's our house....
> June: Sounds almost too good to leave.[91]

In many ways, suburbia, which had become a reality to many modern families, was too good to leave. While *Leave it to Beaver* and other domestic sitcoms of its time have been accused of committing sins of omission, they were actually indicators of the highly

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[89] Conway and MacLane, "The Party Spoiler," *Leave it to Beaver*, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[90] Karen C. Donovan, interview with author, 4 February 2001.

[91] Connelly and Mosher, Mathilde and Theodore Ferro, "The Most Interesting Character," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

segregated nature of American life in the 1950s and 1960s.[92] Set in a time during which covenants were still being attached to deeds to prohibit future sales to African Americans and Jews, it would have been difficult, indeed, to portray middle class suburbia as anything but lily white.[93] While the Cleaver's suburbia was more Victorian than post-World War II, more upper middle-class than democratized Levittown, its all white populace reflected the same prejudices and intolerance that marked the early suburbs since their nineteenth-century inception.[94]

If one was white and none too eager to flaunt their religious affiliation, getting along in suburbia was a matter of fitting in with the other neighbors who lived in close proximity. Yet that proximity, even in Mayfield, could be quite oppressive.[95] In one episode, Ward recalled how his coming home early from work once sparked a neighborhood rumor that he had been fired. In another episode, when Wally parked an old jalopy at the end of the driveway, the neighbors were quite eager to express their

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[92] Marc, *Comic Visions*, 29.

[93] See Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* (New York: Basic Books, 1987) 151-154.

[94] It should be noted that the suburbia portrayed by the series was not the modern, affordable Levittown type home, but the sort of home that existed in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century suburbs. Indeed, some of the home styles featured in the series are quite Victorian in nature. It should also be noted that the proximity of a city square or downtown complicates the image of modern suburbia, placing the series more in a small town than suburban setting. This is most likely a product of the production studio's available exterior sets than any planned design. Indeed, despite what the sets tell viewers, the concept of being in suburbia was indeed a part of the series; in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry's Club," for example, Ward tries to explain the importance of people working for the common good by telling Beaver a story of pre-modern France. When June later asks Ward what sort of American examples the French would use in a similar story, Ward suggests that they probably talk about Levittown.

[95] See Larry Atherton's chapter on small town community in his *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1954) 181-216. Also see Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967, who notes that while blacks are missing from the suburban picture, religious and ethnic difference in suburban Levittown had been tolerated (167-69). Donaldson, who noted that there was a move toward secularism in the suburban church, notes this as well (138). Finally, see Whyte's section on "The Church of Suburbia," 405-422. One should not forget, however, that many suburbs through the 1950s still had covenants which prohibited the sale of suburban homes to Jews.

disapproval.[96] Keeping a low profile in suburbia was always a good idea. When Beaver got himself into trouble that required the fire department to rescue him, Wally worried that the rest of the neighbors would think they were goofy. When Wally gave Beaver a hideous haircut in one episode and came home with a hip, ducktail-style haircut in another, June feared she would have to move away for fear of what the neighbors might think.[97]

As Whyte had argued in his discussion of suburbia in *The Organization Man*, the modern suburbanite not only had a pressure to keep up with the Jones, but not to rise too

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[96] In Connelly and Mosher, "New Neighbors," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), the new neighbor, Mr. Donaldson, tells his wife that it is a good practice to get in good with the neighbor's kids; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat Out of the Bag," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward worries that if Wally and Beaver run into a problem taking care of their neighbors cat, it may cause a strained relationship with the neighbors; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," Ward notes that the last time he came home early, people in the neighborhood started a rumor that he had been fired; in William Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car," a couple who sees Ward and June driving in Wally's beat-up used car assume something has happened to affect Ward's economic position; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," people begin looking upset towards an old jalopy Wally has parked outside of the house; and in Raphael Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," there is a suburban scene that features a man raking his yard, a contemporary car with tail fins, and a salesman talking to a female homeowner.

[97] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," after Beaver gets locked in the principal's office and has to be rescued by a fire engine, Wally jokingly worries about what the rest of the community is going to think of the family. Ward warns Beaver that he should try to be more inconspicuous in the future; in Diamond and Gersham, "Party Invitation," when Beaver refuses to get out of the car to go to an all-girl party, Ward gets upset, arguing that Beaver's behavior is embarrassing to he and June; in William Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car," June is worried about what the neighbors will think about Wally's old heap—as she drives down the Mayfield streets in the car, neighbors look on in disapproval; in Conway and MacLane (story by Bob Ross), "Beaver's Birthday," Wally admonishes Beaver to brush his teeth, afraid of what people might about his "toothless brother." Style faux pas were also problematic for the Cleavers. In Bill Manhoff, "The Haircut," June fear's Beaver's botched haircut, courtesy of Wally, will disgrace the family; when Wally picks out a gaudy suit in Richard Baer, "Wally's New Suit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward worries about his friends and colleagues reaction to it. When June jokingly suggests they move, Ward replies "We may have to." Once the problem is resolved, Ward tells Wally that it is important to wear the right clothes for certain occasions; Wally's adoption of a duck tail in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," makes June worry about how Wally's haircut reflects on her and the family; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," Wally explains that Beaver's decision to wear a sweater to an occasion requiring a sport coat is upsetting Ward and June because they are worried about how it will make them look in the community.

conspicuously above them.[98] Connelly and Mosher made sure that the Cleavers remained true to the popular culture tradition of making the family appear neither to rich nor too poor.[99] Even though the Cleavers lived in a rather affluent older suburb, June and Ward were always portrayed as comfortable but not wealthy. Indeed, there were characters in the series who, in comparison to the Cleavers, made them seem quite modest.[100] A wealthy mother in "Wally and Alma," seemed surprised that June did not have domestic help.[101] In "Parking Attendants," Fred Rutherford, Ward's blow-hard friend from the office, teased Ward about not being invited to the wedding of the wealthy Langley family's daughter. "Don't let it get you down," teases Fred, "...the locker room attendant at the club didn't get an invitation either."[102] The wealthy were also depicted as problematic parents. In "One of the Boys," there was a clear sense of disdain, on the part of Ward and June, for rich parents who took frequent vacations without their

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[98] See Whyte's chapter on "Inconspicuous Consumption," 345-364.

[99] See Nina C. Liebman, *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995), which notes that the middle-class was the desired class among viewers: "On television, then the middle class is held to be the most easy going, happy, and principled of the various social strata—a class envied by both the wealthy (whose lives are prim and proper) and the lower classes (who are tired of dirt, junk, and cheese sandwiches)" (245).

[100] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Short Pants," June's Aunt Martha Bronson, a wealthy, older, single woman with "Eastern" manners, implies, after looking at the home, that Ward has been doing well, something she had doubted due to his more modest farm-boy past. Also in that episode, Aunt Martha makes a distinction between the type of clothes Wally and Beaver are wearing and the type of clothes that are more suitable for her distinguished family; proving Ward's middle-class standing, when Wally notes, in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," that his friend Mitch's father is "loaded," Ward replies that Wally does not suffer from that problem; in "Beaver Says Goodbye," Ward notes that he lost an offer on a house to people who paid in cash, implying that he does not have the sort of money to do that; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," Ward notes that he does not enjoy how his friend "Sutton" always talks about making more money than Ward. When June asks Ward if he is bothered because Sutton may be lying, Ward replies that he is bothered by the fact that he knows Sutton is telling the truth.

[101] This is an interesting moment in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," in which June is offended by Alma's mother's comment that she has taken June away from her dishes, implying a class difference between a woman of Alma's mother's status—free to leave after dinner—versus that of June, who is still a slave to her kitchen.

[102] Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants."

children, leaving them to run around town unsupervised in expensive cars.[103] Even Wally knew enough to look askance at conspicuous displays of wealth. In "Community Chest," for example, Wally expressed his embarrassment for a classmate who was picked up from school by a chauffer.[104]

The suburban sitcom home itself was also to be of moderate means, and while it was displayed that way textually, the section of the back lot in which exterior scenes were filmed, particularly once the show was relocated to Universal Studios, was more reminiscent of expensive, first-ring suburbans.[105] Despite the opulent looking neighborhood, the Cleavers were portrayed as having much the same housekeeping and home maintenance problems as average Americans. Carpets needed to be cleaned, screens needed to be put up, broken appliances needed to be fixed, and garbage cans, lawn, and patio equipment needed to be purchased and maintained; paying strict attention

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[103]See Liebman, who notes that wealthy families and poor families would have entirely different sets of issues; wealthy families would spoil their kids with things most American families would not have, and poor families would not have the income to get the things to show what was to be the typical childhood. "It is the middle-class status itself that creates a plethora of episodes underscoring thrift, work experience, the value of family versus the value of pretense, the pleasure in consumer items, and the inherent satisfaction in work to purchase them" (234). There are problematic rich parents in several episodes of *Leave it* to Beaver. In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," the wealthy mother of a girl Wally ahs become involved with appears as an out-of-touch, domineering mother whose husband never says a word; in Connelly and Mosher, Gwen Gielgud, "One of the Boys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions) a group of spoiled high school kids clearly come from wealthy families, one being the son of the president of the local country club (however, when the boys turn out to be less than proper role models for their son, Ward notes his surprise in that they seemed to come from good families, which may also speak to the more complicated message of good families do not always result in good children); and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry's Club," one of Wally's teachers makes a note that education and being a snob goes hand-in-hand.

[104] Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest."

[105] Liebman also notes how the middle-class sitcom house was to be of modest means, showing how Wally and Beaver shared a bedroom while a guest room was available (230); in Horace Newcomb, *TV: The Most Popular Art* (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), Newcomb notes that the modern suburban home, as displayed on TVm was to "reflect prosperity but not elegance. The standard of living is based on comfort; the rule of existence is neatness. During the meal scenes there is always plenty to eat, and a teen-ager frequently opens a refrigerator to pour another class of milk. There is shabbiness or disarray only when called for by the script, and in such circumstances care is taken to indicate that it is an arranged form of clutter..." (29-30).

to their gender roles, Ward was always fixing something around the house as June tended to the table and garden.[106] As much as Ward and June tried—and, for the most part, succeeded—to look like the average suburban homeowners, their affluence and their position was still obvious, even within the confines of the show. In an early series episode, "The Paper Route," the working class man who assigns routes took one look at the boys and says, "Your clothes are too good. You look like the kinda kids who'd quit after the first week."[107] In "Box Office Attraction," Wally's date Marlene, who had been invited for dinner, asks Ward if he is a lawyer.

> Ward: No, why?
> Marlene: I don't know. This just looks like the kind of house a lawyer would live in.[108]

The audience was also wise to the discrepancy existing between their modest suburban homes and those of early-1960s era domestic sitcom families. In 1961, one *TV Guide* reader wrote:

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[106] The trappings of suburbia are evident in numerous episodes. In Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse," Ward noted that he paid $280 to fix a basement leak that is still leaking; June's obsession with clean carpets and Ward's mention of window screens are seen in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver's Tree;" household appliances could also prove problematic. In Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk," June notes that dinner was going to be late because she pressed the wrong button; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear," Ward mentions looking at lawn equipment that had enough features to be used by a farmer; the patio and barbeque, sure signs of suburbia, are featured in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest;" Ward is impressed by a larger backyard in a home he is looking at in Tibble, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Says Goodbye;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by O'Connor), "Beaver's Team," Ward talks about how much he likes to be home on Saturdays to get away from work, after which June gives Ward a list of household items that need attention, to which Ward responds that he's looking forward to going back to work on Monday; and in Fran Van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward brings June the shelf paper she had been asking for.

[107] Van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route."

[108] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction."

> Having the understanding that most situation comedies are about the lives of typical Americans suburbanites, I ask why can't they live in $8000 or $9000 homes like the rest of us instead of in homes that look like the drawing room at Buckingham Palace.[109]

As humble as the portrayal of Ward and June was supposed to be, they obviously enjoyed "the good life." The Cleavers, like many of Mayfield's finest, were members of the country club, which loomed at the center of Mayfield social life, whether it was in providing dances for kids, elegant dinners for the Cleavers and their friends, or a place for Ward and his fellows to enjoy a Saturday morning round of golf.[110] Ward, as a organization man who dined in the finest restaurants, had enough prestige to be able to pull a few strings to make Wally's first real "dinner date" most impressive, not only getting Wally a reservation when Wally failed to do so, but even in being able to establish a credit account for Wally at the restaurant after Ward learned that Wally had left his wallet behind.[111] But the status Ward and his fellows enjoyed was never fully assured. In "Beaver the Caddie," when Beaver caught Mr. Langley cheating at golf, Beaver, who got a five dollar tip for his trouble, began feeling guilty and considered telling on M. Langley. When Wally pointed out that Langley could get kicked out of the country club and lose his status in the community, Beaver was forced to find another way

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[109] Letter to the editor from Shannon Hunter, Fayetteville Arkansas, *TV Guide*, 25 February 1961), A-2.

[110] Episodes in which the Country Club is mentioned include Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest;" Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid;" Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl;" Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs;" Conway and MacLane, "Beaver, the Caddy;" and Conway and MacLane, "The All-Night Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[111] Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date."

to solve his dilemma.[112] Just as Whyte had observed, the middle-class affluent American not only had the most—they had the most to lose.[113]

One did not have to look too far in Mayfield to find out what life was like for those who failed to share in post-World War II affluence. Just as sociologist Michael Harrington, in the early 1960s, would reveal an "other America" of poverty, Connelly and Mosher revealed that there was another Mayfield. Indeed, the world beyond Main and Elm streets occasionally exposed pockets of poverty that undermined the supposedly picture perfect view of domestic sitcom life. In the first season episode, "The Clubhouse," Beaver, who was trying to earn money to become a member of Wally and Eddie's club, ended up giving his money away to a homeless person. While this acknowledgement of poverty complicated Mayfield's image, it should be noted that this first homeless character, known far and wide as the town bum, was depicted as a societal leech as opposed to a victim of society; who else would feel comfortable taking money from a child?[114] Beaver's next major encounter with the homeless in "Beaver's Good Deed," broadcast in 1963, was a bit less callous. Through a comedy of errors, Beaver let a "bum" into the house, giving him a meal and letting him take a bath in Ward and June's bathroom. Before Beaver knew it, the man had stolen one of Ward's good suits and slipped out of the house. While the message of the episode spoke to Beaver's need to

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[112] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy." We also see elements of the gains and losses related to "the good life" in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone?" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), in which Eddie notes that his father said playing tennis is a good way to meet rich people; in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," Lumpy brags about getting a job as a locker room attendant at the country club, which, according to Fred Rutherford, is a way for Lumpy to meet the cream of Mayfield's society. Not that Fred's thoughts on Lumpy working in a subservient position was even applied across the series; in Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," Fred refused to let Lumpy join Eddie and Wally parking cars at the fancy Langley wedding, fearing such a sight would hurt Fred's social standing.

[113] See Whyte, 338-344.

[114] Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse"

find a middle-ground between being giving and being taken advantage of, the tag had a surprising twist. The homeless man sent Beaver a letter saying that he used Ward's suit to affect a better image and get a new job. The man also enclosed a five dollar bill as down payment on the suit. While Ward and Wally clearly doubted that the man would send any more money, there was a sense of ambition and responsibility that did not exist with the 1957 homeless character. Not that his difference went unnoticed by Beaver, who, when explaining the situation to Wally, described the homeless person by saying that he was "not exactly a man; he's a tramp."[115] While the1963 episode, "Clothing Drive," had it share of laughs at the expense of the poor, it also featured an even stronger message of one's responsibility to one's fellow man. Written by Allan Manings, who would go on to produce *Good Times*, as well as co-create *One Day at a Time*—the first network situation comedy to feature a divorced mother—the episode involved a school clothing drive that offered a reward for the student who collected the most clothes. While Beaver seemed motivated only by the reward, Ward pointed out that the true reward was in helping others less fortunate than themselves.[116]

In "Bachelor-at-Large," when Eddie moved out on his own, the freedom so coveted by Wally and Lumpy and Beaver soured when they witnessed firsthand the "crummy neighborhood" Eddie had to live in.[117] Other episodes, as well, noted the existence of the poor or people living in poverty.[118] In "The Grass is Always Greener,"

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[115] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed."

[116] Allan Manings, "The Clothing Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[117] Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large."

[118] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions," Beaver, convinced Ward will become a millionaire by reading a book on the subject, begins picking out which of his clothes he will give to the poor when he becomes rich. Interestingly enough, Wally notes that if becoming a

in which Beaver became friends with the local garbage man and his kids, Beaver was fascinated by their home, which seemed much more fun than his clean, boring suburb. Rather than devolving to a mere veneration of suburbia (which, in large part, the episode was), the episode showed that the garbage man's kids, who June, in accordance with her middle class sensibilities, was a bit wary of, proved to be better behaved and more well-adjusted than Mayfield's suburban-bred characters like Eddie Haskell, Lumpy Rutherford and Larry Mondello.[119]

Of course, Beaver was quite aware of the advantages he enjoyed. When Beaver refused to go to a dance, he vowed that no punishment would change his mind—not even if his parents killed him or sent him out to be adopted by a poor family. Living in suburbia was a special privilege not to be taken likely. As Beaver so clearly expressed, dropping out of suburbia and affluence was a fate worse than death.[120]

Religion

Although church membership increased during the post-World War II period, sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver*, part of the non-secular imperative of the affective family

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millionaire was that easy, everyone would do it, and the millionaires would have no one to "shove around;" in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," Beaver says he wants to carry coins in his pocket so that people will think he is rich, but Wally tells him that carrying cash is now a sign of being poor—the modern rich person uses a credit car; in Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quit School, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Eddie brags that his new job at the gas station will make him so rich he will be able to buy the malt shop and "give it to the poor."

[119] Connelly and Mosher (story by John Whedon), "The Grass is Always Greener," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Leibman, in her reading of this episode, acknowledges that it tells a story of universal adolescent envy (Beaver is as much in awe of the garbage man's kid's environment as they are of his) and that, ultimately, suburban kids have to be reminded of how good they have it (245). It should be noted, however, that there is something o be said for the conscious decision on the part of the writers, in this case Connelly and Mosher, to portray the Garbage man's kids as well mannered and respectful, especially in a time when poverty was so connected with juvenile delinquency.

[120] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

sitcom, had little mention of any specific religious affiliation.[121] While the Cleavers were, without doubt, Christian, there was only one episode in which Jesus was mentioned (in a Christmas song that Beaver sang for a school play).[122] It was also implied, through one line of dialogue, that Beaver and Larry Mondello attended different churches.[123] Nevertheless, the series did not avoid the topic of religion, which had been intimately intertwined, culturally, with the family and home.[124]

In addition to numerous mentions regarding church and Sunday school and the sanctity of the Sabbath (Sunday was the day that Ward yelled at his kids the least),[125] the Cleavers did have a sense of religious values. In one episode in which Beaver swore at a classmate while Ward was out of town, Beaver, too embarrassed to tell June about what he had done, tried to get Miss Landers to accept Wally as the family representative who would discuss the matter with her. In order to convince Landers that Wally was capable

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[121] Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep: The United States Since World War II*, second edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 125.

[122] Manhoff, "The Haircut."

[123] Interestingly enough, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," as Beaver and Larry Mondello talk about Sunday school, there is a clear line of dialogue which implies that he and Larry do not go to the same church (although there is nothing implying that Larry is not a member of a Christian church).

[124] See Mary Colleen McDannel, "The Home As Sacred Space In American Protestant And Catholic Popular Thought, 1840 To 1900," (Doctoral Dissertation, Temple University, 1984) which, in discusses how Protestant and Catholic thought regarding the home had, by the nineteenth century, turned the home into sacred space; see also Jeffrey M. Burns, *American Catholics and the Family Crisis 1930-1962: An Ideological and Organizational Response* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), who notes that many groups were concerned with a perceived twentieth-century family crisis: sectarians, Jews, Protestants, and Catholics (106-127).

[125] Numerous mentions of Sunday school in such episodes as Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend;" John Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); William Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car;" Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma;" and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," which also includes Larry Mondello's observation that bible stories told in Sunday school are nearly as violent as television. The family is seen getting ready to go to church in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem." The sanctity of the Sabbath is alluded to in Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," in which Wally cannot go over and slug Eddie because it is Sunday; and in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," where Beaver says that Sunday is the day that Ward yells the least.

of taking Beaver to task, Beaver told her of how Wally once yelled at him for acting up at church, admonishing Beaver for making people think he would came from a home in which nobody respected anything.[126] Through various episodes, Mayfield kids were depicted as believing that God watched over them and that their reward would be their entry into heaven.[127] The sense of good over evil was quite strong; in one episode, when Beaver violated his restriction and went to a movie theater and won a new bike, Beaver began to think that winning the bike—and having to face the consequences of violating his restriction—was God's way of punishing him. At the end of the episode, Beaver found redemption in donating the bike to a church.[128]

While specific religion was not a significant part of the show, moralistic lessons based on the Judeao-Christian tradition certainly was, with many episodes reinforcing the notion of "turning the other cheek" and of loving those in need of help. Several episodes revolved around Ward teaching Beaver that one had to believe the best about people, even when they did bad or wrong things (Eddie Haskell and Lumpy Rutherford, who served primarily as negative examples, were the people who Ward argued needed love and understanding the most).[129] In one episode, when Beaver wished that the person who

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[126] Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father."

[127] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," June, concerned that Beaver may have been stealing items at school, notes that God is watching over him and that Beaver should take care not to do anything that would hurt God; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid," Beaver worries that he will not get into heaven if he lies; in Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," June talks about how God knows when a child is lying. Later in that episode, when Beaver tells the truth and no one believes him, Beaver is comforted by the fact that "someone"—meaning God—knows the truth; in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," when Beaver's little neighbor, Benji, believe that Beaver has turned into a rock, he believes that the real Beaver is in heaven.

[128] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize."

[129] In Baer, "Lost Watch," after Lumpy Rutherford has intimidated Beaver, falsely accusing him of having stolen a watch the he had lost, Ward has compassion for Beaver's suffering but nevertheless tells Beaver that Lumpy, acting the way he did, needs understanding more than anything else; in Conway and MacLane,

had stolen his bike would get caught and go to jail, Ward told Beaver that the young thief was already being punished by his conscience, which most certainly left the boy afraid of running into Beaver and being discovered. When Beaver asked Ward what would happen if the boy had no conscience, Ward replied that if that, indeed, was the case, the boy may actually wind up in jail. Either way, it was not for Beaver to judge him, but to help, to understand—to love.[130] If one could hold good thoughts, good actions would follow.

The idea that each person had the power, within his or her own mind, to create both good and bad, was made quite clearly in "Beaver's Baby Picture," in which Beaver spent much of the episode embarrassed over a nude baby picture that June had entered in the school baby-picture contest. After Ward resolved the matter by taking a pair of scissors and cropping the photo into what Beaver agreed was an acceptable head and shoulders shot, Ward told Beaver that there was really nothing wrong with the picture June had submitted:

> Ward: Whatever bad thoughts those fellows may have had were just in their minds. You know, they say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Well, lots of times, ugliness is too.
> Beaver: You mean all the bad stuff in the world is in people's minds?
> Ward: Well, a great deal of them are, Beaver.[131]

"The Credit Card," Ward tells Beaver that "we have to believe the best about people," even Eddie Haskell; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," Ward forgives Eddie for writing a letter which made Ward look foolish to his fraternity brothers; and, in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), when Ward secretly helps Lumpy get an opportunity to regain a lost football scholarship, he reminds Beaver that he did it in the spirit of the story of the Good Samaritan.

[130] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[131] Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture."

Nowhere in the series was the idea that action follows thought made more clearly. This message was all the more important in the modern nuclear age, when love and understanding seemed like the only paths to peace. Guiding that love and understanding was not the suburban milieu, which produced Eddie Haskell and Lumpy Rutherford as easily as it did Wally and the Beaver, but the parents, who would arm their children with a moral foundation upon which they could act. This sort of parenting was as accessible to first-ring suburbanites as it was to those who lived across the Mayfield tracks, as evidenced in "The Grass is Always Greener." While *Leave it to Beaver* was never about the Cold War, it used elements of contemporary life, including the troubled world situation, as a backdrop for the sort of complicated age in which the Cleavers lived. The answers to such troubles were never to be found in political solutions, but in the love and understanding of parents who had miraculous powers to undue the damage of the complex world that *Leave it to Beaver* reflected.

CHAPTER FOUR:
PARENTING IN MAYFIELD

The family's one place where you're
always wanted, and don't you ever forget it.[1]

--Ward Cleaver

In "Nobody Loves Me," Beaver and his pal Richard Rickover pass a bookstore window in which they had previously looked at books about adolescent insecurities, the topic of the episode. As they gaze upon such titles as "Facing Forty Without Fear," and "Parenthood, the Ultimate Insecurity," Beaver says, "Gee, Richard, they got as many books about parent's problems as they had about kid problems," to which Richard replies, "I guess parents have almost as tough a time as kids do."[2] Ward Cleaver—who in "Ward's Millions" told Beaver that good parenting was not something one could pick up from reading a how-to book—would certainly agree with Richard's observation.[3] Indeed, Ward and June saw taking care of kids—whether it was their own or Wally and Beaver's friends—as one of the hardest jobs in the world.[4]

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[1] Conway and MacLane, "Untogetherness," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[2] Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Nobody Loves Me," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[3] Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions, " *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[4] In Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward notes that it easier to be a "neat father" to someone else's kids; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat Out of the Bag," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), June tells Ward that they may appreciate their children more if they belonged to someone else, implying they only see the good side of other people's kids; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward and June discuss how it is more problematic to care for another couple's child than their own. June also notes that taking care of kids is an exhausting job; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when June laments Beaver having a friend who was stealing from his classmates, Ward notes that they could have it worse—they could be the other boy's parents; and, in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions,) 1962, Ward cheers up June by saying that Beaver is not the only kid who gets in trouble at school.

This assessment would have resonated well with baby-boom era parents. The baby boom, which began in 1946 and continued through the early 1960s, marked, if not a celebration of the family, certainly the reversal of a trend toward smaller families that had been taking place since the 1890s.[5] While the series could be pedantic in its parenting advice, it was also quite pensive, with Ward and June depicted as being as confused as their real-world counterparts. Far from conforming to the Mayfield Mystique of perfect parents, Ward and June struggled with the same questions and made the same mistakes as most parents did. While the preferred parenting method—which usually happened to be the more progressive method—was driven home quite heavily in each episode's resolution, the path to that resolution, as necessitated by the plot, left Ward and June feeling some of the same frustrations assumed to be experienced by parents in the audience.[6] This chapter explores how Ward and June echoed—and failed to echo—the parenting practices of their time. This chapter also looks at the sort of parenting practices the series seemed to endorse, as well as the comments the series made on the sort of parenting problems viewers may have been facing.

Ward and June in Fact and Fiction

While academics in the 1980s and 1990s tended to posit the fictional affective family sitcom as detached from reality, the parents depicted on such shows as *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave it to Beaver* did share similarities with the lived-experience of many—

[5] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 7.

[6] See Coontz, in *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), a follow up to her *The Way We Never Were*, in which she notes that, after having become a parent herself, viewers were using the series as a guide to help navigate the task of parenting (38-9). It should be noted that Coontz offers no support for her claim other than her own experience.

although certainly not all—Americans. At the time of the series, eighty-six-percent of all children living in the United States lived in two-parent homes, with nearly sixty percent of those children born into male-breadwinner/female homemaker configured families.[7] While the stay-at-home mom, viewed from the dawn of the twenty-first century, seems anachronistic, June Cleaver was in the statistical majority of her time. While the percent of married women in the labor force, by presence and age of children in the home, grew between 1940 to 1970s, 71.7% of mothers with children age 6-17 did not work outside the home in the 1950s.[8]

This is not to say that the Cleavers stood in the statistical majority in all measures of the baby boom family. While June, based on Billingsley's age, would have been at about the statistical norm of contemporary young baby boom mothers, Ward, based on Beaumont's birth date of 1910, would have been 35 when Wally was born, making him a bit older than the statistical norm for young married baby boom parents. Furthermore, while this series and those like it tended to be composed of two or three children, the statistical reality of the baby boom included families with four, five, and six children, a reversal in the trend toward smaller families that began after the 1890s.[9]

In terms of their fictional marriage, Ward and June were depicted as a couple which had great respect for each other, despite their strictly gendered roles, serving as an idealized example of the companionate marriage ideal made popular in the 1920s. Unlike early twentieth-century comic strip fathers who ran from their responsibilities, Ward

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[7] Ibid., 37.

[8] Statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor statistics, 1978, 64, table 14, page 64, as cited in Lynn Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 92-3.

[9] May, 7.

personified the fabled "new father"[10] who got involved with his children's lives and matters of the home.[11] Indeed, Ward was so involved with family life, it was he, not June, who was depicted as having the double day of duties at work and at home. While Ward was certainly served by June (perhaps more so than Ozzie Nelson, whose wife, Harriet Hilliard Nelson, was always depicted as less subservient than June), Ward was a frequent helper in the kitchen, drying dishes, getting and helping put away groceries, and even pouring June the occasional cup of coffee.[12] Unlike Maggie and Jiggs, June was no fry-pan wielding shrew.[13] Viewers could tell the Cleavers enjoyed being married. While the word love was not bandied about with abandon as it would be in later 1980s family sitcoms such as *Family Ties*, there was little room for doubt that Ward and June were a

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[10] See Robert Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A Brief History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), who argues that the scientific and therapeutic ethos of the family had given rise, between 1920-1940, to a new fatherhood in which the father was more involved with the day-to-day workings and emotional health of the family (88-118).

[11] See Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), who writes that young parents of the post-War era "attempted to 'relate' to their children instead of imposing their authority. (105-106).

[12] Ward helps June with the groceries in Bob Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Ward dries the dishes in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and in Connelly and Mosher , "Eddie's Double Cross," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960). Ward helps June set the table in Bill Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ward pours coffee for June in a number of episodes, including George Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Ward puts away dishes for June in Joesph Hoffman, "Beaver's Laundry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and Ward and June discusses issues effecting their children together in a number of episodes, including Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[13] See Scott Donaldson *The Suburban Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) for more on the concept of husband and wife operating as a team (124); also, see Lasch, "...If the fifties glorified domestic life, it was a type of domesticity already reorganized on the principle of 'friendship.' This point has been lost in the superficial commentary on the postwar 'cult of domesticity' that has become so fashionable in recent years..."(105).

happy couple who faced the task of keeping a home, and, more importantly, raising their children, together.

"Don't be your father's kind of father..."

In an episode in which Wally got in trouble for throwing towels at some other boys in the school locker room, June whisked Ward aside to ask him if he would have pulled a similar stunt when he was a boy. When Ward admitted that he would have, June replied that Ward was no better than his son.

> Ward: That's right, but what's wrong with wanting my sons to be better than I was?
> June: Well, now that you mention it, nothing at all.[14]

Whether people of the 1950s turned inward toward family to make up for depression era and wartime deprivation, or whether they did so out of the hopelessness of the Cold War era,[15] many baby boom parents, both fictional and real, did seem engaged in making their children's lives better than their own.[16] In making a better world for Wally and the Beaver, Ward and June borrowed not only from twentieth-century progressive parenting literature, but also negative and positive examples from their own fictive pasts. This was particularly true of Ward, who seemed to be influenced by conflicting memories of the

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[14] Connelly aaand Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[15] According to Lasch, the retreat to family and "domestic virtues" came about from economic disasters of the thirties, World war II, and the Cold War, which made people feel they had little control in politics or history. Business and work became dull, and, thus, people retreated into the comfort of the sort of childhood they had known (105-106); the more popular (yet not necessarily any more correct) historical argument in this regard was advanced by Elaine Tyler May, who argued, in *Homeward Bound*, that people retreated to the family in the fifties because of fears of nuclear war, as well as in response to a Cold War rhetoric of containment that was being applied to the home.

[16] This is expressly stated in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election, " *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), in which Ward states that he does not feel there is any parent who does not want their kids lives to be a little better than his.

stern discipline he received from his father balanced against a childhood that he recalled as being simpler and happier than that of his boys.

In the 1963 episode "Beaver Joins a Record Club," Ward jokingly admitted to June that he stopped talking about the long walks he used to make to school because it only reminded him of the harsh childhood he actually had.[17] Like Joe Connelly, Ward had learned to look for the good things. But that was not always so easy for Ward, who seemed to be fixated on the harshness of his father, a man who seemed to have little sympathy or understanding for young Ward.[18] Based on information Ward revealed in several episodes, viewers learned that Ward's father had little interest in making life easier for his children.[19] As Ward once observed, his father "never got himself trapped trying to be a good guy."[20]

Through various episodes viewers found how Ward's father's hands and words inflicted sharp physical and emotional scars. While Ward once said that his father listened to his children, he also noted that their mistakes and indiscretions were usually

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[17] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[18] It is here where the theory on the producer's past and the family ideal in George Lipsitz, *Time Passages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) becomes problematic. If Connelly and Mosher truly wanted to replace their past, which was, to a large extent, fatherless, why did they not make Ward's past a pleasant memory as opposed to one so harsh and problematic? Connelly and Mosher did not ignore their harsher past as much as they created a present ideal which was, indeed, more tolerable.

[19] Ward said that his father was too busy with his own life to help him with a school project in Connelly and Mosher, (story by Ellis Marcus), "Beaver's Poster," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); in Frank Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward notes that his father would not have paved the way for him the way he had done for Beaver; Connelly and Mosher (story by Bill Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward keeps the door to the house unlocked during the night so that his kids, who are camping outside, can come in without having admit to he and June that they had failed to spend the night outside. When June asks Ward if his father would had done that for him, Ward says no—which is one of the reasons Ward did it for Wally and Beaver.

[20] Connelly and Mosher (story by Bill Manhoff), "Weekend Invitation."

met with a trip to the infamous wood shed. [21] Ward's father was depicted as having little time for the progressive child-rearing practices being used by an elite few during Ward's youth in the 1920s for example.[22] When Ward tried to ease Wally through a bout of self-consciousness, Ward was quick to point out that his father would most likely have said something to make matters worse; bouts of emotional depression in Ward's day brought little more than a dose of "foul-tasting tonic."[23] And, while Ward, like many modern fathers, wanted Beaver and Wally to find their own vocational interests, one episode revealed that Ward's career path had been set by his father.[24] On the one occasion when Ward did follow one of his father's parenting examples—letting Beaver run away from home without attempting to stop him—the situation ended in dismal failure.[25]

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[21] Ward notes that he stopped talking about his childhood after realizing it was miserable in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Ward mentions being taken to the wood shed in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ward's father's razor strap was mentioned in Bob Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); in Connelly and Mosher (story by Dale and Katherine Eunson), "The Hypnotist," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward notes that while his father would listen to his kids, the punishment with the belt would come "nine out of ten times" just the same. When June says that was cruel, Ward looks at the positive side and reminds her that at least his father had listened; getting hit with the strap was part of life then, and, as Ward said in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), "my father was not one to let a boy down;" and, in Bill Manhoff, "The Haircut," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Ward notes that his father would have "wailed the tar" out of him in a similar situation that Ward now faced with Beaver.

[22]See Thomas Hardy Leahey, *A History of Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1987), 345-354, for a discussion of progressive psychology in the 1920s.

[23] Ward notes how his father's directness in one of his own pubescent bouts with self-consciousness set him back years mentioned in Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); the foul-tasting tonic treatment is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiancé," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[24] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's IQ," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960),

[25] Connelly and Mosher , "Beaver Runs Away," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

While Ward acknowledged that his father had "a fine set of values," he had no desire to parent in similar fashion.[26] If anything, his father's lack of understanding and empathy caused Ward to heighten his own. This improved sense of understanding over that of his fathers can been seen in "Beaver's Football Award," in which Beaver and some of his friends on the football team decide to wear sweaters instead of jackets to an upcoming sports awards banquet. While Ward tries to convince Beaver that his teammates will let him down, leaving Beaver the odd man out (there is no doubt expressed in this episode that jettisoning the jackets was a poor social move on Beaver's part), Beaver refuses to give in. Ward takes Beaver to the banquet in a sweater and, to no one's surprise, Beaver is the only one dressed causally; consequently, Beaver feels like a "creep" and demands to leave. When Ward takes Beaver back to the car, he pulls a jacket and tie out of the trunk. Beaver is overjoyed, but wonders why Ward did not just make Beaver wear the sweater. Ward replied that he did not force Beaver because that is exactly what his own father would have done.[27] This line is crucial to understanding the Cleaver's parenting techniques, for it shows how Ward was being depicted as a father who was desperately trying to shrug off the mistakes of his father's supposedly less enlightened past. Indeed, Ward Cleaver, standing at the precise moment where science, economics and environment allowed for one to raise a family "properly," moved Ward to discard the relics and practices from the past that no longer seemed appropriate.[28]

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[26] "Fine set of values" line from Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958). Some readings of this line may indicate that Ward felt the lack of such punishment was also one of the problems of post-World War II America.

[27] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[28] cite from Coontz about economic stability of the family which allows it to be successful.

Ward and June's view of the past was not entirely negative. In looking at the problems Beaver and Wally faced, Ward and June were often depicted as drawing on their own childhood memories for guidance, whether it was in recalling what it felt like to long for some material object, to desire to be popular, or to dream of fame and stardom.[29] Such empathy was shown by Ward in a number of episodes, including "Beaver's Prize," in which Ward decided to bring some ice cream home to Beaver, who had been grounded for breaking a rule:

June: I thought you were the strict father?

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[29] In Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward, not impressed by one of Beaver's magic tricks, notes that he used to be a kid as well; when Beaver rescues his old teddy bear for sentimental reasons in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward did the same thing with his old shot-put which he found in the garage; Ward empathized with Beaver's desire for a toy in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), both Ward and June reveal their empathy for Beaver's desire to be popular at school. Such empathy is also expressed in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward also empathizes with Beaver's desire to be a famous musician, a dream Ward once had when he was a child; Ward and June's understanding is a pivotal part of the resolution to Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), in which Beaver wants to spend a bit more time with a dog he found before giving it back to its owner; in Connelly and Mosher (story by George Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward also tells June how fads like haircuts are part of growing up and that he had indulged in them as well; Ward recalls, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions,) 1959, how he once gave his mother a gaudy present just as Beaver had done; Ward empathizes with Beaver's tactics to extract a favor from his father in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs;" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), June empathizes with Beaver's desire for a rather gaudy sweater; and, in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley," June wants to help a friend's son because she grew up with the friend as a child and once dreamed of each having children who would be friends together. In terms of doing harmful or dangerous things, Ward notes in William Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), that he did many things that his parents never found out about; in Bill Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward tells June that he used to see horror movies like Beaver wants to see and that they never did him any harm; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward says he used to do some of the fighting and rough-housing that Beaver has been inspired to do via reading "Ivanhoe;" when Beaver lands in a police station in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward admits he would not have wanted his father to know about such a situation any more than Beaver did; and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward empathizes with Beaver's childish stunts. In many ways, each of these instances also convey another main theme of the series—that there is a certain unchanging universality to childhood. Parents need to recapture that past in order to parent well.

Ward: Well, I'm also the ex-child.[30]

Confronted with a world which he saw as more pecuniary than that of his youth (a view which is not, by the way, historically accurate), Ward was depicted as desperately wanting to share his "golden age" youth—which would have taken place, oddly enough, during the Great Depression—with Wally and Beaver.[31] While June is depicted as having a few nostalgic interests,[32] it was Ward who most often looked back fondly to old baseball heroes, the simple pleasures of reading Tom Sawyer, walking barefoot in the summers, and living on the ice in the winters.[33] The irony should not be lost on modern readers; while viewers today see the series as representing a golden age, Ward is mourning a "golden age" from the 1920s —a period which Helen and Robert Lynd had

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[30] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[31] Ward's nostalgia was also noticed by Nina C. Lieberman, in *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995), which noted that Ward was not as potent as other TV dads of his time, like Jim Anderson, because "...his reminiscences about his youth undercut his authority, constantly reminding the viewer that Ward, too, was once a mischievous little boy himself" (125).

[32] See Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," and Tibble, "Wally and Dudley."

[33] Ward shows his fondness for past baseball heroes in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), noting that while he thought people would never forget the heroes of his past, Wally says they now have new heroes who will never be forgotten; Ward feels sports for kids have grown too complex in Connelly and Mosher (story by Edward J. O'Connor), "Beaver's Team," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), joking that kids need special equipment today even to play marbles; Ward notes he took his shoes off on the last day of school and did not put them on all summer in Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); in Connelly and Mosher, "Garage Painters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward speaks of Tom Sawyer as a real boy's hero and wishes boys could have fun like they used to. When Beaver and Wally steal a page out of Tom Sawyer by getting a small neighbor child to paint the garage door for them, they soon learn that times have changed and that one cannot do the same things Tom did without getting into trouble; in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward waxes nostalgic for the good old days of walking to school, calling it one of the pleasures of childhood; Ward also glamorizes the way kids used to walk a great deal in the old days in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk;" Ward talks nostalgically about sitting around the piano for a sing-a-long in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," mentioning the 1920's song, "I'm Just Wild About Harry;" and, in Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver's interest in ice skating makes Ward recall how he used to spend his winters on the ice.

already typified in *Middletown* as pecuniary, self-involved, and overly commercialized.[34] Thus, before the fifties were nostalgia they were nostalgic.

The use of the past in popular literature is certainly not new or unique to the 1950s; nostalgia and declension have been continuing themes in American literature since the early-nineteenth century.[35] However, during the last days of the depression and continuing on through the great dislocation of World War II, nostalgic literature had become so ubiquitous, it was drawing barbs from social critics and commentators. Clyde Brion Davis, in his polemic exposing the lie of the "good old days," wrote that he was "out of patience with the wailing prophets of doom" who believed that the world was "rattling to hell in a handcar." Most offensive to Davis were what he called:

> ...the painted mausoleums, the nostalgia books which have been riding the best-seller lists for the last ten years or so, the fiction and so-called non fiction which spread a cake-frosting of glamour over the good old days, the better days of a half-century or more ago. Some of them have been good and some of them have been bad, but I am not concerned at the moment with literary quality. What does concern me is that they have had a cumulative effect on the popular audience, giving an impression that the days of long ago were more interesting, more romantic and happier than today and that impression is by and large simply false.[36]

Wright Morris, further attesting to the predominance of nostalgic material in post-World War II America, shared Davis's disdain for nostalgia in his 1963 work *The Territory*

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[34] See Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929; reprint, San Diego: Harvest, 1957), 496-502.

[35] See David C. Stineback, *Shifting World*: Social Change and Nostalgia in the American Novel (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976), in which Stineback writes that the individual characters of novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "yearning for rest (or, more accurately, stability) frequently take the form of nostalgia for the past and, in particular, an insistent sense that life present is somehow morally or spiritually inferior to an earlier period in history" (15).

[36] Clyde Brion Davis. *The Age of Indiscretion* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1950), 17-18.

Ahead.[37] Much like Stephanie Coontz, who would later argue against the impossible family ideals imposed by the domestic sitcom, Davis argued that nostalgia reuced one's ability to function:

> The power and source of nostalgia...sings in the blood, and with age it grows thicker, and when all other things fail it joins men in a singular brotherhood. Wherever they live in the present, or hope to live in the future, it is in the past that you will truly find them. In the past one is safely out of time but not out of mind.[38]

Nevertheless, those seeking shelter in the past could turn to any number of volumes recounting the good-old days, including Samuel Rapport and Patricia Schartle's collection of "Informal recollections of home, farm, village and big city by America's Greatest Writers" compiled in *America Remembers: Our Best Loved Customs and Traditions*. Unlike Marx and Morris and other contemporary critics fed-up with the past, Rapport and Schartle urged Americans to remember what was good and right about their history. As Rapport and Schartle observed:

> Historians who record the American heritage must consider the bitter hardships of pioneers, the roughness of our frontier tradition, the rawness of back streets and slums. Yet there are happier bonds that hold Americans together: the simple, unpretentious traditions of home and community that democracy has fostered. Although the memories of bad times have strengthened us, it is the happy times American remember best and longest. These too belong in the record.[39]

Dale Eunson, who along with his wife Katherine would write a number of the series most sensitive *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, first gained notoriety with his post- World War II nostalgic memories of the stories told by his paternal grandfather, Robert. Eunson's *The*

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[37] Wright Morris, *Territory Ahead* (New York: Anthenum 1963), 159.

[38] Ibid., 159.

[39] Samuel Rapport and Patricia Schartle, eds., *America Remembers: Our Best Loved Customs and Traditions*, (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1956), 11.

Day They Gave Babies Away, appearing first as a short story in a 1946 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, became one of the most enduring sentimentalist pieces of the post-World War II period.[40] The story details the tragic experience of how Eunson's grandfather and younger siblings, who grew up in rural Wisconsin, had lost their parents in 1868. The story builds to a Christmas Eve trek though rural Wisconsin, with Robert placing his brothers and sisters, one by one, with loving families who agreed to adopt the orphans.[41] It is not surprising that Eunson's tale of displaced orphans touched a nerve in post-World War II America, which had seen much family upheaval and displacement.[42] Eunson's story, steeped in the sort of family melodrama that he and his wife Catherine would use to great effect in many *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, combined the current feelings of displacement with the nostalgic allure of rural nineteenth-century heartland America.

Ward's nostalgic feelings are perhaps best depicted in "The Happy Weekend," in which Ward attempts to give his boys a taste of the simpler life he once enjoyed at rustic Shadow Lake. Trouble starts before the trip begins, when Wally and Beaver tell Ward that they have already made plans with Eddie to see the latest B-movie, *Jungle Fever*. Ward, upset the mass, "ready-made entertainment" his sons are consuming wants Wally and Beaver to enjoy something more authentic. Arguing that his sons "ought to be exposed to things I did when I was a boy," Ward decides to treat Wally and Beaver to a

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[40] The story became very successful; it was made into a teleplay, appearing on the anthology series *Climax* in 1955. In 1957, the book was then made into a successful Hollywood production, *All Mine to Give*. The book went through several reprints and was published up through the 1980s.

[41] See Dale Eunson, *The Day They Gave Babies Away* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1947).

[42] See William M. Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War: The Second World War in the Lives of American Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), as well as Griswold's chapter, "Fatherhood, Foxholes, and Fascism, 1940-1950," 161-184.

weekend of some good old-fashioned fun—whether they like it or not. Upon their arrival, Ward soon finds that picturesque Shadow Lake has been corrupted by modernity, leaving the lake a mere shadow of its past. The first assault on Ward's pristine past occurs when June and the boys find a small strip mall that offers comic books and a hairdresser. Later, Ward and his boys learn that the lake has been artificially stocked with fish to accommodate people's growing desire for a maximum catch with minimum effort. The ultimate insult comes when Wally and Beaver find Shadow Lake's most impressive feature—a cliff overlooking the town's drive-in theater that is showing *Jungle Fever*. Wally and Beaver spend their last night at Shadow Lake taking turns watching the film through binoculars. Disappointed, Ward admits to June that has realized that "you can't wrap up your childhood in a package and give it to your kids." By the end of the episode, however, Beaver and Wally, having discovered a small island on the lake, do begin to have fun, and beg Ward to let them stay another day, offering Ward some hope out of what was, overall, a miserable excursion in nostalgia.[43]

The problem of mass culture and its effects on children were not unique to the 1950s; as noted above, the Lynds explored it in their 1920's investigation of Middletown. While Mary Rene Hughes and Gerard Jones in their respective works on comic strips and sitcoms argued that the coming of the affective family meant that modernity was unquestionably being accepted by popular culture, "The Happy Weekend" proves that that was not completely true.[44] The Cleavers—Ward in particularly—could be quite

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[43] Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[44] See Mary Rene Hughes, *What's So Funny? Families in the Comics*, (Masters thesis, University of Michigan Horace H. Rackham School for Graduate Studies, Program in American Culture, 1992, who writes about how comic strip families had, by the 1950s, were depicted as adopting or accepting

uncomfortable with modernity. Not that Ward and June based all their actions on a past they both lamented and despised. Indeed, the same modernity that brought stocked ponds and strip malls also brought an arsenal of scientific parenting tools that Ward and June certainly accepted.

Scientific Parenting in Mayfield

Ward and June Cleaver were not created in a vacuum. Series producers Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher, parents themselves, seemed to be well aware of the competing ideas and ideologies that, by the mid-twentieth century, formed the canon of popular scientific child-rearing literature. Consequently, Ward and June were well aware that parenting was not just about love, but science:

> June: I don't like the boys fighting like this...Maybe it's our fault?
> Ward: How can it be our fault?
> June: The books always say it is.
> Ward: No book's going to make *me* feel guilty.[45]

But, by and large, the books *did* make Ward feel guilty, as evidenced in the pilot episode in which Ward warned June against defying the wisdom of parenting experts.[46] Consequently, the Cleavers not only discussed the right way to raise their sons, but made critical assessments of how they handled—and mishandled—various parenting situations.

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industrialism and its resulting modernity without question, 56-7, while Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, makes much the same argument about sitcoms, 87-101.

[45] Dialogue from episode reprinted in Irwyn Applebaum, *The World According to Beaver*, (New York: TV Books, 1984), 171.

[46] See discussion of pilot in chapter one.

To understand the effect that the 1950s sitcoms had on the American family ideal, it is first important to understand the effect America's obsession with family and parenting had on the sitcom. The convergence of modern psychology and child-rearing was rooted in the work of G. Stanley Hall, a pioneer of the medical-model of child-rearing.[47] By 1881, Hall came to recognize "the uniqueness of childhood and the wisdom of adapting education to the child's nature at every stage of development."[48] If children could be studied, Hall reasoned, educators could find out how best to enhance their learning and development. Hall's most significant contribution to education was the child-study movement, which he introduced at the National Education Association in 1882.[49] While Hall's child-study was not known for its careful methods or scientific validity, the brief-lived movement was significant for bringing together medical, psychological, and pedagogical thinkers who helped forged elements of psychology and education that continue to shape children's lives today; "Without Hall's unorthodox synthetic urges," writes Hall's biographer Dorothy Ross, "...both psychology and education might have been considerably poorer."[50]

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[47] See Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972) who argues that Hall's "scientific psychology" resulted from "the convergence of concepts, problems, and methods of investigation in philosophical psychology, physiology, and evolutionary biology," which lead Hall to the "conviction that the mind could be studied in the same scientific manner as other physical and biological natural processes" (66-67).

[48] Ibid., 115.

[49] Ibid., 126

[50] Ibid., 366-367; see also Theresa R. Richardson, who, in *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), argues that "...the impact of child study was more pervasive than its official organization or temporal existence might imply. Hall's ideas on child study filtered into other organizations such as the Mother's Congress, precursor to the contemporary Parent Teacher Associations. It became a part of the developing academic disciplines which were to become the official guides for child life in the twentieth century" (25-6).

One result of Hall and other social scientists and physicians' work was parental reliance on expert sources. In writing about the twentieth-century rise of scientific parenting techniques, Michael Zuckerman observed that "Few parents anywhere have ever put themselves as hugely and hopefully in the hands of child-care counselors as American parents of the aspiring classes have in the twentieth century."[51] Indeed, while child-rearing had previously taken place within a web of female relationships, it was slowly giving way to an emerging field of less personal experts.[52] This new faith in psychological parenting provided a new perspective on mothering, which was transformed from a "primitive biological duty" to what Victoria Bissell Brown has called "work for which women needed to prepare."[53]

At the bottom of this new scientific parenting were the individual psychologists, pediatricians, and child development specialists who, between the early to mid-twentieth century, advanced the expanding catalog of child-rearing methods and techniques. Perhaps the most significant psychologist of the 1920s outside of Freud was behaviorist John Watson, who argued for stricter feeding schedules and more restricted emotional contact between parent and child. Arguing that "human beings could be built to order,"[54] Watson offered perhaps the most prescriptive advice to date, highlighting excessive mother-love, an element of which one sees in the family sitcom, as an evil to avoid.

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[51] See Michael Zuckerman, "Dr. Spock: The Confidence Man," in Charles E. Rosenberg, editor. *The Family in History*, (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 179.

[52] Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Motherwork: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 18.

[53] See Victoria Bissell Brown, "Golden Girls: Female Socialization among the Middle Class of Los Angeles," in Elliot West and Paula Petrik, editors, *Small Worlds: Children and Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 237.

[54] Thomas Hardy Leahey. For a full discussion of Watson and parenting, see pages 350-54.

Watson, like Hall, was adept at public relations and he popularized his ideas through his writings in *Harper's* and in his book, *Psychological Care of Infant and Child*, which he co-authored with wife Rosalie Rayner Watson in 1928.[55]

A decade later, C. Anderson and Mary M. Aldrich's *Babies are Human Beings* challenged Watson's strict, parent-centered approach with a child-centered view reminiscent of Hall.[56] Watson's ideas were dealt a more serious blow by Arnold Gesell, a former student of Hall and founder of the Yale Clinic of Child Development.[57] Working with colleagues Louise Bates Aimes and Frances Ilg, Gesell argued that children's problems were, primarily, biologically based, "alleviating the overwhelming sense of responsibility with which many mothers had been imbued."[58] Following in that vein was Benjamin Spock, the psychiatrist, pediatrician, and author of what is arguably the most successful of the prescriptive baby books, *The Commonsense Book of Baby and Child Care*. While Spock has sparked a great deal of debate,[59] his guide, which has been heavily revised, is still used widely today. By the 1950s, the interest in childhood and

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[55] Ibid., 352.

[56] Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 161.

[57] Ibid., 214-15.

[58] Ibid., 215.

[59] Over the past twenty years, Spock has sparked a great deal of academic interest, promoting a variety of scholarly interpretations of his work. According to William Graebner, "The Unstable World of Benjamin Spock: Social Engineering in a Democratic Culture, 1917-1950," *Journal of American History 3* (December 1980), Spock was "nothing less than a social engineer," (613) influenced by the previous generation of progressive scholars that included Kurt Lewin, Lawrence Frank, and Caroline Zachry (623) Graebner viewed Spock's infant as a potential little tyrant who needed discipline provided within a non-authoritarian environment. "What Spock had done...," summarized Graebner, "was to enlarge the playpen and put the parent inside—not as boss, but as a leader." (629). To Nancy Pottishman Weiss, "Mother, the Invention of Necessity: Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care*," in Hiner and Hawes, Spock was little more than a Watsonian mother-blamer who was unable to see beyond his race, class, and gender (Weiss, 283-303). To Grant, While Spock was, to a certain extent, all of these things, he was neither as one-dimensional nor as extreme as any of these scholars would have one believe (201-244).

child-rearing and education, along with the rise of psychology, had entered the American collective psyche and lexicon.

By 1957, parents had a wide variety of sources to which turn to guide them in their child-rearing.[60] Embedded in the developing image of scientific progress was the clear message that better families, defined along culturally constructed standards, had become a realistic goal. It was with the arrival of mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and particularly television that case-based research based on child study was disseminated to a wider audience, posing a general standard for what normal behavior, and normal parenting, would mean. John Brooks, in *The Great Leap*, details how the popular media of the 1950s had latched onto the psychology that the middle-class had adopted decades earlier.[61] As Brooks argued, "Television, not only in its rash of 'psycho' melodramas, but more subtly in its family-situation comedies and even in 'adult' westerns, was insinuating an often watered-down version of psychoanalytic ideas into the minds of its viewers..."[62]

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[60] In addition to Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1957), there were a number of other such books, including Joseph D. Teicher's *Your Child and His Problem: A Basic Guide for Parents* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company 1953), and Mary M. Thomson, *Talk it Out with Your Child: Better Child Guidance through Family Conversations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), which, in many ways, echoed the techniques found in use by Ward and June Cleaver and other sitcom families). It should be noted, of course, that the books were able to take on many topics that television sitcoms could not touch. For example, while Spock, Teicher, and Thomson all have sections on masturbation and homosexuality, this issues was never broached on television.

[61] See John Brooks, *The Giant Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), who writes that "Mothers worried about toilet training and sent their children to progressive schools, where, in accordance with psychoanalytical theory, permissiveness reigned and competition was discouraged in the interest of releasing creativeness and avoiding the formation of neurosis. Psychoanalytic ideas were certainly the key factor in the rising vogue among parents, in these limited circles, for closely observing and studying child behavior almost minute by minute" (187).

[62] See Brooks, 188-89; see also Harold Rosenberg in "Psychoanalysis Americanized" in *Commentary* (April 1965).

General psychology and psychological child-rearing practices did appear in many popular series of the 1950s and 1960s, including *Leave it to Beaver*, but they were often presented as more curse than cure.[63] On the one hand, while psychology informed much of the parental practices of situation comedy, it, as a general study, was used as comedic fodder. In *The Goldbergs*, for example, comedy was derived from Molly's young, American, educated daughter and her use of psychological terms that her mother, through her broken English, could neither pronounce or understand. Like Molly's daughter, Wally Cleaver became a conduit through which psychological theory entered the Cleaver home.[64] Indeed, Wally accepted psychology as a timeless fact; in one episode, Wally depicted psychology as something parents had been using for over 100 years to get a kid to do something they did not want to do.[65] In another episode, Wally tried to manipulate Beaver through child psychology. When his plan backfired, Wally concluded that psychology was bunk.[66]

Leave it to Beaver poked fun at psychology in a number of ways. Perhaps the most frequent was by creating a situation which undermined a stated psychological "fact." Such use appears in the pilot episode, when Ward warned June against flying in the face of psychological advice that told parents to stay out of their child's private world.

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[63] See Gerard Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 42.

[64] In "Beaver's Freckles," Wally figures out that Ward and June are using child psychology on Beaver. Wally says that Beaver has a persecution complex in "Tell it to Ella;" in Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions,) 1963, Wally, touting knowledge he has learned from a high school psychology class, tells June that kids Beaver's age have a tendency to be self-centered.

[65] Hoffmann, "Beaver the Babysitter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1952).

[66] in Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Wally tried reverse psychology on Beaver and it backfired on him. Realizing this, Wally jokes to June, that the psychologists are "sure stealing the money..."

While June disagreed, she deferred to Ward, only to find that, had she gone with her "common sense" instincts as opposed to those of the experts, the whole problem of the episode could have been averted. In "The Clubhouse," after Ward cited a study stating that kids cannot concentrate on one thing for more than 40 minutes, Beaver proved the experts wrong by spending the bulk of the episode committed to earning money to join Wally's club. In "Lumpy Rutherford," Wally and Beaver told Ward about a pesky neighborhood bully. Ward, recalling his youth, told the boys of how he once fixed a similar bully by playing a practical joke on the boy. After the boys left the dinner table, June was worried that the boys would emulate Ward's practical joke. Ward, again citing the experts, assured June that modern kid's aggressions were "siphoned off into other things like finger painting." Needless to say, Wally and Beaver played the same practical joke.[67] Readers should take careful note that the struggle between science and commons sense in these examples is highly gendered, pitting male faith in experts against female faith in intuition.

This type of gendered division is played to maximum effect in the series' greatest indictment of expert advice, "Wally's Haircomb," in which Wally has adopted an outrageous "jellyroll" haircut, imported to Mayfield High by Eddie Haskell. June is shocked, particularly in regard to what the neighbors might think, but Ward convinces June that the haircut is a simple expression of harmless teenage rebellion. "We couldn't be so cruel as to force him to be different," says Ward, spouting the popular psychology of the day. Unsure of Ward's assessment of the situation, June takes the problem to an

[67] Ward talks about expert ideas on child attention span in Mel Diamond and Ben Gersham, "The Clubhouse;" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); the comment on channeling childhood aggression is from Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy Rutherford," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

expert—Wally's male principal—who concurs with Ward. June reluctantly goes along with the experts until she finds that Beaver has also adopted Wally's new look. In a moment of fury, June leaves psychology behind and marches upstairs and demands that Wally comb his hair back to normal. When Wally asks why, she calms down to deliver her own reasoned response, reminding Wally of a time when Beaver's unorthodox behavior made Wally feel embarrassed. While June ultimately used psychology in helping Wally to see the situation through her eyes (something Ward had earlier told June could not be done), she was quick to leave the expert advice behind when the situation grew out of hand.[68] Much like her real-world counterparts, June made common sense choices that flew in the face of expert advice. [69]

The series took psychology to task in other ways as well. In "Beaver's Ring," Beaver told Ward and June about a psychologist who sat in his class for "a few minutes" to do a study on children, implying that the psychologists who prepare such studies do so on the basis of very little evidence. In "School Bus," Ward was offended by a note sent by the school which implied that Beaver's behavior on the school bus made unfair psychological judgments about Beaver's mental adjustment. Other episodes showed Ward getting upset with the idea that he had to watch his emotions and reactions so as not to hurt his children's' "delicate" psyches. Ward also complained about how experts had replaced the roles that parents once played in making their child feel loved.[70] Most

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[68] Connelly and Mosher (story by George Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb."

[69] See Grant, who argues that while parents may have bought baby books, they also expressed agency when "Common sense" guides failed to provide common sense. "In setting their own standards for normal behavior," writes Grant, "mothers, though not uninfluenced by professional judgments, commonly questioned the basis for the expert's conclusions" (153).

[70] The scene in which Beaver talks about a psychologist who came in for a few moments to observe kids was in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Beaver's Ring," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in

troublesome to Ward was how psychology had displaced blame, taking responsibility away from the child and placing it on the parents—a comment similar to those leveled by critics of Dr. Spock.[71] When Ward had to drive Beaver to school after Beaver' misbehaved on the school bus, Ward observed, "That's the way it goes nowadays. The child does something wrong and they punish the parent."[72] When June became frustrated with the expert advice over Wally's hair style, she lamented "It looks as though now-a-days, no one can make a boy do anything."[73] It took a bad parent like Fred Rutherford, who had neither the time nor the patience to be a good, "modern" father, to express the frustration that many of the characters felt towards psychology:

> Fred: My Clarence answered back to me, I slapped him right in the mouth. None of that psychology for me.[74]

Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," Ward gets upset with the school for sending a letter which states that Beaver's behavior problem on a bus has resulted in a letter telling he and June that Beaver's behavior is not up to that of the level of a fourth grader; in Tibble, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward is disappointed when he finds out that Wally's lifeguard job has fallen through, but does not express that disappointment to go along with modern psychology that argues a parent should not hurt their child's self-esteem; in Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," Ward laments the state of modern life, psychology included, that has precluded allowing kids to outgrow things: as Ward says, "They've even got experts to teach children how to play;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward notes that modern kids who say good things about parents are non-conformists; and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward jokes that the sort of relaxation pets once provided children has now been taken over by child psychologists.

[71] Ward tells June that no psychology book will make him feel guilty in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward quips that blaming he child for their mistakes is now, under the rules of child psychology, out-dated; and in Raphael Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward admonishes June for being a modern parent and blaming herself for Beaver's mistakes.

[72] Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus."

[73] Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb."

[74] Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

Nevertheless, while the overt message regarding psychology may have been one of derision and humor, Ward and June's parenting was founded in a Spockian brand of progressive psychology. For example, as good, modern parents, the Cleavers were aware of the psychological ramifications of fighting in front of their children.[75] Following the idea of action following thought, the series promoted the importance of parents developing a positive sense of self among their children. When Beaver's friend Whitey Whitney expressed his jealousy over Beaver's parents allowing him to go to the store to buy his own ice skates, Whitey said "My parents always tell me how dumb I am. Some times they tell me so much, I really think I am dumb."[76] After berating Beaver for being afraid of the dentist, Ward, feeling sorry for what he had done, told June that "all a kid needs is a little reassurance, now and then, that we recognize he's doing the best he can. That way, he'll usually wind up doing the best he can."[77] As June noted in "Report Card," it was easy to point tell children what was wrong with them, yet more difficult to talk about what they were doing right. Ward echoed this thought in "Music Lessons," arguing that every once in a while, for no particular reason at all, parents ought to tell their children that they love them.[78] Beaver's Uncle Billy expressed a similar sentiment in "Uncle Billy's Visit." In the episode, Uncle Billy, who had been portrayed in a previous episode as a person with little sense of responsibility, found himself taking care

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[75] In a rare moment, Ward and June begin arguing in Connelly and Mosher, "Broken Window."

[76] Hoffman, "Beaver's Ice Skates."

[77] Ross, Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Tooth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[78] June notes that parents talk too often about what is wrong with the child and not what is right with them in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961). Ward makes a similar comment, noting parents would be served better by praising their kids all the time as opposed to only doing so when they do something exceptionally good in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jack Patrick), "Music Lessons," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

of Wally and Beaver for a few days. Billy, who was very trusting of the boys, imposed few rules, something that Beaver particularly enjoyed. When Beaver got caught sneaking into a movie theater, Beaver was sure that his Uncle would go easy on him. Billy, upset that Beaver had violated his trust, was quite upset, telling Beaver that he was ashamed of him. When Ward and June came home, Beaver was afraid that Billy would tell them of his misdeed. Uncle Billy decided not to say anything, however, telling Beaver that, "if folks keep telling a kid over and over again that he's bad, first thing you know, he's gonna start believing it himself and try to live up to it."[79] Whitey Whitney, Ward and June Cleaver, and Uncle Billy were all reaching the same conclusion—psychology may be fair game for derision, but, deep down, its lessons were important.

Thus, Ward and June were guided in their parenting efforts by past memories as well as modern psychology. Ward's use of the past, both in its negative and positive connotations, shows that the series is not devoid of history. Ward's desire to recapture his elusive past shows that he and his family were, indeed, moving through time. Dale and Katherine Eunson, scriptwriters who did an excellent job capturing both the nostalgic and forward-looking aspects of the series, summarized this sense of parental growth in the 1959 episode, "Pet Fair." After Ward told June that his father never took the time to understand his childhood mistakes, June asked Ward to be different in dealing with his own sons. "Don't be your fathers kind of father," said June. "Be your own father."[80]

This conflict between old and new parenting techniques was explored by Robert Sears in his landmark 1950's study of the parenting techniques of 379 suburban mothers.

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[79] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[80] Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair."

According to Sears, the underlying struggle was not simply a matter of competing ideas but of competing values:

> The formation of the battle lines was inevitable. The last half century has been a time of rapid cultural change for many reasons. It has created insecurity and uncertainty about values among even the strongest of our people. In the face of uncertainty, the "old way" often has had a sense of safe rightness....Furthermore, the "new way" is feminine. It says, in effect, that men do not know everything, and especially that they do not know best about children. So the battle line was drawn. Between men and women. Between old and new.[81]

Gendered stereotypes aside, Sears' observation helps explain the wide variety of parenting techniques depicted as being selected by Mayfield's families. Indeed, while particular child-rearing ideas appear throughout history, the practices are not utilized in an entirely linear fashion. Some take hold and persist while others fade away. Indeed, culture is not a matter of forward progress compromised by what Warren Sussman called "cultural lag" and what Raymond Williams called "residual culture;"—culture is a mix of old and new forces continually acting upon people as they negotiate the present and pioneer the future.[82] Thus, Ward finds no paradox in waxing nostalgic for the simpler days of harsher parenting while raising his kids in a thoroughly modern democratic family environment. In a world of ideas, the line between old and new is never clear. Confronted by the good and bad of their past and the parenting literature available in their time, fictional and real-life parents made choices among a diversity of ideas.

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[81] Robert R. Sears, Eleanor E. Maccoby, and Harry Levin, *Patterns of Child Rearing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 311.

[82] Raymond Williams, , "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Culture Theory," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 415-17.

Parenting in Mayfield

June: Do you think all parents have this much trouble?
Ward: Only parents with children.[83]

While Ward once told Wally that parents, contrary to popular belief, did have a sense of what was going on in their children's lives, much of the humor of the series, beginning with the pilot and extending through the early years of the series, was derived from situations in which parents stood outside of their child's secret world of which the parents were unaware.[84] As Ward said in the narrative opening of the first season episode "The Black Eye,"

> Children have a wonderful knack for keeping their world separate from ours. They raise monsters right under our very noses. Unknown to us, they send away for everything from shrunken heads to flying saucers...[85]

"Captain Jack," one of the first regular series episodes broadcast, centered around the Cleaver boys sending away for an alligator and raising it, for the better part of the episode, without Ward and June's knowledge. Many other episodes involved Wally and Beaver either sneaking things behind their parents backs, or getting involved in some shady deal or phony offer that leaves their parents wondering what their children were up

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[83] Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); a similar sentiment is found in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when after Beaver's pigeons die, June tells Ward that this sort of disappointment happens "when you have pets," to which Ward replies, "No, dear. This is what happens when you have children." Also, when Ward's collectible baseball is ruined in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," Ward admits that one has to expect that sort of thing to happen when one has children.

[84] Ward tells Wally that parents are not totally out of the loop in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment."

[85] Connelly and Mosher (story by Rick Vollearts), "The Black Eye," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

to.[86] Mayfield children also had had a secret world of friends and acquaintances, filled with people like Captain Jack, the owner of the alligator farm; Beaver's friend and confidant, Gus the Fireman; junk yard owner Fat's Flanagan; and Charlie, the electrician. As noted in chapter three, Beaver also ran into several homeless men.[87]

As with the pilot, much of the comedy in these episodes came from an exaggeration of a situation from which Ward and June were isolated. In "Beaver Gets Adopted," for example, a dejected Beaver sought new parents from an adoption agency.[88] In "Perfume Salesmen," Wally and Beaver were threatened with a lawsuit from the Acme products company for failing to return a perfume they were unable to sell. In an episode in which Beaver owed a $30 fee to a modeling agency that Ward tried to dissuade Beaver from joining, Beaver secretly visited an attorney to whom Beaver offered his life savings of forty-six cents in return for legal advice and help. "I'm going to take that fee," said the attorney, who was also a friend of Ward, "Because I think you should learn that anytime

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[86] This is even the case with the pilot, in which Beaver and Wally go through much of the episode keeping their parents in the dark about the bicycle they have "won" from the milk company; one also sees this in the early episode, Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), which depends on Wally and Beaver secretly raising an alligator in the toilet tank. Other examples include Beaver and Wally sneaking out of their beds to break into the school in Connelly and Mosher (story by Phil Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); in Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School," Ward tells June that kids are always doing something behind their parents back and that all a parent can do is "sit tight and wait for the explosion;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," Wally and Beaver sneak a tire on and off Ward's car under June's nose; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Wally warns Ward not to ask questions that may reveal things Ward would rather not know about (this in regards to a crooked golfer that Beaver encounters while working as a Caddy at the country club); in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem," June admits that she thinks the kids could even sneak an elephant in behind their backs; and in one of the more famous scenes from the series, Beaver and Wally try to sneak a suitcase that they have tied to a rope up the outside wall of the house in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out."

[87] Gus the fireman and Fats Flanagan appear in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Get's Spelled," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); Fats appears again in Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window;" Beaver runs into Charlie, the electrician, in Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and Pete the "bum" is mentioned in Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse."

[88] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted."

you put yourself in a position where you can't come to your father for help, it's going to cost you something in life....You can't expect strangers to be as understanding as your own parents."[89] On other occasions, Wally and Beaver had secret brushes with the authorities, as well. In "The State versus Beaver," Beaver received a ticket after taking a home-built go-cart ride around the block. Afraid to face his father, who warned him about taking the go-cart out without permission, Beaver got Wally to accompany him to court.[90] In "Substitute Father," Beaver, who got in trouble at school for swearing, asked Wally to stand in for June (Ward was away on business) to discuss the matter with his teacher, Miss Landers.[91]

Mayfield parents were also depicted as having problems understanding their kids. In the 1957 episode, "Water Anyone," one city worker, having had a conversation with Beaver, is asked by a co-worker what Beaver was talking with him about. "Search me," says the first worker. "I got four of my own and I never know."[92] This sentiment echoes the sort of communciation gap alluded to in the parenting manuals of the time. As Thomson argued in her child-rearing manual *Talk it Out with Your Child*:

> Multitudes take courses in conduct and speech with the aim to 'win friends and influence people. But the most important people anyone is ever privileged to address are those who grow up in is own home. And they are the ones with whom out talk often falls miserably short.[93]

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[89] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[90] Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[91] Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[92] Clifford Goldsmith, "Water Anyone?" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[93] Thomson, ix.

Mayfield parents were also depicted as struggling with deciding how much autonomy to give their children. In "Beaver's Ice Skates," an episode which deals with Beaver developing smarter consumer habits, Ward tells Wally that kids need to learn how to handle responsibility before they can take it. Wally, echoing a similar sentiment expressed by Beaver in the series pilot, asks Ward, "If you don't give a kid responsibility, how can he learn to handle it?" Ward, unsure of how to answer, simply replies, "Well, Wally, I guess that's just one of the things that gives parents gray hairs."[94] Such issues frequently arose in June's concerns over Wally's choices in male and female friends. June seemed particularly worried in several episodes that Wally would fall in love with the "wrong" type of girl.[95] June also worried about her sons' general safety as well; in "The All Night Party," for example, June and Gwen Rutherford debate whether they should let Wally and Lumpy go to an all-night graduation party. While both June and Gwen are worried about the potential consequences, they admit that they hate to say "no" to their children.[96]

The Cleavers also fretted over how much assistance they gave their kids. In the 1957 episode "The Perfume Salesman," June chastises Ward for using her women's club

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[94] Hoffman, "Beaver's Ice Skates."

[95] June notes that it would be nice if they could pick their children's friends in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); June is also worried about Wally getting mixed up with some fast-living high school boys in Connelly, Mosher, and Gwen Gielgud, "One of the Boys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); June is often depicted worrying about Wally and his involvement with girls, as in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kenneth Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Wally Goes Steady," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[96] Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963). This sort of concern with being strict or permissive was not specific to TV families, but was an issue addressed by child-rearing manuals, such as Spock's exploration of "Strictness vs. Permissiveness," 46-9.

list to help his boys sell a mail order perfume. Later in the episode, when the perfume company sends the boys a cheap projector as payment for their work, Ward substitutes one of much higher quality to curb their disappointment.[97] In "Paper Route," after Ward and June vow not to help the boys with their new job as newspaper carriers, they both do so secretly, leading to a mistake which causes the boys to get fired. Ward gets the boys their job back by reminding the route manager that Ward's company does a great deal of advertising with the newspaper.[98] This was not the only episode in which Ward used his position and power to try and help his kids. While such action was in direct contrast to the series overwhelming message of making one's own way in the Mayfield meritocracy (in one episode, Eddie is made to look foolish for thinking life was about "who you know, not what you know"[99]), Ward used his clout to help Wally impress a date, helped Wally get into Ward's old college fraternity, and talked to the people at State University to help Lumpy get a second chance at an athletic scholarship Lumpy had lost due to bad grades.[100] Not that views on parental help were all that consistent among the 234 episodes. In "Eddie the Businessman," for example, Wally eagerly seeks Ward's help in

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[97] Diamond and Gersham, "Perfume Salesmen," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[98] Fran van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[99] Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[100] see Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Wally's Dinner Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Ward uses his clout to get Wally and Beaver a second chance at their paper route in Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route;" Ward writes a letter to help Wally get rushed by his old fraternity in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity;" and Ward uses his pull with his old alma mater to help Lumpy get a second chance at a football scholarship in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Having "pull" with the right people could be used by other Mayfield parents as well—in Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), for example, Lumpy's father had a judge suspend his son's license; and in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Eddie got his uncle to help him get a job on a ship.

finding a summer job. An earlier episode, "Wally the Businessman," however, had Wally balking at the idea.[101] Again, dramatic needs trumped dogma.

Ward also responded rather inconsistently in his children's pleas for help with their homework, a situation that must have rang true to many viewers. In "Beaver's Poem," for example, Ward became so frustrated in helping Beaver with a poem that he ended up writing the assignment himself. When Beaver won a prize for the poem, Ward was forced to explain why Beaver could not accept an award for work Beaver had not actually done.[102] Ward acted quite differently in "Beaver's Poster," refusing to help Beaver make a poster for a class project (not that Ward refused to do this after learning his lesson in the earlier episode, as each episode tended to be a self-contained stories that were often inconsistent with other episodes, certainly due in part to the number of episodes made, the lack of time with which to make them, and the number of writers involved in the show). Ward's action was redeemed in the resolution when Miss Landers realized that the other kids, whose projects looked better than Beaver, had received help from their parents. Because Mayfield idealized the meritocracy, Beaver's poster, ugly as it was, won.[103] Once again, Ward and June were acting on the sound parenting advice of the time, as evidenced in Teicher's handbook, in which he noted that parents should not demand perfection from their children's homework: "Good work performance is certainly

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[101] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[102] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[103] Connelly and Mosher (story by Ellis Marcus), "Beaver's Poster."

pleasing, but if the child is doing the best he can that ought to be satisfying to teacher, parent and child."[104]

Mayfield parents were also depicted as dealing with the question of over-indulging their children.[105] While scholars have noted that the series preached an overall message of financial responsibility, many episodes are filled with examples of the "loot" Cleaver parents dolled out for any number of reasons.[106] In "Beaver Takes a Walk," for example, Ward buys Beaver a new fielder's mitt after Beaver lost his mitt by making a bet that was based on one of Ward's exaggerated stories of his youth.[107] The Cleavers also used material items as rewards for good grades and to sooth their children' illnesses.[108] As noted above, Ward and June also used their memories of Depression-era deprivation to convince them to allow their boys, particularly Beaver, to buy something they desperately wanted. For example, in "Beaver's Sweater," June tells Ward about the

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[104] Teicher, 224.

[105] See Brooks, who laments the excessive indulgence of baby-boom era parents. While he has no explanation as to why American parents began "showering their offspring with cash in practically unlimited sums," he provides a number of statistics to prove it was happening: "...in the mid-Sixties it was being claimed that Americans between thirteen and twenty-two were spending $25 billion a year, or half as much as the cost of our entire military and defense establishment, and that their purchases were responsible for 43 percent of the take in the phonograph-record industry, 44 percent in the camera industry, 39 percent in the radio industry, 53 percent in the movie industry, and even 9 percent in...the new automobile industry" (Brooks 233) see also, "25 Billion-a-year Accent on Youth," *Newsweek*, November 30, 1964.

[106] Liebman.

[107] Ward gets Beaver the mitt in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward feels sorry for Beaver, who lost his movie and soda money by making a loan to Larry, and gives Beaver money for a soda; in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," Ward almost decides to reduce Beaver's stiff punishment for destroying Ward's collectible baseball, but Wally convinces him not to; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," Beaver expresses that he wants a big, expensive item that Ward says he will get for Beaver's birthday; and, in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," Ward notes that he got himself in trouble by being a "good guy" and giving into Wally's desire to go on a weekend outing with some friends.

[108] Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilder Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card;" Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connely and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

time she had pined for an opal ring in an effort to convince Ward to let Beaver get a new, expensive sweater he had wanted. Ward, recalling a similar disappointment from his youth, allows Beaver to get a jacket in "Beaver's Jacket."[109]

For all of his indulgent behavior, Ward could also deny money to his kids.[110] While the Cleavers spent an incredible amount of money on their kids, Ward was a rather conservative spender in comparison to other Mayfield parents.[111] As Ward observed in the first season episode "The Clubhouse," "If we gave them everything they wanted, they'd be bored and we'd be broke."[112] Part of this sentiment comes out of the middling nature of the sitcom family as discussed in chapter three, where obvious over-indulgence was clearly frowned upon. Thus, when Beaver wins a car in a contest, Ward tells Beaver he will have to sell it and use the money for college. When June points out that some of Wally's classmates drive cars better than their father's, Ward made it clear the Cleavers were not that sort of family (a statement which also appears to speak to Ward's need to maintain authority within his home).[113] In "One of the Boys," Ward and June roll their

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[109] Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," and Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962). In Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960 June recalls how much she admired having an orchid for her dress as a young girl, and convinces Ward to let Wally get one for his date.

[110] After Beaver wasted his money, Ward refused to hand over more money for Beaver to go to the carnival in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Found Money;" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," Ward gives Wally a hard time before eventually handing over money for Wally to restring his tennis racket.

[111] See chapter seven for a discussion on material culture.

[112] Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse."

[113] Connelly and Mosher (story by Arthur Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

eyes when they learn that some of the wealthy Mayfield high school boys have expensive cars for which their fathers pay the insurance.[114]

As evidenced by the excerpt from "The All Night Party," Mayfield parents were also concerned about the amount of freedom they should grant their children. While Ward and June certainly wanted Beaver and Wally to grow to be responsible, independent citizens, they also knew that children needed limits. Such limits were not easy to set at a time when so many parents seemed to be giving into their children—a problem that appears to be assumed by the various scripts that deal with this issue. In "Tell it to Ella," in which Beaver wants the same sort of freedom to stay out late as enjoyed by his friends, Ward observed, "That's what's bothering half the parents in America. That their children's friends have so much freedom."[115] This line not only spoke to Ward's concern for a perceived lack of parental authority in matters of child supervision, but shows how Ward had a great deal of discomfort with what was clearly portrayed as a challenging time for parents. This sense of increased parental indulgence was echoed in "Beaver the Magician," in which Beaver and Larry Mondello play a trick on four-year old Benji Bellamy, making it appear that Larry has turned Beaver into a rock. Convinced that Beaver is a rock, Benji gets his mother to go over to the Cleavers and demand that they find Larry Mondello and turn the rock back into Beaver. Although Ward and June try to diffuse the situation, Benji begins to cry. Matters get worse when Ward and June reveal that Beaver is away at his Aunt Martha's house. Unable to prove

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[114] Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys."

[115] Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962). See Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), who notes that the image "so popular in the mass media—of impotent parents dominated by their demanding children—is inaccurate, except perhaps among families from extremely poor beginnings, who want their children to have everything they missed and cannot cope with their ceaseless requests" (27).

that Beaver is not a rock, Benji becomes even more agitated. Benji's anxiety lead the Cleavers to bring Beaver back from Aunt Martha's. Martha is incredulous, refusing to see how Benji's parents could let a little boy turn a whole neighborhood upside down. That sort of thing, said Aunt Martha, was certainly not tolerated in her day—she believed what her parents told her.[116]

The days of such unquestioned obedience had long vanished. Mayfield, like America, was filled with parents who worried about their kids and questioned the parenting decisions they had made, both in terms of the punishments they exacted or the rewards they awarded.[117] At bottom, parenting was a hard job, a fact which Ward and June acknowledged on any number of occasions. After hearing Ward deliver a lesson in honesty to Beaver, June drops by the den:

> Ward: Well, you know, June, when you come right down to it, sometimes it's pretty tough being a kid.
> June: I just heard a little bit of what you said to him. You know, sometimes it's kind of tough to be an adult too.[118]

"Parents Are No Good"

Parenting in Mayfield was also a thankless job. Consider the following scene: One morning at breakfast, while June and Ward were explaining to Beaver why he could

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[116] In Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," Aunt Martha laments the day when parents told their kids what to think. See also Donaldson, who saw the 1950s and 1960s parental desire for discipline as a nostalgic look back to a golden age. As Donaldson wrote, "A strong orientation toward a more virtuous past almost always crops up, either overtly or covertly, in the indictment against pampering suburban youngsters" (128).

[117] For example, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," Ward second-guesses his decision to buy and ice cream for Beaver, who was on restriction at the time.

[118] Connelly and Mosher (suggested by a story by Robert Paul Smith), "Next Door Indians," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

not have a pet, Wally, studying from his school notes, repeated the following line—"parents are no good. Parents are no good" Ward, curious as to Wally's remark, asked Wally to explain it. Wally replied that it was a mnemonic device that Eddie Haskell had devised to help remember the names of Pascal, Archimedes, Newton and Galileo. As Ward returned to his argument with Beaver, Wally again repeated "Parents are no good."

> Ward: Wally, are you still studying your science?
> Wally: Sure dad.[119]

Of course, Ward was well aware that kids viewed their parents as being quite problematic. In one of his more nostalgic moments, Ward said that "It's pretty hard to have a care-free day when you're Beaver's age. About the only way to really guarantee it is to stay away from adults.[120]

The real problem—another major parenting problem addressed by the series—involved the basic lack of communication and understanding that existed between parent and child. Indeed, for all the generalizations regarding Ward and June's effective parenting skills, the Cleavers—particularly Ward—were more often than not depicted as mishandling their kids' troublesome situations. Ward's flippant response in "Beaver Gets Adopted," as noted above, lead Beaver to the local adoption agency.[121] Ward's anger over Beaver drilling holes in the garage wall led Beaver to threaten to run away from home. While such lectures may have been necessary to maintain order and enforce the rules, Ward and June realized that their words often fell on deaf ears or were

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[119] Dale and Katherine Eunson, "Pet Fair."

[120] Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School."

[121] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted."

misinterpreted by Wally and Beaver, who were inclined to view their parents as being cruel and arbitrary.[122] As Ward observed in the episode "Spot Removers," adults speak as adults but that children listen as children.[123]

Such misunderstanding frequently became the fodder for episodic humor. This was used to a great extent with Ward, whose thoughtful advice often made matters worse.[124] Thus, When Ward warned Wally that shaving at too early an age would make his beard grow thicker, Wally, eager to prove his masculinity, shaved even more frequently. In trying to placate Wally's feelings of self-consciousness about his pug-nose, Ward said that when he was a boy he had been concerned with his own big ears; rather than confort Wally, Ward's discussion gave Wally one more physical trait to worry about.[125] In each of these instances, Ward is depicted in similar fashion to the bumbling

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[122] Ward says parents can make the right thing seem "dull and unattractive" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ward acknowledges that lecturing kids makes them afraid to come to their parents in Richard Baer, "Lost Watch," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward says parents confuse their children by lecturing to them; in Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward admits to June that it is hard to be firm without being angry; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," Ward notes that an outsider's words can have more effect sometimes than those of a parent.

[123] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers."

[124] The difficulties of conveying lessons to a child, or to get the child to see things from a parent's perspective, is found in Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," and Bill Manhoff, "Cleaning up Beaver."

[125] There are numerous examples of this throughout the series. In van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route," Ward thinks the boys want to confide in him but June is wise enough to know they want a favor of him; in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Ward thinks he convinced Wally to go to dancing lessons, but June knows that it was a girl at the school that has motivated her son; Ward thinks his talk helped Wally feel better about dating a tall girl in Ross (story by Enochs), "Wally's Big Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), but it was the girl doing exactly what June predicated—wearing flats and combing her hair down—that actually made Wally feel better; Ward underestimates one of Beaver's problems in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model;" in Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," Ward does not agree with June that Tom Sawyer will encourage the boys to get into trouble, but June is later proven right; in Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," Ward , thinking he has helped Wally feel better about his pug nose has actually given him a fear of his ears being too large (something that Ward revealed he had worried about in his youth); the same problem happens between Ward and Beaver in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Sheepdog," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); in

fathers of early twentieth century comic strips, such as "The Gumps" or "The Family Upstairs," where sagacious pomposity was deflated.

Sometimes the child's secret world and the lack of communication combined to create dramatic problems. In "The Bank Account," when Ward spent the better part of an episode thinking his sons were talking money out of their school bank account to buy something foolish, he was embarrassed to learn they used their money to buy him a new hunting jacket.[126] A similar situation occurred in "Beaver's Bad Day," when Ward accused Beaver of lying only to learn that, after a punishment had been doled out, Beaver was telling the truth.[127]

Ward also erred as a parent by being extremely harsh or short with his kids, scolding them, calling them stupid, or otherwise putting them down.[128] There were also times in which Ward and June were depicted as having little time for or patience with

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Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward incorrectly thinks it was his speech on the spirit of competition that made Beaver want to improve his baseball skills (while Beaver was actually motivated by being bested by a girl); in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb, Ward thinks he has easily gotten Wally to change his mind about growing out a duck tail, arguing that the hair will fall in Wally's eyes during swimming. but, at dinner, Wally reveals he will quit swimming and keep his new hair style; in the Conway and MacLane, "Yard Birds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward boasts about his boys responsibility just before the episode's problem—which hinges on their lack of responsibility—is revealed; and in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Ward thinks Beaver is balking at a summer bus trip because he will miss the family, as opposed to the fact that Beaver is really afraid to leave his new girlfriend.

[126] Phil Leslie, "The Bank Account," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[127] John Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[128] Ward calls the boys "stupid," in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble;" Ward is warned not to scold Beaver in both Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat out to the Bag," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete;" in a discussion about Wally's future in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's IQ," Ward inadvertently makes Beaver feel foolish; Ward's harsh tongue-lashing leads Beaver to run away in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Runs Away."

their kids.[129] When rules or behavior expectations were violated, discipline followed, either in the form of a grounding, a lecture, or both.[130] Such displays of anger made the Cleaver boys reluctant to tell their parents the truth; indeed, even though Ward and June told their sons time and again that Wally and Beaver could come to them with any problem (a frequent theme of affective family sitcom parenting), the children knew that parents were arbitrary and unpredictable enough to often require a more circumspect route to the truth.[131] Wally clearly expresses this to Ward in "The State versus Beaver" and "Beaver's Ice Skates," saying that he and Beaver could never really be sure as to how Ward might react to bad news.[132] In some episodes, a parent's reaction to bad news could seem quite scary.[133] While this sense of fear surfaced in a number of episodes, it

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[129] Ward, due to a preoccupation with some other work or out of anger, is seen having little patience with his kids in Connelly and Mosher (story by Arthur Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest" (trying to fix a lamp); Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilder Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card" (got a headache helping Beaver with his homework); Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem," (again, helping Beaver with homework). Ward's is short with Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho;" and Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); and Manhoff, "The Haircut."

[130] Ward's anger over the loss of a childhood memento has him deliver a strict and sever punishment to Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball;" in Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," in which Beaver looses money he had collected for a charity, Ward sends Beaver out to tell the people he had lost it, leading many of the people observing that Ward was being much to strict; the episode Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine" begins with Wally, arriving home late, getting a lecture and stern punishment as well, although part of that is demanded by the plot, which will have Ward and June feel that their harsh words have lead Wally to seek joining the merchant marine.

[131] Ward seems to be determined to dislike whatever suit Wally buys in Baer, "Wally's New Suit;" Ward says he will listen to all the facts but then tell Wally why he cannot go on a weekend trip in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation."

[132] June admits that she and the kids have to be a bit devious in dealing with Ward's changing moods in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates;" in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," Wally says they never know how Ward will react to bad news and find it hard to take a risk on being forthcoming.

[133] Ward has made such a big deal to Beaver about not being conspicuous in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), that when he learns Beaver would rather starve than let Ward know he got his head caught in a park fence, Ward notes "Let's just get him out of the fence first, June, then you can all sit around and tell me how wrong I was;" Ward ends up scaring Beaver in "Connelly and Mosher, "School Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), by inadvertently discussing all the things that can go wrong in Beaver's play; in Katherine and Dale

was most clearly portrayed in the Connelly and Mosher first season script, "The Haircut." Having already been scolded for losing his lunch money three days straight, Beaver, afraid to confront his father, tries to cut his own hair. When Wally walks in on Beaver's dismal attempt at cutting his own hair, Wally lends a hand, making Beaver's hair look worse. While the boys make a feeble attempt to hide the problem, Ward and June eventually discover what happened. Ward, angered that his children deceived him, is quit upset. June reminds him, however, that much of the problem is his Ward's fault:

> June: Put yourself in his place. He loses his lunch money three days in a row, and then, after being warned that this is his last chance, he loses his haircut money. Naturally he's afraid to tell us.
> Ward: What's so natural about it? Are we monsters? Do we beat him?
> June: Ward, the only guide a little fellow has is the love and approval of his parents. Now, if he thinks he's lost that it's worse than a beating.
> Ward: Well, I don't know.
> June: Look, he was afraid to tell us the truth, wasn't he?
> Ward: yeah.
> June: Who's frightening him if it isn't you and me?
> Ward: I guess that's one of the troubles of being a parent. You love your kids so much you scare the pants off of them.[134]

There is a great deal of material in this scene, from June's strong-yet-measured stand against Ward to the elements of progressive parenting that so often surface in the series, but, at bottom, this scene shows that the Cleavers were, like their real-world counterparts, not endowed with magical skills but were coming to learn about dealing with their children on a daily basis. Their perfection lay not in their freedom from making mistakes, but in their introspection, in their ability to see what has gone wrong—a

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Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," when Beaver changes his mind about wearing a sweater he made his parents buy for him (a female classmate has the same sweater), June explains to Ward how hard it is for a child to admit they made a mistake after taking a strong stand with their parents; and Ward's high expectations regarding his children caring for a neighbor's cat makes it all the more difficult for them to confront Ward when they lose a cat in Connelly and Mosher, "Cat out of the Bag."

[134] Manhoff, "The Haircut."

message which was, in turn, delivered to the viewer. The Cleavers were not perfect parents because they did not make mistakes; they were perfect parents because they *realized* that they make mistakes.

While Gans, in *The Levittowners*, would criticize modern suburban parents for failing to recall what it was like to be a child, the Cleavers excelled as parents in that regard.[135] Unlike most parents—fictional and non-fictional—Ward and June could admit when they were wrong.[136] Indeed, it is their ability to recognize their mistakes that makes their parenting seem perfect. Over various episodes, Ward apologized for not trusting his kids enough, for being too strict in his punishments, for the inconsistencies in his rules and behavior, and for the poor examples he occasionally set.[137] Ward acknowledged that he and other parents could treat their kids harshly and that they were prone to give bad advice,[138] even when such bad advice was rooted in dreams they held for their children.[139]

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[135] Gans noted that the gap that exited between parent and child was "exacerbated by a strange parental amnesia about their own—and not too distant—adolescence" (211).

[136] In Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Found Money," Ward admits he was wrong for doubting Beaver, causing Wally to observe that it was neat to have a father who was fair. Wally's assessment is born out in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," when viewers find that Larry Mondello's father has never apologized to his son; the same proves true in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," as Judy Hensler's father, unlike Ward, expects his child to be perfect all the time; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckies New Shoes," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), even when Wally makes a mistake that results in a little neighbor getting lost, Ward decides that Wally ahs learned his lesson and gives Wally his allowance over Wally's objection.

[137] Ward apologizes to Beaver for not trusting him in Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life," phrasing it not just as his problem, but the problem a lot of parents make; Ward apologizes for misjudging Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party;" in Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," Ward admits that his punishment for Beaver was too sever and takes steps to correct it; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," Ward, after forgetting to pick up Beaver's bike license apologizes to Beaver for yelling at him for loosing his bike; and after Ward admonishes Beaver for telling a lie in Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," after Ward is caught lying to Fred Rutherford to get out of a dinner invitation, Ward calls back to accept.

[138] Ward apologizes for calling his boys stupid in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble;" Ward apologizes for yelling at Wally in front of Eddie in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The

Perhaps the most touching apology episode was one of the earliest—"Beaver Runs Away." After accidentally allowing Larry to use Ward's power drill to bore holes in the garage wall, Beaver gets yelled at by Ward, who tells Beaver that failing to follow house rules will give Beaver nothing but trouble. When Beaver interprets this as Ward kicking him out of the house, Beaver decides to run away. Recalling how his father had allowed him to run away without attempting to stop him, Ward decides to use the same strategy on Beaver, sure that Beaver will come crawling back as Ward preserves his parental authority and vanquishes forever the specter of running away. June and Wally disagree with Ward's plan, but Ward stands firm. When Beaver comes down the stairs, ready for his journey, Ward simply offers his hand and wishes him well. Beaver is a bit dumbfounded, but leaves, ending up eating dinner at his pal Larry Mondello's house. In the meantime, June has become frantic over Beaver's disappearance and begs Ward to go look for him. When Ward refuses, June gets the car and begins looking for Beaver herself. Later, when Wally expresses his doubts, Ward argues that he could not allow Beaver to win in the situation. Wally, close to getting in trouble himself for challenging Ward's authority, tells Ward that Beaver does not want to win anything as much as he wants to be able to come home without "looking like a creep." Ward finally realizes the mistake he has made. When Beaver comes home, the two talk it out:

Shave," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), in which Ward also notes that sometimes it seems as though parents forget what it was like to be a kid; Ward also apologizes for giving bad advice to Beaver in Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), as well as to Wally for giving bad advice to Wally in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross" and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election." Ward also apologizes for filling Beaver with exaggerated stories from his youth that lead Beaver to look foolish in front of his classmates in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk."

[139] Ward clearly notes, in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," that parents often dream through their children and lead them on the wrong path. Showing how unrealistic this sort of behavior was, Lumpy and Eddie refuse to believe that Ward would apologize to his son, saying "No dad would say that in a million years."

Beaver: Mom said when you were a kid you ran away once.
Ward: Your mother told you that?
Beaver: Yeah. How did you feel when your father didn't come after you?
Ward: Well, I felt pretty bad.
Ward: Then how come you didn't come after me?
Ward: Well, I guess I made a mistake, Beaver. I guess I was so anxious to be right, I kind of forgot what it felt like when I was a boy.

Beaver and Ward shake hands and all is forgiven. [140]

This poignant episode is not a story of patriarchy, but of patriarchy undone, of the progressive ideal of love and understanding superceding senseless, "old-regime" parental authority. Ward's past had given him a parenting technique, but it had also given him a memory that he had buried. Even Wally was allowed to offer suggestions to Ward, something Ward could certainly not have done with his father (and, something that even Wally's real-life contemporaries were getting into trouble before; a survey in *Teen* magazine noted that kids reported getting in trouble with their parents for offering unsolicited advice).[141] At bottom, this episode shows how the modern family, as Lasch observed, had come to eschew the patterns of authoritarianism, opting instead for a harmonious family life.[142] It was also a form of parenting that Beaver and Wally seemed to appreciate. In the resolution of "Beaver Won't Eat," in which Beaver is forced to eat Brussels Sprouts, Beaver promises that, from this point on, he will do whatever his parents ask. While Ward says he appreciates the sentiment, he goes on to say that neither

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[140] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Run's Away."

[141] See Marianne Farmer, "Spanking!" '*Teen*, September 1959, which noted that one way a teen could find themselves in trouble was for offering unsolicited advice (27).

[142] See Lasch, who discusses how social science came into its own in the 1940s and 1950s to solve "...'World Problem No. 1, the harmonization of conflicting ideologies.' " (96).

he nor any other parent can truly expect such obedience as parents often hold impossibly high expectations:

> Beaver: Hey dad, are you admitting that sometimes you and mom do make mistakes?"
> Ward: Yes, Beaver, I guess I am.
> Beaver: Boy, dad. That's pretty neat. That's pretty neat.[143]

Although they feared their parents, Wally and Beaver also realized that Ward and June *were* pretty "neat," something that most Mayfield kids could not say about their own parents.

"They're always yelling at me..."

If the Cleaver's great perceptive skills and willingness to apologize painted too perfect a picture of parenting, other Mayfield parents quickly brought the viewer back to a greater sense of realism. Snatches of conversation uttered across dozens of episodes by Wally and Beaver's pals revealed homes either dominated by screaming parents who resorted to corporal punishment or lenient parents who had neither the courage nor stamina to say "no." Eddie Haskell, the most rebellious youth in sitcom history to date, was depicted as the product of an over-protective mother and harried father whose interest in domestic tranquility led them to over-indulge Eddie. Beaver's apple-chomping pal Larry Mondello was depicted as the product of an anxious mother and conspicuously absent father whose frequent business trips left Mrs. Mondello alone to deal with oafish Larry and his depression-ridden sister. While these families certainly helped to present the Cleavers as the ideal, the negative parenting example was so overwhelming it was

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[143] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

palpable. The Cleaver's notwithstanding, Mayfield's other parents clearly undermined the idea of the 1950s sitcom as bastion of happiness and bliss.[144]

Bad parenting in Mayfield ran the gamut from preoccupied parents, parents backing out of promises, and parents who tried to get their kids "out of their hair."[145] While Ward and June held fast to the expert opinion that spanking was to be avoided, corporal punishment was a way of life to the rest of Mayfield parents.[146] When Wally suggested that Ward and June let the school take care of Beaver's behavior problems, June noted that Ward felt a child's parents should be responsible for their discipline. Wally, who always read "discipline" in terms of corporal punishment, said, "Yeah, I guess if a kid's gonna get hit, it's better if he gets hit by his own parents.[147] In "Chuckie's New Shoes," when little neighbor boy, Chuckie Murdoch continues crying after the episode's problem had been solved, Mrs. Murdoch asks him why he is still crying:

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[144] Although, one should not forget their dramatic role as negative model to reinforce the lesson. As Liebman notes, "...the TV programs pit a dysfunctional unit against the Andersons, Stones, Cleavers, Douglases, and Nelsons, who then, as a family, act as the model for improvement, the catalyst for change, or the initiator of solutions....Much like the wild-west hero, who enters the society only to better it and leave, television's nuclear families welcome the intrusion of society's more troublesome situations in order to resolve them and restore the patriarchical conservative order" (149-150).

[145] in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Whitey notes that his father used to make things with him until he started coming home with headaches; images of kids who have parents who do not spend time with their children are also seen in Connelly and Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys," and Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella;" Beaver and Wally's friend's parents are depicted as backing out of promises they made to their kids in Conway and MacLane, "Poor Loser;" Connelly and Mosher, "School Play;" and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest."

[146] Teicher, for example, noted that "Spanking and other physical punishments are unnecessary....A parent's disproval or displeasure is really punishment enough" (141). While Spock felt that spanking could be used sparingly (as did Teicher, 141), Spock was quick to add that "it is **never** the main element in discipline...only a vigorous additional reminder that the parent feels strongly about what he says" (332).

[147] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

Chuckie: I'm afraid you're gonna hit me.
Murdoch: Well, now, when did mommy hit you for no reason?
Chuckie: All the time.[148]

Chuckie was just one of the Mayfield kids who lay in fear of their parents.[149] Such punishment was not some fictional hangover from an earlier age, but quite real to Mayfield's real-life contemporaries. For all the advice against spanking, Sears, in his study, reported that only one percent of the mothers of five-year-olds refrained from using physical punishment, although forty-five percent of those mothers said that they only gave one or two real spankings in a child's lifetime or spanked rarely. Overall, forty-one percent of the mothers admitted to spanking, while seven percent admitting to frequent and sever spanking.[150]

Spanking was an important issue for real-life teens, as well. One letter in response to a *'Teen* magazine article on spanking which had estimated that thirty-one percent of teenagers said they still got spanked, argued that the figure, based on his anectdoctal evidence, was too conservative. The bulk of teens interviewed for the

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[148] Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes."

[149] in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Gilbert says his mom never lets his dad hit him while he's sleeping; in Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window," Eddie notes that his father would have hit him if he broke his father's car window; Eddie makes a similar observation about his father in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance," (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally notes that parents are trying to help even when they are hitting their kids; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert is worried his dad will hit him if he comes home too early from studying; Whitey talks about his parents not wanting to hit him in front of other kids in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," (Gomalco Productions, 1962); in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," (Gomalco Productions, 1961), a junk yard owner indicates that he hits his child; and Beaver's friend Richard talks about his father being in a real "hittin' mood" in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry."

[150] See the section on "Negative Sanctions" in Sears, et al., 314-361. Table IX:3 indicates that 1-percent of mothers said that they never spanked their kids, 12-percent said they occasionally slapped hands and only gave one or two real spankings in their child's lifetime, 35-percent said they spanked two or three times a year with occasional slapping, 29-percent said that they fairly often slapped and occasionally spanked, 15-percent said that they fairly often spank, with some spankings being sever, and 7-percent reported that frequent and severe spankings were a major technique of child control, with 1percent not ascertained (328).

article, published in 1959, argued that spanking should stop at age 13. The respondents also said that they desired an approach more akin to Ward and June Cleaver (although they did not label it as such), in which kids "would sit down with...parents and discuss issues and problems" as opposed to being spanked.[151]

Getting lectured or yelled at was often viewed by Mayfield kids as worse than a beating, and there were plenty examples of tongue-lashings taking place in Mayfield.[152] In "Beaver Sees America,", Whitey calls for Beaver by asking Ward, "If you're not yelling at Beaver, may I please talk to him?"

> Ward: Why would we be yelling at him?
> Whitey: I don't know. They're always yelling at me.[153]

Other Mayfield kids, like Lumpy Rutherford and Judy Hensler, who tried to lived up to impossible expectations held by their parents, were often depicted as living in fear of bringing home disappointing or bad news. When Judy Hensler, who presented herself as perfect to her parents, got thrown off the school bus, she was afraid as to how her father would respond.[154]

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[151] Farmer, 26.

[152] Sears, Table IX:4 indicates that 26-percent of the parents interviewed said spanking "Does good, no reservations," 21-percent said that it "Does good, some reservations," 8-percent said that spanking was "Good in some ways, bad in others," 18-percent said it "Does no good with reservations," 22-percent said it "does no good," and 5-percent "Never spanks" or were not ascertained (330).

[153] Parents who scare their children by yelling at them are depicted in numerous episodes, including Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Sees America;" Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth;" Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs;" Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains;" Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's;" and Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[154] Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus."

The two most problematic parents depicted in the series (outside of Eddie Haskell's parents, who will be discussed in chapter six) were Fred Rutherford—father of Clarence ("Lumpy") and Violet Rutherford—and Mrs. Mondello, mother of Beaver's pal Larry. If Ward was the model of the understanding parent willing to learn from and admit to his mistakes, Fred was his opposite. Although he liked to tell others that he and his son had a good understanding—a lie that Fred sincerely believed—and while he loved to brag about his kids,[155] Fred really had no idea how his son really felt. Trying—and failing—to be the all-American boy Fred so desperately wanted, Lumpy lived in fear of his father. In "Lost Watch," an early Lumpy episode, Lumpy tried to blame Beaver for stealing a watch rather than face his father with the truth that he had lost it himself. Lumpy goes on to terrorize the Beaver through much of the episode, saying that Beaver must either produce the watch or pay to replace it. The truth eventually comes out and Lumpy must face his father's wrath.[156] Lumpy had good reason to be scared of his father, as various episodes alluded to how Fred practiced corporal punishment[157] as well as spouted cruel epitaphs at his son, referring to Lumpy as a "boob" or an "oaf."[158]

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[155] In Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine," Fred, unaware of how his son feels about him, tells Ward that he and Lumpy have a very close relationship.

[156] Baer, "Lost Watch." In Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Lumpy indicates his father gets upset if he asks him for a favor; and, in Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," Lumpy is seen riding his car without his father's permission, as Fred took it away from his son for flunking physical education.

[157] Fred's use of corporal punishment is alluded to in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble;" Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation;" Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet;" Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's;" and Conway and MacLane (story by William Gargaro, Jr.), "Wally's Car Accident," (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[158] Fred calls Lumpy names like oaf and boob in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," and Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship;" Fred refers to Lumpy's tuba as "stupid" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke," (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," dialogue reveals that Fred takes his anger out on Lumpy when Fred loses at golf.

Standing in stark contrast to the selflessness of Ward and June, Fred was portrayed as an ego-maniac who craved being the center of attention. Such need for attention sometimes manifested itself in rather pathetic displays. In "Wally Stays at Lumpy's," Wally and Lumpy discuss how Fred had come downstairs to participate in Lumpy's teen party. When Lumpy's failing math grade cost him a college football scholarship, Fred could only think about how Lumpy's failure reflected negatively on him and his standing at work and at the country club. Fred was also not above using his children as tickets of entry into a better life; when Fred learned that a classmate of Lumpy's had wealthy parents, Fred encouraged his son to hang around the boy more often. Fred's worst parenting moment took place in "Wally's Track Meet." After Lumpy's locker room antics got Wally suspended from the track team, which was about to compete in a big track meet, Lumpy eventually decided to tell the coach about his own role in the incident. While Ward would be proud of such a decision, Fred, who had been looking forward to taking the family along to the track meet, told Lumpy not to be too hasty in telling the truth.[159] While Fred's actions can be viewed as merely reinforcing the positive example of the Cleaver's positive behavior, the persistence with which *Leave it to Beaver* showed such human foibles was unmatched by most affective family sitcoms. Few sitcoms, then or now, had as many problematic characters as did *Leave it to Beaver*.

[159] Fred dominates Lumpy's Party in Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's;" Fred encourages his son to be friends with a wealthy teenager in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation;" Fred worries about losing his status after Lumpy looses his scholarship in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship;" and Fred encourages Wally not to say anything about his role in the locker room altercation in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet."

The Mondellos were another dysfunctional Mayfield family. Perhaps no scene better expresses young Larry Mondello's plight than the one in "Beaver Makes a Loan," in which Larry, having just been chastised by his mom, sings a pathetic chorus of "You Only Hurt the One You Love."[160] While June served as the ideal of the calm and collected mother, Mrs. Mondello was the depiction of the harried mother left alone to deal with Larry, who was viewed by Mrs. Mondello as one big nervous headache[161] When asked what she would do if granted one wish, Mrs. Mondello responded, without missing a beat, that all she wanted was for Larry to be a "good little boy."[162]

Like Lumpy, Larry had his share of lectures and spankings,[163] with many of the punishments delivered in delayed form when Larry Mondello's father—who was almost

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[160] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan."

[161]Mrs. Mondello claims that Larry is making her nervous in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry's Club," (Gomalco Productions, 1959), to which Larry responds, "Yeah, just about everything I do makes you nervous;" Mrs. Mondello is depicted as shoving Larry as he walks along the sidewalk in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," Mrs. Mondello complains of the "nervous headache" she gets by yelling at Larry's sister; and Mrs. Mondello tells Larry that he is giving her a headache in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Found Money."

[162] Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday."

[163] Larry talks about his mom hitting him in the supermarket for knocking things down in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds a Wallet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Larry says his sister laughs when his father hits him in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," in which Larry also notes that even though he was found to be innocent of stealing a boat, his father still hit him as a lesson for next time he gets in trouble; in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," Larry, after being yelled at for opening his sisters diary, later in the scene pathetically pleads, " "Alright, mom. Don't hit me. Don't hit me;" in Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Plays Hooky," it is revealed that Larry's father hit him for skipping school; and Larry talks about his father hitting him in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship," (Gomalco Productions, 1959). It is implied that Mr. Mondello yells at Larry in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem;" Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "The Price of Fame;" Connelly and Mosher, "The Cookie Fund," (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance;" Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday;" and is noted for yelling at Larry's sister in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

always away on business—returned home.[164] This displaced fear—this "wait until your father comes home" attitude—was in many ways, endemic of what Christopher Lasch had argued modern life had become—delayed punishment from a system awash in rules too numerous and complicated for anyone to obey fully.[165] While viewers never saw Mr. Mondello actively engaged in yelling at Larry, viewers learned, through transitional dialogue, that it did not take much to upset Larry's father; Larry could get in trouble for blowing a line in a school play as easily as he could be for challenging his father's judgment. Unlike Fred Rutherford, who tried to find his social status in through the success he dreamed for his children, Mr. Mondello saw his son as an imposition. In one episode, for example, viewers learn that Mrs. Mondello had to fight with her husband to agree to take Larry to a father-and-son school event. In "Beaver Makes a Loan," Beaver expressed his disbelief that Larry's father would cry if Larry ran away from home. As Beaver put it in "Beaver's Freckles," Mr. Mondello was a "hittin' father."[166]

Mr. Mondello's frequent absences also spoke to the gendered imperative of the importance of having a man around the house. This importance was also expressed in

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[164] Larry's father is noted as being out of town in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat;" and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath;" comedy in one episode is derived from fact that Mr. Mondello was, for once, *not* out of town in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize."

[165] See Lasch for his theory on how the absent father is a simile for a society which has come to expect delayed punishment for crimes they are not even cognizant of committing. as Lasch said, "The divided perception of parental authority carries over into social action. On the one hand, authorities invite contempt because they allow so many violations of their own rules; on the other hand, they threaten to exact a terrifying revenge at some unspecified moment in the future. As the postponement of gratification loses its force as a form of social control, the postponement of punishment takes its place. Deferred retribution represent the price paid for undeferred gratification" (188-189).

[166] Mr. Mondello discussed being upset at Larry in Connelly and Mosher, "School Play;" and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike." Mr. and Mrs. Mondello fight about Mr. Mondello going to a school event with Larry in Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Ward's Problem," (Gomalco Productions, 1959). In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan," Beaver finds it hard to believe that Mr. Mondello would ever cry at anything, even if Larry joined the French Foreign Legion and got killed; and in Connelly and Mosher (story by William Cowley and Peggy Chantler), "Beaver's Freckles," (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver describes Larry's father as a "hittin' father."

Mrs. Mondello's insistence that Larry's sister's get married. In "Larry Hides Out," Mrs. Mondello says that she feels that all of her family problems would be solved if Larry's sister would get married and provide a man around the house who could set Larry straight.[167]

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most dysfunctional family presented on *Leave it to Beaver* families was that of Chopper Cooper, Beaver's old buddy from summer camp who came to visit Beaver for a weekend. Viewers learn of Chopper's parent's divorce when Chopper is dropped off at the Cleavers by a man Chopper calls "uncle Dave" (who, according to Chopper, wants to be his "new daddy.") As Chopper tells Beaver about all the great presents he gets from his mom and dad, who are apparently competing for Chopper's affections, Beaver, ever the materialist, begins to envy Chopper's "great" life. Consequently, Beaver, in his own passive-aggressive way, spends the better part of the episode trying to convince Ward and June to get a divorce. However, when a call from Chopper's lonely mother sends Chopper home early, Beaver realizes that Chopper craves an intact family that is free of the constant bickering of his mother and father. Even though the script does not specifically denounce divorce, with Ward explaining it to Beaver as an option parents take when they are "hopelessly incompatible," Beaver is "smart" enough to see the advantage the Cleavers enjoy over the Coopers. Beaver not only learns that Chopper's mother cries at night—getting "the weepies," as Chopper calls it—but that Chopper cries as well. As Chopper leaves the

[167] in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," Mrs. Mondello says that she feels that all of her problems with Larry would be solved if her daughter was married and they had a man around the house.

Cleaver home, he gives Wally his new baseball glove, telling Wally that he does not need it—his mom cannot play baseball. [168]

It is important to note that while divorce is clearly eschewed by the episode, the resolution to the series, which has Ward talk with Mrs. Cooper, does not end in a promise that the Coopers will reunite for a happy ending. The happiest conclusion one can draw from the episode is that Chopper's parents will stop arguing over their son and do what is best for him. While this episode can be read in many ways, its resolution seems to suggest that even in divorce a parent can make decisions that affect the stability and happiness of their child. Parenting skills—and good parents—are thus rendered as all powerful beings who, even in the midst of divorce, can still be good parents, which was, in many ways, the most prominent theme of the series.

[168] Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest," (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

CHAPTER FIVE:
RACE AND GENDER

In January, 1963, during the last season of *Leave it to Beaver*, Kim Hamilton became the first and only African-American actress to appear in any of the series' 234 episodes. Hamilton's role in the episode, titled "Parking Attendants," was quite small and, by the standards of the time, quite predictable: she played a maid for the rich Langley family, which was hosting a posh wedding. The episode was not the first time Connelly and Mosher may have come into contact with Hamilton, whose first professional acting job was playing the part of Andy's girlfriend in the television version of *Amos 'n' Andy*, for which Connelly and Mosher wrote.[1] While Hamilton, a rather young woman, played the *Leave it to Beaver* role with no exaggerated stereotypical features added to her physical or vocal presentation, the fact that the very first African-American to appear in the series was cast in the role of a maid showed that post-*Amos 'n' Andy* television—and post-*Amos 'n' Andy* America—had a long way to go in regards to racial representations.

The same was true, of course for gendered representations. Not only did June Cleaver appear to embody all the qualities of the happy domestic that viewers, just a few years later, would come to despise and ridicule, the show itself assumed highly gendered roles that were depicted as "natural" and timeless. Indeed, while *Leave it to Beaver* has been perceived by many as a show about childhood, it was, more specifically, a show about white, male, privileged childhood. Consequently, the series, for the most part,

[1] "No Longer Trying to Reach the Moon," *TV Guide*, 7 September 1963.

ignored minorities and depicted women in ways that stood in sharp contrast with cultural values towards race and gender that were already in the process of change.

Of course, reporting that *Leave it to Beaver* was racially exclusionary and sexist is not really news. Indeed, while its constant appearance in re-runs has made it hard not to judge the series from the present perspective, the gendered and racial stereotypes that existed within the series were consistent with the time in which it was produced, at least in terms of network television. To that end, while this chapter explores the way *Leave it to Beaver* dealt with—and failed to deal with—race, ethnicity, and gender, it also attempts to look at how the series spoke to the changing racial, ethnic, and gendered landscape taking shape circa 1950. Indeed, even in this white, male-oriented series, one finds messages of tolerance and examples of women who were "not June Cleaver"—including, surprisingly enough, June Cleaver herself.

Race and Difference in Mayfield

In the 1960 episode, "Wally's Test," Eddie Haskell secretly loaded the school's restroom towel dispenser with crib notes for an upcoming exam. Wally, unaware of Eddie's plan, spilled ink on his hands and excused himself to the bathroom. When Wally pulled out a towel to wipe his hands, he was somewhat puzzled to find that it held the following quote: "To thine own self be true." Unaware that his teacher had replaced Eddie' crib sheets with these words from Polonius, Wally wiped his hands and returned to class. Soon after, Eddie excused himself to the washroom, becoming upset when he realized that his notes were gone; to Eddie, it seemed obvious that Wally had taken his notes. After class, Eddie confronted Wally, who had no idea what Eddie was talking

about. Mocking Wally's "innocent" reaction, Eddie mimicked Wally's request to go to the bathroom, saying "'Can I wash the ink off my *lily white* hands?'"[2]

The irony of Eddie's comment, appearing in a series noted for its lily white image, should not be lost on twenty-first century viewers disturbed by the racial and ethnic exclusion which marks this and other 1950's era television. On the rare occasions when *Leave it to Beaver* did deal with race and ethnicity, it usually did so by addressing the things which marked people as different. In "Beaver and Chuey," in which Beaver befriends the son of Ward's Spanish business associate, much of the episode's humor depends on certain stereotypes. For example, after Eddie tricks Beaver into telling Chuey that he has a "face like a pig," (Beaver thinks that he is telling Chuey that he is "a real swell guy") Chuey becomes hurt. When Beaver asks Wally about why Chuey responded like that, Wally blames it on the Latin temperament. This episode also gains humor by highlighting the adult Spanish character's lack of facility with English in much the same way that *Amos 'n' Andy's* episodes derived their humor from the characters' malapropisms and lack of understanding of poly-syllabic words. Thus, Chuey's father stumbles through idiomatic expressions, saying things like "it is nice weather we are obtaining" and referring to his son's sadness by saying "My boy is to cry." If there was any doubt in the humor of these lines, which would have been well accepted by an audience used to laughing at such differences, the requisite canned laughter was there as a reminder.[3] The sound track also used music to accentuate the difference. When a Spanish character appeared on the screen, his arrival was accompanied by Spanish-

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[2] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[3] George Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

themed music. This music was not only used in this "Beaver and Chuey," but in two other episodes, one involving a Chihuahua and the other involving a burro.[4]

Music was also used to denote Indians and Indian themes. In "Next Door Indians," the sound of Indian-like drum beats were played under the boys' search for authentic Indian artifacts in a vacant lot across from the Cleaver home.[5] There were also Indian stereotypes in episode dialogue, from Beaver's assumption that all Indian children had canoes to Wally admitting that he was once afraid that he would be scalped by the cigar store Indian outside of the Mayfield drugstore.[6] In "Water Anyone," Ward referred to one of his early-American ancestor as a man who sold whiskey to the Indians "to get them in the mood to buy guns."[7] Other episodes expressed the concept of "Indian givers," Fred Rutherford once described the office as consisting of Chiefs and Indians, and Ward once likened himself to the Great White Father when settling peace between his two quarrelling boys, implying that his sons were behaving like two "wild Indians".[8]

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[4] Music used under scenes in Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey;" Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and Conway and MacLane, "Three Boys and a Burrow," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[5] Connelly and Mosher (suggested by a story by Robert Paul Smith), "Next Door Indians," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[6] Canoe reference in Lou Breslow and Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); scalping reference in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Indians and whiskey reference in Gifford Goldsmith, "Water Anyone," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[7] Goldsmith, "Water Anyone."

[8] Indian promiser, giver, and trader referred to, respectively, in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Allan Manings, "The Clothing Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961). Fred Rutherford refers to chiefs and Indians in the business world in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and Ward makes the reference to the peace-making Great White Father in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

In regards to African-Americans, Kim Hamilton, as noted above, was the only African-American to appear in an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*. While African-Americans had appeared on television in non-stereotypical roles during the 1950s, no sitcoms of the period featured African Americans in non-domestic recurring roles. As historian Sarah Evans observed, life through the lens of the affective family sitcom was presented as "relentlessly white and middle class."[9] As Billy Gray, who played son Bud Anderson on *Father Knows Best*, recalled, "It was as if we were living in a vacuum or some kind of enchanted forest. It wasn't taking into account the reality of the world. It was just an advertiser's vision of what the world should be."[10] Yet the lack of an African-American presence in a community such as Mayfield was, in many ways, quite historically accurate. Indeed, post-World War II America pursued a suburban dream which eagerly kept African-Americans and other racial minorities out of the landscape. Scholars of suburbia are quick to point out that American suburbs, through their history, had always been seen as important for who they excluded as much as for who they

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[9] See Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), in which she argues that domestic scenes were "uniformly white and middle class, for suburbs had also effected a new racial and economic segregation of American Society....Television entered 5 million new homes per year with a powerful capacity to generate cultural norms and present a homogenized image of middle America that blurred differences of ethnicity and class. Differences along the lines of gender were perhaps the most powerful social division recognized and enforced in this portrayal of American life as relentlessly white and middle class" (251-2). See also Ella Taylor, *Prime Time Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), who found it quite ironic that TV ignored the issue of race at the time it was of a rising concern due to urban tensions from black southern migrations. "As the ...[1950s]...wore on, television families became almost exclusively white as well as middle-class. In a period when blacks and rural whites were migrating north in large numbers, when race was fast becoming a source of urban conflict, and when television programmers were allegedly reacting out to more cosmopolitan audiences, the 'ethnic comedies' of the early 1950s were rapidly disappearing. Amos n Andy, The Goldbergs, and Life with Luigi had all been dropped from the schedules by 1954." (26). It should be noted that while Taylor laments the passing of the ethnic sitcom, *Amos 'n' Andy* was only taken off the air after protests by the NAACP.

[10] Billy Gray inerview in Jeff Kisseloff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 346.

included as well.[11] As noted in chapter three, while suburbanites would hold greater tolerance for less outward expressions of difference, such as ethnicity or religion, race remained a polarizing factor. Speaking specifically to Levittown, Pennsylvania, Gans observed that "certain differences were most definitely not welcomed [in Levittown]....Blacks could not buy in—a Levitt policy that lasted for two decades, long after the nation began legally trying to rid itself of lawful segregation."[12] The Levittown policy was aided by the Federal Housing Authority, whose practice of red-lining—which delineated areas in which they would and would not invest in housing loans—almost always worked to the detriment of African-Americans.[13] As Jackson stated:

> Reflecting the racist tradition of the United States, the Federal Housing Administration was extraordinarily concerned with 'inharmonious racial or nationality groups.' It feared that an entire area could lose its investment value if rigid white-black separation was not maintained.[14]

This policy, according to Jackson, put a governmental "seal of approval on ethnic and racial discrimination" that was obviously accepted by the people buying into the new suburban areas."[15] As William Whyte, Jr. observed in *The Organization Man*, talking about racial tolerance fit well with the suburban mentality, but, in reality, it meant that

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[11] Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 82.

[12] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 141

[13] Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontiers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 207-208. Also see Coontz, who provides a good summary of how suburbia was financed and supported, as well as how minorities excluded, 76-79. Also see Donaldson, who says that while 15 to 20 percent of blacks lived in suburban homes by 1969, "few of them lived in integrated communities. Most lived in transplanted ghettos, in either all-Negro or almost all-Negro suburbs" (142). Thus, while suburbia changed drastically in the postwar period, the modern suburbanite inherited the prewar suburban legacy of prejudice.

[14] Ibid 208.

[15] Jackson 217; see also Herbert J. Gans, *Levittowners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 14, who talks about how this discrimination came out of a desire on the part of those who purchased into suburbia.

white suburbanites would be living alongside the very people they were leaving behind in the city.[16] As Gans observed:

> Until the state enforced a nondiscrimination law, salesmen refused to sell to Negroes and assured whites who asked about Negroes that the community would be as lily-white as other Levittown's. After the law was enforced, the salesmen protected themselves by citing the law, and promised to locate people who did not like to be near Negroes away from them, but also discouraged those who were strongly biased against Negroes from buying into Levittown.[17]

Jackson put it even more succinctly: racial discrimination in "suburbanization was not willed on an innocent peasantry. Without a substantial amount of encouragement from the mainstream of public opinion, the bureaucrats would never have been able to push their projects as far as they did."[18]

Thus, the all-white milieu of the Cleaver's Mayfield reflected a harsh reality of American suburban life. Jane Wyatt, who played Mrs. Anderson in *Father Knows Best*, also noted the similarities between televised and actual discrimination; "My dentist was born in Minnesota," said Wyatt. "He said, 'There was one black man, but he just collected the trash, and he lived on the outskirts of town. And I'd never seen a Jew in my life.' There were places like that. We were supposed to be a small town."[19] In his personal postscript to his book on *Amos 'n' Andy*, Melvin Ely, born in 1952, writes that the portrayal of a diverse array of African-Americans—including African-Americans in

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[16] As Gans noted, "Although many whites were willing to live in an integrated Levittown, some were hesitant about buying next to a Negro family" (377). Gans also discusses this issue, 169-170 and 426-428. See also Whyte, who, in his discussion of a Chicago suburb, noted that toleration was part of their social goals, but integration meant living with people that they left behind in the cities (344).

[17] Gans, 14

[18] Jackson, 216

[19] Jane Wyatt interview in Kisseloff, 346.

professional, responsible positions—in *Amos 'n' Andy* opened him to a world he had not known. As Ely observed:

> I lived in a segregated society in which it was possible—almost inevitable—for a middle-class white boy to have no inkling that there were Afro-Americans with college degrees and professions, who spoke like network anchormen, or that there were Afro-American communities whose busy streets were filled with black faces and institutions own and run by black people themselves.[20]

Gans, who lived as a participant observer in Levittown, Pennsylvania, wrote that the only blacks he saw coming in and out of his Levittown community were working as maids.[21] Thus, while it is unfortunate that Kim Hamilton's appearance in *Leave it to Beaver* was in the stereotypical role of domestic servant, it was not all that far from the sad truth of race relations and segregation in America, circa 1963.

One must also wonder what effect the NAACP's pressure on the producers of *Amos 'n' Andy* had on the way Hollywood and individual producers decided to deal with race. Considering the controversy regarding *Amos 'n' Andy* (which, while removed from primetime in 1954, remained in syndication until the mid-1960s), coupled with the growing civil rights movement, mid to late-1950s programmers may have been steering clear of non-white images to avoid controversy.[22] Consider the 1963 *Dick Van Dyke Show* episode "That's My Boy?" in which Rob Petrie (played by Dick Van Dyke), in a

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[20] Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of An American Phenomenon* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 256

[21] Gans, 14.

[22] See Gerard Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), on white producers feelings in the wake of *Amos 'n' Andy*, which Jones argues "marked the disappearance of blacks form TV series. Not only would there be no more black sitcoms for fifteen years, but for a decade there would hardly be any black supporting characters or guest stars on TV. After all the fuss about *Amos' n' Andy*, the white creators of American TV seemed to feel the safest course was simply to act as if blacks—and all other non-WASPs—simply did not exist" (60).

flashback episode, becomes concerned that the hospital has exchanged his new baby, Ritchie, with that of another couple. When Rob finally arranges to make an exchange of babies with the other newborn's parents, Rob—along with his 1963 studio audience—is shocked to find that the couple that appears at his door is African-American. Even though the father, played by Greg Morris, was portrayed as calm and collected amidst Rob's buffoon-like antics, series writers were worried about how African-Americans would react to a joke based on race.[23] While there is no evidence indicating that Connelly and Mosher or ABC had similar concerns with *Leave it to Beaver*, this bit of history shows how at least one group of producers had, circa 1960, grown very concerned with television's representation of race.

There is some evidence to suggest that Connelly and Mosher, in their past work with *Amos 'n' Andy*, had been concerned with presenting a more toned-down image of the exaggerated racial stereotypes as they helped moved series from radio to television in 1951. According to media critic Gerard Jones, Connelly and Mosher, along with "racially sensitive" director Charles Barton, were to provide a more sensitive approach to the series characters.[24] As Jones noted, *Amos 'n' Andy* emerged on television with "ethnic characteristics toned down and admirable aspects heightened."[25] It should be noted that historian Melvin Ely did not find such a character change in his own work on

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[23] See Vince Waldron, *The Official Dick Van Dyke Show Book* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 216-220.

[24] See Gerard Jones. *Honey, I'm Home*, who argues that "Connelly and Mosher...promised a new, more sensitive approach to the characters [on *Amos 'n' Andy*] and their milieu" who replaced the distanced Gosden and Correll from the series and added a more racially sensitive director Charles Barton (53). According to Jones, Connelly and Mosher wrote the bulk of the scripts for the televised series (51). Ely argues that the characters did not change in the transition, 205-6.

[25] Jones, 54

the series.[26] Ely, whose work on *Amos 'n' Andy* has greater academic rigor than Jones', does concur that director Charles Barton showed "no signs of racial prejudice and became friendly with members of the cast."[27] Ely also notes how Barton had stood up to series co-creator Freeman Gosden, who kept trying to tell the series' African American actors how to sound like African Americans.[28]

Whether or not Connelly and Mosher were concerned with toning down the racial stereotypes in *Amos 'n' Andy*, which was always Gosden and Correll's series, there were some examples of dialogue and situations in *Leave it to Beaver* that dealt in a slightly more complex manner. In "The Happy Weekend," for example, June reads one of Beaver's homework assignments which acknowledges that the "Pilgrims were people in big hats who made freedom in America by killing Indians."[29] In "Miss Lander's Fiancé," Wally observed that the Western series *Wagon Train* depicted whites as "chipping in" to kill Indians.[30] Of course, both of these lines clearly seem to have been played for laughs as opposed to presenting oppositional history. The episode "Kite Day" dos a better job of reversing Native American stereotypes. In the episode, Beaver had ruined a kite that he and his father had made for a upcoming kite competition. Afraid to face his father with the bad news, Beaver clings to the chimera that the event will be rained out. Hearing that Indians used to do rain dances, Beaver locates a man in Mayfield of Indian decent. Far from being depicted as a stereotypical Indian, the man is presented as a wealthy

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[26] Ely, 205-206

[27] Ibid., 205

[28] Ibid., 206.

[29] Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[30] Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiance," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

individual whose Native American grandfather had made a fortune in the oil business. As the man quips, his grandfather was too busy making money to care whether it had rained or not. Thus, Beaver's search for the stereotypical Indian was met with a more rounded, complicated character.[31]

More significantly, numerous *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, while never speaking directly to the issue of race or civil rights, stressed an overall concept of toleration that was so important to the meritocracy ideal upon which much of the series was seemingly founded.[32] In "Larry's Club," Ward tries to convince Beaver that it is wrong to join the "Bloody Five," a local group of boys who want to exclude Larry Mondello from their club. Toward the end of the episode, Ward delivers a parable designed to inculcate an organization man's sense of tolerance and fair play. Ward's message: while it is fine to band together to help one another, it is wrong to exclude others (which is rendered somewhat ineffective by several other episodes in which Ward is depicted as belonging to an exclusive, gender-divided country club).[28] At the end of the episode "Haunted House," in which Beaver becomes convinced that elderly Mrs. Cooper is a witch, Beaver asks Ward why people sometimes jump to conclusions about others. Ward tells Beaver that the problem lies in prejudice; "We make up our mind on rumors and first

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[31] Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[32] Messages of tolerance were quite prominent in popular works of the post-World War II era. For example, Samuel Rapport and Patricia Schartle eds., *America Remembers: Our Best Loved Customs and Traditions*, (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1956), focuses on what was "right about America" concluded with a optimistic piece on ethnic and racial understanding written by Thomas Wolfe's "The Promise of America," 667-669: "So, then, to every man his chance—to every man, regardless of his birth, his shinning, golden opportunity—to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him—this, seeker, is the promise of America" (669).

impressions," says Ward. "If they happen to be wrong, then we're wrong, too."[33] A similar sentiment is expressed again in "Beaver and Gilbert," when Ward encouraged Beaver to resist the rumors surrounding a new child on the block and take time to get to know the child as an individual.[34]

Connelly's views on tolerance may be further understood by examining his work with Father Ellwood Keiser, otherwise known as the "Hollywood Priest," a Paulist priest who expressed a dedication to preaching ecumenical understanding. Connelly worked with Keiser on the mid-1960s television series *Insight*, which, produced by Keiser's Paulist Productions, was designed to bring biblical teachings to moral and social questions of the day. The first script, written by Connelly and Jim Mosher (apparently not related to Bob Mosher),[35] was called "a Tale of Two Testaments," and, according to Keiser was "about the Jewish experience of God" which "contained a ringing condemnation of anti-Semitism."[36] According to Keiser:

> The reaction from the viewers was immediate and mostly positive. The parishioners liked it. So did my priest friends. But what moved me most were the telephone calls from Jewish viewers, some of whom were survivors of the Holocaust. The public acknowledgment of Christian sins against Jews, the condemnation of anti-Semitism as a contradiction of the Gospel, as well as the affirmation of the complementarities of the Old and New Testaments, came over to them as good news. One said, "This is new church doctrine. I never thought I would hear it. We are entering a new age."[37]

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[33] Tibbles, "The Haunted House," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[34] Connelly, Mosher and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[35] According to Ellwood E. Keiser, *The Hollywood Priest: A Spiritual Struggle* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), Connelly and Jim Moser met weekly at Joe Connelly's apartment at the Balboa Bay Country Club in Newport Beach to write and polish the scripts (115).

[36] Keiser, 118

[37] Ibid., 119

Leave it to Beaver may have been overly optimistic about the power of the affective family, and while its exclusion of minorities certainly enforced the prejudices of its time, the series never preached hatred of others. This kindness, this openness, and this understanding was but one of the many cultural artifacts that were turning people toward a more benevolent and understanding view of a world compromised by the prejudices of its time. While *Leave it to Beaver* represented, in part, a very old way of looking at the world, it also stood on the cusp of a moment of cultural change which was not entirely lost on the series.[38]

While it is very difficult to capture what Connelly and Mosher may have thought about race, Hamilton's appearance in the series proposes some interesting questions. Did Hamilton's role in *Leave it to Beaver* simply speak to an exclusionist past or did it possibly speak to a change that was taking place in the culture of the time? Is the most salient feature of Hamilton's appearance the fact that she was a maid, or that she was portrayed without exaggerated mannerisms that had been common to previous depictions of African American domestic workers? Was Hamilton put in the role because "the powers that be" assumed that all maids should be African-American, or because they knew she could pull off the role with a sense of dignity and humanity that would not be perceived as overtly offensive? Was Hamilton's appearance just part of the same old racist pattern of mass media, or a harbinger of change?

Nine months after her role in "Parking Attendants," Hamilton went on to play a number of more diverse roles, including a part in a *Ben Casey* episode in which she

[38] Connelly was also the producer of a 1969 film, *Change of Habit*, which provided an even more complicated view of race relations, which will be discussed in chapter nine.

played a schizophrenic mother who had lost her baby. Hamilton was particularly proud of her *Ben Casey* role, which she had competed for against other actors, including white actors. Reflecting the popular 1960's ideal of a "color-blind" society, Hamilton, as *TV Guide* phrased it, was pleased with the "growing trend to cast Negroes as people, not just as Negroes."[39] This integration of African-American characters into mainstream productions that had previously limited African-Americans to stereotypical roles, or as entertainers and sports figures, represented a change that was going on during *Leave it to Beaver's* last season. Of course, the fact that only one African-American ever appeared in an episode of *Leave it to Beaver* precludes making too much from her appearance, for if this was the best that network television could do, it certainly had a long way to go.

Gender

In 1963, the year Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, *Leave it to Beaver's* June Cleaver experienced an interesting moment of self-discovery. It happened quite innocently during an episode involving a set of baseball tickets. As the Cleaver men—Ward, Wally, and Beaver—prepared to leave for the game, Beaver asked June about her own plans for the evening. When June revealed that she would pass the time with some mundane kitchen activity, Beaver asked, "Gee, mom, did you ever think you'd look forward to spending an evening lining shelves?"

"No, Beaver," June replied. "I never did"[40]

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[39] "No Longer Trying to Reach the Moon."

[40] Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

While this exchange is but one example of the thousands of throw-away, slice-of-life family moments common throughout the series' six-year run, June's reply in this scene had a curious edge to it—a strange mix of resignation, anger, and regret. While the show's overwhelmingly sexist tone has rendered this line lost to history, its appearance makes one wonder whether June had hidden, somewhere in the Cleaver's 211 Pine Street home, her own copy of *Feminine Mystique*? While it is common to believe that June was a happy domesticated female—and, as we will see, there is a vast amount of episodic evidence to support that view—there are moments of the series—more frequent than the average viewer or scholar might think—that reveal a changing pattern in terms of gendered relations. While boys and girls and men and women played out their lives in a highly gendered world, that world was, in many instances, as dynamic as the real one in which they were viewed.[41]

Industrial Revolution and the Family

June Cleaver and her fictional counterparts did not emerge magically in the 1950s, but arose out of gendered ideals that had been building since the rise of the capitalist market economy and its resulting Industrial Revolution, which gave rise to unprecedented social questions, challenges, and configurations. The Industrial Revolution not only changed men and women's relation to work, but to each other as

[41] See Nina C. Liebman, *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995), which argues that "The bulk of all domestic melodrama's themes and narratives focus on gender" (173); while Liebman seems to confine the word gender to women, however, the series was incredibly concerned with representation of boyhood and masculinity, as will be seen in this chapter.

well.[42] Perhaps the greatest effect of the Industrial Revolution was on the family, which moved from household production to wage labor that took men—and in the case of the working class, women—out of the home and into new working environment. As men tried to redefine their position in this modern world, women and children took on new roles as well.[43]

The contribution of rural and urban wives was, at one time, viewed as a gendered but important part of the American economic system that sustained the family.[44] The growth of a cash economy, however, brought changes that redefined American notions of "economy" and "labor," resulting in a gradual "dissociation of wives and wives' work from the symbols of economic value."[45] Eventually, women's unpaid labor fell out of the realm of economic activity; while the work had not changed, and while it often made the difference in a family's economic survival, its perceived value had declined.[46] At the same time, the family, taking its cue from late-eighteenth century Evangelicals who placed morality and family together years before the Victorians did, was growing more

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[42] See Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), which argues that, by end of nineteenth century, "The overthrow of arranged marriage took place in the name of romantic love and a new concept of the family as a refuge from the highly competitive and often brutal world of commerce and industry. Husband and wife, according to this ideology, were to find solace and spiritual renewal in each other's company" (5).

[43] A very brief discussion of this can be found in Arlene S. Skolnick and Jerome H. Skolnik, eds., *Family in Transition*, sixth edition, (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989), particularly the essay "American Families in Transition: Historical Perspectives on Change," by Tamara K. Hareven, 39-56. See also the essays on women and family in the book's second chapter, as well as Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are, Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 110-114.

[44] See Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), who takes a sweeping view of the relation of domestic and paid labor in America up through the nineteenth century, 12-13.

[45] Ibid., 24.

[46] Ibid., 12-28, 140.

intimate.[47] Middle-class Victorians strengthened the sacred nature of home and family. As Beecher and Stowe observed in their *American Woman's Home*:

> The family state then, is the aptest earthly illustration of the heavenly kingdom, and in it woman is its chief minister. Her great mission is self-denial, in training its members to self-sacrificing labors for the ignorant and weak: if not her own children, then the neglected children of her Father in heaven. She is to rear all under her care to lay up treasures, not on earth, but in heaven. All the pleasures of this life end here; but those who train immortal minds are to reap the fruit of their labor through eternal ages.[48]

Not that every woman ascribed to or experienced this prescription. Working-class women, for example, were an important part of the nineteenth-century labor market. Kathy Peiss, in her excellent work on women and the rise of mass amusements, noted that sixty-percent of women in New York aged 16-20 worked.[49] According to Peiss, such work introduced women to a new social sphere which, among other things, spelled problems for patriarchy as men came to have less control over their daughters and families.[50] Indeed, by 1900, young men and women were finding new amusements outside of the home, coming into their own for the first time under a youth culture

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[47] See Fishman, who notes that Evangelicals taught that the most secure path to salvation was the beneficent influence of a truly Christina family. Anything that strengthened the emotional ties within the family was therefore holy; anything that weakened the family and its ability to foster true morality was anathema" (34-35).

[48] Catherine Beecher and Harriet Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: or, Principles of domestic science; being a guide to the formation of economical, healthful, beautiful, and Christian Homes* (1896; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 19.

[49] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 34.

[50] See Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Knopf, 1986), who, looking at gendered changes occurring in New York, noted that "patriarchical controls over young women's leisure, time, earnings, and sexuality weakened accordingly. In this new social space, women helped to create a youth culture of sexual and commercial pleasures, purchased with wages and time freed up from domestic obligations and family discipline (83); see also Peiss, who showed how increased spending money for young women gave these women greater control and freedom, (69), as well as how new practices being formed outside of the role of the family allowed them to create a distinct culture in new public spaces (47-72).

defined by new mass entertainments. While such changes were particular to big cities, by World War I, the code of Victorian behavior was beginning to crack.[51] By the 1920s, the Lynds would find that even in middle America, automobiles, motion pictures, and ready-to-wear clothes had become a lure for young adults who were forging a very different world that had previously been under the father's control. As the Lynd's observed:

> The more sophisticated social life of today has brought with it another "problem" much discussed by Middletown parents, the apparently increasing relaxation of some of the traditional prohibitions upon the approaches of boys and girls to each other's persons. Here, again, new inventions of the last thirty-five years have played a part; in 1890, a "well-brought-up" boy and girl were commonly forbidden to sit together in the dark; but motion pictures and the automobile have lifted this taboo, and, once lifted, it is easy for the practice to become widely extended.[52]

According to the Lynds, traditional family values were being replaced by growing distractions, including public schools, which became central in an adolescent's life as home was relegated to "a place from which they go home to eat and sleep."[53] As women enjoyed increased visibility, sexuality, and activity in the public sphere, "separation of home and work, the structural basis for the traditional middle-class gender ideology, had changed almost beyond recognition."[54]

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[51] See Evans, who notes that "labor unions, women's clubs, and settlement houses all represented new public spaces for women, arenas in which they could experiment freely with new ideas and actions. Between 1900 and World War I the old Victorian code which prescribed strict segregation of the sexes in separate spheres crumbled" (160).

[52] Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929; reprint, San Diego: Harvest, 1957), 137.

[53] Ibid., 211.

[54] Evans 195. This, of course, must be tempered with the fact that not all women were feminists, and not all were flappers. Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) shows that the sexual liberation of the 1920s, discussed frequently by 1970s scholars, was tempered with its own form of what May would, in her discussion of the fifties, call a sort of sexual brinksmanship.

Nevertheless, cultural ideas of the happy domestic were kept alive by people like Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*, a social conservative who "wanted women to give up careers and outside activities for the joys of motherhood and domesticity."[55] Such cultural imperatives toward women appeared strong through the Depression and World War II era. Indeed, while Betty Friedan argued that the culture of the 1930s and 1940s promoted a new era of female autonomy that was squelched by the domestic cultural steamroller of the 1950s, Joanne Meyerowitz, in her own survey of women's magazines, found that images of the domesticated housewife were actually less prominent in the 1950s than in the two decades which had preceded it.[56]

The Depression, and, more importantly, World War II, brought gendered roles into greater question. While working women were seen by some during the Depression as robbing able-bodied men of much needed employment,[57] those same women were lauded during World War II for taking up industrial labor roles vacated by those men who went to war. As Evans observed, however, "the breakdown in the sexual division of labor was clearly limited to the war effort from the start," as discrimination against women in blue-collar jobs continued in spite of the world crisis.[58] In *Wartime Women*, Karen Anderson shows that while the war made a major difference in women's lives, they had to contend with discrimination and a perpetuation of the idea of women serving

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[55] Jackson, 186

[56] Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *Journal of American History*, (March 1993), 1477-78.

[57] Evans, 202

[58] Ibid., 222-223.

only as temporary workers.[59] As the war continued, American media became fixated on the growing problem of latch-key children and juvenile delinquency that was rising during the war, thus catching women in double bind of work and childcare, which the government was not willing to support.[60]

Toward the end of the war, a variety of forces converged to remove women from their wartime service.[61] Nevertheless, women—including young married women with children—joined the workforce in greater numbers after the war than ever before.[62] While cultural producers did ignore the growing role of working women, the domestic ideal had its roots not only in a century of domestic ideology, but the reality of a majority of women in the 1950s who were making the choice to reverse a historical trend toward

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[59] See Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), who writes that, "Even in a war boom community like Detroit, prejudice limited and defined the extent of change created in social, sexual, and racial arrangements as a consequence of a 'full employment' economy....For all the improvement in her absolute status during the war, the working woman would find that her relative position within the American economy and its ideological concomitants remained unaltered by the wartime experience (55); see also Milkman (find full cite), who shows specific instances of discrimination in auto and electrical industries and while acknowledging that things did not change much, does indicate that these years were transforming ones for the women involved and the country as a whole.

[60] See William Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) and his discussion of the governments reluctance to provide daycare for working mothers during World War II for fear of, among other things, upsetting "traditional" gender roles, 161-71. It should be noted that there was some public support for daycare, as it was referred to as a place which could help fight juvenile delinquency in the Aetna film "As the Twig is Bent."

[61] George Lipsitz, in *The Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), argues that, in the late 1940s, one found "...employers, unions, and government officials discouraged women from seeking high paying jobs, while psychologists, members of the clergy and educators counseled women to devote their primary energies to child rearing" (286); see also Bennett, who argues that business leaders specifically devised ways to remove women from the war-time jobs they had held, keeping in line with the 1940 draft law which required that returning veterans be given their jobs after the war had ended (13).

[62] For an excellent study of the pioneering role of mothers of the 1950s, see Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom & Social Change* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), who argues that the seeds of social change concerning women's roles in the 1960s and 1970s were sewn by the women of the 1950s who began working outside of the home. See also Evans, who, citing statistics from Weiner, wrote that "In contradiction to privatized images of family life and the glorification of motherhood, white married women with children entered the labor force at an accelerating rate. From 1950 to 1960 their labor force participation rate grew from 17 to 30 percent" (252).

smaller families. The reality of the baby boom and the move to suburbia allowed producers to ignore the move from work to home and concentrate on what appeared to be and—in many ways was—a cultural imperative of "family;" in 1957, the year *Leave it to Beaver* debuted, eighty-percent of Americans polled felt that people who chose not to marry were sick, neurotic and immoral; in 1962, another poll revealed that an overwhelming number of mothers felt that a woman should have children if she could.[63] As Friedan observed of the circa 1950s housewives:

> In many instances the women I interviewed truly fitted the new image of feminine fulfillment...four, five, or six children, baked their own bread, helped build the house with their own hands, sewed all their children's clothes. These women had no dreams of career, no visions of a world larger than the home; all energy was centered on their lives as housewives and mothers; their only ambition, their only dream already realized."[64]

While researchers like William Chafe and Meyerowitz have shown that 1950s and early-1960s American womanhood was much more complex than Friedan suggested, there was a cultural imperative toward domesticity that attempted to replicated mid-nineteenth century family ideals within a modern suburban milieu.

The domestic image conjured by television producers was aided, ironically, by the working mothers who played popular domestic housewives. Lucille Ball, who, in real life was a powerful Hollywood producer, publicly highlighted her own domesticity, particularly after the 1952 pregnancy which joined her real life birth with that of her

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[63] Beth Bailey, "Sexual Containment," paper given at Ike's America, a conference on the Eisenhower Presidency and American life in the 1950s, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 4-6 October 1990, and John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters, a History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 65, as cited in Coontz, *Way We Really Are*, 133-34.

[64] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963; reprint, New York: Laurel, 1983), 234

fictional son Little Ricky.[65] Lucy was just one of many sitcom actors who, despite her work, extolled the virtues of domesticity. Barbara Billinglsey, herself the single mother of two boys, likened her domestic role to a career in a 1961 *TV Guide* article; speaking to housewives who had adopted the practice of wearing slacks—something the author of the article seemed clearly against—Billingsley was quoted as saying that:

> There are occasions when a homemaker feels and looks better if she's dressed up. No matter how hectic things get, try to keep yourself up. We try on *Leave It To Beaver* - June Cleaver always changes her dress to look fresh when the children come home from school. A woman managing a home has a career, just as an office worker does. And an attractive career girl gives her job more stature.[66]

Thus, while June may have been a working mom who later admitted that she herself wore slacks during the time *Leave it to Beaver* was filmed (she also wore slacks in a few episodes of *Leave it to Beaver*, as well), Billingsley, through her public comments, likened the role of housewife to career. This choice was certainly reinforced by the highly gendered world of *Leave it to Beaver*, in which everyone, even little Beaver Cleaver, knew what was expected of women. After losing a library book that he borrowed on Ward's card in "Beaver's Library Book," Beaver became convinced that his

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[65] According to Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, Lucy also represented, in microcosm, the domestication of American women, noting that her earlier wild display of "embodiment of female energy with no valid outlet" served as "a comic demon called forth from the boredom and frustration of an entire generation of housewives" (68). As Jones argued, American viewers were wise to the fact that being a housewife was "never as neat and modern and efficient *as Better Homes and Gardens* tried to make it seem....Things went wrong; things got messy; lives turned ugly. *I Love Lucy* gleefully confronted us with that day-to-day ugliness. Lucy was never soothing, but it was liberating" (70). All of that changed, Jones argues, shortly after Lucy became a mother: "Lucy's new motherhood had completed her connection to the American public and made her show enormously successful." According to Jones, the later episodes of the series also became more tamed, more domesticated, with Lucy being less rebellious. As Jones notes, "The show's philosophy hadn't changed, but its fires were dimming. Lucy, like America, was being domesticated. The struggles of postwar adjustment was being supplanted by the business of raising a family. Genial old Ike had replaced spunky old Harry. Ricky and Fred were playing golf" (73).

[66] Barbara Billingsley, "Advice to Homemakers: Dress Up your Role," *TV Guide*, 13 May 1961.

father would be taken away by the library police. Well aware of the gendered roles, Beaver begged the head of the library to spare his father so that the family could remain intact. As Beaver said, Ward had to "make the money. And my mother's gotta' stay home and cook."[67]

And stay home and cook, she did. Indeed, June's primary role in the series certainly appears to be that of tireless domestic servant.[68] Nearly every episode of *Leave it to Beaver* features at least two scenes of June engaged in domestic work. Billingsley's blocking (the physical movement and actions an actor uses during a scene) had June constantly vacuuming, dusting, cooking, arranging, washing, and drying dishes, cleaning the refrigerator, the windows, and changing the sheets.[69] June darned socks, worked on her boy's school play costumes (Mayfield schools just assumed mothers would do such work), set the table, and arranged flowers to beautify the home.[70] While it may have

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[67] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[68] For example, in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Helper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally discusses, with all certainty, that cooking and cleaning are woman's work. Taken in isolation, this line seems to justify the purely gendered nature of the series. While the series is certainly highly gendered, Wally's line also serves as the foundation of a comic turn-around, in which Wally falls in love with the maid's daughter (who has taken over for her mother) and does all of her work—work he had earlier left exclusively for women. While part of the humor is also derived from Wally's "clear" violation of the gendered role, many times, explicitly sexist statements stem not only from the sexism underlying the period, but from dramatic needs of the script; thus, its existence is not only an artifact of culture, but of drama as well.

[69] June is a domestic dynamo in nearly every episode; here are but a few examples: For refrigerator cleaning, see Connelly and Mosher (story by Ellis Marcus), "Beaver's Poster," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); for dusting and vacuuming see Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Andy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions,1963); June cleans the outside windows in Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); does laundry and linen cleaning and bed sheet changing in Arthur Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[70] June darns socks in Phil Leslie, "The Bank Account," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), in which Ward calls June "quite the little mother;" it is evident that the school system expects that the mothers would be able to sew their children's play costumes in Connelly and Mosher, "School Play," *LITB* (Gomalco

looked odd for a woman to do such labor in high heels and pearls, the excessive labor itself was not an unusual sight to viewers. As Friedan observed, housewives of the time had learned how to stretch one hour of housework to fill six hours of time.[71] Media historian Susan Douglas, in her popular look at American women in post-World War II popular culture, also noted how her own mother appeared preoccupied with keeping a clean home.[72]

Food preparation, another of June's tasks, was important in the Cleaver household, both in terms of the shared family meals as well as June's use of food to occasionally sooth over Ward's "savage breast."[73] Consequently, June was constantly baking and preparing dinners and lunches.[74] While June did have other diversions and relaxed by listening to music and reading books, one episode quipped that even her spare

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Productions, 1958); June arranges flowers in Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and sets the kitchen table in Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest."

[71] As Friedan observed in Mystique, housewives practiced incessant cleaning, stretching one hour of housework to fill six: "housework, washing dishes, diaper-changing had to be dressed up by the new mystique to become equal to splitting atoms, penetrating outer space, creating art that illuminates human destiny, pioneering on the frontiers of society. It had to become the very end of life itself to conceal the fact that it is barely the beginning" (239).

[72] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 57.

[73] June figures food will soften Ward's mood in Connelly and Mosher, Connelly and Mosher, "Broken Window," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Runs Away," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); When Beaver feels depressed in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), June brightens his spirits with a gingerbread man; and, in Mel Diamond and Ben Gersham, "Perfume Salesmen," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), June says that her chopped egg sandwiches will serve as a good reward for Ward's plan to help Wally and Beaver sell some foul-smelling perfume.

[74] June prepares meals and bakes in Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," Connelly, Mosher and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," Ross, "Brother versus Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Connelly and Mosher, Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson) "The Hypnotist."

time was devoted to reading a cookbook.[75] June was also the primary server in the house, pouring coffee for Ward and lemonade for Beaver,[76] a piece of blocking that one *TV Guide* article referred to as a buffer moment, in which bad news or other plot advancements were broken over a freshly poured cup of coffee.[77] June's work was so ubiquitous, even the kids knew it. When Beaver wanted to buy June a steam iron for her birthday, Wally discouraged Beaver, saying that was a poor choice for a woman who spent nearly every waking moment involved in domestic work.[78]

June was not merely depicted as a domestic servant, but as a mother, who had a "natural" ability to reverse the pain and suffering of her children. After Beaver accidentally broke a window in "Broken Window," June calmed Beaver's fears by saying she would put Ward in a better mood with her lamp chops:

> Beaver: You know, mom, when you're in a mess you make things seem not so messy.
> June: Well, isn't that sort of what mothers are for?[79]

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[75] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job."

[76] June serves coffee to Ward in numerous episodes, including Connelly and Mosher (story by Ellis Marcus), "Beaver's Poster," Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates," and Conway and MacLane, "Eddie the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); June pours lemonade for Beaver, who is working in the yard, in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[77] "They also serve..." *TV Guide*, 8 November 1958, 11.

[78] Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[79] Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window."

In "The Silent Treatment," in which Beaver gives June the cold-shoulder for refusing to let him tag along with Wally and Eddie, the episode resolves with Beaver running to his mother after being stung by a bee.[80]

While Mayfield women had special skills and qualities, they were also marked by assumed gendered limitations. For example, when June offered to take the boys camping after Ward reneged on his promise to do so, Ward quickly dismissed the idea. In another episode, the idea of June driving a pick-up truck was also played for laughs. When June offered to help Wally with his math homework, Wally politely turned her down, assuming that June would not be capable of providing such help. June was also depicted as being incapable of or uninterested in learning such masculine things as the high school letter system; when Wally tried to explain it to her, June, dumbfounded, responded that she was glad she had gone through high school as a girl.[81]

Specified gender roles were also enforced by examples of men's domestic limitations, a comedic device that had been used since the early Twentieth century in such comic strips as "The Gumps" and "Blondie."[82] In one episode, after Ward bragged

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[80] Beaver says moms are better for mushy stuff in Connelly and Mosher (story by Breslow and Hoffman), "Beaver's First Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Wally notes that moms know when their kids are sorry even without having to tell them; later in that same episode, June indicates she knows by instinct when her child is unhappy or hurt as she feels unhappy and hurt as well. In Connelly and Mosher , "Family Scrapbook," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), when June recognizes Beaver from one of his baby pictures, Ward notes that only a mother could do that.

[81] June offers to take Wally and Beaver camping in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); June jokes about driving around in a pick-up truck in Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Most Interesting Character," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Ross, "Brother versus Brother," June offers to help Wally with his trig homework; and June's lack of understanding of the high-school letter system is in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Athlete," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[82] See Mary Rene Hughes, *What's So Funny? Families in the Comics*, (Masters thesis, University of Michigan Horace H. Rackham School for Graduate Studies, Program in American Culture, 1992), which notes that one would find the same lack of male facility with housework in "Blondie" (55); see also a 1917

about how he used to cook for his fraternity brothers, he made a mess of June's nice kitchen. When June returned, she immediately took charge, showing how easy and "natural" it was for a woman to perform in "her" domain. Wally was depicted as having the same sort of problem in another episode in which he made hamburgers for Beaver. About the only place where men could shine domestically was in fixing household items, taking out the garbage, and cooking outdoors, a skill that Ward attributed to his caveman roots (although the same scene derives humor from a strong Ward using asbestos gloves to protect his hands from fire).[83] Thus, women's success along with men's failure in the domestic realm gave women clear title to hearth and home.

"Girls usually make me sick..."

While domesticated women may have been idealized on *Leave it to Beaver*, the series rarely lauded their efforts. As Betty Friedan observed in her discussion of the image of women in magazines, while there was a great deal of "'lip service'" paid to mother love, no one was ever blacklisted or fired for an attack on "'the American women.'"[84] This lack of respect manifested itself in the family sitcom as a general

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"Gumps" strip 102, as reproduced in Bill Blackbeard and Martin Williams, *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977), 72.

[83] Ward messes up the kitchen in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition," and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Bill Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Ward struggles to find a pen in the kitchen before June finds it easily in "Beaver and Violet;" Wally has problems making dinner for Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Ward notes that a woman's place is in the home and while she is in the home she may as well be in the kitchen in Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest," in which he also notes man's "naturally" superior talent in outdoor cooking.

[84] See Friedan, *Mystique*, 203; see also Liebman, who notes that "In programs in which girls are absent...[such as *Leave it to Beaver*] sexual derision of women and elevation of men are more common...*Leave it to Beaver* abounds with sexist remarks in general, and specifically with jibes at June's family..." (pn).

distrust, misunderstanding, and fascination with the difference between men and women and boys and girls that that gave rise to pronouncements of absolutes that were unfair, if not downright cruel. Even animals were not immune from sexist labeling, from a parrot who showed his hatred of girls by calling everybody boys, to boys who showed no desire for a free "girl" kitten.[85]

As far as Beaver and Wally were concerned, girls and women had little understanding for such masculine things as cleaning fish, riding bikes, or, with one notable exception, liking pet rats.[86] It seemed nearly impossible to get girls or women to understand men's and boy's things, and if men or boys ever tried to do so, as Wally had done with June in trying to explain the high school letter system, the other sex walked away with disinterest.[87] Women and girls in Mayfield were depicted as mechanically inept, pulling cords out by the plugs, putting ice cube trays backwards in the freezer, or clumsily sitting on records and breaking them.[88] In one episode, when a man's daughter

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[85] The Parrot scene is from Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Beaver's lack of desire for a free female cat is in Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); and Beaver's dislike of female "cow" frogs is in Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[86] In Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when Richard, one of Beaver's friends, asks Beaver why women do not like to clean fish, Beaver indicates woman do not like to do "neat stuff;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally wonders why June does not understand why a boy would want to ride his bike to school.

[87] When Ward has trouble explaining the rules of football in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," Ward basically tells her not to ruin the good time she had by trying to understand the sport; when June asks Ward about tying a marine knot, she walks out as Ward explains it in detail; this happens again in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Andy;" June also walks out on Ward's explanation of old baseball stars in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and his discussion of building a crystal radio set in Conway and MacLand (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[88] Ward's anger over June pulling plugs by their cords in Diamond and Gersham, "Perfume Salesmen," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), and Connelly and Mosher, "New Neighbors," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); the backwards ice cube trays are in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and girls sitting down and breaking records left on chairs is alluded to in Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

failed to tie up a boat properly, resulting in its loss, the man blamed the accident on her sex: "You know how girls are."[89] When Ward told June about a co-worker who kept coming to him for advice on how to encourage a sense of responsibility in his child, Ward quipped that the man had to overcome a rather "insurmountable problem" in that the child was a girl.[90]

Such differences led boys and girls toward what Ward once labeled a "natural animosity," especially among pre-pubescent boys like Beaver who did not yet hold any affection for girls.[91] As Beaver noted in the pilot episode, he "usually" did not like girls, who possessed a timeless "creepiness" that, according to a joke in another episode, dated back to the days of the bible. Girls made boys like Beaver sick to their stomachs while sapping the fun out of the male domain.[92] Inviting girls to a party, was, as far as Beaver was concerned, tantamount to ruining it. While Beaver knew he was not supposed to hit

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[89] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[90] Connelly and Mosher, "Child Care," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[91] in Connelly and Mosher (story by Joseph Hoffman, Lou Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," Ward says that it is natural for little boys to be "allergic" to girls; he also notes that it is not normal for a boy to enjoy his first dance; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver notes how Violet Rutherford is not his friend because she is a girl; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver notes that Gilbert has had practice hating girls as he has a sister; and in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Beaver says he would rather be dead than be a girl.

[92] Beaver calls girls rats in Connelly and Mosher , "Eddie's Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Beaver says that girls are rats even in the bible in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); girls are referred to as creepy in a number of episodes, including Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count;" Beaver notes that girls make him sick to his stomach in Gershom and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble;" in Gersham and Diamond, "Party Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver equates looking awful and looking like a girl as one in the same; in Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver says that girls and sports do not mix; and in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver thinks it would be terrible if one had to work off a college scholarship by working in a girl's dorm.

a girl, he saw no reason to be friendly to them. Beaver expressed his distaste for girls best in "Untogetherness;" faced with a choice between spending time with a girl or catching a 31-pound bass, Beaver, without skipping a beat, said that he would prefer the bass.[93] Even the blocking in *Leave it to Beaver* played to the notion of a pre-pubescent desire for separation of the sexes—in one episode involving a school picture, the boys kept inching away, en masse, from the girls who continued moving back towards the boys.[94]

Mayfield girls were not only depicted as creepy, but as possessing many faults as well. According to Wally, girls liked dances and other social events because they did not mind standing around and looking stupid or silly.[95] Girls were also portrayed as "blabbermouths" whose need to talk precluded logical thought. After Beaver revealed a secret football play to Penny, a girl in Beaver's class, Penny revealed the secret play to the opposition while remaining quite oblivious to the harm her slip had caused (Ward, near the end of the episode, was quick to point out, however, that it was Beaver who had erred in the first place by revealing the secret play, although whether that error was

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[93] Beaver says he would not change his nose for a girl, as Wally is doing, in Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Beaver applauds Henry VIII for chopping his wives heads off and says that girls ruin parties in Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," Beaver cannot understand why a hypnotist in a movie would go to all the trouble of hypnotizing a girl just to kiss her; and Beaver's desire for fish over girls is expressed in Conway and MacLane, "Untogetherness," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[94] Separation of boys and girls on school grounds is seen in establishing shot of Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); boys and girls move away from each other, en mass, in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture;" in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition," when one student suggests the class do a paper on submarines, Mrs. Rayburn, the principal of the school and Beaver's teacher, suggests that that topic would not be "fair to the girls" in class. Interestingly enough, Rayburn, as a working woman in a responsible positions, suggests that the class do a paper about the jobs their mothers held before marriage.

[95] Wally says girls naturally like standing around and looking stupid at dances in Connelly and Mosher, (story by Hoffmann and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date;" in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," Wally says that a woman he likes must be older as she does not look silly enough to be a girl.

simply in talking too much or talking too much to a girl was not expressly stated).[96] This lack of logical thought was, in one episode, worn proudly by June, who argued that motherhood trumps logic.[97]

Mayfield was depicted as having its share of smart girls. Judy Hensler, a classmate of Beaver's, appeared to get good grades, but her intelligence was outweighed by her nastiness, which forever plagued Beaver. Oddly enough, while Liebman portrayed Hensler as being deferent to Beaver, Judy almost always emerged victorious, whether she was making fun of the things Beaver did or in telling others that Beaver was dumb.[98] Indeed, even when Beaver helped Judy in one episode, Judy repaid Beaver's generosity by being mean to him.[99] Judy was also depicted as a tattletale and trouble-

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[96] In Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally says it is natural for girls to "blab," in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), a reference is made to girls being good with words as they are always talk so much; in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," while Lumpy is the first to tell the secret number of fish in a pet store contest, the first one to get it from Lumpy is a girl, who tells it to the other girls who apparently, like Lumpy, do not understand the lack of logic in such a move; Penny tells of Beaver's plan in Connelly and Mosher (story by O'Connor), "Beaver's Team," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[97] June's lack of logic is noted in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[98] In the first episode, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Judy scares Beaver about a note his teacher is sending home with him; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Judy calls Beaver dumb while extolling her own intelligence; Judy likewise brags about her intelligence in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Says Goodbye," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Judy brags about her father in Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Most Interesting Character;" Judy brags about being a beautiful baby in Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and she brags about her mother's former career in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition."

[99] Liebman makes some rather inaccurate assessments in regards to Judy Hensler. On the one hand, while Liebman says she was the only regularly featured girl, there were at least three other female characters who had recurring roles over the series (although some were played by a number of different actresses). While Judy's egoism, brattiness and snottiness is, according to Liebman, attributable to Judy being a girl, there were certainly male characters who were just as deplorable in the series. Liebman is correct in saying that "Girls on Leave it to Beaver represent vanity and entrapment," but utterly wrong in her assessment that "in all her battles with Beaver, Judy must forever swallow humble pie and acquiesce to the male domain" (185). All one need watch is the episode "School Bus," in which, after Beaver helps Judy get out of trouble, Judy continues to be mean to him, continuing to make a fool of Beaver in front of his friends.

maker, taking names of the boys who talked in class or reminding Miss Landers not to forget an upcoming test or quiz.[100] Linda Dennison, another one of Beaver's classmates, was never portrayed as particularly smart, but she became a vehicle through which gendered relations were explored. In "Her Idol," Linda and a reluctant Beaver looked at some baby birds in a tree they climbed together, breaking a gendered taboo that had been immortalized in the childhood ditty about boys and girls who sat in trees. As will be noted later, this cultural faux pas led to an impassioned plea for greater gender understanding.

Perhaps the most complicated of Beaver's female classmates was Penny, who, as the series progressed, moved from being depicted as a dumb little girl to one who was bright and self-confident. In one episode, Penny talked about her plans to major in history at Radcliff. In another episode, when Beaver said that he wished Penny was a guy so that he could "sock" her, Penny proudly proclaimed that if she was a guy, Beaver would be too afraid to "sock" her. In many ways, Penny's character foreshadowed the more confident attitude many baby boom girls would adopt as they grew older.

While many of Wally's female friends were presented as dreamy-eyed and boy-crazed, "Wally's Drivers License" featured a rather smart, confident teenager named Shirley, who, during their driving lessons flaunted her knowledge of the rules of the road. Shirley's violation of the unassuming female was, of course, punished by episode's end,

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[100] Judy reminds Landers of a spelling test in Frank Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and tells the teacher not to forget to collect homework in Connelly and Mosher, (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Judy offers to take names of people who misbehave on the school bus in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," and takes names of misbehaving kids in Connelly and Mosher, "The Cookie Fund," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

when Shirley failed the road test which Wally easily passed.[101] Judy, Linda, Penny and Shirley aside, most Mayfield girls conformed to the stereotypes that their contemporary society had laid out for them. While one episode had Violet and Gwen Rutherford surprisingly enjoying a rat they had adopted as a pet, most of Mayfield's females, June included, ran from rodents, toads, and any other creepy or grotesque thing.[102] Women and girls in Mayfield were often depicted as weak, jealous, and overly emotional (although, some men were depicted that way as well).[103] Woman in Mayfield were

[101] Perhaps Beaver's first crush involves classmate Linda Dennison, the tree climbing girl in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Her Idol," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Penny talks about Radcliff and about Beaver being afraid to sock her if she was a guy in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny." In Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's IQ," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Penny says she could do better than Beaver on the IQ exam using only "half" her brain. The scene featuring Wally and Shirley is in Ross, "Wally's License," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[102] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," Wally says is natural for girls to not like "blood or dirt or any of those neat things." Oddly enough, Violet and Gwen Rutherford actually are depicted as being quite fond of Beaver's pet rat; June is also depicted as being scared of rats in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," Wally's girlfriend screams when Beaver gives her a toad; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Bob Ross), "The Visiting Aunts," June is appalled by the grotesque aspects of a carnival side show, and June gets upset when she hears Wally talk about Lumpy's tonsils being in a jar in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[103] In Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," Wally tells his female partner that she pays good for a girl; in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), it is assumed that girls are the only people who will need saving at the beach; Wally depicts June as overly emotional in Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture," and Richard's mom is depicted as hysterical in Conway and MacLane, "Three Boys and a Burrow;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Sheepdog," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), June pre-empts Ward's gendered put-down when she tells him not to say that she is acting like a woman as that is exactly how she plans to act; and women are depicted as naturally jealous in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kenneth Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); In Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip," Ward tells George Haskell, Eddie's father, that he is somewhat afraid to tell bad news to June for fear of her over-reaction; and in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," Ward notes that he apologizes to June to keep the peace even though most of their arguments are clearly her fault.

naturally nosy, able to sniff out the smallest details that men failed to capture.[104] They were also depicted as wholly unpredictable and confusing.[105]

Mayfield Women and girls, depicted as vain materialists, were prone to spending, and, armed with their husband's checkbook, could not resist a purchase.[106] Women were obsessed with what they wore, never seeming to have the right clothes for the particular season or event, even though they managed to take forever to get dressed.[107] Style

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[104] June demands to know the details of the boys adventures in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip;" in Connelly and Mosher, "New Neighbors," while Ward has failed in the task, June demonstrates that she has even the most minute details on the new neighbors.

[105] Women are seen as impossible to figure people who mess up a young man's life in Ross, "Brother versus Brother;" women are depicted as being forever unpredictable in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," Ward admits to June, partially to be sarcastic, that he told Beaver that women are full of quirks that men must humor; in Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally dismisses a girl's fickle decision with the interjection, "Women! Wow!" June changes her mind on the color of the patio furniture in Connelly and Mosher, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); June thinks it is natural that a girl likes Wally more after he is rude to her in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); and June says that girls go through a period of changing their minds all the time when they discover boys in Ross, "Brother versus Brother;" There is quite a discussion in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday" between Ward, Wally and Beaver about how women always want a present even when they say not to fuss; June notes that women are like that, as well, in Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), when she talks about getting an anniversary present for a person who told her not to fuss.

[106] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Rick Vollaerts), "The Black Eye," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), little Violet Rutherford charges a soda to her father's account, saying she learned the practice from her mother; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job," June paints the garbage cans that Wally forgot to do so that she can get Ward to let her buy a new hat; June goes looking for new drapes that Ward says she does not need; in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward says that it would be impossible for two women to go looking in a store without buying anything in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962)—June vehemently disagrees with Ward's assessment, but, then, asks Ward for the checkbook before she leaves.

[107] In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), June and Gwen talk on the phone about what to wear to an evening event; in Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," June does not know what clothes to wear out in the woods and argues that none of the old clothes she has are right for the season; June is also looking for the right thing to wear in Connelly and Mosher, "The Bus Ride," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); June changes her outfit after Ward and the boys tell her she looks good in it in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and June takes a long time to get ready to go out is in Connelly and Mosher, "School Play," and Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend."

always trumped comfort, particularly in regard to shoes.[108] June was so obsessed with her looks, she had to fix herself up before going to the beauty shop. In return for such efforts, women expected that attention would be paid to their beauty; June, who was often depicted as being wise to Eddie Haskell's sarcasm and guile, could also be a sucker for a kind word from either Eddie as well as from Wally and Beaver's other friends.[109]

Where beauty was valued, ugliness was to be avoided, whether it was dumb old Judy Hensler with a face that Beaver once said looked like it was being "broken in for a witch," or old Mrs. Cooper down the block, whose cronish appearance made Beaver believe she was a witch. Unattractive girls in Mayfield were labeled as owls or crows.[110] Perceived homeliness could be a real curse for women, who depended upon an arsenal of cosmetics to combat the horrible fate of solitude; when Beaver observed all the make-up and creams Larry Mondello's sister used, he noted:

Beaver: There sure is a lot to being a girl.

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[108] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions," June chooses style over comfort in her selection of shoes; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath," June wears ill fitting shoes because they are the right color; in Hoffman, "Beaver's Laundry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally notes that early-1960's women's hairstyles look like one has let their hair get blown around in the wind.

[109] In Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture," June does not like hearing that she is aging; in Breslow and Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," when Wally says her new hairstyle makes her look older, June says she will never return to the beauty shop that had done her hair; June puts on make-up to go to the beauty shop in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry;" June is taken in by Eddie's compliments in Manings, "Stocks and Bonds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie the Businessman;" and June's beauty is noted by Eddie in Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and by one of Beaver's friend in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers."

[110] Beaver makes fun of Judy's appearance in Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School" after Judy calls him and the other boys pigs; Mrs. Cooper and the witch incident occurs in Tibbles, "The Haunted House;" derogatory terms for unattractive girls are found in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," Ross (story by Kenneth Enochs) "Wally's Big Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and Connelly and Mosher (story by David Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

Larry: There is when you look like my sister.[111]

Girls in Mayfield apparently learned the importance of beauty at an early age, or so the boys thought. In "Beaver the Babysitter," Wally told Beaver that the best way to get the little girl Beaver was baby sitting for to go to sleep was to tell her that if she would get bags under her eyes and never get to be a movie star if she stayed up too late.[112]

The biggest problem girls presented, however, at least from the Mayfield male perspective, was the havoc they wrecked once boys started becoming attracted to them. As Ward observed, nothing could age a "fella" faster or ruin a guys life quicker than girls, who used their feminine wiles to take men from their natural, carefree state and trap them in their domestic world.[113] As Wally and Beaver grew older, they were depicted as learning how women used their charm, smiles, and beauty to turn an otherwise strong, red-blooded American boy into a hopeless mess. Girls had an uncanny knack for wrapping a boy around their fingers, getting boys to do such things as go to dances, give them lettermen sweaters, buy them expensive flowers, or treat them to an expensive meal at a fancy restaurant.[114]

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[111] Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[112] Hoffmann, "Beaver the Babysitter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[113] in Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," Ward likens staying away from girls to a line he heard in a movie in which a scientist said one should not expose themselves to malaria; in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl," Beaver says that things were less complicated before Wally knew girls; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers," Ward says that nothing ages boys faster than girls; Ward likens girls and indigestion as having the same effect on boys in Connelly and Mosher (story by Allan Lipscott and Bob Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961)*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Ward says girls complicate the lives of brothers in Ross, "Brother versus Brother;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Sheepdog," Ward says the sound of girls crying is something men need to learn to endure; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," when Beaver tells June that girls mess up a boy's life, June argues that girls probably feel the same way about boys.

[114] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," teenage classmate Gloria flashes a smile and gets Wally to extend her credit for an ice cream bar, and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains"

While June had reservations about Wally falling into the clutches of the "wrong" sort of girl or getting attached to one girl at too early an age, she shared a sense of camaraderie and pride with the girls who had mastered the art of landing a man.[115] When Ward complained about how Wally's classmate Mary Ellen Rogers had befriended Beaver in an attempt to get Wally to take her to a dance, June proudly replied, "As a woman, I'm very proud of Mary Ellen."

> Ward: You think women should act this way?
> June: It's the only way to act. Now, look, if we sat around and waited until you men got interested in us and got good and ready to settle down and have families, why this whole continent of America would be nothing but buffalo, jack rabbits and grizzly bears.[116]

Apparently young Mayfield women knew that getting their man was essential to entering the domestic domain June inhabited. In talking about his old alma mater, State College, Ward told Wally that one could get anything they wanted at State, to which June proudly added "That's where your father got me."[117] While attractive women had a

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attractive Georgia Batson flashes a smile to get Wally to give her Beaver's old electric train set; When a girl gets Wally to take her to a dance in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," Ward knew Wally stood no chance against her feminine wiles; in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally's classmate Francis wrangles Wally's letterman sweater under false pretenses and then lies to her friends that she has Wally wrapped around her finger; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid," Ward worries that Wally has been the victim of conniving female who has talked Wally into buying her an expensive orchid for her dress; and Julie Foster is depicted as using her feminine wiles to get Wally to take her to an expensive restaurant in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[115] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame" June acknowledges that girls use tricks to get boys to come to their houses; in Richard Baer, "Wally's New Suit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), after June convinces Wally to get a more respectable suit, Ward says that she is a master of the "indirect approach," to which June comments that is how she landed Ward; and, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl," Mary Ellen Rogers uses Beaver to get Wally to come to her house to ask her for a dance.

[116] Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl."

[117] Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

rather easy time landing a man, the marriage imperative weighed particularly heavy on Mayfield's "owls" and "crows" like Gilbert Bate's and Larry Mondello's sisters. Indeed, Mrs. Mondello was forever pushing her less-than-beautiful daughter (who viewers never actually saw) to find a man. According to Gilbert, his sister went all the way to Hawaii to find a man, but to no avail. As Gilbert said, in regards to his sister, "If you're a girl and don't think someone wants to steal you, you might as well be dead."[118] This marriage imperative was not far from the reality Friedan had commented on, noting in the *Feminine Mystique* that so many women of this time period believed that they could find their life and self through a man.[119] After the woman found her man, her next move was to become a mother, which carried its own set of challenges for Mayfield women.

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[118] The imperative of getting a man is seen in a number of episodes. In Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver talks about how Mr. Langley's daughter finally "hooked" a man; Larry says his sister's homeliness keeps her from getting dates in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry's Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Larry's mom says that his sister would have been married long ago if she just had some of Larry's charm; in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," Larry describes his sister taking a boating class as one of her last chances to land a man; in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," Larry's sister went looking for a man at the museum. In the same episode, Mrs. Mondello says that things would be better if Larry's sister was married and there was a man around the house; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test," Larry's sister is going to a wedding on her mother's hope that getting married is "contagious." In that same episode, Larry says his mom is mad that his sister spent all of her time eating as opposed to introducing herself to men at the wedding; in Conway and MacLaneConway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Gilbert talks about his sister's unsuccessful trip to Hawaii to find a man; and, in Ross, "Ward's Golf Club," Gilbert says an unwanted girl may as well be dead.

[119] Friedan, *Mystique*, 234; see also Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Woman's Movement* (New York: Dell, 1991), in which she noted that TV says, "Do anything you can to hook that man, all those images of women on television say, because you aren't or can't be a person yourself. But without studying or working or doing anything yourself, you can be a 'housewife' at eighteen" (68).

Momism, bad girls, and predatory females

"...You have to stop making the moves for them. You know, that's something a lot of mothers never learn.
-- June Cleaver[120]

In 1944, Philip Wylie published *Generation of Vipers*, a scathing critique of American mothers whose pathological pampering, according to Wylie, had led to a weakening of their sons' wills. More than a decade later, in "Beaver's Newspaper," when June made the comment that she hated to see her boys grow up, Ward responded "I suppose even a vulture hates to see it's young grow up—nothing personal, dear." While Ward did not specifically use the word Viper, the predator in Philip Wiley's popular social critic, there is enough linguistic similarity here to make the connection between June and her "momist" counterparts. Whether or not Connelly or Mosher were aware of Wiley's depiction of mothers and momism, they lived in a time when they certainly knew that comedy could be derived from the problem of the overprotective mother.[121]

While June was never portrayed as being pathologically overprotective, she was, more often than not, prone to refer to her kids as babies or sweet little angels, much to the Cleaver men's dismay.[122] While Ward was proud of his boys for winning the occasional fight, June became frantic when she learned that her boys were involved or may become

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[120] Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Wally's Dream Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[121] Elan Packard, Harry Winter, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Newspaper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[122] June looks at Beaver after a fight and calls him a "poor little dear," in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); June is aghast at the bald head Beaver sports in Manhoff, "The Haircut," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), referring to her boy as a "poor little bald-headed angel;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), when Ward infers that Wally is not an angel, June says he certainly looks like one while he is sleeping; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Norman Tokar), "Brotherly Love," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), June is appalled that Ward compares the boys to gorillas; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), June calls Beaver a "poor baby."

involved in fisticuffs.[123] Comedy was also derived from June's worries about Wally or Beaver getting hurt in school sports and games. For example, when Wally did a good job in a particular football game, June was worried that the coach would now want to play Wally in future games, increasing his risk of injury.[124] In contrast, Ward usually stayed calm in such matters, once even continuing his work after June discovered the boys had snuck out of their room at night. Indeed, Ward was determined to make the boys independent, whether it was in trying to get the boys to walk instead of be driven by car, or by haranguing June for still hanging the boys' washrags out for them each night.[125] Where June was inclined to help her kids with bullies, Ward said that Beaver had to learn to fight his own battles.[126] In one episode, Ward cautioned June to avoid becoming like her aunt, who was still taking care of her 37-year-old unmarried son—one of the tragic result of pathological motherhood.[127]

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[123] Ward wonders how the "other kids" looked after fighting with Beaver in Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "The Black Eye;" in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), June demands Ward go get Beaver when she learns Beaver may be fighting, but Wally goes instead so as not to embarrass Beaver.

[124] June wants Ward to talk Wally out of taking a job as a lifeguard in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard;" June is worried the boys will run away with the circus if Ward allows them to work there in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hugh Beaumont), "A Horse Named Nick," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), June worries the boys might accidentally set a fire while burning leaves; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), June worries the coach will play Wally all the time in football; and, in Ross, "Brother versus Brother," when June learns that one of the other players on an opposing team has a virus, June makes Wally promise he will stay away from him.

[125] Ward wants the boys to walk more in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Takes a Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), but June thinks it is okay to give the boys a lift in the car; Even though June is arguing that the boys are old enough to take care of the neighbor's cat in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat out of the Bag," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward reminds June that she still hangs their towels out for them each day.

[126] June wants to call a troublesome boy's mothers in Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert" and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959). In the latter, Ward says that June should put an end to that practice.

[127] In Hoffmann, "Beaver the Babysitter," Ward warns June not to be like her aunt Emma, who still made her 37-year- old son dress properly for rain; in Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding

Not that June was depicted as a restraining or confining mother. Indeed, June wanted her boys to grow and be independent, even though seeing them pass such milestones as driving a car made her afraid.[128] While June, along with other mothers, could hasten the dating process,[129] June was perhaps most frightened by the idea that Wally would wind up in the clutches of some girl of questionable character or even a nice girl who would trap Wally into an early marriage.[130] June would have the same fears a few years later regarding Beaver and his adolescent love interests.[131] Indeed, June, awash in her conservative, middle-class sensibilities, had a certain criteria for the women her son would marry—a woman who, not surprisingly, was very much like June: "Some very

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School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward considers sending Wally to boarding school to get him away from June's apron strings, a reference which angers June and for which Ward apologizes.

[128]June notes she is frightened by Wally growing older in Connelly and Mosher (story by Allan Lipscott and Bob Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter;" in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally notes that moms are more reluctant than dads to admit their children are growing up; and, in Ross, "Wally's License," June is very much against Wally getting a driver's license.

[129] June is involved in arranging dates in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl," and in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960). In the latter, Ward indicates that he thinks mothers enjoy making dating arrangements more than the kids enjoy the dates.

[130] In Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," June becomes worried that Wally will be convinced to follow Eddie's example of going steady with a girl and urges Beaver not to grown up "too fast" on her; both June and Ward are worried that Wally has fallen for the maid's daughter in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Helper;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), June does not like the idea of a girl having Wally "in her pocket;" June feels the same about a "predatory" female who has latched onto Wally in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater." June cannot bear the sight of seeing Wally holding hands in public with Julie Foster in Connelly and Mosher (story by Lipscott and Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter;" June is worried Wally will fall for the wrong sort of girl or get hurt in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Wally's Dream Girl;" and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), June is upset to learn that Wally has "picked up" a girl outside of a theater, worrying that the girl may even be divorced (implying, perhaps, the fear that this girl would lure Wally into pre-marital sex, which for all Wally's obsession with girls and dating, seemed to never take place among Mayfield teens).

[131] Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

sensible girl from a nice family. One with both feet on the ground who can cook and keep a nice house and see that he's happy."[132]

On the occasions when Wally or Beaver's girl friends failed to conform to this standard, June could become quite upset. For example, June did not appreciate girls who called boys for dates, something she says she would not have done in her time.[133] To June, such actions were the markings of a "bad girl," a girl who did not know her proper role and place.

As problematic as momism was, the "bad girl"—the girl who was aggressive and sexually active—was far worse. While sexual experimentation, with certain limitations, had been a social reality since before the industrial revolution, and, indeed, a greater social reality in the 1920s,[134] the girl who indulged in this sort of activity was still eschewed by the mainstream, particularly television programs (and, indeed, has remained so even in such contemporary films such as *Pleasantville*; consider, for example, that while the teenage boy in *Pleasantville* learns that there is more to life than TV, his sexually permissive sister learns that there is life beyond sex and, in the end, chooses to remain in *Pleasantville*).[135] Mayfield's ultimate bad girl was depicted through a one-episode character named Marlene Holmes, a movie theater ticket clerk that Wally fell in love with in "Box Office Attraction." From her first scene in the episode, Marlene is depicted as quite aggressive, at least by Mayfield standards; when Wally asks her out, she provocatively tells Wally her number is "in the book." Later, Beaver and his friend

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[132] Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater."

[133] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune."

[134] See Fass, 260-290.

[135] Gary Ross, director, *Pleasantville*, New Line Cinema, 1998.

Gilbert see Marlene going into a bar, leading Gilbert to observe that Marlene is a "woman of the world." Beaver, realizing his brother has the "misfortune" of being in love with such a girl, becomes plagued with angst.

While June does not know that Marlene goes to bars, she has, by the next scene, already expressed some misgivings as to Wally's decision to pick Marlene up outside of the theater as opposed to outside of Marlene's home. June even speculates as to whether Marlene might be a "divorce." At June's request, Wally invites Marlene to dinner, during which Marlene takes on the role of ideal "good girl," talking about going to night school to study interior design and about living with a strict aunt who does not let her out on school nights. Marlene's performance sets June at ease. When Marlene walks out to the car with Wally, she takes a much needed drag on a cigarette to relieve the tension of dinner. Referring to the evening as an "interrogation," Marlene reveals to Wally that she lied to his parents so that they would like her. Marlene then moves closer to Wally and says that she hopes Wally will like her, too. Marlene forces Wally to stop the car and begins kissing him. Wally, for all of his previous interest in dating, is uncomfortable with such a forward girl, whom Wally quickly falls out of love with (placing Wally not totally outside of reality but certainly in the minority of other boys who, desperate for sex, might have appreciated Marlene's advance).

Trying to salvage the evening, Wally suggests they go to a movie. Marlene, however, has other plans, directing Wally to take her to a bar. Once inside, we learn that Marlene is a regular there, flirting and dancing with other men who seem to know her quite well. Seated with Wally, Marlene explains how she dropped out of school three years ago and how she has no respect for Wally's decision to refrain from drinking—

which Wally says is due to his coach's orders. When Wally suggests they leave, she belittles Wally, saying that he is afraid that his father will get angry at him for being in a "beer joint." Realizing that they just do not "dig" each other, Marlene becomes a bit more sensitive to Wally and sends him home. To make sure that there was no mistake Marlene was a character to be pitied, the scene ended with Marlene sitting alone, calling out to the bartender, "Hey, Charlie, put another dime in the machine." Back home, Wally is depressed, saying little to Ward and June, who have found out through Beaver about the "type of girl" Marlene is. While June wonders whether or not she or Ward should say anything to Wally about Marlene, Ward remarks that the look on Wally's face says that nothing more needs to be said.[136]

Much like the juvenile delinquent, so popular in magazines of the time, Marlene, the aggressive girl, was a social problem who lay far to the left of June's idealized domestic female. This aggressive "bad girl" character was reprised, in a somewhat tempered form, as one of Beaver's girlfriends in the 1963 episode "Beaver Sees America." While Ward and June have offered Beaver the opportunity to take a summer bus trip across America, Beaver seems more interested in seeing Mary Margaret, a new girl whom Wally has labeled "a real operator." When Mary Margaret learns that Beaver is going to go away, she makes a move for Beaver's friend Gilbert, which only makes Beaver more committed to staying home. While Ward finds it hard to believe that a thirteen year old girl could be such an aggressor, Wally tells Ward that he has seen the girl around town and that while Beaver is in the "Little League" of love, Mary Margaret is operating in the "World Series." Likening Mary Margaret to they type of woman one

[136] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction."

finds in the movies but never expects to meet in real life (again, the ideal within the ideal), Wally tells Ward that little girls have grown up an "awful lot" since Ward was a child. This worries Ward, who secretly meets with Gilbert's father to arrange for both of their sons to take the bus trip together and avoid Mary Margaret. Once again, the aggressive female has been successfully avoided.[137]

Concerns about predatory females was not the invention of Connelly and Mosher. In looking at several examples of school behavior films, sexually active women were never looked at in a positive light. For example, the 1947 film *Are You Popular?* compares popular "good girl" Caroline with promiscuous "bad girl" Ginny.

> Narrator: Ginny thinks that she has the key to popularity: parking in car with the boys at night.[138]

According to the narrator, this not only makes Ginny unpopular, but hurts the reputations of the men she dates, who "feel less important" when they "learn that she dates all the boys." In the end, Ginny emerges as a girl without a crowd:

> Narrator: No, girls who park in cars are not really popular. Not even with the boys they park with.[139]

According to Rickie Solinger, whose *Wake Up Little Susie* explores single pregnancy and race in the days before *Roe v. Wade*, school officials were quick to expel white pregnant girls and help enforce the "adoption mandate," through which parents shipped their

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[137] Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Sees America."

[138] *Are You Popular*, Coronet Instructional Films, 1947.

[139] Ibid.

young white pregnant daughters off to maternity homes where the children could be born in anonymity and adopted by waiting white couples. This activity not only allowed parents to hide their "shame," but allowed school officials to keep other female students from being influenced by such "rebellious" behavior.[140] Girls who failed to publicly perform to acceptable social standards of behavior were no more welcome in Mayfield than they were in America.

"I'm gonna' marry a girl with a horse"

For all the lack of understanding of girls among Mayfield boys—played mostly for comedic irony and dramatic effect—there was evidence of a more complicated picture of women within Mayfield. While most Mayfield girls were depicted as "creepy," and a few, like Marlene and Mary Margaret, were depicted as being downright dangerous, there were positive qualities to women recognized by Mayfield boys, especially in regard to teachers and mothers who always seemed to be in a different, acceptable category of women. As Beaver says in one episode, he's not going to marry a girl, he's going to "marry a mom."[141] Older women could also hold appeal for Beaver; while Beaver admitted that he did not usually like girls, he made it clear that he had a great crush on the office secretary, Miss Sims, who appeared in the pilot episode. Beaver, in his pre-adolescent years, also was depicted as showing a fondness for girls who shared boys

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[140] Rickie Solinger, *Wake up Little Susie*: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade (New York: Routledge, 1992), 109-10.

[141] in Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School" Beaver refers to Miss Landers as a "good guy;" Moms are also noted as being "okay" in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," in which Beaver makes the distinction between marrying a girl and marrying a mother, as well as in Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window," and Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid."

traits. Beaver, for example, developed a crush on Linda Dennison because she climbed trees, and admired Violet Rutherford because she had the ability to beat up three boys in their class. Beaver's favorite girl, however, was the one-episode character who dressed like a cowboy and owned her own horse. "If I ever get married," said Beaver, "I'm gonna marry a girl with a horse."[142]

Although it took extreme circumstances to get Beaver to be friendly with girls, his willingness to experiment with such friendships echoed what some have observed as a general trend in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Clyde Brion Davis, girls of his childhood—a period which would have coincided with that of Connelly and Mosher's—were very much like those portrayed in *Leave it to Beaver*. As Davis put it, they "were just around and they jolly well kept their place. They wheeled their doll babies in doll buggies. They played jacks. Sometimes they rolled hoops. They stuck out their tongues at you and if you pulled their hair they screeched."[143] By the 1950s Davis was seeing this image begin to change. As Davis observed:

> As I write this, I can look out my window and see half a dozen high school students passing a football. There are four boys and two girls. One of the girls, a tall supple lass, throws the football as well as any of the boys—along beautiful spiral with plenty of power behind it. The boys do not patronize her as their grandfathers would have patronized her grandmother...
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> Today there is a companionship between young males and females which did not exist and could not exist under the silly standards of forty-odd years ago"[144]

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[142] Violet Rutherford is in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," and the horse comment is from Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[143] Clyde Brion Davis, *The Age of Indiscretion* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1950) Davis, 54.

[144] Ibid., 54-55.

That companionship—that understanding—occasionally made its way into *Leave it to Beaver* episodes as well, with Wally or Beaver coming to the realization that boys and girls were not really as different as outward appearances made it first appear.[145] Both Beaver and Wally found, on occasion, girls who understood how they felt, whether it was Wally finding a girl who understood his fear of dating a girl taller than him or Beaver learning that his female babysitter understood what it was like to have her parents treat her like a little kid. In "Beaver's Frogs," Beaver even learned that June could come to understand how a boy could develop an emotional attachment to a bunch of frogs—creatures which seemed to be the exclusive property of the masculine domain.[146]

While some of this "understanding" certainly served to enforce the strict gendered divisions which were played throughout the series, there were several episodes that complicated the strict gendered divisions apparent in most of the series' episodes. In the second season episode, "Her Idol," Beaver, as noted above, finds himself beginning to like one of his young classmates, Linda Dennison. After being teased for his gender violation—even his female classmates "knew" that boys and girls were not supposed to like each other—Beaver "proved" that he was a true girl-hater by calling Linda a mean name and making her cry. Miss Landers, Beaver's teacher, was disappointed in Beaver

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[145] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl," Beaver sees that boys and girls make up the same stories, thus showing the genders may not be as different as most episodes assume; Beaver is surprised to find that a girl is as adverse to kissing him as he is kissing her in Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club;" Wally wonders if girls are as afraid of boys as boys are of girls in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl;" a similar sentiment is noted in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); and in Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," both Beaver and a girl he was to date, Susan, admit they are both a little scared of going out on a date.

[146] In Ross (story by Kenneth Enochs), "Wally's Big Date," Wally is surprised to hear Gail, a tall girl he is dating, say that she understands what he means when he tries to explain why he was reluctant to date her; in Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters," Beaver is surprised to find that his female babysitter understands what it is like when one's parents treat you like a child; and, in Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs," Ward tells June that she is pretty understanding of boys things for being despite the fact that she is an "ex-girl."

and the peer pressure which led him to such action, and made an impassioned plea to bring about some gender understanding among her students and the viewers:

> Landers: All that commotion yesterday was caused by a mistaken idea. Some of you seem to think that there is something shameful about a little boy and a little girl liking one another. Now, let's think about it for a minute. Is it really so shameful? All of us in this room are rather like one big family. And I think our family would be a lot happier if we were kind and considerate and friendly toward one another. And, well as for little boys and little girls liking each other, well you don't have to be silly about it, but I do think you should have mutual respect and learn to get along together. If you do that, you'll be taking a big step toward becoming the kind of men and women we want you to be.[147]

While the Dick Conway and Roland MacLane script's inclusion of kids not being "silly" about male and female relationships is open to interpretation—for example, was this a way to hedge any mistaken series endorsement of pre-adolescent dating or kissing—the overall message of Lander's speech seems quite clear. Like Davis had already observed, many of the gendered restrictions that were alive and well in Mayfield—and America—were, indeed, outdated. If Mayfield was truly going to represent a meritocracy based in harmony and mutual respect, such respect was going to have to extend beyond gendered limitations.

A similar theme is followed by Katherine and Dale Eunson—two of the series most sensitive writers—in "Blind Date Committee." Wally, as the reluctant head of the school's blind date committee, must find a date for a girl who obviously appears to be a real dud to the other boys. Unable to get anyone else to take the girl to a dance, Wally, not wanting to fail in his task, agrees to date the girl. Much to Wally's surprise, he actually has fun with the girl, whose only problem, as the script reveals, is that she is too

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[147] Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Her Idol."

shy to engage in the sort of "tricks" that other girls play to attract men—flattering them, and pretending they are interested in what they have to say. While Wally convinces the girl that she is smart enough to catch onto such tricks—should she choose to do so—the script does not resolve with the girl taking such action (as had other sitcoms). Wally, depicted as one of the most desirable of all Mayfield boys, has taken to this girl not because she has used her feminine wiles, but because she acted as herself and probably would continue to do so.[148]

Another Eunson's script, "Wally's Dream Girl," goes even further in complicating male and female relationships. In the first act we learn how Wally has come to idolize one of his new female classmates, Ginny, who Wally sees as the perfect woman. Content to worship her from afar—she is too perfect to approach for a date—June learns of Wally's affection for Ginny. Much to Wally's dismay, June speaks to Ginny's mother and arranges for Ginny to join the Cleavers for a picnic lunch. From the moment Ginny gets in the car, Wally begins to pick up on her flaws, which slowly destroy his idealized image of her. Ginny is allergic to the sun, allergic to certain foods, does not want to run around and have fun—all things which make for a rather boring picnic partner. Wally is crushed. In the episode's resolution, Ward tries to cheer Wally up by saying that even though Ginny fell short of his expectations, she was still a good looking girl, to which Wally replies, "Yeah, but I guess there's a lot more to it than just being good looking, you know?"

This line can be read in a number of ways, including that looks were, to some extent, important (after all, what, other than looks, and perhaps deportment, led Wally to

[148] Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee."

idealize Ginny in the first place?), but the idea that there was "more" to a relationship besides that physical attraction seemed to entail a deeper, more complicated view of relationships. Interestingly enough, immediately after Wally's line, June applauds Wally for expressing such a nice sentiment, not only indicating what a nice young man Wally had become, but giving weight to the more complicated nature of Wally's observation.[149] Again, while interpretations vary from viewer to viewer, one can see this line speaking to Wally's desire for the sort of relationship that had been extolled since the days of the companionate marriage; that people in love would be drawn not merely by looks, but by a camaraderie—the same sort of camaraderie that was clearly evident in Ward and June's marriage.

While June Cleaver, depicted as a college-educated, upper middle-class woman, should, in the interest of realism, have been depicted as less domestically inclined, her overall image as domestic servant was still the reality for a majority of American women.[150] That did not mean she or her real-life counterparts greeted the task with open arms. In speaking of domestication and family, Lasch observed that women, by the early 1960s, resenting their "lowly status" that was so "sharply at odds" with their

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[149] Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Wally's Dream Girl."

[150] According to Gans, a woman's distance from domesticity depended on her economic status and education level. In looking at gender roles in suburbia, Gans found that working-class families were more likely to conform to the "male breadwinner" female "Homemaker" model. Lower middle-class women, part of the middling group to which a series like *Leave it to Beaver* was designed to appeal, tended to share more common interests with their husbands and had marriages that were based on companionship. Upper middle-class women, who saw home and family as less important, belonged to families that had "shed almost all sexual segregation, for college attendance has trained women for organizational and occupational skills which they can and want to pursue even while being mothers and housewives" (25-30)

expectations (not that many women did not resent this position during previous historic periods).[151] As Susan Douglas observed in *Where the Girls Are*:

> My mother despised doing housework, and she was extremely unpleasant to be around when, on her weekends "off," she vacuumed, stripped the beds, cleaned the oven, ironed, and so forth. Yet she was determined to have the house neat and clean at all times, because a clean house was the primary way you were assessed as a wife and mother. June Cleaver made having a spotless house look so effortless; for Mom, it was so hard. I resolved early on to become a slob when I grew up, since housework seemed to produce nothing but misery...[152]

Sociologist Stephanie Coontz discussed a similar situation with her mom, who worked on home projects and artistic projects while her kids were in school, yet spent the summer months devoted to being a full-time mom.[153]

As much as June was supposed to be a happy domestic, she could also be depicted as departing from the ideal as well. In "The Spot Removers," when Ward came home to see June sewing in her busy dinner-time kitchen, Ward commented on the "charming domestic scene" of "mother sewing in the kitchen, dinner bubbling on the heart," saying it looked "just like something out of Louise May Alcott." June quickly responded that she was not sewing in the traditional sense of making a garment, but merely sewing a button on Wally's jacket, thus indicating that Ward's idealized image was not as ideal as he had imagined.[154]

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[151] Lasch, 135

[152] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 57.

[153] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were, American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 165, claims, like Weiss, that it was parents/moms of 1950s, not student feminists, who began feminist movement.

[154] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers."

Further exploding the myth of June as tireless worker are at least five episodes containing scenes in which Wally "uncovers" that his busy mother, much to his surprise, makes time for herself. The following dialogue to this effect takes place in "Beaver's Monkey" after Wally comes home and sees June relaxing, listening to music:

> Wally: I never saw a mom lying down resting.
> June: Look, I know it's against the rules but just don't tell anybody.[155]

Through these moments, one can read how the series, albeit rarely, poked at the myths and ideals that were supposedly spun and reinforced by the series itself. As evidenced by June's dismay at spending an evening lining shelves, mentioned in the introduction to this section, there are a number of instances in which even June Cleaver was *not* June Cleaver.[156]

"I wouldn't let a dead chicken push me around"

As content as June seemed to be in her role, numerous lines of dialogue in a variety of episodes tend to complicate the idealized image that has become so closely

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[155] The quote about laying down and resting being "against the rules" is from Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey;" Wally walks in on June as she is relaxing and listening to music in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); in that same episode, June goes on to note how she likes the opera, even that she had gone to see a fight in Madison Square Gardens; Wally is equally shocked to hear June singing "I'll Never Smile Again" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair." June says that Doris Day is a mother and she sings, but Wally says that is quite different as she is not a "regular" mother like June, which makes an interesting comment when one considers that Billingsley, who played June, would fall into that same category of working mom as would Doris Day; Wally is surprised to find out June dated other men in Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs," to which June replies that it is hard for a child to consider their parents are "human;" and, in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates," June lets a surprised Wally know that both her and even Ward enjoy reading romance novels.

[156] This despite Liebman's assessment that Margaret Anderson of *Father Knows Best* was a more "active participant" in family matters than June Cleaver or Harriet Nelson; to Liebman, June was only significant in the "meals she prepares and the neatness of the house" (205). This serves to reinforce my idea that all of these sitcoms, if looked at closely enough, reveal a more complicated tone than what firsts appears—as will be noted in the next few pages, June Cleaver was very much a part of the Cleaver family business.

associated with this series. Indeed, while June Cleaver emerges as the prototypical "milk and cookies" mom, dressed to perfection while carrying out her domestic duties with a smile, there are times when June violated that ideal to become a little bit more like her actual counterparts who themselves were in a process of social and cultural change. For example, June used frozen foods, store-bought cakes, and left-overs.[157] June wore pants when she worked in the garden or went camping with the boys.[158] More importantly, June did not meet every domestic chore with a smile. When Ward got Beaver to take a much needed bath, June was quick to comment that it would be her who would be stuck with cleaning out the tub; when Ward decided to take all the food out of the refrigerator to change the light bulb, June knew it would be up to her to put all the food back.[159] June was also aware that constantly being in the house kept her ignorant of the life that was going on around her; "I get out of my cave so seldom," observed June in "Child Care," "I don't know what's going on in the world." In "High School Sweater," June expressed how just escaping to the drug store could be a real treat.[160] Even Beaver was aware of June's "captivity;" when June says she has to stay in the kitchen to make sure she bastes

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[157] June buys frozen food in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball;" June buys a store-bought cake in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give;" June serves leftovers in Phil Leslie, "The Bank Account," and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count."

[158] June appears in slacks in Connelly and Mosher, "Happy Weekend," Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," and Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble."

[159] June notes she has to clean up the bathtub in Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); June notes the mess Ward has left her putting a light bulb in the refrigerator in Connelly and Mosher (suggested by a story by Smith), "Next Door Indians."

[160] June's cave comment is from Connelly and Mosher, "Child Care;" Junes comment on being happy to get out of house is from Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater."

her chicken on time, Beaver observes, "If I was a mother, I wouldn't let a dead chicken push me around."[161]

Other women in Mayfield seemed to share June's malaise. In "Beaver's Typewriter," Wally talks about how June does not like to cook after coming home from her woman's club meeting, perhaps implying that June and her friends have been talking about the frustrations of domesticity. In "Beaver's Laundry," Richard Rickover says that his mother told his father that if he was unhappy with the way she did his laundry, he could send his clothes to his mother, who lived in California. In "The Book Report," Gilbert's mother was so tired from cleaning the drapes that she eschewed the home-cooked meal and sent out for Chinese food.[162] June and other women could also be assertive with their children, as well, demanding that they not be referred to simply as "Hey, mom," or be treated like their child's personal secretary.[163] In "The Visiting Aunts," June becomes very upset when the boys get fidgety spending the day with her Aunt Martha. Arguing that she asks the boys for very little—which is true—June demands and wins their promise to follow her wishes.[164] In "Train Trip," June, always the accommodating mom, is makes four different batches of cookies in order to please everyone's different tastes. Toward the end of the episode, however, June reveals that,

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[161] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book."

[162]Comment on the mothers at luncheons is from Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Chinese take-out is mentioned in Conway and MacLane, "The Book Report," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); the laundry comment is from Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry."

[163] June appears upset at being referred to as "hey mom" in Conway and MacLane, "The Party Spoiler," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); a teenage girl's mother says she is not her daughter's personal secretary in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography."

[164] Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts."

"At the last minute I asserted my independence and put everything in everybody's."[165] June also had her own way of getting even with trouble makers. After Eddie uncovers that Ward set the basketball hoop he made for Beaver and Wally above regulation height, June decides to put mayonnaise on his sandwiches, even though she knows he is allergic to it.[166]

As Liebman observed in her observations of the series, June did not tend to revere her husband in the same way as he fictional cohort Margaret Anderson of *Father Knows Best.*[167] In "Beaver's Bad Day," June was quick to point out Ward's hypocrisy and inconsistency in his actions, which, in real life, was something that bothered actual teenagers.[168] While Ward would often get sarcastic with June, she proved a clever opponent, able to turn a phrase back towards ward in a sarcastic manner as well. In one episode, when Ward complained of his coffee being cold, June was quick to point out that it was fine when she poured it for him twenty minutes ago. Wielding her power with the kitchen, June could threaten—always in a pleasant way—to burn ward some toast or tell the family, which had been picking on her, to get their won deserts.[169] When a clever comeback evaded her, June was not above slamming the door to Ward's den.[170]

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[165] Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip."

[166] Connelly and Mosher (story by van Hartesveldt), "The Perfect Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958)*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[167] Liebman, 125.

[168] June notes that Ward is relaxing while trying to teach the boys responsibility in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job;" June chastises Ward for lying to get out of a dinner engagement at the same time that Ward is trying to tell Beaver why lying is wrong in Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958). It is interesting to note that such parental inconsistencies were reported as bothersome to teens who had responded to the Farner's *Teen* magazine survey on spanking.

[169] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally, the Businessman," June turns one of Ward's sarcastic comments back on Ward; in Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," Ward describes his setting the silverware backwards as a holder over from his prep school days in which he fought against the "social order." When Ward gets mad

Whenever June caught Ward making sexists comments to the boys, June clearly expressed her dismay, either verbally or with a telling glance.[171] June was also quick to voice her opinion in two episodes in which the country club membership was considering kicking women out of the club's dining room and golf course (although her defiance in these episodes is played mostly for laughs and is not greeted very sympathetically). In another episode, when Ward shows June a report that his office did on women's spending habits, June, who was not pleased with the results, is not surprised to learn that men had compiled the report.[172]

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at June for putting some of his books upside down in the bookcase, June throws the same line back at Ward; June offers to burn Ward a piece of toast after a sexist comment he makes in Connelly,Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Her Idol;" a similar sexist comment from Ward to the boys in Connelly and Mosher (story by David Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver" leads June to tell the Cleaver men that they can go and get their own deserts as opposed to getting her to get them.

[170] Beaver comments sarcastically on Ward making Beaver cry in both Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "The Black Eye," and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962). June also makes a snide comment regarding Ward trying to teach Beaver how to box in "The Black Eye;" the comment about the cold coffee is from Packard and Winter, "Beaver's Newspaper;" June slams the door on Ward in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist;" and June teases Ward as he works with the boys in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[171]June challenges sexist comments in a variety of episodes. In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," June verbally expresses her dissatisfaction when Ward tells Beaver that women have quirks that need to be humored; June says Ward should be ashamed to tell the boys that women make men look silly in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl;" in a cut-away reaction shot in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater," June is shown to be upset when Ward says that no one has yet devised a way to understand why women would persist in calling a boy who does not want to seem them; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Levinson) "Don Juan Beaver," Ward tells June that Beaver is "beyond help" after he has gotten mixed up with girls, to which June rolls her eyes and looks upset; June looks equally upset in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee" when Wally says that some girls still give him the creeps and Ward encourages Wally to hold onto that feeling for as long as possible.

[172]When male country club members vote on barring women from the golf course and dining room in Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), June asks Ward how he has voted; in Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," June, referring to a move to bar women and children from the country club course on Saturdays, asks Ward why he would want to belong to a club that takes such a "warped" attitude (with laugh track up, playing her comments for laughs as opposed to serious); and June's comments on the marketing survey are from Connelly and Mosher, "The Boat Builders," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959)

Perhaps June's greatest stand occurred in "The Clothing Drive," a later season episode written by Alan Manings (who would later co-create, along with Whitney Blake, *One Day at A Time*, the first show to feature a divorced mother). In the episode, Ward had mistakenly left one of his new suits near a pile of clothing that Beaver had collected for the poor. Although Ward knew the accident was his fault, he tried to convince June that she should go to the school to retrieve the suit:

> June: I think we'll have a small recount here. Who put the suits where they were...who forgot to tell anyone they were for the cleaners...and furthermore, who told Beaver to take the clothes that were in the hall...well, then logically, who should get the suits back?[173]

Ward not only deferred to June's demands, but Wally and Beaver were quite impressed as well, likening June's logic to that of Perry Mason, a popular television lawyer of the time.

Given the overall affective tone of the series, it is not surprising that June's most passionate challenges to Ward involved parenting decisions that June did not agree with, from Beaver running away to Ward's forcing Beaver to become more conscious of his cleanliness. Indeed, June often felt that Ward expected too much from the boys, put too much pressure on them, or failed to understand their underlying motivations for their actions. June could also be the primary problem solver. When Wally started wearing a ducktail, it was June who defied Ward and the experts and took matters into her own hands, forcing Wally to see himself through his parents eyes (something Ward had

[173] Manings, "The Clothing Drive."

deemed impossible).[174] Neil Lillico, whose masters thesis explored the pedagogical aspects of *Leave it to Beaver*, noted in his viewing of 145 episodes of the series that 75.2 percent of the episodes were resolved without a difference of opinion between Ward and June. Furthermore, according to Lillico, June had "identified the problem and offered a solution in 70.3 percent of the episodes," and, in the 20 percent of episodes in which there was a difference of opinion, June's solution was adopted 79.3 percent of the time.[175]

While much of the series revolved around the domestic setting, *Leave it to Beaver* was not ignorant of the fact that women had been a part of the workforce for quite some time as well. In "Mother's Day Composition," for example, Beaver's class was required to write about what jobs their mothers held before they got married. While many of the other mother's appeared to have held quite responsible jobs before marriage, Beaver was unsure of what his own mom had done for a living. When Beaver asked Wally about June's past life, all Wally could offer was that June must have waited around for Ward to

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[174] in Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), June is the first to discover the secret alligator the boys are keeping; June reacts to the duck tail haircut in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiance," June rushes Ward out of the house when he proves to be insensitive to Beaver's crush on Miss Landers; June feels Ward has made a mistake in expecting Beaver to be as aware of his hygiene as Wally in Manhoff, "Cleaning up Beaver;" in Manhoff, "The Haircut," June warns Ward that his idea of giving money to Beaver, who has just lost money, is a bad decision. It is also June who notes how she and Ward are the reason why Beaver and Wally are afraid to come to them with their problems; June feels Ward has too high of expectations on the boys in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat out of the Bag;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "The Black Eye," June not only disagrees with Ward teaching Beaver how to fight, but notes that he is doing so because of a problem he is having at work; in Diamond and Gersham, "The Perfume Salesmen," June feels Ward is making a mistake in helping the boys sell their foul-smelling perfume; June argues with Ward on her idea to have the quarrelling brothers sign a friendship pact, saying that he does not like the idea because it is hers. In a rare instance, June's idea is proven wrong; June convinces Ward that he needs to be more understanding of Beaver's motivation in lying about having a parrot in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair," claiming that parents must try harder to understand out children; and June expresses a similar sentiment in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho."

[175] See Neil B. Lillico, "Television as Popular Culture: An Attempt to Influence North American Society? An Ideological Analysis of *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1961) (Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1993),section on relationships, as published at www.leaveittobeaver.org/thesis/thesis_relationships.htm.

come along (to which the laugh track responded with a knowing guffaw, revealing that the adults in the audience knew that life was a bit more complicated than Wally's limited view). Later in the episode, June explained to Beaver that she went to boarding school, lived with her aunt during the summers, and once worked in a book store, a job from which she got fired within a few days. When Beaver compared June's life to all the wonderful occupations of his classmate's mothers—from department store buyer to dental nurse to WAC—Beaver began to feel cheated that his mom led such a dull life. Inspired by a TV interview, Beaver makes up a story about June having been a mobbed-up Broadway dancer, a lie which is revealed by episode's end. While this episode is interesting in that it acknowledges the working mother, it is important to note that each mother seemed to give up their career for marriage. Nevertheless, this episode still reinforced the ideas that women's lives were more complicated than they first appeared.[176]

Women were part of the Mayfield workforce. Through various episodes, viewers find that women held jobs such as real estate agent and police clerk. In another episode, June noted that one of her babysitters was no longer available because she had taken a steady job.[177] When Beaver bought his mom a cheap blouse in a gaudy dress shop, a sales woman, depicted as being quite gruff, describes it as a very "serviceable model" that could be worn "at the home or the office," to which Beaver responds "My mother

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[176] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition."

[177] in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers," June mentions a female real estate agent she met at the market; there is a female clerk in the police station in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat;" June mentions the baby sitter who took a steady job in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and Miss Landers gets engaged in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Finace."

doesn't have an office; she just has a writing pad in the kitchen."[178] In "Beaver's I.Q.," June also noted that young school girls are now just as ambitious as boys, and that they could also be doctors and lawyers.[179] Furthermore, in the episode in which Miss Landers became engaged, it was not clear that she would give up her teaching once she was married, although, by the next season, Beaver was being taught by Mrs. Rayburn—the principal of the school and another Mayfield working woman .

Thus, while the preponderance of images of June presented her as quite content with her life, there were numerous episodic moments in which June and Mayfield womanhood were rendered in more complicated terms. Mayfield women may have been happy, for the most part, with their domestic role, but the negative manifestations of such a life did not go completely unnoticed or unchallenged. While most mothers stayed at home in Mayfield, a few worked. While these working women did not account for the same distribution of working women in the real world, their presence in Mayfield denoted a dynamic society which reflected and commented upon societal and gender change.

Fatherhood and Masculinity

While many academics and critics, looking at the changing role of women in the 1980s, took a presentist approach to see how far June Cleaver stood from the reality of her real-life contemporaries, few have noticed that it was Ward Cleaver, as the affective,

[178] Connelly and Mosher, "June's Birthday."

[179] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q." This is also noted in Lilico, who also argues that the producers, while promoting a dominant ideology of gendered roles, are "aware of the changes taking place in society."

supportive father with loads of time to provide his children, that truly stood outside the norm of American family life. Indeed, while the majority of American women during June Cleaver's day were stay-at-home moms, few fathers were as involved with their family as were fictional fathers Ozzie Nelson, Jim Anderson and Ward Cleaver. In looking at various episodes, it seemed that every unpleasant task, from discipline, to telling bad news to breaking up fights, were relegated to Ward.[180] As Ward questioned in "Beaver's Secret Life," "Why is everything unpleasant and miserable always turn out to be the father's job?"[181] Not only was Ward depicted as making all the important financial decisions for the family, but even Beaver's school principal Mrs. Rayburn—depicted as a strong working woman herself—called Ward instead of June to discuss school discipline issues.[182]

What explains the ubiquity of the father in these affective family series? [183] Perhaps one answer lies in Connelly and Mosher's personal lives, whose lack of a strong father figure in their childhoods could have led them, consciously or unconsciously, to endow their imagined family with a strong, understanding father. This answer, of course,

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[180] June quickly tells Ward in a number of episodes that saying no, providing discipline, or having to sneak around to find out about their kid' activities, is a father's job. Examples of this are found in Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," in which June says Ward must tell the boys they cannot keep an alligator; in Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," in which June says Ward must tell Beaver he cannot keep a monkey; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," June says discipline is the father's responsibility; in William Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward complains how a father has to do all the miserable jobs; in Breslow and Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," June tells Ward that if Beaver gets the canoe he wants, Beaver's safety with it will be Ward's responsibility; and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), June says that being sneaky, in regards to one's kids, is part of being a father.

[181] Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life."

[182] in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," Beaver assumes Ward will decide whether or not he can get a new jacket; Rayburn calls on Ward, not June, to discuss a matter of Beaver's discipline in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture."

[183] Liebman, 198.

does not necessarily explain why Robert Young, as co-producer of *Father Knows Best*, had already made the conscious decision to play a strong father character who was neither the bumbler or the boob of popular culture's past. Perhaps the most plausible explanation lies in the cultural ideals going back to the nineteenth century which had tried to find a greater role for the father within the modern, post-Industrial family from which dad was absent for large amounts of time each day.[184]

Following industrialization, the chief role of the father was as "breadwinner," who, through the invention of the family wage, sought to regain the sort of control he exerted under pre-Industrial agrarian-based patriarchy.[185] According to Ross Parke and Peter Stearns, late-nineteenth-century men, sensing the changes in modern life and family, began devoting "a considerable portion of their growing leisure time to explicitly family activities, despite the fabled attractions of bars and other nonpaternal

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[184] Robert Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A Brief History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 91.

[185] See Coontz, *Way We Really Are*, who writes that "New cultural images of women as "angels in the house" replaced older ones of women as lusty yoke-mates of men. New norms of masculinity evolved, defining male authority in terms of breadwinning rather than personal control over the daily life of the household" (114). For more complete discussion, see Laura L. Frader, "Engendering Work and Wages: The French Labor Movement and the Family Wage," in Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), who noted how the family wage, as it appeared in Europe and America, first came out of the struggle of skilled tradesmen looking to hold onto control of their fields. As Frader and Rose observed, "Proponents of the family wage ideal removed the wage from the domain of the individual and tied it to the interests of the collectivity, the family. They assumed that the right to provide subsistence to a family was a male right, hence workingmen should be paid wages not only on the basis of their labor, but also on the basis of their status as fathers and family providers....Behind the notion of the family wage was...an idealized notion of the family, sustained by women's private, unwaged labor in the home and by men's breadwinning in the public world of work" (144). See also Boydston, who argues that, as the notion of breadwinner became important in the industrial age, the image of working women, which was growing in importance in industrialized America, made men feel quite uncomfortable, even when such employment failed to pose a threat to men's work. According to Boydston, by the 1860s, "females who were visible as outworkers and operatives may have seemed to bespeak an 'unnaturalness' in society—an inability of wage earning men to establish proper households. Like the witches of the seventeenth century, wage-earning women became symbols of threats posed to a particular concept of manhood—in this instance, a concept that identified male claims to authority and power with the status as sole wage-earner." (154-55). Also see Evans, who, although she was speaking in the context of women union workers in Victorian age factories, notes how the presence of these women "provoked anxiety among male workers who feared competition for jobs and lowered wages; these men also viewed women's presence in the public arena as a violation of natural law" (136).

diversions."[186] Victorian era writers, touting the domestic, suburban ideal, also began preaching that the father had an important role to play in their children's development; as Beecher and Stowe had argued:

> It is far more needful for children that a father should attend to the formation of their character and habits, and aid in developing their social, intellectual, and moral nature, than it is that he should earn money to furnish them with handsome clothes and a variety of tempting food.
>
> It will be wise for those parents who find little time to attend to their children, or to seek amusement and enjoyment in the domestic and social circle, because their time is so much occupied with public cares or benevolent objects, to inquire whether their first duty is not to train up their own families to be useful members of society. A man who neglects the mind and morals of his children, to take care of the public, is in great danger of coming under a similar condemnation to that of him who, neglecting to provide for his own household, has 'denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel'[187]

These Victorian calls for an involved fatherhood were joined in the early twentieth century by social scientists who began likening families to small groups to which the father could add important psychological benefits, particularly in regard to his children's development.[188] It was during the 1920s that the concept of a "new fatherhood"—one in which fathers struggled not only to be better providers but better, more involved parents—had emerged. However, the new fatherhood was always more ideal than actuality.[189] Just as progressive parenting ideas had become watered-down ideals of

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[186] In Ross D. Parke and Peter N. Stearns, "Fathers and Child Rearing," in Glen H. Elder, Jr., John Modell, and Ross D. Parke, editors, *Children in Time and Place: Developmental and Historical Insights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 156.

[187] Beecher and Stowe, 300.

[188] Griswold 91-3

[189] Griswold writes "children looked to their mothers as emotional caretakers and to their fathers as combination playmates and bankers" (142).

popular culture in the 1950s, so too had the New Fatherhood ideal. [190] Thus, while the close family that industrialization had destroyed could not be revived in fact, it could be in fiction.

Another reason accounting for the ubiquity of the father was the perceived masculinity crisis, in which men, during the post-World War II period, began to feel that their power had been usurped by a feminization of the culture.[191] No one articulated this fear better than Wylie's *Generation of Vipers*, which blamed mothers for smothering their sons with too much love and attention.[192] If Wylie was correct, it would take a particularly heroic male to prevent this "momism," as Wylie labeled it, from ruining American boyhood. Ward Cleaver, along with his fictional counterparts Jim Anderson and Ozzie Nelson, were just such men—practitioners of the affective aspects of the "new. fatherhood" who, as breadwinner, would do anything, including lay down their own life to protect their families.[193]

This heroic image of fatherhood was not lost on Beaver, who, in "Most Interesting Character," decided to write about his father's life. Much like Beaver had

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[190] Liebman, 206, notes the disappearance of mothers in TV shows as part of a melodramatic tradition that went back to the eighteenth century, in which the mother was less important than the father in serious plays.

[191] See Griswold's discussion of the perceived effemination of American males as discussed by such writers as Philip Wylie, David Levy, and Edward Strecker, 172-76. Griswold also discusses this concern as it applies to 1950s fathers, 185-218. See also Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 261-266.

[192] Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (1942; reprint, New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1955).

[193] Ward's duty to work and pay the bills is noted in dialogue in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver' Library Book," Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Ward's Millions," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Marcus), "Beaver's Poster," in which Ward also discusses how fathers through time have given their lives for their families. Ward's job providing the family with a nice home is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Runs Away," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff) "Tenting Tonight," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

been dismayed by June's mundane life revealed in "Mother's Day Composition," Beaver was hard-pressed to find any stories in his father's past that stood up to the war heroes and professionals who made up the bulk of the fathers in Beaver's class. Rather than create a more interesting life for Ward, as Beaver had done in "Mother's Day Competition," Beaver decided to take June's advice and write about the way Ward made Beaver feel—safe, secure and loved. Thus, Beaver came up with a portrait of the true hero of his age—the average farther who did his best to be a loving friend and supportive provider. Reading his paper aloud to the family, Beaver said of Ward:

> He does not have an interesting job. He just works hard and takes care of all of us. He never shot things in Africa or not saved anything that was drowning, but that's alright with me because when I am sick he brings me ice cream and when I tell him things or ask things he always listens to me. He'll use up a whole Saturday to make junk with me in the garage. He may not be interesting to you or someone else because he's not your father. Just mine.[194]

This heroic image of Ward stood in sharp contrast to many of Ward's real-life counterparts. Surprisingly, it was Philip Wylie who offered the most scathing portrait of early 1950's American fatherhood. Not that Wylie came to his critique spontaneously. After lambasting women in a *Look* magazine version of his *Generation of Vipers*, Wylie received many complaints from female *Look* readers. Meeting this response, Wylie wrote another *Look* article, "Pop is a Moral Slacker," which appeared in *Look* in 1951.[195] According to Wylie, the father of the affluent, nuclear age was as much to blame as mom for the fate of his children. Where mom had become smothering and overprotective, pop suffered from a lack of moral and ethical grounding. According to Wylie, the idealized

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[194] Connelly and Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Most Interesting Character."

[195] Philip Wylie, "Pop is a Moral Slacker," *Look*, July 3, 1951, 61

involved father was met with the reality of uninvolved "Pops" who were much too tired to play with their kids when they came home from work. As Wylie argued, "Being a suitable father demands dozens of hours every week....America's pop is too exhausted by earning a living (he says) to be anything of the sort." Thus, the fruit of pop's labor was used to provide material objects that he used to bride "his family to keep out of his hair." The modern pop, wrote Wylie, had no sense of family, love or kinship, but, was instead, little more than the family's "star boarder."[196]

Pop's problems went much deeper than his lack of interest in his family, wrote Wylie. Using material from the recently released Kinsey report, Wylie noted how Pop, frustrated by his wife's frigidity, turned to other women to become a "sexual cheat" (note how Wylie found a way to blame mom even while blaming dad). According to Wylie, this "bootleg" sex, took him underground into a baseless world which further corrupted him. Thus, Pop became a "vulgarian," evidenced in his love of dirty jokes and the mass media's sexual innuendo which catered to it. Such jokes and attitudes were quite harmful as they were picked up by pop's children.[197]

Wylie also saw pop as a hypocrite, who, "Ashamed of and full of conflicts," had "...come to cheat in a thousand ways," from fudging on golf scores to getting the best of someone in a business deal to bribing a judge to get out of a civil infraction. Rather than be ashamed of such indiscretions, Pop, according to Wylie, went home and bragged about them to the family who learned from his example. Far from serving as the backbone of

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[196] Ibid., 56

[197] Ibid., 58; it should be noted while the argument on frigidity squarely places the blame, once again on mom, Wylie does acknowledge, on page 57, that women acted in this manner because of the cultural taboo on women deriving sexual pleasure; thus, women were a product of their culture as opposed to some biologically pre-destined frigidity.

society, the pathetic middle-class pop was little more than a common crook.[198] As such, pop had lost the ability to demand honesty from his politicians and institutions. To Wylie, the modern pop was little more than "a slob."[199]

Pop's biggest problem, as far as Wylie was concerned, lay in his blatant materialism that did little more than teach his children how to "*get things*" as opposed to "*understand ideas.*" To Wylie, society could only redeem itself if American fathers began judging themselves and their acts in light of their children.[200] To Wylie, the fate of the country depended on the father to serve as a proper role model for his children. While such an act proved quite difficult in the real world, it was exactly the sort of task a fictional father, such as Ozzie Nelson, Jim Anderson, or Ward Cleaver, could handle.

Ward was certainly no moral slacker; honest to a fault, he was a very strong character, both physically and emotionally, who was rarely depicted as weak or indecisive.[201] Ward was certainly no cheat, sexual or otherwise. Indeed, the worst mistakes Ward could make, outside of parenting mistakes described in chapter four, involved getting carried away with the pride he felt for his boys and his well-intentioned desire to make them strive to be the best they could be. For example, while Ward expressed indignation at various doting or manipulative fathers presented in a variety of

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[198] Ibid., 59; this statement foreshadows Lasch's argument about how people in a nation of laws are waiting for delayed punishment from their numerous discretions

[199] Ibid., 60

[200] Ibid., 61

[201] Ward looks foolish in very few episodes. In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," when Beaver gets the chicken pox, Ward, who never had them, develops an uncharacteristic psychosomatic itch; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Takes a Drive," Ward is basically emasculated in front of his boys when Wally appears before a traffic judge who makes Ward responsible for Wally's infraction; and Ward looks quite absent-minded in a scene in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry," when he yells at Wally for losing a tool that he himself had lost.

episodes,[202] he could just as easily be caught bragging about his kids or using his children to live out his dreams. In "Part Time Genius," for example, Ward became upset over the way his colleague continually bragged about his son. When Beaver took a test which revealed that he was a genius, Ward could not wait to brag about his son. Even when Ward later learned that Beaver did not test as well as it had appeared (another child had substituted his test for Beaver's), Ward's pride let his colleague continue to believe that Beaver was a genius.[203]

In "Wally's Election," Ward was excited to hear that Wally was running for school office. When he learned that Wally was facing Lumpy Rutherford, the son of Ward's office rival, Ward began seeing the election as a contest between he and Fred, and filled Wally with ridiculous advice on glad-handing students in order to win the election. When Wally lost, Ward, in typical Cleaver tradition, apologized to Wally for giving such bad advice. In doing so, Ward revealed that he, like other parents, often make the mistake of realizing their own failed dreams through their children, a fault which kept parents from accepting their children for ho they are.[204]

Ward also on occasion measured his self-image through the actions of his sons. In "The Tooth," Beaver admitted that he was afraid to go to the dentist. Ward, accompanying Beaver to the office, was quite dismayed to find that Fred Rutherford's

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[202] Ward asks for the courage not to act like a "typical father" in Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election;" Ward vows not to be a "grandstand" father in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet;" Ward admits to coaching Wally from the sidelines in Tibbles, "The Haunted House;" Judy Hensler's father is seen as being quite doting in both Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Ward's Problem," and Connelly and Mosher, "School Play." In the later episode, Judy's father has brought a heavily outfitted camera to a simple school play—the only father in the crowd to have done so. Consequently, Ward is not surprised to learn that the man with the camera is Judy's father.

[203] Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "Part-time Genius," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[204] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election."

daughter, Violet, was facing her visit with no fear. Embarrassed by Beaver, Ward made matters worse, berating his son in public and imploring Beaver to be a "good little soldier." After Beaver broke down in fear in front of the Rutherford's, Ward, ultimately realized that he had put so much pressure on the Beaver that Beaver had little choice to react any other way. In discussing the situation with June, Ward, speaking more to the viewers than June, noted how a father's hopes for his sons often runs counter to his child's own well-being:

> Ward: ...See, the trouble is, you watch your boy growing up and you begin to see him as the All-American boy. Got to be the best athlete. Make the best grades. Have the courage of a Spartan. And then, every once in a while, he lets you down a little bit and they're just one quivering mass of disappointment.
> June: Come on, you're not one of those fathers.
> Ward: I don't know. I caught myself almost trying to be today. You know, all a kid needs is a little reassurance, now and then, that we recognize he's doing the best he can. That way, he'll usually wind up doing the best he can.[205]

Of course, episodic comedy characters rarely benefit from their lessons, so the same mistakes—at least enough to fill 26 episodes per season—happen time and again. Thus, Ward continued to put pressure on his kids, especially Beaver, who was depicted as being neither as academically or athletically talented as his older brother, Wally. In "Beaver the Athlete," Ward chastised Beaver for not showing a more competitive spirit in school baseball practice.[206] In "Dramatic Club," when June argued that Ward should just let

[205] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Tooth."

[206] Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete."

Beaver be an "average little boy," Ward replied, "Dear an average little boy doesn't have a chance these days."[207]

Ward could also err by trying to be too much of a "pal" to his children. "In the Perfect Father," Ward became jealous when Wally and Beaver began spending a great deal of time with Mr. Dennison, one of their friend's father's. Trying to win the boys back, Ward made a fool out of himself by showing off and dominating the boys friendly game of basketball.[208] In "Ward's Problem," Ward's desire to keep a promise he had made to accompany both boys to two different events led him to observe that "when a father has two sons and they're both looking forward to having a wonderful time with him, you hang onto the feeling as long as you can..."[209] The Cleaver boys, of course, wanted that same sort of love and approval from Ward. As Beaver once put it, there was nothing worse than being hated by one's own father.[210] One way for Wally and Beaver to insure that love and affection was to become the sort of man Ward—and society—expected them to be.

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[207] Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club."

[208] Connelly and Mosher (story by van Hartesveldt), "The Perfect Father."

[209] Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Ward's Problem

[210] Beaver is worried Ward will never be proud of him again in Ross, Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Tooth;" Beaver says he does not want his dad to think he is dumb in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates;" Beaver says that it is terrible to have your father think you are sneaky in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call;" Beaver is worried Ward will be disappointed in him when he tells him that he did not make the school band in "Music Lessons;" and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver's friend Kenneth, who stole items from the school, says he cannot tell his dad about what he has done as he fears his father will hate him, which Kenneth says is the worse thing that can happen to a kid.

From Boy to Man

In *Living Room Lectures*, Liebman argued that sitcom boys had a fairly easy time being boys. *Leave it to Beaver's* episodic evidence, however, shows that that was hardly the case.[211] While the series did tend to present many aspects of boyhood as being unchanging,[212] and while various scripts played to numerous characteristics of boyhood,[213] Mayfield boys were not born with a sense of masculinity. They had to learn how to become a man.

There were definite gender boundaries demarking what Mayfield boys could and could not do. Such boundaries were tested, time and again, over the course of the series—much in the same way they were being tested by the character's real-life counterparts who, no doubt, became informed of masculinity in part though this and similar series. Perhaps the most significant of these images were of boys desperately trying to prove their manhood. As noted in chapter two, Wally and his adolescent friends

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[211] As proven by this section, Liebman's assertion that boys require no such instruction for their masculine is wrong. "..Because of its hegemony," writes Libeman, "there are no discussions of what it means to be male, or of what constitutes a boy's proper behavior or identity" (182)

[212] Dirt that comes off of a boy has to go somewhere, is one of Ward's infamous "immutable laws," this one from Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver." The first boyhood crush is depicted as universally devastating in the teaser to Connelly and Mosher (story by Phil Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); and the idea of a perennial "fat lady hitting a kid" at the train station is noted in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip."

[213] Beaver keeps a pocket full of turtle dirt in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled;" Beaver has a ton of junk in his pocket, including an old golf ball, army men, and baseball cards, in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); Ward says all boys want tattoos in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jack Patrick), "Music Lesson," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), while June is unsure of why a boy would want a horse tooth, Ward says he would not trust a boy who did not want one; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho," Ward talks about how boys like to be out in the rain; in Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," Ward says bringing a mouse home is a natural part of being a boy; in Breslow and Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," Ward notes that boys love frogs and girls do not understand why; and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward notes that a quiet boy is always a sign of trouble that is brewing.

liked to refer to each other as "men." In another early episode, Beaver told June about how much he was looking forward to being one of the bigger guys and getting to stand around on the corner like the older kids and punch his fellows on the arm.[214] Because manhood was, in part, a waiting game, Mayfield boys tried to rush the process along, whether it was Wally trying to act like a man by using Ward's razor, Beaver bragging that he was too old to need a babysitter, or Eddie and Lumpy proving their manhood by trying to get a job on a fishing boat or joining the merchant marine.[215]

Masculinity could also be demonstrated through various material items or affectations. Guns, cars, and even gym locker smells could take away the sting of femininity.[216] The importance of these items was particularly evident in "Party

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[214]See the pilot, Connelly and Mosher, "It's a Small World," 1956; in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," Beaver says that he cannot wait to stand around like the big boys do and hit each other on the arm; the teenage boys refer to each other as men in Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding School," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," when June asks Beaver why he has to wear a sweater to the semi-formal affair, Beaver, who has promised the other boys on the team that he would do so, says it is a man's reason and that June would not understand.

[215] Wally rushes shaving in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," and gets embarrassed when Ward, in front of Eddie and Lumpy, tells him that he is too young to shave (Ward later apologizes, noting that when a boy tries to be a man, he does not need his father telling him that he is not one). In the end, Ward tells Wally that shaving is just an outside symbol of manhood and that what counts is first being a man on the "inside;" in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," Wally agrees to take Beaver's side of an argument with Ward when Beaver flatters him by saying he could have a "man to man" talk with him. Ward, however, is in a bad mood and tears into Wally, ending that plan; Beaver tries to prove his manliness by trying to convince his parents he does not need a sitter in Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters;" in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Wally and Lumpy think Eddie is lying about his parents letting him work on an Alaskan fishing boat, to which Eddie replies that his parent treat him like a man; likewise, Lumpy plans to join the merchant marine because he wants to prove his manhood to his father in Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[216] Beaver goes to the all-girls party in Diamond and Gersham, "Party Invitation." When Beaver comes home happy (having seen the girl's father's gun collection) Ward is a bit worried, wondering why Beaver would himself at such an affair; when Ward's Uncle Billy shows up in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit," June is not happy that he brought the boys a gun and a knife; the locker room smell discussed in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater;" and Wally notes that a boy suddenly becomes a car expert when he turns fifteen in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

Invitation," in which Beaver was invited to Linda Dennison's all-girl party. After winning a doll, a stunned Beaver learned that he was about to become involved in a game of post office. Frightened by the idea of being kissed by a room full of girls, Beaver made a quick escape into Linda's father's den, which was filled with such masculine symbols as guns and hunting trophies. At last, Beaver was on safe ground.

Ward, who had made Beaver go to the party without realizing Beaver was the only boy there, was usually quite conscious of gender appropriate behavior as practiced in Mayfield. Through various episodes Ward encouraged his boys to read *Tom Sawyer*, whom Ward labeled a "real boy," taught Beaver how to fight, and, in an effort to instill Beaver with a sense of chivalry, had Beaver read *Ivanhoe*.[217] Where there was chivalry, there was sexism, which often served as the nexus of male bonding within the episodes.[218] Indeed, Ward was always ready to share with Wally and Beaver how women had a knack for making men look silly, how they could disarm a man with tears, or how

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[217] Tom Sawyer reference is from Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters;" Ward believes a boy has a right to defend himself, and teaches Beaver to fight in Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "The Black Eye;" Ward also encourages Beaver to fight in Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert;" Ward is interested in whether or not Beaver won a fight with another kid in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe;" in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," Ward sends Wally to break up a fight with Beaver. Cautioning Wally to use commons sense, Wally assumes that means not to stop the altercation if Beaver is winning. When Beaver comes back unharmed, Ward is proud of Beaver, who remained unharmed because the other kid backed down. Ward is still proud of Beaver, saying that it is important not to run from a fight. Ward tells Wally to treat his date like a lady in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl;" Beaver says one cannot squeal on a girl in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography," to which Ward agrees; Beaver says one cannot hit a girl but one can hit a sister in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny;" Beaver also says one cannot hit a girl in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," Knights and chivalry are discussed; Ward says defending women has always been the "manly thing to do," in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe," but when he takes on a boy for fighting with a girl—his sister—Beaver just gets in trouble. While Miss Landers does not approve of fighting, she does applaud Beaver's chivalry.

[218] As Lieberman notes, "In programs in which girls are absent...[such as *Leave it to Beaver*] sexual derision of women and elevation of men are more common and, indeed, often serve to bond the fathers with their male children. *Leave it to Beaver* abounds with sexist remarks in generally, and specifically with jibes at June's family" (175).

they clung to men who pushed them away.[219] Ward, along with other adult male characters, instructed Mayfield boys that they had to learn to "grin and bear" the enigmatic female, maintaining their distance from the opposite sex for as long as they possibly could. If it was a Mayfield girl's duty to trap a boy, it was a Mayfield boy's duty to avoid that trap.[220]

While Ward never encouraged his boys to lie, he was aware that some of his ideas about women would not be taken well by June. Thus, on several occasions, Ward made the boys promise to hold his comments in strict confidence:[221]

> Beaver: I guess you gotta be more on your guard with girls than you do with fellas, huh dad?
> Ward: Well, yes, but there's no reason to tell your mother I said that.
> Beaver: Oh, don't worry dad. We're a couple of guys who can tell each other stuff.[222]

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[219] In Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Her Idol," Ward tells Beaver that one never wins in an argument with a woman; Ward tells Beaver that women have a way of making men look foolish in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "My Brother's Girl;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Lipscott and Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter," Ward tells Wally that no man knows how to deal with a crying girl; Ward says that women are "consistently unpredictable," in Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache;" in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give," Ward tells Beaver that situations with women get worse before they get better (referring to women, dating, and adolescence); Wally's driving teacher agrees that women make a man nervous in Ross, "Wally's License;" and, in Diamond and Gersham, "Party Invitation," Mr. Dennison likens Beavers experience at an all girl party as being quite "terrifying.

[220] In Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," when Wally says some girls still give him the creeps, Ward urges him to hold onto that feeling as he slaps him on the back; in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography," Beaver's teacher says that as a boy gets older he learns to look beyond a girl's faults, sneakiness being one of them; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete," Ward and Beaver joke together that while baseball player Ted Williams strikes out every now and then, he does not do so when playing against girls as Beaver was in his class.

[221] In Connelly and Mosher, "The Bus Ride," Wally shows that he knows enough not to reveal things that would get his dad in trouble with June; in Connelly and Mosher (story by O'Connor), "Beaver's Team," Ward agrees that one has to be on guard with women, but tells Beaver not to say he heard that from him; Wally similarly aggress to keep a similar comment to himself in Conway and MacLane, "The Moustache;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," Ward asks both boys not to tell June that he has told them about techniques they can use to "dump" a girl; and when Ward says he is going to have a "man to man" talk with Beaver in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," June says she feels Ward does that to shut her out of the boys' lives.

Ward gave Beaver a friendly, masculine jab on the chin at the end of the exchange. When June entered and asked what Ward and Beaver were talking about, Beaver—proving himself worthy of the manhood bestowed upon him—responded "Nothing, mom. We were just taking like the two of us were men."[223]

In a time when homosexulaity was still considered a malody that needed prevention and treatment, being a man in Mayfield also meant not being a being a sissy. While sports were a way to prove one's manhood, certain sports, like tennis, could be labeled as "sissy." While Beaver assured Gilbert that it was okay to practice a golf waggle, Gilbert was quick to note how it made Beaver look like a "hula hula" dancing girl.[224] Playing the flute was also associated with a lack of masculinity, and certain books, like *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and *Penny Bobbins* were considered emasculating; when Beaver became chivalrous after reading *Ivanhoe*, as noted above, Ward bragged to June that Beaver would not have gotten such a spirit by reading a feminine book like *Penny Bobbins*. Even a person's name could imply less than masculine qualities. When Beaver asked Wally if Somerset Maugham was a writer,

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[222] Connelly and Mosher (story by O'Connor), "Beaver's Team."

[223] Ibid.

[224] The idea that tennis is not a man's game is noted in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone;" Beaver says weddings are for sissies in Connelly and Mosher, "Child Care;" one of Beaver's classmates said there would be no competition for Beaver in prep school in Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prep School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); the golf waggle incident is from "Ward's Golf Clubs;" and, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete," Beaver goofs around while playing baseball as Judy hits a homerun.

Wally quipped than anyone with a name like that certainly was not a professional football player. [225]

Mayfield boys and men could also be labeled a sissy by crossing assumed gender boundaries. While Ward and the boys were seen regularly helping June around the kitchen—one of the few areas in which the gendered nature of work was being slightly dismantled—there remained, in other episodes, the idea that such help was "sissy stuff." In "Beaver and Violet," Ward took a bit of ribbing from Fred Rutherford when Fred caught Ward holding a dish and wearing an apron.[226] Throwing like a girl, smelling like a girl, and singing like a girl were also sissified acts off-limits to Mayfield boys. In "Beaver's Autobiography," in which Beaver talked a girl in his class into writing his autobiography for him, Wally's argued that the girl may put something in the story that makes Beaver sound like a sissy.[227]

Wearing certain clothes—like the old-fashioned short pants forced on young Joe Connelly—carrying umbrellas, or wearing rubbers were also seen as emasculating items. Costumes for school plays wreaked havoc with masculinity, such as the time when Beaver had to wear angel wings, or when Ward became upset that Beaver had been

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[225] The Rebecca of Sunny Brook Farm comment is from Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble;" Book such as *Penny Bobbins* and *Hoppy the Kangaroo* being for girls is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe;" Somerset Maughrm comment appears in Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life;" in Connelly, Mosher and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," Gilbert has lies about his father's job as a flute player, and the other kids find it humorous that Wally's friend Dudley, in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley" plays the flute.

[226] In Connelly and Mosher (story by William Cooowley and Peggy Chantler), "Beaver's Freckles," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally says that setting the table is sissy stuff; Fred catches Ward doing dishes in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet."

[227] Throwing like a girl is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Wally turns down June's fragrant hand lotion in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count;" Beaver is upset that he has to sing soprano in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley;" and Beaver has a girl write his autobiography in Hoffmann, "Beaver's autobiography."

chosen to appear on stage as a yellow canary suit. In "Dramatic Club," Wally admitted that he was ashamed to be seen with Beaver when Beaver wore a Dutch boy costume for the school play; in a later episode, Wally was deeply troubled by the prospect of dressing up as a girl for a humorous role in a play given by a boy's club at school. Beaver also took quite a ribbing when he appeared in public dressed in a bunny suit—another costume for yet another school play.[228]

Being associated with women's or effeminate clothing served as comedic fodder for several episodes, as well. In "Last Day of School," a package mix-up resulted in Beaver taking a slip as a going-away present for his teacher. In "Beaver's Sweater," Beaver was crushed to find Judy Hensler wearing the same, expensive Alaskan sweater he fought so hard to get his parents to buy for him. In "The Big Fish Count," some boys made fun of Eddie for wearing an apron in his job at the local pet shop. While such ribbing was harmless, gender deviation could also lead to permanent scars. In "Beaver's Doll Buggy," the plot of which will be discussed in greater detail below, Eddie recalls how the woman who take care of him when he was a young boy gave him a home permanent that Eddie wore to kindergarten. To make matters worse, when Eddie complained about the perm to his father, his father just laughed. As Eddie said to Wally, it was that experience that had him adopt his wise-guy attitude.[229]

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[228] In Manhoff, "The Haircut," Ward is worried that Beaver's playing an angel will harm his son's masculinity; the yellow canary episode is from Connelly and Mosher, "School Play," in which Ward notes that Beaver playing a yellow canary makes it hard for Ward to face his friend at work who has a son trying out for the Detroit Lions; Beaver's Dutch boy costume is seen in Connelly and Mosher, "The Dramatic Club;" Wally is asked to dress like a girl in Connelly and Mosher (story by George Tibbles), "Wally's Play;" and Beaver appears in a bunny suit in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Bunny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[229] The slip incident is from Connelly and Mosher, "Last Day of School;" the sweater incident is from Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Eddie wears an apron in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count;" and Eddie reveals the story of

Appealing to a sense of masculinity could also be affective in persuading a Mayfield boy to adopt a more conservative manner of dress. When June diplomatically tried to talk Wally out of a gaudy suit he had selected for himself in "Wally's New Suit," June directed the salesman, in secret, to tell Wally that the suit's heavy padding was designed to make less muscular looking boys look more manly. June's plan worked perfectly, and Wally opted for the more conservative suit that Ward and June wanted Wally to buy.[230]

Toy animals and dolls were also off limits for boys Beaver's age. When Beaver decided to rescue his old teddy bear from the garbage in "Beaver's Old Friend," he had to bear his father's and his friend's taunts of being a sissy who still played with dolls. It took June to realize that the bear Beaver had rescued was the same one who had kept Beaver "company" while he lay in bed sick, some time ago, when Beaver had the measles. Dolls were also problematic for Gilbert, who got a big laugh from his classmates when he suggested that they dress colonial dolls for a school project. One of the biggest doll problems for Beaver occurred in "Beaver's Doll Buggy." Beaver, like many of the boys in his neighborhood, had decided to build a coaster car. Since so many of the boys were building such cars, however, wheels were getting hard to find. Beaver decided to accept classmate Penny's offer to let Beaver have her old doll buggy wheels. When Beaver forgot to bring his tools to remove the wheels from the buggy, however, he

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his kindergarten home permanent in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Doll Buggy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[230] Beaver's dislike of short pants and umbrellas is referred to in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Short Pants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); umbrellas are also depicted as less than masculine in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," and Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley;" likewise, rubbers are mentioned as undesirable in Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse;" and June gets Wally to switch to a more masculine cut suit in Baer, "Wally's New Suit."

was forced to push the cart all the way home. Wally and Ward, who realized that Beaver had not taken any tools, realized how devastating it would be if Beaver was spotted by other boys as he pushed a doll buggy along the Mayfield sidewalks. Beaver became aware of this problem on his own as he spied his friends Gilbert and Richard walking up the block. Realizing how the doll buggy compromised his masculinity, Beaver quickly pushed it down a hill before Richard and Gilbert saw him with it. When Gilbert and Richard found the doll buggy, the pair commented on how they could use the wheels for their coaster car (apparently two boys pushing a baby carriage was not as problematic as one boy pushing it alone). Although Beaver desperately wanted to reclaim the buggy and its precious wheels, his desire to be a man won out and he let Gilbert and Richard go off with the buggy.[231]

Beaver was not the only boy who had to learn the rules of manly behavior. In several episodes, other boys also had to learn their place, particularly in the fine art of keeping their emotions and feelings in check. Whether it was Richard gushing over how much he liked being friends with Whitey, Eddie accusing Beaver of being too sloppy when Beaver thanked him for a favor, or Chuckie, the little boy down the street, getting rebuked by Beaver for getting too "sloppy" over him, little Mayfield boys eventually learned their place. The same was true of overt affection toward girls; when Judy thanked Beaver for giving her a copy of the apology letter Beaver had written to the school bus driver, Beaver threatened to punch her in the stomach if she got too mushy. When Beaver thanked Penny for giving him her doll buggy wheels, Penny also felt

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[231] The teddy bear incident is in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Gilbert, for a laugh, suggests dressing colonial dolls for a school project in Connelly and Mosher (story by Marcus), "Beaver's Poster;" and Beaver worries about the ramifications of pushing a doll buggy down the street in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Doll Buggy."

uncomfortable. The amount of emotion a boy was allowed to feel was not always obvious. In "Beaver's Monkey," Larry Mondello brought over some flowers for Beaver's pet monkey, who had caught pneumonia after spending the night in the rain. When Larry handed the flowers to Mrs. Cleaver, Larry worried about how the other guys might view such a gesture; Larry asked June to promise that she would not tell the other guys about the flowers, seemingly implying that it might be viewed as effeminate (or, at the very least, stupid).[232]

How one was viewed by the other guys was always a concern. When Wally took dancing lessons, even Beaver knew enough not to tell the other guys, who would surely call Wally a sissy. Likewise, Wally was all too happy to keep quiet about Beaver being in a school baby-picture beauty contest. When Beaver asked Gilbert to pretend to be a housewife so Beaver could practice his pitch collecting for a local charity, Gilbert balked at the idea.[233] The appearance of masculinity was depicted as being particularly important to adolescent boys. Wally, who was generally quite mild-mannered, had very little tolerance for assaults on his manhood. In one episode, when Gilbert suggested that a girl had knocked Wally down, Wally pounced on Gilbert. Wally was also quite embarrassed when a female driving student expressed a better understanding of the cars

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[232] Whitey tells a gushing Richard to "shut up" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet;" Beaver gets mushy thanking Eddie in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers;" Beaver tones down Chuckies' affection for him, in the interest of saving face in front of the other kids, in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); and Larry brings flowers for Beaver's monkey in Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey."

[233] Wally takes dancing lessons in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest;" Beaver is ashamed to say his brother is playing a girl in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play;" Wally is likewise ashamed of Beaver being in a school beauty contest in Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture;" in Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert gets upset when Beaver asks him to pretend to be a lady so he can practice collecting for the community chest.

and driving than he did.[234] The masculine image was important for a little kid like Beaver, as well, who, in the very first episode, advised his new teacher, Miss Canfield, not to make the boys wear aprons while finger-paining.[235]

It was also important that Mayfield boys were dominant—or at least appear so—in what was socially accepted as the male domain. In "Beaver the Athlete," Beaver spent an entire evening practicing hitting baseballs so he could outperform Judy Hensler, who had showed Beaver up in baseball earlier in the episode.[236] In "Wally's Chauffer," Wally became upset when, for the lack of a drivers license, he had to be driven to a dance by his date, Evenly Boothby. While Ward tried to convince Wally that there was nothing wrong with letting a woman drive him to the dance, Wally continued to balk. When he finally agreed, Wally was greeted with taunts and jeers by his fellows at the dance, who referred to him as "Cinderfella" and "Queen for A Day." The situation was defused, however, and Wally ended up having a wonderful time at the dance. Afterwards, when Eddie and Lumpy tried to pull a trick on Wally, their plan backfired, ruining Lumpy's car. Now Eddie and Lumpy's crew had to hitch a ride back with Evelyn, undermining the gendered taboo on women drivers and male passengers.[237] In "Wally's Big Date," Wally was embarrassed to be seen with a taller girl.[238] This fear was not the invention of script writer, Bob Ross, but a problem which existed within the culture at large, at least as it

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[234] Gilbert says that a girl knocked Wally down in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains;" The female driver appears in Ross, "Wally's License."

[235] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled."

[236] Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete."

[237] Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer."

[238] Ross (story by Kenneth Enochs), "Wally's Big Date."

was depicted by the popular media. A 1958 *Life* article, for example, focused on the ordeal of Elizabeth Bassett Burton, a six-foot two-inch woman who told readers of how difficult it was to be a tall girl in American society. "If I were not tall," said Burton, "I could fit much more simply into the general scheme of things. If I were fat or small, there wouldn't be so many questions. But a tall girl is everybody's business." Burton went on to note how one of her shorter male friends were embarrassed to walk down the street with her.[239]

While Wally adjusted to his "big" date, who catered to Wally's ego—without even being asked to do so—by setting her hair down and wearing flats, Wally and Beaver had a harder time dealing with their overly sentimental parents. In "School Bus," Beaver took quite a bit of ribbing when his whole family gathered around to see Beaver off on his first school bus trip. Even private hugging and kissing could be problematic for Beaver. When Beaver felt overwhelmed by the understanding Ward showed for him in "The Cookie Fund," Beaver wanted to hug Ward, but, fearing he may be too old to do so, hugged June instead. On other occasions, Beaver allowed Ward to kiss him or carry him up to bed on the provision that no one found out about it.[240]

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[239] "A Tall Girl is Everybody's Business," *Life*, January 6, 1958.

[240] According to Wally in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," being seen being kissed by one's father is embarrassing; when Ward gives Wally a watch for a birthday present in Connelly, Mosher, Keith Fowler and Paul Norman, "Wally's Present," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward holds out his cheek for Wally to kiss. Since Eddie is present, Wally just shakes Ward's hand; Beaver is likewise embarrassed when June goes to kiss him goodbye in front of the other guys in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike;" Beaver is embarrassed by the family standing around watching him board the bus in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus;" Beaver, too old to hug Ward but needing to hug someone, hugs June in Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund;" Beaver lets Ward carry him upstairs, as long as it is private, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete," and Beaver is so pleased with Ward's understanding of his predicament in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day" that Beaver decides to kiss Ward, even if he is too old to do so.

Kissing was always problematic for Mayfield boys. In "Beaver and Gilbert," the first episode in which Beaver's friend Gilbert appears, the boys made fun of this "new kid" for a number of reasons, including Gilbert's misfortune to have the same name as an actor who the boys once saw kissing a woman in the movies.[241] Worse than witnessing a movie kiss, of course, was having to kiss an actual girl.[242] Crying was another sign of male weakness.[243] By the time he was eight, Beaver had already learned that a boy was only supposed to cry under extreme circumstances. Getting in trouble or losing one's pet were circumstances in which it was hard for a boy not to cry, but the dry-eyed imperative remained. When Beaver had to face a judge in "The State versus Beaver" Beaver promised Wally that, no matter how bad things got, he would not cry (a promise he ended up breaking). When Beaver faced up to a mistake he made in school, he told his teacher Miss Landers that he did not want to cry in school. Beaver, like Wally, Ward, and the majority of Mayfield men, knew the importance of putting up a masculine front.[244]

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[241] Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert" and Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist" have lines in which Beaver feels it is wrong to kiss a girl.

[242] Beaver has to kiss a girl in a play in Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," and is worried the guys will find out that Violet Rutherford kissed him at the company picnic in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet."

[243] Fred Gipson, *Old Yeller* (New York: Harper, 1956), which was popular at the time of the series, also speaks to the social code against boys crying after a certain age. While Travis' younger brother, for example, could cry at age five, Travis was too old for that. "I wasn't about to cry. I was fourteen years old, pretty near a grown man. I stood back and didn't let on for a minute that I wanted to cry" (3).

[244] In Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair," Beaver says a ten year old can no longer cry; Richard, a teenager, wishes he was young enough to cry when he messes up his father's laundry in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry." In that same episode, Beaver agrees that the only times he can cry is when it's dark or when he is in the movies; in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem," a younger Beaver says sometimes things get so messed up, the only thing a kid can do is cry; in Connelly and Mosher, "The Boat Builders," after a mishap with a boat, Wally is worried that Beaver may start crying when they confront their parents; Beaver tries to hide his tears when he cries for his dead pigeons in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons;" Beaver ends up crying against his will in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver;" and Beaver admits his reluctance to cry in front of Miss Landers in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship."

Fear was also to be kept under wraps. While Wally once admitted he was afraid of being scalped by the cigar store Indian, he only confessed after making Beaver promise he would not tell anyone. In "Tenting Tonight," Wally and Beaver felt they had to remain in their tent through a rainstorm so as not to make Ward and June think they were a couple of sissies. Ward, wise to the demands of masculinity, kindly left the back door unlocked so the boys could sneak in during the night (which they did). Fear could also reveal the true nature of wise-guy braggarts like Eddie Haskell, who, in at least three separate episodes, proved that under his self-assured exterior beats the heart of a coward.[245] Unlike Eddie, Beaver learned that being a man meant facing up to challenges. Sometimes that meant hiding one's feelings and "taking it like a man," as Ward had suggested to Beaver in the episode "Baby Picture" (it is important to note that Ward's advice was most likely given as much to advance the plot as opposed to affect such information. Indeed, the resolution to the episode has Ward apologizing to Beaver for giving such advice to a boy).[246] Nevertheless, avoiding fearful situations or events was never tolerated on *Leave it to Beaver*. During the final season, as Beaver had become an adolescent, Beaver conquered his fear of riding a roller coaster and joined the back-slapping fraternity of young men that of which Beaver had so desperately wanted to be a part.[247]

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[245] Wally's fear of the cigar store Indian is mentioned in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician;" the boys' fear of being out in the rain all night is in Connelly and Mosher (story by Mnhoff), "Tenting Tonight;" Eddie's fears are seen in Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear," and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night

[246] Ward tells Beaver to confront his anger with Gilbert like a man in Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert;" Ward tells Beaver to hide his feelings and take things like a man in Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture."

[247] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear."

While Beaver would have some trouble adjusting to this new adult role (as will be explored in chapter eight), Wally was quite comfortable with it. Wally's passage into adulthood was dealt with specifically in "Substitute Father," in which Wally proved he was able to handle a family problem in Ward's absence. Indeed, June was so proud of Wally by the end of the episode, she invited him to sit in Ward's chair and carve the roast. When Wally expressed doubt as to whether he was capable of carving the beef, June expressed her confidence that he is more than equal to the task.[248]

Achieving manhood was important in Mayfield, if only because the alternative the series presented was unacceptable. There was no room for weak male adults in Mayfield. One of these weak males was George Haskell, who was actually played in several styles by several actors throughout the series run. While later George Haskells were a bit domineering and pig headed, the George Haskell featured in "Train Trip" was depicted as having trouble holding an afghan that Ward hoisted with ease. Is it possible that the script was trying to imply tht George's lack of strength explained, at least in part, why Eddie was so different from Wally?[249]

The case against the weak male was made more clearly in "Wally and Alma," in which a wealthy, domineering mother had steered her daughter toward what appeared to be an exclusive relationship with Wally. Wally, unhappy in the relationship, tired to get out of it by introducing Alma to a series of other boys. When Alma's mother saw the parade of boys that lined up for her daughter, she began having second thoughts about Wally taking up so much of her daughters time (which is exactly what Wally wanted).

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[248] Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[249] Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip."

Unable to see that she had been the cause of the whole problem, Alma's mother, accompanied by her quiet husband Albert paid a visit to the Cleavers. As Alma's mother proceeded to make a fool of herself in front of the Cleavers, demanding they keep Wally in check, Albert sat calmly by the Cleaver fireplace smoking his pipe. Much like the weak husband character from Connelly and Mosher's film, *The Private War of Major Benson*, or the weak father character Jim Backus played in *Rebel Without a Cause*, Albert was an example of the emasculated male so feared by contemporary commentators who warned of the "feminization" of American life. As Ward argued, Alma's mother's domineering attitude was the result of a husband who failed to exercise his authority. This lesson was not lost on Wally, who, near the end of the episode, tried to explain to Beaver the problem of the "man who stands by the fireplace and smokes his pipe."

> Beaver: What's wrong with that?
> Wally: Nothing. But that's all he does.[250]

Wally and Beaver had little to fear. With Ward as their guide, they have very little chance of becoming a weak George Haskell or the "man who stands by the fireplace."

Not that Ward expected his boys to become dictatorial patriarchs, for he certainly had not turned out that way. Indeed, while the emasculated male was something to be avoided, the preponderance of more complicated images of women and men, boys and girls—not to mention the occasional messages of toleration that emerged out of lily white Mayfield—reveal that the series was struggling with the same issues that faced the overall culture. While *Leave it to Beaver* was being played out in an all white milieu, so too, was much of suburbia, which had red-lined African Americans out of the picture.

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[250] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma."

While the show was awash in highly defined male and female roles, the fact that such roles were poked at and tested—if only for comedy's sake—showed that such roles had to be learned. Not only that, it showed that, by the 1950s, such roles were highly contested. While the series paid a great deal of attention to family and home, it took its cue from a demographic phenomenon of childbirth that has yet to be equaled over the past fifty years. Given the time in which the series ran, *Leave it to Beaver* is, at bottom, much more surprising for the complicated picture it attempted to draw than for the predictable exclusion and sexism it displayed.

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MASS CULTURE, HISTORY AND MEMORY AND THE IMAGE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY

VOLUME II

By

Michael B. Kassel

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Professor Mark L. Kornbluh

CHAPTER SIX:
YOUTH CULTURE & GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

"You're a kid, you got no rights, now go to sleep."
--Wally Cleaver[1]

In *Philosophy and the Young Child*, Garreth B. Matthews writes:

> If Piaget, the first great psychologist of cognitive development...isn't sensitive to philosophical thinking in young children, who is? Not, in general, other developmental psychologists. Nor, I think, educational theorists. Who then?
>
> The answer may come as a surprise. It is writers—at least some writers—of children's stories who have been almost the only important adults to recognize that many children are naturally intrigued by philosophical questions.[2]

While Matthews goes on to describe writers of children's literature, he could have easily turned to episodes of *Leave it to Beaver* to find that Connelly and Mosher and company were also part of the "important adults" who recognized not only children's interest in the unique and different way in which children viewed the world. While the writers views of childhood were tempered by many things, from their own sensibilities and experiences to the confines, paradigms, and dictates of their medium and the industry of which it was a part, they certainly tried to present child characters that would be identifiable and humorous to viewers young and old. While the stories the writers told about these kids often tell us more about how they viewed 1950s childhood as opposed to that childhood itself, their work certainly serves as an interesting document of a baby boom America seemingly obsessed by children.

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[1] Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver's Tree," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[2] Garreth Matthews, *Philosophy and the Young Child* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 56.

While much of the images of childhood seem to reinforce the typical popular culture ideas of "trust your parents," "do the right thing," and all the other moral lessons these shows seemed to impart, the writers, in their strive to create a semblance of realism, also endowed Mayfield kids with a perception of a world that was far from perfect. While today's nostalgic viewer looks back on Mayfield life as simple and uneventful, the episodes reveal a set of Mayfield kids, Wally and Beaver included, who were frightened by their parents, worried about their social status, and placed in situations which clearly showed the hypocrisies and foibles of their fellow children and adults. While the problems of *Leave it to Beaver* were never as serious as the underling poverty and racism that laid below the 1950's shaky mask of consensus, the series, in its attempt to add dramatic tension and achieve realism, painted a view of childhood that was far from perfect.

Characteristics of Youth

One reason *Leave it to Beaver* is viewed as a show about life from a childhood perspective involves not just its scripts, but the way it was posited within the media during its first season.[3] While the ideas of childhood were being filtered through adult writers, as noted above, its advertised dedication to exploring life through a child's eyes was not all hyperbole. Early episodes directed by Norman Tokar—a former child actor who had starred as Henry Aldrich in the radio series, *The Aldrich Family*—fostered the child's-eye view through creative camera angles that literally tried to capture the mind and eyes of a child. In "Lonesome Beaver," for example, Beaver had accompanied

[3] See Oscar Golbout, "A Gift from the Children," *New York Times*, 8 December 1957, and "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," *TV GUIDE*, 1 February 1958, 16-18.

Wally and the older boys he so admired in hopes of being able to join their scout troop. When Beaver was told he was too young to join, he was left to walk home alone. Out in the dark night, with the rain falling and the wind howling, Tokar's use of close-ups, low-angles, and sound effects helped turn the familiar Mayfield streets into a scary scene of howling wind, blowing branches, and creaky, swinging gates. In "Haunted House," Tokar set the camera at child level to show how ordinary items in an old house could appear frightening to a small boy who believed in such things as haunted houses. In "Cleaning Up Beaver," Tokar cut quickly among pictures of old family members and other common household items to make the Cleaver's spare bedroom seem menacing to the Beaver, who, after a fight with Wally, decided to sleep there on his own. Tokar also used audio effects in that episode to create the illusion of fear, amplifying the sound of a cat's meow as Beaver tried to sleep. Other episodes used inset shots—in which the camera showed a particular object in close-up—to give a sense of the thoughts that might be occupying Beaver or Wally's mind; for example, as Beaver waited for the doctor to arrive in "Beaver's Tonsils," he drew an unflattering picture of a "mad doctor."[4]

The series also tried to capture the child's view of life through lines of dialogue that spoke to a unique and amusing childhood philosophy. Throughout the series, there were numerous observations that provided a simplistic, funny, child's-eye-view of the world that added a rather heart-warming, "oh, to be that young and innocent again" spirit to the series. This rang true enough to be lauded in press accounts, such as a 1958 *TV Guide* article which observed:

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[4] Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); George Tibbles, "Haunted House," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Bill Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

> Most of the delight stems from Beaver's wholly natural small-boy approach to life. In the Beaver's mind, a doctor is a man whose hands smell funny, and 'messing around the house for a while' is a logical idea of something to do. To the Beaver, red ink is the same thing as blood if he's signed a pact with it.[5]

The majority of these philosophical nuggets came from Beaver, who commented on such things as dirt holding the world together or rain being good for standing around in. Beaver and other Mayfield kids were also depicted as dreamers and believers in miraculous solutions that would solve their problems, whether it was Beaver dreaming that Wally would marry a wealthy girl, or that a millionaire would hand him a sack of money to save him from a financial problem.[6] Ward also provided such views of childhood through his own nostalgic recollections of youth. To Ward, childhood was a magical period which could collapse or expand time and distance.[7] Boys longed to be

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[5] "Tom Sawyer: (Junior Grade)," 17.

[6] In Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Most Interesting Character," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when Ward and June note that they are selling the house, Beaver likens the old house to an old friend; Beaver's observation on dirt is from Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); the idea that rain is only good if one can stand around in it is from Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver observes that a kid, referring to his young neighbor Benji, is allowed to believe in all kinds of "goofy stuff;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver says that he dreams Wally will marry a rich girl so Beaver can "goof off" for the rest of his life; and, in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Big Fish Count," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward notes that winning anything—in this case, two little fish—for a boy Beaver's age is one of the things that gives a kid confidence to keep on going.

[7] in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward notes that, to a child, getting out of impending trouble for even an hour can be a welcome relief; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), while Beaver, upset with his friend Larry, said he would never talk to him for the rest of his life, Ward observes that, for children, "the rest of your life is seldom more than two or three hours;" and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward notes that kids take longer routes home from school as the amount of daylight increases.

crude, rude teenagers, and being bad or mischievous was only fun if there was someone around to witness it.[8]

Outside of cameras and dialogue, which revealed the eyes and mind of the child, *Leave it to Beaver* most frequently explored childhood in terms of external characteristics and activities that showed how Wally, Beaver, and the other Mayfield kids stood outside of the adult norm. This "fish-out-of-water" brand of humor was certainly not new to domestic-based comedy. "Maggie and Jiggs," for example, was founded on the premise of working class characters trying to break into the upper-class world. The *Goldbergs* derived its humor in similar fashion, with the Jewish immigrant mother standing outside of her Americanized children and adopted home. Perhaps no comedy proved the "fish-out-of-water" format better than *Amos 'n' Andy*, whose title characters, as southern African Americans, attempted to make their way in a world that was run by a white power structure that set the limits and boundaries of Northern American life. Just as Amos, Andy, and the Kingfish tried to make sense of this urban northern world, Wally and Beaver tried to make sense of this adult dominated world filled with seemingly ridiculous conventions and rules. While Connelly never commented on the "fish-out-of-water" nature of *Leave it to Beaver*, he did indicate in a 1958 *TV Guide* article that he felt that "Beaver...is like *Amos 'n Andy* in that both shows rely more on character than on frantic situations."[9] In this case, the characters, like Amos and Andy, were confused by a world they did not quite understand.

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[8] Ward's observation on kids wanting to be "crude, rude" teenagers is from Connelly and Mosher (story by Joseph Hoffmann and Lou Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); the concept of children finding pleasure in mischief is from Connelly and Mosher (story by Fran van Hartesveldt), "The Pipe," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[9] "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," 17.

One of the most prominent characteristics featured in the series were language patterns that Connelly and Mosher had observed among their own kids as well as within contemporary youth culture in general.[10] As noted in chapter two, some of the early series' speech patterns attributed to Beaver reportedly came from Connelly's own son, Rick, who, as a small child, tended to omit parts of polysyllabic words. As Connelly was quoted in a *TV Guide* interview during the show's first season, "'It's just a matter of dropping the first syllable off a word,' he explains. He asked his youngster one night where his books were:

> "I most got 'em,' the boy replied.
> "You what?"
> "I most got 'em."
> "What's he saying?" Connelly asked his wife.
> "I don't know," said Mrs. Connelly.
> "I said," said the boy, patiently, "I almost forgot them."
> "Oh," said Connelly.
> "Anyway," grins Mosher, "that's the way the character is born."[11]

This use of truncated words was quite prominent in the early episodes, in which Beaver's youth was played for "cuteness." Not only was the first gag of the pilot based on a similar misuse of the language, but the first episode aired was titled "Beaver gets 'spelled," short for "Beaver gets expelled." The first season also found Beaver using such words as "'stinguisher" for "extinguisher," "'sploit" for "exploit," "'tricitiy" for "electricity" "'specting" for "expecting," "'jecteor" for "projector," "'deem" for "redeem," "hamburglers," and the occasional "thunk" as the past tense of "think."[12]

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[10] Karen C. Donovan, interview with author, 4 February 2001; Connelly's attention to child's speech patterns is also referenced in Arthur J. Sasso, "Leave it to Beaver" *Calling All Girls*, October 1958, 42.

[11] "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," 17.

As the years passed and the characters grew (unlike on *Dennis the Menace*, who, despite actor Jay North's growth spurts, remained, like his comic strip counterpart, forever five-years old) the cute truncated words were replaced by a contemporary teenage vernacular to which Connelly and Mosher were quite attentive. Indeed, Connelly made a practice of looking for new words that had come into usage, which was reinforced by publicity articles that appeared during the period. An interview concerning a 1962 series Connelly was producing, *Going My Way*, based on the Bing Crosby film, noted:

> Connelly is careful to note the latest slang expression used by the children and to incorporate them into the dialogue. "one of the newest ones I've heard is 'tough,'" he said. "The kids use that meaning 'the best.'"[13]

Thus, while Billy Gray of *Father Knows Best* complained that the producers would not allow him to use contemporary words within their show,[14] Connelly and Mosher welcomed such usage, leaving *Leave it to Beaver* as a time-dated lexicon of childhood words of the late 1950s and early 1960s, from keen to kooky to loot.[15] In addition to

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[12]Words noted in text are from Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); 'sploit and 'tricity are from Gifford Goldsmith, "Water Anyone," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); 'tricity and "yo you" for yo yo is from Connelly and Mosher, "New Neighbors," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); 'jecter is from Mel Diamond and Ben Gersham, "Perfume Salesmen," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); 'deem is from Richard Baer, "Lost Watch," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and "thunk" is said in Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," Connelly, Mosher Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and Connelly and Mosher (suggested by a story by Robert Paul Smith), "Nextdoor Indians," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[13] John P. Shanley, "Going My Way," *New York Times*, September 30, 1962.

[14] Billy Gray interview in Jeff Kisseloff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 342.

[15]Beaver says "keen" in Connelly and Mosher, "Child Care," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Wally calls Beaver a "kooky kid" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); "kook" is also used in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Eddie uses the word "loot" to mean "money" in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963). In that same episode, Gilbert describes Beaver as a "swinger" when Beaver decides to

expressions like "blowing their tops," "coping a foul ball," "cracking up" and "conking out,"[16] there was also the co-option of language from the Beatnik culture, which entered the mainstream in a pathetic sort of self-parody.[17] Thus, Mayfield, like any other American town, was filled with youth who adopted such words as "wow," "dig," "crazy," "cool," and "bomb" to express jubilation or as descriptions of things they really liked.[18] There was also the adoption of such "hipster" phrases such as "man," "cool," "cool it,"

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give a girl an expensive locket he won at a carnival; Beaver says "cop a foul ball" in Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and Eddie jokingly asks Wally if he wants to "drag" while the two are parking cars in Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[16] "Blowing their tops" is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds a Wallet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); "crooked it" is from Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); "going off his trolley is from Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); "off his rocker" is from Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); "clop" for hit is from Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); "conk out" for die is from Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); "cracking up" is from Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); "getting with it" and "having a blast" are said in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); "going flaky" is from Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains;" "coming on to strong" and "all shook up" are from Connelly and Mosher (story by David Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and "skunk you" is said in Allan Manings, "The Clothing Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[17] See John Brooks, *The Giant Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), in which he observed, "The attitudes and outward aspects of Beatnikism became familiar to everybody during the later 1950s...It's special language, featuring words like pad, kick, and dig, became as threadbare and flat as Madison Avenue jargon." (236-237).

[18] "Wow" is said in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); "dig" is said in a variety of episodes, including Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); "crazy," meaning to be interesting, in a good way, is in Connelly, Mosher, Gwen Gielgud, "One of the Boys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), which also finds the expression "cool;" "crazy" also appears in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters;" "bomb" as being great, is from William Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); being a "blast," meaning to be fun, is found in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); and "that's a gasser" is from Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

"cat," "beat it" and "squaresville."[19] Such phrases were particularly applied to dating and women, where Eddie and Lumpy were seen as a cross between Beatniks and Rat-Packers, using words and phrases like "picking up chicks," "dolls," and "swinging;" women of the world were labeled as knowing "the score" or being "real operators,"[20] while unattractive girls became known as "owls" or "weirdoes."[21] One's mental state was expressed through such words and phrases as "flip," "flipping" one's "lid," "going ape," or "blowing" one's "top." In one episode, a mentally challenged person was referred to as a "couch case."[22] Even the authority structure was labeled with a modern vernacular, with

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[19] "Man" is used by teen gang member of the "Cobras" in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Wally tells Beaver to "cool it" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Eddies says "cool it," in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Eddie says "if the cat's in the book" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma;" Beaver tells Judy to "beat it" in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," 1959; and Eddie says "squaresville" in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[20] Eddie says "cool it" and refers to "picking up a couple of chicks and having a ball" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke;" Eddie refers to girls as "chicks" in Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), and Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); references to girls as "dolls" and "honies" by Lumpy and Eddie, respectively, are from Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Eddie, referring to his new girlfriend in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), asks Wally, "Am I living or am I living?" In Manings, "Stocks and Bonds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Eddie refers to a high selling stock as "swinging;" Beaver says Wally has "flipped" for a girl in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); in the same episode, Wally, getting the cold shoulder from a girl, says "Brr, baby, it's cold out here," and describes Wally as "panting to meet ya.'" In Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Beaver says he will give a girl a "buzz" (telephone call). In the same episode, he also tells Wally, the "next time you cook something like this up" to get him a girl who "knows the score;" the words "flipped" and "operator" are used in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kenneth Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and Wally describes a teenage girl from Beaver's class as a "real operator" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Kahtherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[21] Unattractive girls are referred to as owls in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," and as owls and gophers in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Eddie also used the expression "owls and weirdoes" to describe male members of a supposedly sub-standard fraternity in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity."

[22] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card," Wally is looking through the refrigerator for some food that will "flip" him; Wally asks if Aunt Martha has "flipped her lid" in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician;" Wally uses "flipped" and "gone ape" in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and uses the expression

Eddie referring to his father as "old man," and Beaver using such words as "fuzz" and "cops."[23]

As with other sitcoms of its time, *Leave it to Beaver* lamented these language changes, which seemed hard for Mayfield parents to understand.[24]

> Ward: You know, when I was a boy, when we said crazy, we meant crazy.
> June: (sarcastic) how backward.
> Beaver: Boy, mom, I'll bet in those days you said something like "swell" or something, huh mom?
> June: Well, no. I think we said "keen."
> Beaver: "Keen?" They don't even use that on *Dobie Gillis* anymore.[25]

Not that "hip" language was always played for laughs. In "One of the Boys," the writers cleverly turned the use of the world "cool" around to enforce Wally's choice to avoid becoming involved with a group of spoiled teen boys:

> Beaver: You know what cool means, don't you mom?
> June: Uh-hm. Sometimes I think it means not too hot.[26]

"go ape" in Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Beaver says "blew his top" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Eddie says "blowing his top" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Eddie uses the expression "couch case" in Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods."

[23] Eddie uses "old man" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Beaver uses the words "cops" and "fuzz" in Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party," 1963.

[24] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," June makes fun of Ward for his dated use of the word "gumption;" June tells Beaver not to use expressions like "sweat it out" in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), when Ward uses the expression "wise him up" Wally corrects Ward, saying the proper phrase now is "clue him in."

[25] Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys."

[26] Ibid.

The series also used child speech patterns in an apparent attempt to comment on a perceived vacuous tone in teenage speech and thought. In "Beaver on TV," in which Beaver appeared on a teenage discussion show, the script writers appeared to show the perceived lack of teenage facility with logical and political arguments by having Beaver deliver a rambling assessment of how teenagers and parents needed to come to an understanding in terms of teenage phone use. The episode further appeared to comment on the teens that appeared on such shows through Wally's description of the show as a "sort of a stupid *Meet the Press*." Vacuous teen speech was also depicted through scenes of Wally being lost for the right words with various girls he dated.[27] Teenage girls in Mayfield—like most teenage sitcom girls of the period—were among the most stereotypically portrayed characters, with most Mayfield girls depicted as using silly words like "yummy" and using phrases that expressed a profound sense of emotion and over-reaction. When one father refused to let his daughter go to an all-night party with Wally, his daughter responded, "daddy, you're ruing my entire life."[28]

How actual children reacted to such depictions is lost to history, but the media, in all its middle-class sensibility, seemed, in large part, to buy into the idea that the Cleaver kids and their Mayfield pals—at least in the early seasons—were quite genuine (which is no surprise, given that these magazines were designed to sell the value of television to its readers) . As one critic in *TV Guide* noted, "The plots of the Beaver show are the sort of thing that anyone's kid might get into, and the dialog has that wonderful candor and

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[27] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV;" inane teenage date talk in Connelly and Mosher (story by Alan Lipscott and Bob Fosher), "Teacher's Daughter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[28] The word "yummy" used in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); dramatic girl talk from Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party."

directness with which children disconcert and enchant you."[29] *TV Album*, a television fan magazine, was equally impressed by the series:

> Parents of small boys, or those who remember when their son was at this incredibly wonderful age, watch the show with a bit of a lump in their throat in between laughs. There is something so appealing, so almost wistful about Beaver (between pranks, that is) that he does give you a choked-up, sentimental feeling. They also watch the Beaver's pranks with deepest sympathy—for his long-suffering, adoring parents and harassed older brother. Building an entire weekly series around a child of this age is something of a new trick on TV. Judging by the viewer's reaction to it, we'd say it's a pretty bright idea. But, after all, with delightful Jerry to spark the show, how could it possibly fail?[30]

How, indeed? For the next six seasons, *Leave it to Beaver* provided America with a media-filtered view of American childhood. A view that, while exaggerated and inaccurate in many ways, was based in various concerns of post-World War II American youth, not the least of which being the growing concerns of peer pressure.

"We couldn't be so cruel as to force him to be different"

"It's the great American dream today to be popular..."
-- Ward Cleaver[31]

In her history of American teenagers, Grace Palladino observed that the quest for popularity among teenagers had not only become a social imperative in the post-World War II era, but a driving force in the burgeoning teen market.[32] Underscoring that search to be popular, of course, was a deep sense of self-consciousness which was quite palpable

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[29] "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," 17.

[30] "untitled," *TV Album*, 1958, No. 5, 66

[31] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[32] Grace Paladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 98.

in *Leave it to Beaver*. While the quest for popularity was not the invention of post-War America (consider, for example, the Listerine mouthwash ad Connelly had commented on in his early-1940 application to the J. Walter Thompson agency noted in chapter two), it certainly flourished as youth became a lucrative market for fashion, grooming, and hygiene products aimed specifically at this burgeoning market.

Just as the writers had used language to place Mayfield kids within their contemporary moment, they also used artifacts of grooming and style that seemed to mirror that obsession of some modern American teens. Connelly himself noticed the inordinate amount of time his children spent on their own hair and grooming and adapted that trait to Wally, whose blocking for various bedroom and bathroom scenes included attention to such grooming.[33] Hair styles were, indeed, outward signs of independence and maturity for Mayfield boys.[34] In "Wally's Haircomb," Wally adopted a new, popular hairstyle in an attempt to prove his popularity—much to June's dismay. In "Beaver the Sheepdog," a comment from a female classmate made Beaver self-conscious about his bushy hair, which he attempted to tame with a can of Glama-Spray hairspray.[35]

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[33] In Golbout, Connelly noted he based the meticulous hair-combing on an observation he made of his 14-year-old son Jay.

[34]In Connelly and Mosher (story by Norman Tokar), "Brotherly Love," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Wally gives elaborate directions to a barber, indicating that he wants a ducktail (Ward called ahead, the barber informs Wally, to make sure Wally does not get such a haircut); when Beaver tries to part his hair in the middle, Ward undoes it in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee;" Wally combs his hair in the mirror in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Wally puts tonic on his hair in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," and Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); When June tells Beaver to go upstairs and comb his hair before going to school, Beaver says that he spent ten minutes trying to get his hair to look like he did not comb it in Connelly and Mosher (Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card;" Beaver puts on an excessive amount of after shave in Ross, "Brother versus Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[35] Connelly, Mosher and Tibbles, "Wally's Haircomb," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver, the Sheepdog," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

Facial hair, an important aspect of masculinity, was also featured in three episodes, one in which Wally grew a mustache to impress Julie Foster, his classmate and love-interest.[36] Scripts paid attention to other grooming issues, as well, from Larry's sister using a variety of creams to get rid of her pimples, to Wally using various items to strengthen his muscles. One early episode had Wally sending away for a device that promised to reshape his pug nose while another episode found Beaver using sandpaper in an attempt to get rid of his freckles.[37] Several Mayfield children boasted of their orthodontia, which was not only used to bring teeth in line, but as a status symbol for the parents who bragged about being able to afford such expensive dental work.[38]

While Wally and Beaver dressed in trousers and hard shoes most of the time, they were also depicted as being fond of jeans and tennis shoes, which, along with rock 'n' roll, seemed to be a badge of rebellion among baby-boom teens (the cover of Palladino's first paperback edition, for example, features a stylized denim print). When Beaver learned that his Aunt Martha was going to buy him some new clothes in "Beaver's Short Pants," he hoped for a leather jacket with an eagle on the back. While Beaver did not get a leather jacket, Mathers actually had such a jacket, as mentioned in an early magazine

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[36] Wally talks about a mustache in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Wally grows a mustache in Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[37] Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose" and Connelly and Mosher (story by William Cowley and Peggy Chantler), "Beaver's Freckles," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[38] One of Beaver's friend's parents notes that they have spent $1,200 on their son's braces in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy;" Not only does Fred brag about his daughter needing braces in Ross, Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Tooth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959) , thus projecting the image that he can afford them, but in Connelly and Mosher (story by Rick Vollaerts,,, "The Black Eye," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), he mentions that his daughter has $800 worth of braces.

interview with the young star.[39] Mayfield parents, reflecting the sensibilities of the medium, had little toleration for their denim-clad youth. As June—always depicted as being concerned with teaching her boys a conservative social ethos—said in "Dance Contest," "A boy can't go through life wearing blue jeans and a t-shirt."[40] While the boys tended to like jeans, even Wally found it laughable when one of his peers had wore a pair of cut-off jeans as shorts (an example of the script's negative reaction to actual cultural change).[41] Would actual teens have reacted this way to such a fashion choice, or was Wally used as a character that diffused the style choices that may have seemed more outlandish to the sensibilities of the series writers and/or network executives?

This dichotomy between trying to serve a realistic model for children while maintaining a seemingly conservative line that may have been assumed by the media as desirable among parents was particularly evident in the more conceptual representations of youth culture, particularly as they applied to conformity to adult standards. On the surface, conformity to one's peers seemed to have the same importance in Mayfield as it did in America writ large. Indeed, Mayfield kids who differed from the norm could find themselves being labeled as "squares" or "creeps"—even by Wally or Beaver.[42]

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[39] "Busy as a Beaver," *TV Guide*, June 28, 1958.

[40] Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[41] June tells her aunt Martha that Beaver keeps gravitating toward wearing old jeans, even though she has put them in the Goodwill box in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Short Pants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); Beaver wants to wear blue jeans on his bus trip to his friend's farm, but June says no in Connelly and Mosher, "The Bus Ride," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Wally puts new blue jeans in the wash to try to make them look older in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiancé," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960) and Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb;" Beaver says he would like a blue jean suit in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," and Wally laughs about a kid who once wore cut-off jeans as shorts in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear."

[42] Wally says that individuals who do not conform are "squares" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb;" likewise, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Ward asks Wally, who wants a flat-top, if Wally wants to look

Nevertheless, when faced with a choice between enforcing a teen choice over an "adult" choice, the series always seemed to side with the conservative standard. This was particularly evident in "Beaver's Football Award," in which Beaver and his friends agreed to wear sweaters instead of sport coats to their upcoming football awards banquet. While Ward warned Beaver that his fellows would not follow through with their plan, Beaver insisted and was ultimately allowed to wear a sweater to the banquet. Just as Ward predicted, all of the other boys arrived in sport coats and Beaver was left feeling like a creep for accepting his peers' standards over that of his father's. The message in the episode is quite clear: kids stand a greater chance of looking foolish by following peer trends over adult convention. For a show that was supposed to be about life though the eyes of a child, this message seems more sensitive to the sensibilities of the modern parent who was perhaps as frustrated by the changing standards as was Ward.[43]

The concept of conformity is dealt with in a somewhat more complicated manner in "Wally's Haircomb," in which Wally began wearing a ducktail haircut imported to Mayfield by Eddie Haskell. Ward, fully accepting of modern psychology and expert advice, saw Wally's hair style as healthy teen rebellion. When June failed to agree, Ward told her that they "couldn't be so cruel as to force him to be different." Unimpressed by Ward's assurance that the fad would blow over, June visited Mr. Haller, the high school

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like everyone else, Wally quickly responds "yes;" Ward admits that kids who are different can become the targets of wise-guys at school in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Phil Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Beaver must play a mean trick on his teacher, Miss Canfield, to prove to the other kids that he is not the teacher's pet; Beaver, ashamed that he does not have a pet like the other kids, lies about having a parrot in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally says that Beaver will feel like a creep later on in life if Beaver does not learn how to dance; and, Wally says he will feel like a creep if he cannot see a movie that all the other kids have seen in Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[43] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award."

guidance counselor—a qualified expert on such maters—who also explained the importance of such teen conformity. "They conform," explains Haller, "by not conforming...." Haller assured June—and the viewers—that common sense would eventually prevail and that "Sooner or later every intelligent boy realizes the embarrassment of going around with his hair combed like a piece of French pastry..."[44] By disarming the hairstyle as a harmless fad—the same sort of fad that Ward said that he and his cohorts had gone through—there was hope that these kids would eventually return to the status quo. As in "Beaver's Sweater," Wally eventually took his parents side, noting that, deep down, he knew his new hair style was nothing more than a passing fad that would give way to the "good sense" his parents hoped he would adopt. Little did Ward or Haller or Connelly and Mosher know how insistent these new baby boomers would be in terms of setting a new standard of hipper, freer fashions.[45]

Yet while Wally was depicted as having the ability—read "common sense"—to see through the ephemeral quality of the fad, he and Beaver were also quite aware of the importance of not appearing to be too "square." Positing Wally as a popular character yet holding him up as a positive role model to viewing teens left Wally—and, to a lesser extent, Beaver—walking a fine line between conforming to his peers and conforming to the older standards that were seemingly upheld by the series. Thus, while Wally and Beaver were wise to the overt signs of squareness, Wally was square himself. And his friends knew it. For example, in "Wally's Test," Eddie, who thought that Wally had stolen his crib notes, realized that Wally was too "square" to cheat. Likewise, when

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[44] Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb."

[45] For a discussion of the rise of hipper fashions, see Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 185-204.

Lumpy jumped to conclusions that Wally was two-timing with Eddie's girl (which, of course, Wally was not doing), Eddie's first response was that Wally was too square for such behavior. Wally's squareness was also known to and appreciated by Mayfield parents, who saw Wally as a "safe" boy for their daughter to date. Eddie, who was viewed as one of the "undesirable" Mayfield boys, used Wally's reputation to try to get in good with the parents of the girls he liked.[46] Not that Eddie always benefited from Wally's straight-laced nature. When Wally said that he planned to get a job to be less dependent on Ward for money, Eddie worried that his father would compare him negatively to Wally: "Boy, Sam," exclaimed Eddie, "you're messing up my whole life."[47] Other episodes showed Wally's friends accusing him of being square because he enjoyed such unhip things as being with his family, driving his father's car, and having strict parents who at times appeared too over-protective.[48] Wally, as a square, of course, was not out of line with some of his real life counterparts. Palladino is quick to note that many kids in Wally's time chose the conservative route. Todd Gitlin, a 1960s activist,

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[46]Eddie observes that Wally is too square to cheat on a test and too square to be a two-timer in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960) and Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," respectively. Two different fathers view Wally as a safe boy for their daughter in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer" and Conway and MacLane, "The All-Night Party;" Eddie knows parents feel this way about Wally and hopes to ride on Wally's coat-tails to impress another girl's parents in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[47] Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job."

[48] Lumpy describes Ward's car as square in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); when Wally says he likes his brother in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," Eddie observes that Wally's whole family is square; Beaver's classmates note that Ward and June are stricter than most parents in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters;" in Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party," numerous mentions of Wally being square are made in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," when Wally balks at lying to his parents and going away with some other boys, un-chaperoned, for the weekend; in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," when Wally balks at drinking, his date Marlene implies that Wally is square; in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Eddie says that June and Ward baby Wally and Beaver; and in Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert notes that Ward and June treat Beaver like a baby.

also admits that he lead a rather straight-laced existence as a high school student in the late 1950s.[49]

At the same time, Wally and Beaver were also depicted as trying to avoid the sort of situations that might have labeled them as "square." To that end, they tried to create distance between them and their parents, and were ashamed of the way Ward and June pampered, babied, or otherwise assisted them.[50] Wally and Beaver also wanted June and Ward to be low-key in public, worried that they would embarrass them in front of a teacher or their friends.[51] Wally and Beaver also held a certain expectation of how their

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[49] See Palladino, who notes that there were, indeed, a number of teenagers who, in an effort to further their career goals, "honored adolescent rules of respectability." Arguing that these were the teens who were more likely to listen to Pat Boone than Elvis, Palladino goes on to state that they "accepted the wholesome, casual style adults endorsed" to win favor with their parents and teachers who would be paying for their college and giving good grades and recommendations, respectively (163); see also Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1993), 1-3, who notes that he had been a straight-laced adolescent before going to college and becoming an activist.

[50] Wally says that he must have been a square kid when June tells him he used to enjoy going to dancing school in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance;" Wally notes that he does not want to seem square, but admits that he is looking forward to going to Beaver's graduation ceremony, in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Graduation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Wally says he did not ask Ward or June to chaperone an all-night party as he felt they might be more strict than other parents; In Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when June boys a "baby" gift for a present for one of Beaver's friend, Beaver is so embarrassed, he decides to give the boy his own camera as opposed to looking bad; in Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy Rutherford," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally notes that kids look at other kids funny if their parents help them out; Wally does not want to be seen being driven by his parents in Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Wally does not want his mom at his driving test in Ross, "Wally's License," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and, in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," Beaver is worried he might get "stuck" having to caddy for his father.

[51] Beaver gives Ward and June a list of things to avoid doing so as not to embarrass him in front of Miss Landers in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Wally thanks his mom and dad for not coming down and spoiling his party in Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally tells his parents not to come down to spoil his party in Conway and MacLane, "The Party Spoiler," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Beaver appears foolish in front of his friends when his family comes out to see him off on the school bus in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus;" Wally tells his mom not to say anything to him if she sees him in the hall in school in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth;" likewise, in Raphael Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally gives June instructions on not embarrassing him at a school open house; in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Beaver notes that a kid feels creepy when his parents watch him while play sports; likewise, in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions,

parents were viewed among their peers, and they hoped that their father would not disappoint them or otherwise make them look bad in front of others.[52]

While kids were not always able to control their parents actions, they could fight squareness in other ways. The same clothing articles and accessories that made a kid look like a sissy also made them appear square; consequently, wearing rubbers, carrying briefcases, or wearing suits and ties was problematic for Mayfield children.[53] Reading or studying could easily make a person seem like a square as well—while good grades were certainly applauded, being overly smart was not popular for boys or girls in Mayfield.[54] Being too much of a gentleman, or being "too good" could also get one into trouble, and

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1962), Ward notes that a child does not want his father to see him being benched; Wally tells his mom and dad not to embarrass him by letting people at a track meet know he is their son in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Violet Rutherford lets her father know that he often embarrasses her in public.

[52] Wally is mad at Eddie when Eddie says Ward is goofy in Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Eddie implies that Ward and June do not care about Wally and Beaver because they let the boys sleep in a tent outside in the backyard in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver does not want the other kids to think that Ward is the kind of father who would not take his son on a class picnic in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem;" likewise, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," Beaver does not want the other kids to think his father is the sort who would not buy his son a bike; Beaver and the other boys brag about whose father can make the best kite in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), in which Beaver also expresses he would not want the other kids to think Ward was the type of father who would not build a kite with his son; and, in Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Gilbert, ashamed that his father is a flute player, tells tall stories to project a more heroic image of his father.

[53] The kids laugh at friend Tuey when he wears goulashes in Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); in Connelly, Mosher and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert" and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear," Beaver notes that kids who carry a briefcase to school are square; Eddie notes that parents often buy square gifts, such as a suit, for their kids birthdays in Baer, "Wally's New Suit;" Wally does not take it as a compliment when his mother tells him he looks like a gentleman in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist;" and Gilbert says wearing a tie is square in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award."

[54] in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," when Beaver's old friend decides to read a book for pleasure, Wally and Beaver think he is weird; a friend of Beaver's feels that his high intelligence keeps him from being like normal kids in Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "Part-Time Genius," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and, in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," one of Wally's dates, Jill, feels awkward because she doe not know how to play the same sort of "games" that popular girls play to attract boys.

there were numerous episodes in which kids—even Wally and Beaver—could "get the business" from their peers for being too much of a "gentleman," too wholesome, or too good. For example, when Beaver told Gilbert that he wanted to get permission before spending his birthday money, Gilbert commented that "...sometimes you don't act like a kid at all."[55] When Eddie and Lumpy discovered that Beaver had gotten an "A" in citizenship in "Beaver's Report Card," they decided to play a joke on "the little creep;" Eddie turned one of Beaver's lower grades into a "B+," in the hope that his parents would discover the doctored grade and blame it on Beaver (serving Beaver right, as Eddie said, for having the audacity to get a good grade in citizenship).[56]

While some kids like Wally had few problems with conformity and popularity, other kids found popularity to be a constant uphill struggle.[57] One of the best examples of the popularity imperative is in "Wally and Dudley," in which the son of an old friend of June's fails to fit into Mayfield teen society. Dudley breaks all the rules, dressing out of fashion, wearing a hat and overcoat, and playing the flute. As Wally says, "He's "the kind of kid if he just walks down the street a guy wants to trip him or throw water on him or something." Even Beaver is aware of how far Dudley strays from the norm. When

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[55]Beaver's good citizenship is noted in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card;" Wally thinks a local TV character is a real "corn ball" in Connelly and Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Plays Hooky;" in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Beaver says that he would not want to be considered "a gentleman" at school; Gilbert is surprised by Beaver's wanting to ask his parents if it is okay to spend the money his Uncle sent him for his birthday in Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and Eddie thinks Wally is a square for wanting to get a job so that he does not have to borrow money from his father all of the time in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job."

[56]Connelly and Mosher (Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card."

[57]The Duke appears in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); the Barons appear in Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys."

Ward describes Dudley as a "fine, upstanding boy," Beaver says, "Gee, Wally, he's a creep." Only when Dudley proves himself adept at boogie-woogie piano at a party does he finally gains his ticket of admittance to the popular Mayfield crowd.[58]

Not all Mayfield kids could count on some redeeming talent to extricate them from obscurity. Thus, they turned to more desperate measures, such as acting like a big-shot, making up stories, bragging about their brothers or their fathers, or, as Beaver had done in "Long Distance Call," calling baseball star Don Drysdale and then bragging about it to his friends.[59] Beaver also accepted many dares from his friends,[60] an act which drove many of the plots as Beaver gave into the taunts of his stronger-willed friends.[61] Some kids were so desperate—and so ill-equipped—to make friends and be popular, they went to extremes. In "Beaver and Gilbert," Gilbert, as the new kid in

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[58] Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley."

[59] Beaver brags to his friends that Wally is going to be a lifeguard in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960). When Wally ends up not getting the job, Beaver is disappointed in front of his friends; Beaver looks forward to bragging to his friends about being a babysitter in Hoffmann, "Beaver the Babysitter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Beaver brags to his friends about going to the amusement park with Wally and the rest of the older boys in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Fear;" Beaver brags about going on a double date with Wally in Conway and MacLane, "Double Date;" Beaver and his friends look forward to bragging about talking to Don Drysdale in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally has lied to a girl to make her think that he comes from a wealthy family; Beaver allows his classmates to inflate a story about rescuing a girl from a canoe in Frank Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Beaver has bragged about his father being a real "neat" father in Conway and MacLane, "Three Boys and a Burro," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Beaver boasts about his father's ability to walk twenty miles in one day in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes A Walk," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Judy brags about her father's adventures in Africa in Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Most Interesting Character;" and several kids brag about their mother's professional lives before marriage in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother Day Composition."

[60] Beaver takes a dare in Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup;" Beaver defied Ward and wore a monster shirt to school because he did not want to disappoint the other kids who were also supposed to wear similar sweatshirts to school in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters."

[61] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Runs Away," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup;" and Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," to name just a few.

school, made up fantastic stories about his family and former school in order to win his peer's attention. In "Beaver and Kenneth," another new boy in Beaver's class stole from his classmates and gave the items to Beaver in hopes of winning Beaver's friendship. As Kenneth observed, Beaver was the sort of kid who could be popular without doing anything special. Kenneth was not as lucky.[62] Thus, while the scripts tended to enforce conservative choices, the desire to achieve a sense of realism allowed for Wally and Beaver to give in to some peer pressures that set them apart from the Dudley's and Kenneth's of the world.

Us and Them

In "Wally's Weekend Job," Eddie tells June that he has been reading Aristotle and felt that he had good ideas, despite the fact that he was "an older gentleman." June, humoring Eddie, replies that, indeed, older people can be surprisingly smart.[63] While the humor in this exchange is designed, no doubt, to undermine Eddie's back-handed jab at the establishment—just one of many examples of Eddie's endless tormenting of Ward and June—it also reveals another one of the series' central characteristics of youth: that there was a great deal of distance and very little trust between the generations. While Eddie, as the negative example, was expected to make such comments, it is important to note that the distance between adult and child was also revealed through comments by Wally, Beaver, and other Mayfield youths. While the series most likely never set out to

[62] Gilbert makes up stories about his own past as well as his fathers to win friends in Connelly, Mosher, Tibble, "Beaver and Gilbert;" Beaver's classmate Kenneth gives stolen items to Beaver to try to win his friendship in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth;" and Beaver likens his Uncle Billy in Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960) to the kids in his school who make up stories just to make friends.

[63] Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job."

undermine parental authority or adult privilege, the presentation of ideas of how kids perceived the adult world revealed a set of characters who viewed their parents with suspicion and fear.

The conflict of generations in *Leave it to Beaver* was expressed, in its most simplistic form, in terms of the perceived differences existing between adult and child. Even though historic reality finds great similarity between Ward and Wally's generation, particularly in terms of their experience with popular and material culture, Wally and Beaver paint their parents as relics of a distant age. A number of jokes, for example, revealed that Wally and Beaver had little sense of the world beyond their time, with Wally surprised that there existed "used cars" or I.Q. tests in Ward or June's day (although many of these lines were said knowingly by Wally as jokes).[64] Ward's frequent lapses into nostalgia also left Wally and Beaver with an image of their parents stranded in a era of silent films, epics like *Gone With the Wind*, outdated expressions, and past heroes like Babe Ruth.[65] Older people had strange fads, such as wearing raccoon coats, and even stranger housekeeping practices, like beating rugs and pumping water from a well.[66] Parents not only used old expressions, but had memories of outdated

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[64] In Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward talks about an old roadster tire in his garage that Wally says is from the "olden days;" Ward speaks of a "Model T" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Takes a Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), yet Beaver does not seem to know what a Model T is; Wally is surprised to learn they had used cars in Ward's youth in Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car;" and, in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," Wally teases June about being old, acting as though he is surprised to learn that they had intelligence tests back when June went to school.

[65] In Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," Wally notes that television stations play old silent films for laughs; Wally comments on *Gone with the Wind* being a re-run on TV; in Phil Leslie, "The Bank Account," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver does not know who Babe Ruth was; in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," the boys are unimpressed by Ward's old baseball heroes.

[66] One of Wally's friends, Chester, mentions that his father had an old raccoon coat in Connelly and Mosher, "The Boat Builders," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt

fashions, including funny ties, celluloid collars, and double-breasted suits that made their fathers look like undertakers.[67] And, although TV was only a decade old, life without it seemed distant and unbearable to Beaver and Wally.[68]

As argued in chapter four, the series also exaggerated the difference between the generations through Ward's frequent pining for a lost Golden Age of childhood. Ward, in several episodes, longed for the simple childhood pleasures that had been displaced by mass mediated entertainment (even though his childhood was also augmented by such diversions).[69] Wally and Beaver saw Ward's childhood as foreign and as out of date as his popular culture. When Ward suggested, in one episode, that the kids go out and play mumblety-peg, for example, Wally was quick to point out that a kid would get arrested "these days" for playing with a knife (even though another episode saw a child bring a rifle to school with seemingly no such problem, revealing the unevenness of the episodes'

Monsters," Ward notes that Wally once wanted a Mohawk and that Ward himself used to have a yellow rain slicker with silly slogans on it; in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Big Fish Count," Wally surprised to learn how people used to beat rugs to clean them, and in Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), the boys are surprised to learn that people used pumps in their sinks.

[67] June uses an older popular expression in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward talks about ties and collars in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Ring," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Wally comments on his father's old double-breasted suit being out of style in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and Wally tells Ward that the style of folding handkerchiefs had changed in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date."

[68] The lack of television is mentioned in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," with Wally likening all pre-television diversion to "goofing" around; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk," Wally, who cannot understand his father's excitement over an old pedometer, figures that people who were kids in the days before television must have been excited by seemingly mundane diversions.

[69] Ward mourns the lost art of sailing boats in gutter in Diamond and Gersham, "The Clubhouse;" Ward says the circus is one of the few "wonderful" things left for modern children in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hugh Beaumont), "A Horse Named Nick," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Ward says that kids seemed to remain being kids longer back in his day in "Beaver Goes Into Business."

application of modern standards).[70] As noted in chapter five, after Beaver and Wally read *Tom Sawyer* and copied some of his antics, they realized that what was once considered "good clean fun" in Tom's time was now the sort of activities that would get one labeled as a juvenile delinquent. "Tom Sawyer will always be a great book," said Ward. "But, you can't take the things Tom did and try to do them today."

> Beaver: It was a lot easier being a kid in those days.
> Ward: Well, let's just say it's a lot harder being a kid in these days.[71]

Ward was not alone in this sentiment. Sometime before 1951, President Eisenhower had also observed that "the business of living is far more complex than in my boyhood."[72] Perhaps part of Ward's nostalgia lay in the notion that parents were losing control over their children as they became enmeshed in modernity (even though such control had been vanishing since the Industrial Revolution). As far as Mayfield elders were concerned, the world was, indeed, falling apart. Kids were growing more sophisticated, had less respect for their elders, and were less well-behaved. While many of these complaints went back to the generational declension concerns of Socrates, they tended to paint modern American youth as far from perfect and far from innocent. This situation again begs the question—which will be addressed in chapters nine through eleven—why did modern viewers see the series as being so content with its time?

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[70] Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight."

[71] Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters;" Beaver also learns in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), that being a knight in modern times, a la *Ivanhoe*, or pledging undying friendships ala the story of "Damien and Pithias" could be problematic in modern times.

[72] quoted in Maureen Daly, editor, *Profile of Youth* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1951), 8.

While Ward and June may have depicted their kids as living in a more complicated world, Wally, Beaver, and their contemporaries depicted their parents as complex beings who were next to impossible to comprehend. In several episodes, Beaver was depicted as being confused by the things parents did for enjoyment, their over-reaction to most situations, and their desire or willingness to work and accept responsibility.[73] As June noted in "Beaver's Frogs," it was also nearly impossible for a child to imagine that their parents were human beings.[74] When Wally learned that his father had artistic talent and used to make sketches, Wally says that "A guy never thinks that his father can do anything except go to work and come back."[75] Wally's most cynical comment on parenthood came in "Substitute Father;" after filling in for Ward as

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[73]The idea that grown-ups enjoy strange things like "moving furniture around," "going out to dinner," or dragging kids around and showing them off to their friends appears, respectively, in Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Elan Packard, Harry Winter, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Newspaper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver, the Magician;" likewise, in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally observes that adults always get excited (read anxious) when they travel; in Fran van Harteveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Beaver wonders why parents enjoy working, Wally says that they have to or else people will think they are "silly;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," Wally corrects Beaver's assumption that his father does nothing at work all day; in Leslie, "Bank Account," Wally tells Beaver that parents have to earn money to buy food as opposed to frivolous items they may really want; and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight," June corrects the boys' mistaken impression that adults can do whatever they want whenever they want to saying that no one ever gets old enough to do that.

[74] Larry says that he cannot imagine his father to have ever been a kid in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Breslow and Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," Wally is surprised to learn that June dated other men, which is the episode in which June also notes that it is hard for their children to think of their parents as human; Beaver is surprised by this same fact in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity;" in Diamond and Gersham, "Party Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally says that he and Beaver thought June was too old to understand a kid's concerns;" Wally is surprised to learn that June enjoys reading romances in Hoffman, "Beaver's Ice Skates," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); surprised to see June relaxing to music in Connelly, Mosher, Arthur Kober, "Beaver's Big Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); surprised to hear his mom singing in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair;" and surprised to see June lying down and resting during the day in Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[75] Connelly and Mosher (story by Ellis Marcus), "Beaver's Poster," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

the "man of the house," Wally summed up his experience by telling June "I don't know how you guys can do it without laughing."[76]

Just as parents misunderstood their kids, kids misunderstood their parents. As *TV Guide* observed in 1958, "Beaver is honest and direct, but he is in a state of confused wonderment about the world around him."[77] Jerry Mathers, in his autobiography, also noted that the series tried to present "the inequities and confusion of the adult world being forced upon a child."[78] Part of this confusion was fed by a sense that parents were always ready to find fault and expect the worst from their kids.[79] Indeed, far from leading a comfortable childhood, Mayfield kids were depicted as living in a fear founded in the idea that parents were always willing to assume that their kids were no good.[80] Consequently, Mayfield kids imagined themselves in a perpetual state of trouble.[81] As

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[76] Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father."

[77] "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," 17.

[78] Mathers, Jerry with Fagen, Herb. *...And Jerry Mathers as "The Beaver"* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1998), 5.

[79] Across various episodes, Mayfield kids seem to assume that parents always assume the worst of them: When Larry tells the Cleavers he was waiting for Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," Larry is compelled to assure the Cleavers that he did not break anything; When Gilbert takes some of his trains home from Beaver's room in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," Gilbert assures Mrs. Cleaver that he is not stealing any of Beaver's trains; and in William Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), after Wally enters and says "hi" to Ward, Wally quickly follows his greeting with "I didn't do anything."

[80] Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card."

[81] In Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy," Beaver describes his life to his Uncle Billy as going to school and trying "to keep from getting yelled at;" in John Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver comments that, outside of brushing teeth and going to bed, there is very little a kid can do; and in Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest," Wally says that a kid can get in trouble simply by "sitting on the bed thinking."

Wally observed in "Beaver's Bad Day," "When you're a kid, everything gets you in trouble."[82]

In one episode, when Larry's father thought his son had stolen a boat, his father punished him; after learning that Larry was innocent, Mr. Mondello told Larry that the misplaced punishment would serve as a lesson for the next time.[83] In the resolution of "Beaver's Report Card," an episode in which Beaver was falsely accused by his parents of changing one of his grades on his report card, Gilbert, who had not seen Beaver for a few days, asked Beaver what was new. Beaver, having seen the report card incident as just one of the perpetual messes in which kids were involved, did not even mention the uproar the incident had caused.[84]

Perhaps this is why Mayfield kids, including Wally and Beaver, tended to see their parents in such pejorative terms. As Wally and Beaver noted in several episodes, parents always seemed to be watching their kids, waiting for them to get in trouble. Furthermore, Parents, under the guise of doing something for their child's own benefit, did things like make them place money in the bank or safeguarded expensive items that were supposedly the child's.[85] Mayfield parents—or wardens, as Eddie and Lumpy

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[82] Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day."

[83] Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat."

[84] Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card."

[85] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," Beaver notes how parents, teachers and even the usher at the movies are always watching over kids; in Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally describes a youth center as a place where adults keep an eye on kids; and parent seem to have an uncanny knack for finding out when a kid does something wrong is noted in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip," Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble." The idea that expensive items and large sums of money are always under the guardianship of a parent is mentioned in Baer, "Lost Watch" (Beaver's savings bond), Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater" and Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday" (Beaver's money), and Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater" (Wally's expensive sweater), in which

might put it—[86]could be downright underhanded, giving a kid just enough rope before trapping them in some sort of trouble. And, long before Cat Stevens recorded "Father to Son," the lyrical lament of a young man frustrated by his parents lack of understanding, Wally was quick to point out that Ward was more interested in talking to him than listening.[87]

Not that Mayfield kids wanted to tell any of their deepest secrets to parents, who were often the last resort for childhood problems.[88] Indeed, for a show that time and again proved that parents were the best resources to help a child with his problems, numerous episodes contradicted this argument with Mayfield kids depicted as believing that they were always better served staying as far away from adults as possible.[89] While

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Wally says things a parent gives a kid are never really the kid's property (as in case of Beaver's $19 school sweater).

[86] Parents are referred to as wardens by Eddie and/or Lumpy in Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," and Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation."

[87] In Manhoff, "The Haircut" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), and Connelly and Mosher (story by Jon Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," Wally tells Beaver that a kid has to be careful or parents, who pretend to be nice only to set you up for an argument or punishment; Wally assumes that parents will always say "no" to something fun a kid wants to do in Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "The Black Eye," Wally notes that parents are better at telling as opposed to listening; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Henry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Ward asks Beaver why Beaver went to Gus the Fireman for advice as opposed to Ward, Beaver says that he figures fathers are better at telling kids what not to do as opposed to telling them what they should do.

[88] Gilbert thinks that Beaver must really be desperate for help when Beaver tells Gilbert that he is going to ask his parents how to keep a cat from returning to their house for food in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem."

[89] Gilbert says that kids are better off by staying away from adults in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy;" in Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods," Gilbert notes that things always seem to get messed up whenever parents get involved; in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," Beaver says that he gets nervous around grown-ups; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," Wally says that when parents start talking to other parents about something their child wants to do, the child is usually going to get in trouble.

most of Beaver and Wally's problems were actually exacerbated by their fear in coming to their parents, even Ward understood why they were reluctant to do so:

> Ward: ...I don' t think a fellow should always be running himself down, do you Beaver?
> Beaver: Gee, no, dad. There's enough grown-ups to do that for you.
> Ward: I suppose there are, Beaver[90]

Even the best parental intentions could be seen as suspect by Mayfield kids. When Ward thought of sending Wally to boarding school, Eddie convinced Wally that Ward was trying to get rid of Wally. Eddie tried to tell the same thing to Beaver when Ward and June offered him the opportunity to take a summer bus tour of America. While series scripts clearly showed that no parents—not even Eddie's Haskell father—would want to get rid of their children, the failure to see the positive feeling a parent had for their child often eluded Mayfield's kids.[91] In "Beaver's Typewrite," Gilbert once observed:

> Gilbert: Golly, Mr. Cleaver, you sure are good to Beaver.
> Ward: Well, I'm sure your father is just as good to you, Gilbert.
> Gilbert: Well, that's what he's always telling me, but I haven't noticed it.[92]

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[90] Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play."

[91] Wally tells Beaver in Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Ward's Problem" that parents sometimes tell a kid he or she will do something just to keep the kid quiet; in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," Wally says that some kids fathers can be upset just because their kids are "hanging around" them; in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," when Beaver asks Wally why kids suits are made so stiff looking, Wally replies it is to keep kids from doing something bad while wearing it; in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Eddie says that boarding schools and summer camps are designed to help parents get rid of their kids; Eddie says the same thing about summer trips in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America;" in a similar vein, Wally tries to sell his mom on the idea of sending him on a cross-country trip in Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity" by saying it's a way she can get rid of him for two months—when June makes it clear that she does not want to get rid of him, Wally, taking it the wrong way, assures her she would still have Beaver to yell at; and, in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Eddie tells Lumpy that a good way to get Fred Rutherford to let Lumpy go to Alaska for the summer is to tell his dad that he will be getting rid of him.

[92] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

This attitude appears to be based, in part, on the high level of yelling and corporal punishment that Mayfield kids were subjected to (see chapter four).[93] When Ward and June asked Beaver to tell him about a party he attended in "Party Invitation," Beaver described it as no different than any other party: "The kids ate and the big people yelled at us not to spill stuff." Indeed, Mayfield kids envisioned "being mean" as the exclusive privilege of parents, whose seemingly arbitrary nature was as ubiquitous a part of childhood as standing in the rain or keeping pockets full of turtle dirt.[94] As Wally said in "Community Chest," "I don't think I'll ever be a good father...I guess it's just too hard for me to be mean to people."[95]

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[93] Wally and Beaver imagined parents as hitters right from the first regular series episode, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets "spelled," when Wally writes a note to Beaver's teacher (with the idea that it would look like it was coming from Ward) assuring the teacher he has been beaten Beaver for his misdeeds. Later in the episode, when Beaver makes a scene by hiding out in a tree, Beaver says he is afraid to come down because Ward will hit him. Ward denies hitting him (after all, he is out in public), but Beaver quickly reminds him that Ward has done so in the past, much to Ward's embarrassment. When Beaver finally climbs down, one kid, who has been watching this situation unfold, comments to his friend that Ward is really going to hit Beaver once he gets him home. In Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiance," Wally tells June that he has not taken Ward's rake as he did not want to get "clobbered; in the same episode, Whitey asks if he can talk to Beaver if his parents are not too "busy yelling at him;" When Ward lectures Beaver in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend," Beaver asks if Ward wants to yell at him more or if he can go; this also happens to Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party;" in "Beaver Goes into Business," Gilbert says that he is tired of being yelled at by strangers and decides to go home where he can be yelled at by his parents; in the same episode, Gilbert also says that grown-ups are always looking for a reason to yell at kids;" and, in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," Ward jokes that he usually gets home just in time to "yell at the kids" for something they have done wrong.

[94] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," Wally tells Beaver that older people don't have to have a reason to be mean to kids; Beaver tells his parents that he knows it is their duty to pick on him in Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card," Beaver tells his parents, who are figuring an appropriate punishment for him, that he will give them time to figure out how to "be mean to me;" When June decides to give Beaver a second chance at going to a family football game in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," Wally says that he also has trouble being mean; and, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Vlollaerts), "The Black Eye," Wally says that Ward gets mad at him whenever Ward gets mad at Beaver.

[95] Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest."

Indeed, in episodes in which the older kids had to take care of younger kids, most of them saw the chief responsibility of guardianship as pushing kids around.[96] As Wally observed in the first episode, "When you're an older person, you don't have to have a reason to be mean."[97] When Beaver and Gilbert walked over to pick up a registered letter at the post office, Beaver, for no apparent reason, said "I just hope they don't hit us or anything."[98] Perhaps one of the best examples of Mayfield children's understanding of the arbitrary nature of parents is seen in "Beaver Takes a Drive," in which Beaver and Gilbert got into Ward's car and pretended to be a husband and wife going on a family trip. In mocking their parents, Gilbert, as the wife, picked on Beaver's driving. Beaver, as the dad, referred to his imaginary kids in the back seat as stupid and threatened to beat them if they did not behave.[99]

Wally, Beaver and the rest of Mayfield's kids were also depicted as being envious of adult privilege. In the first season episode "The Black Eye," when Beaver complained to Wally that the rules are a lot easier on grown-ups, Wally was quick to point out that grown-ups were the ones who made the rules.[100] Not that Mayfield adults followed the rules any better than kids. Indeed, Mayfield adults often failed to provide a good

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[96]Wally says that "pushing around" little kids or sounding mean is the way to take care of littler kids in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes," and Hoffmann, "Beaver the Babysitter;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," Gilbert tells Beaver, who is calling the police to report strange noises outside of his house, to make his voice "sound real mean" so the police will think they are talking to an adult.

[97] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled."

[98] Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday."

[99] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Takes a Drive."

[100] Connelly and Mosher (story by Vollaerts), "The Black Eye."

example for their kids to follow,[101] something that actual teenagers polled in a teen magazine reported as being quite frustrating.[102]

No group of kids seemed to be more problematic for Mayfield parents than teenagers:

> Ward: June, do you at times get the feeling of helplessness, frustration, and extreme rage?
> June: I guess it's only natural. After all, we're the parents of a teenager.[103]

Just as the series had posited that it was natural for little boys to hate little girls, the writers and producers of the series seemed drawn to depict a "natural" animosity existing between parents and teens.[104] Mayfield teens were often portrayed as yet another "other," as unpredictable and difficult to explain as women or little kids. As Ward said in

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[101] Such hypocrisy is noted in a number of episodes. In Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," Beaver realizes that while it is okay for a father to forget something, it is not okay for a kid to do the same thing; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes A Walk," Beaver is confused by how his dad can get out of trouble by passing it off as a childhood reminiscence, yet Beaver's mishaps simply are treated as no laughing matter; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth" Wally suspects that the coach's underlying reason for canceling practice was because he had a date; in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward takes a piece of cake from the refrigerator. When Wally comments on how he would have gotten in trouble for the same act, Ward is not pleased, thinking Wally is trying to get him into trouble. When Wally notes that he was impressed by how adults can do things that kids cannot, Ward says it is one of the privileges of age; Wally admires how June is able to politely give a person on the phone the "brush off" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); Beaver is confused by a white lie June tells him in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), noting that if he made up a lie, he would get punished; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship," Wally points out that while Ward and June tell them not to match dinner invitations, they do it all the time; and in Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," Beaver says that Ward, who had admonished him for lying, had lied to Mr. Rutherford about not being able to accept a dinner invitation.

[102] Farmer, 26

[103] Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[104] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prep School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), and Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose" both have lines that note that teens do not listen to parents; in Ross (story by Enochs), "Wally's Big Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward says that a parent never really knows if his message is actually getting through to his teenager.

"Wally the Businessman," "If I knew why teenagers act the way they do, I could write a book and make a fortune."[105]

Teenagers, like little kids, were typed by certain characteristics, such as their insatiable appetites, which were often alluded to for comic effect.[106] As the series moved toward the early 1960s, episode's commented on what adults saw as the strange fashions to which teenagers were drawn. In "The All Night Party," Mr. Gregory, the father of a girl Wally was dating, assumed that Wally would show up wearing tight pants, buckles on his shoes, a crazy haircut, and have a surfboard hanging out of the back of his car.[107] While most of Mayfield teens were courteous and kind, Mayfield parents, on at least three occasions, complained about the contemporary teens' lack of respect for their elders.[108] Even Wally talked back to his parents on a few occasions,[109] although most of

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[105] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward notes how the put upon parent needs all the help he or she can get; a natural link between teenagers and strange behavior is made in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play" and Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska;" in the later, Ward also observes that having manners and being a teenager are mutually exclusive qualities; in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," George Haskell, Eddies father, notes that one cannot make any assumptions when dealing with a teenager; and, in Conway and MacLane, "Untogetherness," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally says that his home-room teacher said that looking bothered is a normal state for teenagers.

[106] Teenagers large appetites are noted in a number of episodes, including Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Henry," Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup," Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," "Conway and MacLane, Wally Stays at Lumpy's," Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party," Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Conway and MacLane, "The Party Spoiler," and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Book Report," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[107] Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party."

[108] Fred notes how a teenager on the street called him "skinhead" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet;" in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," when June tells Wally that she and her classmates acted like ladies and gentlemen, Wally jokes June must have gone to school a long time ago; and Ward comments on the lack of good kids, circa 1960, Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater."

[109] Wally is very angry with June for arranging a date behind his back in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958). Asking "don't I have any rights," Wally claims that June is ruining his life and says that he will not go on the date even if he has to spend the rest of his life in his "crummy room." Wally also gets mad when he is asked to dress up as a girl in Connelly and Mosher (story

his disrespect was portrayed through smart comments that were usually played for laughs and followed by the appropriate, contrite apology.[110] Mayfield teens, including Beaver, even swore. As noted before, the episode "Substitute Father" revolves around an adolescent Beaver swearing at school (the particular word he used was cleverly drowned out for the viewing audience by a school bell). In "The Poor Loser," Wally indicated that Beaver, who was angry with him, swore at him when Wally offered Beaver a ride home.[111]

Wally's teen status did provide one advantage—it allowed him to be a bridge between pre-adolescent Beaver and his parents, a dramatic device that often put Wally at the center of the episode's resolutions. As popular writer Richard Lamparski observed, "On the show...[Wally] was a kid to his parents and an adult to this little brother."[112] Part of this in-between status allowed Wally to explain the subtleties and nuances of the adult world to Beaver, including some of the adult formalities and niceties that confused young

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by Tibbles), "Wally's Play;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally also gets angry and accuses Ward and June of being against him.

[110] In Baer, "Wally's New Suit," when Ward says that he does not want to talk about how disappointed he is in the suit Wally has picked, Wally reminds Ward that it is Ward who has not stopped talking about the suit since Wally brought it home; in Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," Beaver says that Ward gives Wally so much trouble about letting him buy a car that Ward makes walking sound good; in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Pet Fair," Wally repeats a mnemonic device—Parents Are No Good—just as Ward says that Beaver cannot have a pet—Ward is not sure whether Wally was still studying or commenting on his parenting skills.

[111] In Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," Beaver learns of foul language in *Tom Sawyer*; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Sport Removers," Beaver recalls how he and Richard heard an adult swearing; likewise, Wally and his friends talk about adult workmen swearing in Diamond and Gersham, "Party Invitation;" Beaver swears in school in Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father" and it is implied that Beaver has sworn at Wally in Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser."

[112] Richard Lamparski, *Whatever Became Of...?*, eighth series (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1982), 89.

Beaver.[113] In "The School Bus," for example, Beaver wondered why Wally told him to begin his letter of apology to the school bus driver with the word "dear." As Wally explained, "Even if you were going to sue a guy for a million dollars, you'd start it off with dear."[114] Wally also helped Beaver understand how adults and kids were more similar than might first appear. At the end of "Ward's Millions," for example, Beaver asked Wally why adults would buy a book about becoming a millionaire even if they know that no one could truly become rich by just reading a book. As Wally explained, parents liked to dream as much as children did.[115]

On the other hand, Wally also explained Beaver's thoughts and actions to Ward and June.[116] In "The Tooth" and "School Bus," Wally showed Ward and June how their making a fuss over Beaver in front of his friends had embarrassed his brother.[117] From

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[113] Wally explains the rather obtuse way parents phrase things in terms that Beaver can understand in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk," Wally says that Beaver has to learn to realize when Ward is exaggerating; Wally explains how fathers, like sons, like to think that their children think well of them in Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Most Interesting Character;" and Wally also tells Beaver about how parents sometimes secretly do nice things for their kids without expecting to receive any acknowledgment in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight" and Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date."

[114] Connelly and Mosher, "The School Bus."

[115] Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde), "Ward's Millions," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[116] Likewise, Wally tries to get Ward and June to understand how kids feel in various compromising situations in a variety of episodes including: Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Runs Away" (how Beaver wanted to save face so he could return home), Connelly and Mosher (story by Jack Patrick), "Music Lesson," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), (how Beaver wanted Ward to be proud of him for being good at something), Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes A Walk" (how Beaver wanted to be like Ward when he was a kid), Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," (how Beaver felt he had hurt Ward's feelings by disobeying him after Ward built them a go-kart), Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Nobody Love Me," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), (how pubescent boys feel awkward and unwanted), and Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother" (on how hard it is to measure up to a star-level brother).

[117] Wally tells Ward that Beaver is really afraid of appearing afraid in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Tooth;" Wally tells Ward and June that they embarrassed Beaver by waving to him as Beaver got on the bus in front of his friends in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus."

time to time, Wally also advised Ward and June on parenting matters such as appropriate punishments as well as how to keep Beaver safe from problematic kids.[118] In "Beaver the Hero," Wally became so bold as to suggest that he may even be better at dealing with Beaver than Ward. As Wally told Ward, "You've been lecturing the Beaver for 13 years now, and he's still pretty stupid."[119]

Wally could also be the go-between for other parents and adults. In "Summer in Alaska," and "Eddie Quits School," for example, Wally advised Mr. Haskell on keeping Eddie from spending the summer on an Alaskan fishing boat, and advised the high school principal on convincing Eddie to return to school.[120] Wally, as an example of a socially redeemable teen, also had the power to speak on behalf of those good—read "straight"—teens that were often conflated with teen trouble-makers. In "The All Night Party," Wally tried to explain to his date's father, Mr. Gregory, how his daughter got pushed into a fountain at an all-night graduation party. Mr. Gregory, who was nervous about sending his daughter with Wally in the first place, was in no mood to listen to some teenager's explanation. When Wally told Gregory what had happened—that a strange man had pushed Gregory's daughter into the pool—Gregory assumed Wally was lying. When Gregory asked Wally if Wally really expected him to believe such a fantastic story, Wally responded, "No sir. It's the truth, but I don't expect you to believe it."

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[118] Wally advises that Ward and June maintain a strict punishment so that Beaver does not see them as being too lenient in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball" and Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Wally, however, questions Ward's advice that Beaver should stand in front of his class and admit that he lied to them in Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero;" Wally strongly advices that Ward do whatever he can to keep Beaver from spending the summer with a girl who is known as a "real operator" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America."

[119] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero."

[120] Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska;" Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School."

Gregory: Oh, why not?
Wally: Well, just because some teenagers get in trouble and mess around and lie, a lot of parents think that all teenagers act that way.
Gregory: Now just a minute! How do you suppose I felt when I saw my daughter come home soaking wet?
Wally: Well, yes sir. But gee, how do you think Kathy felt on the way home knowing you'd probably believe the worst?
Gregory: What do you mean? Kathy can come to me at any time with any kind of problem—well, can't she?
Wally: Well sir, I don't know. All I know is she was awful scared on the way home...[121]

This powerful message is interesting for a number of reasons, particularly in how it shows that teens, who were depicted as vacuous on the one hand, could also have the courage to challenge adults. Again, while it is impossible to know how contemporary teens reacted to such an exchange, it is easy to see how the writers might have assumed that such a scene would play well with viewing teens. At the same time, it shows how the assumed perfection of the Mayfield environs and its characters was once again more fiction than fact.

The Cruel World

"Not a nice lesson for the boys to find out that there are people in this world who will even take advantage of a fish."
--Ward Cleaver[122]

In "Beaver and Andy," Ward hired a down-on-his-luck alcoholic to paint the Cleaver home. Because Ward and June were so busy shielding their kids from what they euphemistically referred to as "Andy's problem," Beaver inadvertently gave a drink to the recovering Andy. At the end of the episode, Ward and June realized how important it

[121] Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party."

[122] Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend."

was for parents to level with their children. As Wally told his parents, "Somebody's gotta tell a guy about the bad junk in the world."[123]

While *Leave it to Beaver* spoke to the general value of tolerance, and while it did acknowledge, as discussed in chapter three, the existence of poverty, there was a whole lot of "bad junk in the world" that was not addressed by *Leave it to Beaver* or any other late-1950s entertainment programming. That serious limitation notwithstanding, the series writers and producers seemed to do more than most of the sitcom writers of their time in exploring the cruel nature of life in general and the hypocrisy and foibles of the adult world. *Leave it to Beaver*, for all its conservative messages, was perhaps the most cynical of the affective family sitcoms.

This idea of confronting a hypocritical, cruel world was not new in popular culture. George McManus's 1909 comic strip, "The Newlyweds," showed the hypocritical nature of people, as did George Herriman's "The Dingbat Family."[124] These examples notwithstanding, few popular cultural artifacts played to the negative side of life as much as *Leave it to Beaver*. In "Wally's Job," Beaver expressed one of his many philosophical comments on the rather bleak nature of the world while helping Ward paint some old metal garbage cans:

> Beaver: What makes rust, dad?
> Ward: Oxidation. It eats into the metal.
> Beaver: Why don't they make cans out of wood?
> Ward: Well, wood rots.

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[123] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Andy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[124] Blackbeard and Williams, "The Newlyweds—Their Baby," strip 40, p. 52 in Bill Blackbeard and Martin Williams, *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977).

> Beaver: Gee, there's something wrong with just about everything, isn't there dad?
> Ward: Just about, I guess, Beave.[125]

As Gus the Fireman observed in "Next Door Indians," "Seems like everybody's gotta have somebody else to jump on."[126]

Few suffered more at the hands of the cruel world than kids. While Beaver often clung to chimeras in the face of his messes, Mayfield youth had an underlying sense that nothing good could truly ever happen to a kid.[127] Just as kids came to uncover the myths of such childhood heroes as Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy,[128] Mayfield kids learned to temper their expectations with the actuality of disappointment; as Wally warned Beaver many times, anytime one expects something to turn out good, it usually turns out bad.[129] Some of a child's greatest disappointments came at the hands of his or her peers. In "Beaver and Gilbert," when Gilbert broke a promise to go to the movies with Beaver, June felt awful for Beaver. Hinting that Gilbert was an example of the many

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[125] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job."

[126] Connelly and Mosher (suggested by a story by Smith), "Next Door Indians."

[127] Ibid., Wally says that nothing as good as getting rich could ever happen to a kid; in Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella," Beaver says that being a kid means you are not supposed to be happy.

[128] Wally is wise to the fact that Santa Claus is a myth, but he cannot quite bring himself to spoil the illusion for Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip;" in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," Beaver notes that kids stop believing in the tooth fairy by the time their teeth fall out; and, in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction" Beaver notes that he was disappointed to learn that there were four Lassies.

[129] Wally cautions Beaver on how having high expectations usually leads to disappointment in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds A Wallet;" Beaver notes this himself in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," saying that problems come along when things are going fine; even a relative could let you down, as Beaver sadly learns in Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy," when his blow-hard Uncle fails to keep his promise to buy Beaver a new fishing pole.

disappointments Beaver would have to learn to face, Ward said, "Well dear, sooner or later he's got to learn that there are such things as Gilberts in the world."

June: I suppose so. I just wish he didn't have to find out at nine-years-old.[130]

For a series that preached moral messages about being kind and doing the right thing, numerous episodes showed that being polite, particularly where kids were concerned, offered no real payoff. When Beaver helped classmate Judy Hensler write a letter of apology to the school bus driver, Wally warned Beaver that Judy would not appreciate his kindness. The next day, Beaver's friendly gesture toward Judy was returned by her angry retort, "Aw, shut up, you big dummy."[131] While Beaver and Wally usually wished the best for their friends, most Mayfield kids seemed to have an eagerness in seeing their cohorts get into trouble—particularly when it came to seeing Wally and Beaver get in trouble.[132] Mayfield also had its share of bullies and childhood petty thieves,[133] and

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[130] Connelly, Mosher, and Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert."

[131] Connelly and Mosher, "The School Bus."

[132] Mayfield kids often appear anxious to get other kids in trouble, particularly in terms of getting Wally and Beaver in trouble. In Connelly and Mosher (story by Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," the kids cannot wait to see Miss Canfield getting upset at Beaver for putting a coiled snake in her desk; Larry goes against his word and tells the other guys that Beaver has invited his teacher for dinner in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner;" Eddie seems to delight in getting Beaver in trouble with his parents in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," and in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," Lumpy seems happy to see Mrs. Cleaver at school, thinking it means the normally well-behaved Wally has gotten in trouble; Eddie is almost delighted to find that Wally's girlfriend is attracted to another guy in Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache;" even Wally would not want to miss the possibility of seeing Beaver embarrassing himself in public in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV."

[133] A kid steals Beaver's bike in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike;" an older kids cons school money out of Beaver and Larry in Connelly and Mosher, "The Cookie Fund;" just as Wally predicted, "creep" Larry fails to repay a loan to Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan;" Beaver's friend Gus the Fireman talks about kids picking on other kids in Connelly and Mosher (suggested by a story by Smith), "Next Door Indians;" and the first time Lumpy Rutherford is introduced, in Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy Rutherford," he plays the part of a bully who is bothering Wally and Beaver. When Beaver asks Ward why

many kids enjoyed scaring other kids, or made comments that were downright cruel.[134] In "Beaver's Bad Day," for example, when Larry teased Eddie Haskell, Eddie lunged at him, calling Larry "fat boy" and telling him to shut up.[135] Even Beaver knew there was little percentage in being nice to fellow kids. As Beaver advised Wally's unpopular friend Dudley in "Wally and Dudley," "It's okay to be polite to teachers and parents and stuff," but there was no reason to "waste your time just being polite to [other] kids."[136]

Mayfield kids were also depicted as quite cynical, assuming that other kids and adults often had ulterior motives for any displays of kindness. In "Long Distance Call," Beaver suspected Wally of having an ulterior motive in helping the female editor of the school newspaper:

> Wally: Can't a guy help people without having a reason?
> Beaver: Well sure they can, but they don't.[137]

When a salesperson acted nicely toward Beaver after completing a sale, Beaver told the salesperson there was no need to be nice—he had already bought the shoes.[138] Even

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some people are bullies, Ward says that he is not sure, but that people have to learn to live in a world that has such people. When Beaver asks Ward if there is anything that can be done about bullies like Lumpy, Ward says there is one thing—to vow to not be like them.

[134] Judy tries to scare Beaver about a note his teacher has sent home with him in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver gets 'spelled;" Lumpy scares Beaver about getting a dental filling in Ross, Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Tooth;" Judy says that Beaver was bad in his school play and that he will mess up in the next one in Connelly and Mosher, "School Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and Eddie and Lumpy play cruel tricks on Dudley, the new boy in class, in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley."

[135] Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day."

[136] Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley."

[137] Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call."

[138] Salesmen not needing to be nice to kids is noted in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes;" Gilbert notes that a salesman will be nice to Beaver when the man sees that Beaver has ten dollars to spend in Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday;" and Whitey assumes that a salesman is

kindly Mayfield neighbors seemed jaded. When Wally asked a neighbor if he could use her telephone, the woman expressed concern that Wally might be pulling a scam to sell magazines.[139]

The world could also be cruel to animals as well. In three separate episodes, Beaver learned how frogs were killed for scientific experimentation, chinchillas were killed for their fur, and old horses bones were rendered to make glue.[140] Beaver's childhood sense of fairness for animals in a world of carnivores was quite evident in "Beaver's Poem," in which Beaver wrote about how he had once wished to be a duck, until he saw one hanging in the butcher shop.[141] When Ward learns that the resort he took the boys to in "The Happy Weekend" had stocked the fishing pond with fish, Ward lamented a world which held people who would even "take advantage of a fish."

Leave it to Beaver also paid attention to the industries which thrived on taking advantage of gullible kids. In one of the first episodes, "Captain Jack," the giant alligator that Beaver and Wally ordered from an ad in a comic book turned out to be a baby alligator less than a foot long. When Beaver and Wally earned what they thought was a full-size movie projector for selling a foul-smelling perfume, it turned out to be a worthless handheld toy that looked nothing like its illustration. "More Blessed to Give" began with Beaver winning an expensive ring at a carnival game that was supposed to

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being polite because he is out to take advantage of Beaver (which turns out to be true) in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates."

[139] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke."

[140] Ward comments on stocked ponds in Connelly and Mosher, "Happy Weekend;" Chinchillas are mentioned in Connelly and Mosher (story by Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," frogs for scientific research are mentioned in Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs;" the horse situation is from Connelly and Mosher (story by Beaumont), "A Horse Named Nick."

[141] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem."

rigged, while several other episodes featured various phony offers that promised kids fortune and fame.[142] Three episodes also involved crooked salesmen who tried to take advantage of kids.[143] Such dishonesty and humbug was not really new, even to Mayfield residents; as Ward recalled, he had been hoodwinked by gimmicks and come-ons in his youth as well.[144]

Mayfield youth were also aware of the litigious nature of modern America, with numerous mentions being made about school and city liability waivers that needed to be completed before kids were allowed to participate in events.[145] In "Merchant Marine," Gilbert thought about slipping and falling on the Cleaver's porch to get enough money from the insurance company to buy a model midget racer; in "Price of Fame," when Beaver got his head caught in a park fence, Wally suggested that Ward sue the city.[146] In

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[142] The small alligator appears in Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); the small projector is from Diamond and Gersham, "Perfume Salesman;" the fixed carnival game is in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give;" and come-ons for Beaver to be famous as a model or accordion player appear in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), respectively.

[143] A sporting goods clerk purposely sells Beaver the wrong size ice skates to move an item in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates;" a used car lot tries to take advantage of Wally and Ward in Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car;" and Eddie and Wally's foreman at a local ice cream shop are caught stealing ice cream from the company in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[144] Ward notes how he was also once taken in by a mail-order fraud in Diamond and Gersham, "Perfume Salesmen;" in the Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," Ward notes how a count-the-jelly-bean contest from his youth was rigged by a local shop owner, who put baseballs in the bottom of the jelly bean jar to throw off correct guesses.

[145] The school or city needing such permissions are noted in a number of episodes, including Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Beaver's Ring" (when Beaver worries the nurse may cut off his finger to get off a ring), Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother" (field day permission), Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund" (field trip permission), Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard" (parents permission to work as well as release of beach from responsibility if Wally drowns); When Wally gets hired by a circus in Connelly and Mosher (story by Beaumont), "A Horse Named Nick," the owner tells him not to do anything dangerous as the circus has no insurance; and, in Conway and MacLane,"Wally's Weekend Job," Wally notes that the board of health demands that workers serving food have clean hands.

trying to explain mortgages to Beaver, Wally noted how landlords had to get a "high priced lawyer" in order to kick a person out of their home. Blind trust in authority was also questioned, albeit indirectly, in "Borrowed Boat;" after Larry and Beaver are given a boat by a couple of Mayfield ruffians, they are confused as to what to do with it. Going on the advice that the police are a kid's friend, they take their problem to a cop. When the boat turns out to be stolen, Beaver and Larry become the prime suspects by the very authorities they trusted. This was not the first time the series showed the scary nature of authorities. In "Beaver's Big Contest," after Beaver interrupts a police office to sell him a raffle ticket, Beaver tells the police officer that he can go back to "being mean to people."[147]

While kids, businesses, and authorities could let Beaver down, no one did it more effectively than the mainstream adults Beaver encountered. In "Beaver Goes into Business," a woman that Beaver considers to be "a really neat lady" wrote him a bad check for his lawn mowing service. As Ward said, "That's one of the hazards of going out in the world. You find out what people are really like." Saying that this incident had destroyed his faith in grown-ups—except, of course, for Ward and June—Beaver, at Ward's insistence, decided to give the lady the benefit of the doubt and assume the bad check might have been given in error. When that turned out to be the case, Beaver walked away with a better feeling about grown-ups. Wally—older and more jaded than

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[146] Gilbert talks about suing the Cleavers in Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); Wally talks about suing the city in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame."

[147] Wally explains eviction to Beaver in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); police officers as friends is noted in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat;" and the police officer's job as "being mean to people" is in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest."

Beaver—however, held the bill the woman had given Beaver up to the light to make sure it was real.[148]

A similar turn of events took place in "Beaver Good Deed," when a homeless man that Beaver let into the house stole one of Ward's good suits. As noted in chapter three, the homeless man redeemed himself—and Beaver's faith in people—by sending Ward $5.00 as the first installment to repay Ward for the suit he had stolen. While Ward and Wally seriously doubted whether any more payments would actually be forthcoming, there was some effort to redeem adult offenders.[149]

Such redemption was not always achieved by episode's end. In "Beaver Finds a Wallet," Beaver and his pal Larry stumbled across a wallet filled with money. While Larry wanted to keep it, Beaver, who had been raised well by Ward and June, decided to take the money to the police department, which promised that Beaver could have the money if no one claimed it within the next ten days. Encouraged by Ward, Beaver placed an ad in the lost and found section of the local paper. The ten days passed with no claims on the wallet. As Beaver sat in the police station waiting to get his money, he met Mrs. Tompkins who was there to report a lost wallet. Beaver realized that the wallet he had found was the one Tompkins had lost and again decided to do the right thing and tell her about it. Tompkins, grateful for Beaver's honesty, promised to send Beaver a nice reward. After five days, Beaver had still not received his reward. June and Ward were very upset, however Beaver remained sure that the gift would come. As June observesd "I guess when you're Beaver's age, you just don't know enough about the world to give

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[148] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business."

[149] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

up hope so soon." The cruel nature of the world was further amplified by Ward's response to June's suggestion that Ward call the police and report Tompkins: "If they start arresting people for selfishness, half the world would be in jail."[150] Unwilling to destroy his son's faith in human nature just yet, Ward sent Beaver a clock radio, making it appear it had come from Tompkins. When Beaver wrote a glowing letter thanking Tompkins for the gift he believed she had bought, June told Ward that it was a shame that they could not actually send the letter. Ward, eager to punish Tompkins for her selfishness, decided to do just that, hoping that Tompkins would think of Beaver and, more importantly, her insensitivity.[151]

Mayfield adults were not only insensitive—some, like Wylie's "Pop," were downright crooks. In "Beaver the Caddy," Beaver caddied for wealthy Mr. Langley who, during the course of the game, cheated on his golf score by having Beaver record a lower number of strokes. Guilty about his cheating, Langley gave Beaver a $5.00 tip, quite hefty by 1950s standards. Beaver felt a little uneasy about Langley's cheating, but did not say anything. When he learned that Langley had won $500 from his opponent, Beaver realized he must do something. Turning to Wally for help, Beaver discovered that it was not so easy to confront an adult and accuse him of cheating; nevertheless, that is exactly what Beaver did, appearing at Langley's office and telling him that he was aware of his crime. At first, Langley tried to convince Beaver that he was mistaken, but Beaver remained steadfast. Langley then tried to blame his behavior on a bad bet he had made after having "one too many" at the club.. After Langley admitted that he could not afford to loose $500, Beaver asked how Langley could afford to win it through cheating.

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[150] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds a Wallet."

[151] Ibid.

Beaver, who went to school with Langley's son, asked Langley how he thought his son would feel if he knew the truth. Beaver's point hit home with langley, who devised a plan to give back the money by blowing a new round of golf. When Beaver told Wally about confronting Langley, Wally was amazed, telling Beaver that he had taken quite a risk. As Beaver observed, "You know, Wally, I'm glad I don't know as much about life as you do, otherwise I'd be the biggest chicken in the whole world."[152]

Navigating the System

Cruel world not withstanding, Beaver, like the rest of his Mayfield cohorts, would learn how to navigate this seemingly complex world. As Christopher Lasch argued, "Relations within the family have come to resemble relations in the rest of society;" to that end, children learned how to survive the modern world by first learning to get around the rules established by their parents.[153] The scripts, indeed, appeared to be well aware of the tactics children would use to get around their parents, tactics that usually involved giving their parents as little information about their lives as possible—another characteristic of childhood presented through the series.[154] Because parents in Mayfield,

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[152] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy."

[153] Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 174.

[154] The idea of kids being better off being evasive or not saying anything to their parents is noted in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes," in which Ward notes that kid have figured out that the less they say to adults, the better off they will be; Wally says the same thing in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater;" Ward notes that kids feel that parents are more interested in getting them in trouble than in listening what they have to say in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Wally Goes Steady," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward notes that a parent's questions often put kids on the defensive; in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," Beaver says the best way to avoid trouble is to "keep your mouth shut;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Cat Problem," and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," Beaver and Wally respectively note that bringing a problem home to their parents always carries a risk that they would often rather not take.

particularly Ward and June, were so omnipresent, Mayfield kids and teens learned that they needed to band together to protect themselves. As far as Eddie was concerned, the real cold war was the one being waged between adults and kids.[155]

Another way Mayfield kids tried to survive their parents was through manipulation. While putting up a fuss, carrying on, screaming and crying may not have worked with strong-willed parents like Ward and June, such tactics seemed to be popular with other Mayfield kids.[156] Mayfield kids also tried to get their way by waiting for their parents to be in the right mood, having learned that a parent's day at work or at home often influenced the type of decisions they made.[157] Perhaps a favorite method of parental control—even for Wally and Beaver—was, as Lasch had noted, trying to get their parents to see that "they have departed from established norms," in an effort to either get their way or weaken their parent's trust in the decisions they had made.[158] Finally, Mayfield kids could try to turn the rules to their advantage, catching their parents on technicalities or half-truths that, by their parents own words, made it appear that they

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[155] Eddie typifies the parental/child standoff as a Cold War in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl;" Beaver also notes a sort of camaraderie among kids when he tried to keep his friend Richard out of trouble at home in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket;" when Beaver argues that teenagers should not have their own phone on a teen panel show in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," Wally says that Beaver has "sold out to the enemy;" when an advice columnists sides with Beaver's parents in Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella," Beaver is looked at as a traitor by his cohorts.

[156] Larry, Gilbert, and Eddie promote the idea of getting things from your parents by making a fuss or whining in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Henry," Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," and Baer, "Wally's New Suit."

[157] Getting a parent in a good mood or flattering him or her for favors is noted in Conway and MacLane, "The Book Report," and Connelly and Mosher, "The Last Day of School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); the idea that it is always better to confront parents with bad news or ask for something in front of someone else, presumably because the parents will be forced to be nicer in front of others, is noted in Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," and Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods;" in Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds," Ward indicates he also used this technique as a boy.

[158] Lasch, 173.

had allowed their children to do the very things the parents had expressly forbidden. Thus, in "Wally Stays at Lumpy's," a lack of effective communication allows Gilbert to spend the night at Beaver's and Wally to spend the night a Lumpy's.[159]

When such technicalities failed to surface, the child had one last resort—sneaking. To kids like Larry Mondello, sneaking was part of childhood survival—as Larry put it, it was the only thing that kept parents from "killing us all the time."[160] Sneaking could also make activities more fun. As Larry told Beaver in "Beaver Runs Away," "Gee, if you did everything your father tells you, you'd never have any fun." Beaver's friend Gilbert concurred, noting that "everything that's fun can get you in trouble. haven't you learned that yet?[161] Even Wally's more mature friends recognized the importance and pleasures of sneaking. When Wally left Ward and June to assume that a weekend party his friend Scott was throwing was going to be chaperoned by Scott's parents, Wally began to feel guilty about misleading his parents. Scott, anxious to begin a fun weekend with his pals, tried to set Wally at ease, saying that sneaking was "the way you have fun."[162]

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[159] In Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic" and Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpys," the Cleaver kids, through help from Eddie and Gilbert, respectively, try to get around their parents on "technicalities;" in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," Wally is uncomfortable with having played loose with the truth to get them to agree to let him go away for the weekend.

[160] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," Wally says that things are only fun when people say you cannot do them in; in Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," Larry says it is necessary to a kids survival to sneak behind their parents back; Wally and Beaver sneak behind their parents back in a number of episodes, from Connelly and Mosher (story by Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," to Connelly and Mosher (story by Zimmer), "Tire Trouble," to Connelly and Mosher, "The Boat Builders;" Lumpy steals his father's battery and drains gas from his father's car in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke;" Lumpy notes he drained gas from his father's car again in Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School."

[161] Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs."

[162] Connelly and Mosher, "Weekend Invitation."

Sneaking also allowed Mayfield youth to test the rules, which, in their mind seemed quite arbitrary. In "Beaver Smokes a Pipe," Beaver justified his curiosity regarding smoking by arguing that "Everybody's always saying how bad it is and telling kids not to do it, and I figured if grown-ups say it's so bad, there must be something real good about it." Of course, Ward had the final word in the script, noting, "Well, Beaver, strange as it may seem, as you grow older you're going to discover that quite a lot of the things we tell you are bad really are bad."[163] Indeed, no matter how well a child mastered the art of sneaking, Mayfield parents were seldom fooled.[164] Much like the exposure of other problems in Mayfield life, sneaking and other childhood indiscretions appear to have served as the negative examples which enforced the desired idealistic behavior common to so many sitcoms, even to this day.

Eddie Haskell

When it came to navigating the system, no one tried harder—and failed more often—than Eddie Haskell. Yet even though Eddie was always defeated, few TV characters have so consistently stood in opposition to authority as strongly or for as sustained a period as Eddie. What truly made Eddie Haskell different from other negative-example characters of past series was that Eddie, the scheming, beguiling, cheat, was no occasional walk-on character—he was Wally's best friend.

Eddie was not a totally new creation in terms of popular culture, as one can trace his roots to the hell-raising "demon child" turn-of-the-century comic strip characters like

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[163] Connelly and Mosher (story by van Hartesvedlt), "The Pipe."

[164] As Wally noted in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," and Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's," parents were often wise to the way kids tried to work on them.

"The Yellow Kid," "The Katzenjammer Kids," and "Little Nemo."[165] As Gerard Jones observed in *Honey, I'm Home*, Eddie Haskell also shared common traits with another Connelly and Mosher character, *Amos 'n' Andy's* Kingfish, a veritable schemer who always tried to corrupt his best friend Andy.[166] While Wally would downplay Eddie's character by claiming that "A guy like Eddie Haskell only comes along once in a couple hundred years,"[167] his actual appeal lay in how very real Eddie was—even during the series' first run. As Lamparski observed, Ken Osmond, as Eddie Haskell "....played a boy most people can recall from their childhoods. He was scheming and two-faced, but for the most part his guilt went undiscovered and unpunished."[168] Ken Osmond echoes Lamparski, recalling that "I get good response from people that I talk to on the street, primarily because I think everybody knows an Eddie. There was one on everybody's block. So they can kind of relate to it."[169] It is no coincidence that both Mosher's daughter-in-law and Connelly's daughter knew two people from their youth who they felt were models for Connelly and Mosher's Eddie (see chapter two).

If Wally was the safe, ideal boy, Eddie was every parent's worst nightmare—or, in the words of Ken Osmond, at least as bad a Mayfield would allow.[170] As one of Wally's girlfriend's father noted in "Wally's Weekend Job," Eddie was an "over

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[165] Blackbeard and Williams, 19-20.

[166] Gerard Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 126.

[167] Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs."

[168] Lamparski, 89.

[169] Ken Osmond, interview with author.

[170] Ibid.

stimulated adolescent."[171] While Wally enjoyed Eddie enough to be friends, he was wise to his antics, promising, in one episode, to kill Beaver if Beaver ever acted like Eddie Haskell (Beaver came to this same conclusion in another episode).[172] Eddie's faults were indeed apparent. His beguiling line of patter, used to misdirect parents from his indiscretions, was easily seen through by June and Ward, who once observed that Eddie's overly polite manner was "downright un-American," a harsh assessment indeed in the post-McCarthy age.[173] Eddie also had a sarcastic streak aimed at those in authority. To Eddie, teacher's going to a board meeting meant that they were getting their just reward by being "chewed out" by their bosses.[174] Eddie was also the master of the backhanded compliment, throwing the symbols of middle-class sensibilities and pride back at Ward and June. For example, in "The Big Fish Count," Eddie told June that while it was nice that Wally could win a track race, he knew of few millionaires who ran the 220.[175] Not that Eddie emerged unscathed from his loose-cannon mouth. In "Eddie's Double Cross," Ward walked into the room to catch Eddie accusing Ward of collecting clothes for charity as part of a "phony tax dodge;" it took Wally's silent pleading—as well as great restraint

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[171] Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job."

[172] In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," Beaver indicates that Wally would be very upset if he turned out to be as sneaky as Eddie Haskell; in Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver says that if pulling mean tricks like Eddie Haskell does was part of growing up, Beaver preferred not to grow up.

[173] Ward comments on Eddie's guile in Connelly and Mosher, "New Neighbors," the first episode in which Eddie appears, and in Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic;" Ward's characterization of Eddie's politeness as being "downright un-American" is from Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl."

[174] In Connelly and Mosher (Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card," Eddie is pleased to think that his teachers are being called to task by the board of education; Eddie's comments on the teacher's in-service day is from Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor."

[175] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count."

on the part of Ward—to keep Ward from lashing out at Eddie.[176] Still, Eddie could manage to get away with a clever put-down.[177] In "Chuckie's New Shoes," Ward and June—upset with Beaver—hollered at Eddie as they left the house. Toward the episode's resolution, both Ward and June began to feel bad about their behavior toward Eddie and decided to apologize to him. After accepting their apology, Eddie said that he tried to make "allowances for people being the way they are," After Eddie left, Ward paused for a moment, realizing that Eddie had just insulted them.[178]

Eddie and trouble were no strangers—indeed, Eddie was the type of kid who had gotten in so much trouble, other Mayfield kids—including Wally and Beaver—came to him for godfather-like advice.[179] Eddie was a liar and a cheater, faking sick, cheating at school, lying to friends, or offering to cheat at contests. As Beaver said in "The Big Fish Count," "With a guy like Eddie around, it sure is hard to be honest." Indeed, contrary to Ward's teachings, Eddie argued that things like honesty, integrity and responsibility were for suckers destined to "get slaughtered" in the dog-eat-dog world (although, of course, Eddie was always depicted as the loser). In "Beaver's English Test," Eddie says that his

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[176] Connelly and Mosher, "Eddies Double Cross."

[177] Eddie takes a few jabs at the Cleavers from time to time. In Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Lifeguard," Eddie tells the Cleavers while Wally's involvement in athletics is fine, his father prefers that he develop normally; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," Eddie makes a similar comment when he catches Ward and June spying on Beaver; in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," Ward catches Eddie accusing him, behind his back, of getting a phony tax break on some donations to a rummage sale—in an interesting moment, Ward is ready to eviscerate Eddie, but is warned off by Wally who wants to spare the embarrassment of such a scene.

[178] Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes."

[179] Eddie serves as the Don of getting out of troublesome situations in Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window" and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver, the Sheepdog," in which Wally notes Eddie is the person to turn to when one wants to learn how to be a rat.

coach's lesson in sportsmanship represented a "wasted day."[180] To Eddie, a dirty trick made the results more fun.[181] Eddie was frequently trying to infect other Mayfield kids with his dishonesty, particularly Beaver, whom he often advised on how to be a sneak. When Wally balked at Eddie's attempts at corrupting his brother, Eddie justified it by saying he was merely trying to "wise" Beaver up to the ways of the world.[182]

Eddie refused to believe in the meritocracy touted by Wally and Ward, trusting, instead, that people achieved largely through influence and connections.[183] Like other Mayfield kids, including Beaver, Eddie felt that everyone operated as the result of some sort of angle. Eddie got involved in sports, for example, because practice got him out of class.[184] Eddie was also impatient for things to happen as a result of persistence and hard work. When Eddie learned that it took twenty years to become an admiral in "Beaver the

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[180] Eddie admits to faking sick in Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic;" Eddie admits he writes sloppily so teachers will be confused by his work and maybe give him the benefit of the doubt in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother;" likewise, in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," Eddie admits to faking book reports; in Ross, "Wally's Big Date," a girl recalls how Eddie lied about having his pocket picked to get out of paying for a soda; Eddie's helps Lumpy cheat in a contest in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," an episode in which dialogue reveals that Eddie once snuck into a record booth with a tape recorder to record records as opposed to paying for them; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Edward J. O'Connor), "Beaver's Team," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Eddie offers to cheat to help Beaver's team win; Eddie tells Beaver to be vague in his ad in the newspaper advertising a lost wallet Beaver had found in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds A Wallet;" Eddie is astounded that Wally is planning on telling the truth about an accident he had with his car in Conway and MacLane (story by William Gargaro, Jr.), "Wally's Car Accident," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Eddie refers to a lesson in sportsmanship as a waste of time.

[181] Eddie plays such tricks on Beaver in Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist."

[182] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds a Wallet."

[183] Eddie brags about connections with rich people as well as the importance of such connections for later in life Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers," Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl," and Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity;" Eddie notes that he nominated Wally for class president in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election" so he could have a friend in "city hall."

[184] Eddie assumed the only way Wally could get a 92 on an exam was to cheat in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test;" and in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," Eddie says that he goes out for sports so he can get out of classes.

Hero," he gave up his dream of going to Annapolis (a dream he could not have fulfilled even if he had tried). Eddie was the sort who felt he could get further ahead by dating the teacher's daughter or kissing up to the boss as opposed to studying or working hard.[185]

While Eddie ironically admonished Beaver for not having respect for his elders (referring, of course, to himself as Beaver's elder), Eddie had little respect for authorities or parents.[186] Indeed, Eddie saw himself as a leader in the generational conflict—mild as it was—against Mayfield elders. When Eddie once made the mistake of revealing information that got Wally in trouble with Ward and June, Eddie apologized, saying that it was unlike him to go "around telling the truth to grown-ups."[187] Eddie, like most Mayfield kids, including Wally and Beaver, felt that it was a kid's duty to watch out for parents, who were always looking to keep their kids under their thumb.[188] Parents, in Eddie's mind, were wardens, and living at home was like living in prison; Eddie could not wait until he turned eighteen so he could "go over the wall."[189] Eddie, like other

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[185] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, the Businessman," Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School;" the Annapolis comment is from Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero;" Eddie feels he will get a better grade in English by dating the Teacher's daughter in Connelly and Mosher (story by Lipscott and Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter."

[186] This is noted in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test" and in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, The Businessman."

[187] Eddie not only assures Beaver that his parents will reduce Beaver's punishment in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," but tells Beaver to hold on to his rights, which parents will try to take away if Beaver lets them; Eddie apologizes for Wally for accidentally giving away some information to Wally's parents in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl;" and Eddie typifies parents as the enemy in Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella."

[188] Eddie warns that parents have a way of slipping medicines to kids by putting it in their orange juice in Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor;" and in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," Eddie also says that parents keep their kids under their thumb by going shopping for clothes with them.

[189] Eddie refers to parental punishment as "solitary confinement" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America;" he refers to parents as "the Fuzz," in Connelly and Mosher (story by Lipscott and Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter;" going "over the wall" comment in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike."

Mayfield youths, saw parents as arbitrary and unfair, denying their kids fun and enjoyment just because they were able to do so. Such comments were often used to propel Beaver toward taking a stand against Ward. In "Beaver the Model" and "Beaver's Accordion," Eddie encouraged Beaver to get involved in a come-on-scheme that Ward had already nixed. At the same time, Eddie, having been in trouble himself, proved quite good at predicting how parents might react in a given situation. In "Beaver's Big Contest," when Beaver won a car, Eddie correctly predicted that Ward and June would take it away from him. Beaver, convinced that Eddie was just trying to make him feel bad, said that his parents would not do something like that, to which Eddie replied, "Parents can do anything they want. And they got laws to put you away if you squawk."[190] True to Eddies predication, Ward and June did have Beaver convert the car into cash for his college savings plan (which was posited as a positive move on the part of caring parents like the Cleavers).

Eddie was also wise to his legal rights, which he cited to protect himself from arbitrary parents and school authorities. [191] In "The Yard Birds," when Beaver and Wally had to stay home and clean up the yard, Eddie told Wally that he should inform Ward and June about the child labor laws. While Wally and Beaver would never consider bringing the law against their parents, one knew that Eddie was the type of kid who would.

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[190] Eddie tells Beaver that his dad does not want Beaver to become a model in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model" because Ward does not want to have a son who makes more money than Beaver does; Eddie argues a similar line to Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion;" Eddie says that Beaver's parents will not let him keep a trip to Hawaii that Beaver is hoping to win in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest"—as Eddie says, "Believe me, if anyone's gonna be saying aloha in this deal, it'll be your old man."

[191] In Ross (story by Enochs), "Wally's Big Date," Eddie charged that the school violated the law when they sponsored a name-exchange to arrange dates between students of two high schools; Eddie mentions child labor laws in Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds" and Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment;" and Eddie notes in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding School" that parents cannot legally throw a child out until he or she is 21.

Indeed, Eddie seemed quite isolated from his parents and had little understanding for the affective bonds that existed among the Cleavers.[192] In one episode, when June wondered what Eddie must be like at home, Ward responded, "Just be thankful you and I will never find out."[193]

Home, to Eddie, was a place where he always "shoved around."[194] Eddie had little respect for his father and was, in fact, suspicious of his family.[195] In "Voodoo Magic," a young Eddie proudly boasted that he never listened to his parents.[196] In a show about the importance of parenting and the idea of action following thought, some scripts tended to show that Eddie was not simply a bad seed, but the product of poor parenting, particularly that practiced by Eddie's father who, at times, seemed to be fit Wylie's definition the pop as moral slacker. Although Eddie Haskell's father was played by a variety of actors in a variety of ways, we learn, primarily through Eddie's words, that his father was, like Eddie, a wise-guy. According to Eddie, his father also eschewed the idea of a meritocracy, feeling that one bettered themselves by who they knew as opposed to what they knew. Eddie's father also felt there was no such thing as a dirty

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[192] Eddie tries to convince Wally that Ward is taking advantage of Wally by paying him too little to paint garbage cans in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job;" Eddie does not understand why Wally does the right thing by paying Beaver the same amount Chuckie's mother had paid Wally to take her son to get some new shoes in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes;" likewise, Eddie does not understand why Wally wants to help Beaver clean up a mess in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry." In the latter, Wally has to tell Eddie he is helping Beaver for selfish reasons before Eddie will go along with Wally.

[193] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count."

[194] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night."

[195] Eddie accused his father of cheating at monopoly in Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser;" Wally says that Eddie is suspicious of his own parents in Blau, Connelly and MacLane, "Community Chest;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," Wally notes that Eddie maintains his wise-guy image by acting like he does not like his father.

[196] Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic."

trick when it came to business.[197] Unlike Ward, Eddie's father was depicted as getting upset at the mere sight of his son, and Eddie, perhaps having picked up on that attitude, often felt that his father was trying to get rid of him.[198] Mr. Haskell also failed by indulging Eddie's desires, whether it was giving into Eddie's fear that Beaver had once put a voodoo curse on Eddie to allowing Eddie to have a credit card, spend the summer on a fishing boat in Alaska, quit school, or move out on his own.[199] Eddie's parents were also portrayed as having pampered Eddie, with examples of his father and mother noting that Eddie was a very "sensitive" child.[200] While viewers only had Eddie's word about many of his fathers actions, Ward had no doubt that the picture Eddie painted of his father was correct. In "Beaver and Ivanhoe," when Eddie revealed that his father said he would "kill him dead" if he caught him taking any more of his father's items from the

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[197]There are numerous examples of or allusions to Eddie's father's negative examples: from Connelly, Mosher, Keith Fowler and Paul Norman (story by Fowler and Norman), "Wally's Present," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), in which Eddie says that his father says one cannot find nice things in Mayfield, to the example Mr. Haskell set by picking up houses cheaply by looking for couples going through a divorce, as noted in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid;" Eddie's father, in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," encouraged Eddie to learn tennis so that Eddie would meet rich people; likewise, in Baer, "Wally's New Suit," Eddie notes that his father has said it is important to listen to "good music" even if one does not like it;" Eddie's father said Eddie should try to meet rich people in Conway and MacLane, "Untogetherness," and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl" Eddie's says his father told him that it did not pay to hang around with people who were not rich; perhaps the most damning example against Mr. Haskell comes from Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," when Eddie notes that his father said that "nothing's a dirty trick if it's funny enough."

[198] Eddie's father could be quite mean to Eddie, getting upset at the sight of him in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy,", wishing he was out of his "hair" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," or calling him a creep in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model;" as noted before, Eddie said, Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding School," that summer camp was a way for his father to get rid of him.

[199]Mr. Haskell indulges Eddies irrational fear in Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic;" other aspects of indulging behavior on the part of Mr. Haskell is seen in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," and Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska."

[200] Both Mr. and Mrs. Haskell see Eddie as being quite sensitive in Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large;" Mr. Haskell notes that Eddie is timid in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night," and Mrs. Haskell refers to Eddie as sensitive in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska" (an assessment which Mr. Haskell disagrees with in that episode).

attic and selling them, June asked Ward if he felt that Eddie's really said such things. Ward quickly replied, "Knowing Eddie? Yes![201]

And the Cleavers did know Eddie. As Wally said in "A Night in the Woods," "Everybody's wise to Eddie except Eddie." As June replied, "You know, in a way that's very sad."[202] Sad, perhaps, but not exactly true, for even Eddie realized, on occasion, that he stood outside the desired societal norm, as least as it was envisioned by the series. In "Eddie the Businessman," after Eddie unwittingly got involved in a theft ring at the local diary where Ward had gotten him and Wally jobs, Eddies told Wally, "Eddie: Will you tell your father for me that I'm a big, stupid dope?" Without missing a beat, Wally replied, "Don't worry about it, Eddie. I think he's kinda suspected it for years."[203]

While Eddie's parents seemed to shoulder part of the blame for Eddie's behavior, episodes depicted Eddie as suffering from a lack of self-esteem which he compensated for by being a wise-guy. As viewers had learned in "Beaver's Doll Buggy," Eddie had some psychological reasons to explain his behavior as well, having been sent to kindergarten with a home permanent and being made fun of for it.[204] Unable to easily win attention on his won merit, Eddie revealed in "One of the Boys," that, unlike Wally, he had to make a "make a noise like a brass band or no one even notices me."[205] Such

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[201] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Ivanhoe."

[202] Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods."

[203] Eddie acknowledges his own worst faults in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, the Businessman," Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," and Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys."

[204]Eddie talks about the importance of making other people feel creepy in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers" and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Doll Buggy;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Sheepdog," Eddie notes that he owes his success to "the fine art of the insult."

[205] Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys."

insights into Eddie's character—efforts to understand why he acted the way he did—were offered even in some of the earliest episodes. In "Eddie's Girl," for example, Eddie fell in love with a girl who was more interested in Wally. Eddie accused Wally of stealing his girl and ended their friendship. Later, after Eddie realized how rashly he had acted, Eddie asked Beaver how he might patch things up with Wally. Beaver, surprised by Eddie's sincerity, asked Eddie why he did what he did, to which Eddie replied, "Sometimes a guy likes to be like a big-shot."[206] Viewers also saw Eddie's insecurities and fears in "Eddie Spends the Night," in which Eddie was revealed to be quite scared to spend the night alone at his house. When Beaver discovered this fear, he pressed Eddie to explain why he was so afraid of being by himself, to which Eddie responded, it is "not good in life for a guy to act like a big shot to himself."[207]

Eddie's also had a kinder, gentler side, which appeared in "The Spot Removers." When Eddie found out that Beaver had spilled ink all over the suit Wally was planning to wear for an upcoming dance, Eddie convinced Wally to wear something else. While Beaver wanted to thank Eddie for his kindness, Ward cautioned Beaver against doing so, saying that "It's part of Eddies being a character not to let people know that he ever does anything nice."[208]

With Eddie causing so much trouble, why did Wally tolerate him? The answer was simple—they were best friends.[209] And, as his friend, Wally often worried about

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[206] Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl."

[207] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night."

[208] Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers."

[209] Wally notes the irony of Eddie's behavior and the fact that they are friends in Tibbles, "Beaver and Chuey," Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding School," Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night," and Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants."

what it would take to get Eddie to come to his senses and follow the straight and narrow path. As Ward observed in "Wally's Test," Eddie would only realize his faults once he got to the point where he could no longer stand such behavior himself. Ever the optimist, Ward felt that with the right guidance and understanding, even Eddie could one day reform.[210] And, indeed, Eddie was capable of some change—at least, as much change as the sitcom format, which requires a return to the status quo at then end of each episode, could allow. In "Voodoo Magic," for example, while Eddie once bragged about avoiding his parents advice, by episode's end he decided, on his own, to see a movie that his parents would approve of. In "Wally's Test," after Eddie tried to frame Wally for cheating on an exam, Eddie eventually apologized to Wally for what he had done.[211]

As Eddie drew closer to adulthood, his character served as a negative example for the sort of temptations that may have existed for older viewers. In the last few years of the series, Eddie moved out of his house, dropped out of school, and enlisted in the merchant marine. Because none of these were endorsed as appropriate behavior, of course, Eddie, with Wally's help, moved back home, dropped back in, and remained on dry land.[212] While Eddie may have been just as bad as TV would allow, and while he certainly did not fit the pattern of troubled juvenile delinquent that one could find in the real world (Eddie never drag-raced, smoked pot, drank, or knowingly violated any laws), his character was not without effect. Whether or not he was consciously set up as the

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[210]June forgives Eddie for lying in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," and Ward forgives Eddie for the trouble Eddie caused with Ward's old fraternity in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity."

[211] At the end of Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic," Eddie, on his own, decides that he will go see a children's movie because he thinks that is what his parents would like; and, after making it look like Wally had cheated in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test," Eddie apologizes.

[212] Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School" and Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large."

negative example that supported Wally's appropriate choices, by the mid-1960s, the scheming, beguiling Eddie would emerge as a folk hero, the only supposedly "real" character to emerge from the seemingly banal, milk-and-cookies Mayfield. As Cameron Crowe, director of the film *Almost Famous* and baby-boomer who grew up watching sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver*, observed in a 2002 issue of *TV Guide*, "*Leave it to Beaver* was the godfather of modern youth comedy.

> Every character is a gem, odd and earnest and completely hilarious in a very real way. But the true king of teenage characters is Eddie Haskell. There is not a word or a mannerism or a breath he takes that doesn't send me into spasms of deep love and appreciation. He is the most genuinely two-faced character in teenage TV history."[213]

Among the questions asked of the seris, no one has yet explored how the underside of Mayfield life and its scheming characters, Eddie Haskell being the most important, might have influenced those real-life suburban baby boomers who grew to despise—although never fully reject—the troubled world their parents and grandparents had left them. Just because a script holds a character up as a negative example does not mean that the lesson is learned by each viewer. People take from the text what they want, and while it is nearly impossible to recapture how contemporary audiences viewed these characters, the episodic evidence shows that they were confronted by images of problems as well as perfection. How many kids, for example, were inspired by Beaver standing up to his father and wearing his sweater to the football awards banquet? How many kids identified with Eddie Haskell when he and Lumpy pulled a trick on Beaver to punish his good grade in citizenship? How many kids became wise to the foibles of adult life by viewing

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[213] "TV We'll Always Remember," *TV Guide*, 6 April 2002, 32.

such characters as the lady who forgot Beaver's reward or the businessman who cheated at golf?

Thus, in the process of carving out characteristics of youth, *Leave it to Beaver* writers and producers painted a portrait of youth whose perceptions of the adult world shatter the nostalgic myth of Mayfield perfection. Whether the writers played these characters for lessons or for laughs, Mayfield kids were depicted as being frightened by the very same parents to whom they were told to turn. Mayfield kids were taught to do the right thing in the face of friends and adults who failed to act accordingly. While time has softened and, in many ways, obliterated these more problematic images of 1950s life conjured by the series writers, the images remain available in the re-runs that persist through this day.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
LEAVE IT TO BEAVER AND POPULAR CULTURE

During a promotional trip to New York City in 1958, sometime after the first season of *Leave it to Beaver*, Joe Connelly, along with one of his sons and Jerry Mathers, visited the zoo. As Mathers and the Connelly group walked through the grounds, they noticed a number of kids, perhaps as many as 200, waving to Mathers and screaming out Beaver's name. Years later Connelly would recall that it was at that moment that he understood the he had created a popular show which appealed to children. "I knew the show was successful," Connelly recalled, "but I had no idea what an impact it had on people until that day." Connelly walked away from that afternoon thinking that the series must, indeed, be a very good show. [1]

While those two hundred kids at the zoo—along with millions of others at home—would soon make Mathers and his fellow child actors famous, the actors themselves were busy portraying the very same sort of average kids who, as will be discussed in this chapter, were enmeshed in American consumer and popular culture. Indeed, for a show that overtly endorsed the standard line of thrift and wise-spending, the Cleaver kids and their Mayfield fellows were portrayed as being almost mesmerized by material goods. While viewers rarely saw the Cleaver kids sit and watch TV, their dialogue and references over a variety of episodes showed that they were as media savvy as the kids in the audience, influenced by television, movies, sports heroes, and, to a

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[1] Barry Koltnow, in "Older and Wiser," *Orange County Register*, Friday, August 22, 1997, writes, "Joe Connelly, who created the series with partner Bob Mosher in 1957 and modeled the Beaver character after his own son, recently turned 80 and admits that even he was surprised by the show's success. "'I remember after the first season taking Jerry Mathers (as the Beaver) and my son to the zoo,' Connelly said. "There must have been 200 kids at the zoo screaming out Beaver's name as we walked by. I was shocked. My first thought was, 'Hey, this must be a really good show.'""

lesser extent, rock 'n' roll music. Thus, *Leave it to Beaver*, like many affective family sitcoms of its day, became both a product of and comment upon its contemporary material and visual culture. By placing the Mayfield kids at the center of material culture, the series both followed and led popular culture, making for a sometimes confusing, always interesting comment on the commercial youth culture.

Popular Culture in *Leave it to Beaver*

As historian Grace Palladino noted in her historical treatment of American teenagers, the rise of an industry that catered to the youth market helped shape the style and culture of post-World War II American youth.[2] The rise of youth culture began much earlier than the 1950s; indeed, youth have always been a specialized target of mass-marketed fun, from early films to amusement parks to dance halls.[3] By the 1920s, the Lynds, in their discussion of Middletown, considered film as one of the cultural artifacts which engaged and changed the nature of American youth and life.[4] But it was the demographic reality of the baby boom, along with an unprecedented level of affluence enjoyed by parents who, in their own youth had withstood material privation, that gave rise to the flowering of a youth market that coincided with the advent of America's greatest sales tool—television.

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[2] Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 98

[3] For a discussion of early industrial era teenage girl rebellion and early urban youth culture, see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 185-191.

[4] See the Robert S. and Helen Merrel Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929; reprint, San Diego: Harvest, 1957, for their chapter on "Inventions Re-making Leisure," 251-71, with specific discussion of motion pictures, 263-68.

On the dawn of the 1960s, the youth market was so huge, a June 1958 *Life* cover story referred to it as a built-in "recession remedy." Profit was not only coming from toys and merchandising, but an overall expenditure built around the baby boom. According to the article, each American child would consume more than $800 worth of products in its first year of life. Beyond that were other expenses related to the baby boom, including 2.5 billion being spent on new schools, $50-million annually in diaper services, and $5-million in baby shoe bronzing. One of the largest marketing categories was toys, which, by 1958, had become a $1.25 billion dollar industry. In the wake of Sputnik, consumers were spending some $60-million alone, according to the Toy Guidance Counsel, on space and science-based toys in 1958.[5] Character based toys, to outfit and equip "small fry to perform like their TV heroes," had likewise, accounted for $75-million in toy industry sales.[6] Television was a most effective marketer to children.[7] As media historian Susan Douglas, commenting on her own childhood, observed, such appeals were not lost on the youth market, who began to see themselves as a force that needed to be reckoned with.[8]

The people who really needed to reckon with this force, of course, were the parents who earned the money that was coming to be spent more and more by their

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[5] "Rocketing Births: Business Bonanza," *Life*, June 16, 1958, 83-7.

[6] Ibid., 85.

[7] According to Stephanie Coontz, *Way We Never Were, American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), it was during the 1950s that the youth market was first produced, then institutionalized into the youth culture. "It was through such innocuous shows as 'Howdy Doody' and 'The Disney Hour' that advertisers first discovered the riches to be gained by bypassing parents and appealing directly to youth" (38); later, Coontz writes that "it was the marketing strategist of the 1950s, not the 'permissive' child-care ideologies or political subversives of the 1960s, who first attempted to bypass parental authority and 'pander' to American youth" (171).

[8] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are, Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 24-25. (in text quote is page 24, excerpt is 25)

children. This heightened sense of consumerism certainly applied to the fictional children of Mayfield. For a show that so often preached fiscal conservatism, material goods were of great importance to Mayfield youth. Indeed, as Liebman observed in her discussion of the family sitcom, *Leave it to Beaver* was more obsessed with materialism than any other sitcom of its time.[9] Wally was well aware of the importance material goods held. In "The Credit Card," Wally complained to Ward that Eddie, who had his own dinner jacket, his own room, and his own phone, was seemingly ahead of Wally in everything. When Ward asked if Eddie was ahead of Wally in terms of grades, Wally said no—only in the things that "count."[10] While this line expressed a sense of dismay toward materialism as demonstrated daily in the modern world, nearly every episode of *Leave it to Beaver* made some mention of material items. From movie projectors to plastic skulls to transistor radios and FM car radios, Mayfield kids enjoyed their material goods.[11] The process of getting something new was so wonderfully compelling; a friend's parent's purchase of a new car was an event to be lived by all the neighborhood

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[9] See Nina C. Liebman, *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995, in which she writes that, "Of all the programs studies here, Leave it to Beaver is the most overwhelmingly concerned with commodity fetishism" (238).

[10] Dick Conway and Roland MacLane, "The Credit Card," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[11] in Mel Diamond and Ben Gersham, "Perfume Salesman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Wally and Beaver sell perfume to earn a movie projector; in Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher, "Last Day of School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver plays with a plastic skull; in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally's friend Scott is considered cool because he has racing slicks on the back of his car; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver gets a transistor radio as a prize for appearing on a teen panel show; in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Eddie is boasting that he will be the first kid in school to have FM radio in his car; in George Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Says Goodbye," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally and his friend Tuey experiment with "stereophonic sound;" in Connelly, Mosher, Gwen Gielgud, "One of the Boys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), the elite boys in the Barons club ride expensive sports cars; and in Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver asks if he can have motorcycle.

kids.[12] Mayfield kids could be taken in by advertisers as well, often buying items based on inflated claims, smooth sales pitches, or on the power of brand names.[13] Birthdays and other milestones, like grammar school and high school graduation, were frequently measured in terms of the sort of "loot" they would bring, and illness could always be soothed by some sort of present designed to lift the sickroom doldrums. Gifts were highly valued by Mayfield kids; as noted in chapter four, when Beaver leaned that his friend whose parents were divorced received two sets of gifts for birthdays and holidays, Beaver spent the better part of an episode trying to urge Ward and June to divorce.[14]

There was not just a concern with items, but an obsession with the price of those items, from $52.98 bikes to $16.98 telescopes. Mayfield kids with tight budgets and tight

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[12] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Henry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally makes a big deal of going to see Tuey Anderson father's new car, and in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Penny makes brags about her mother coming to pick her up at the school in their families new car.

[13] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver wins an English racing bike with "lifetime guarantee;" in Connelly, Mosher, Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Gilbert brags about having a stopwatch made by "real Germans;" in Bob Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Eddie brags about his gold-plated razor packaged in a genuine plastic case; Beaver wins a "solid gold plastic" trophy in Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); and in Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Richard is jealous of Beaver's "chromium plated" ice skates; Wally refers to the watch June got him in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), as the type he saw running under water on television; a reference is made to a drink called "Honolulu Punch," which is similar to Hawaiian Punch, in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Andy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); Eddie refers to Beaver as "Duncan Hines" in the Conway and MacLane, "Party Spoiler," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); and Ward mentions the Yellow Pages in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[14] Beaver expects great gifts when he is scheduled to get his tonsils out in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); in Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Wally gets gifts from his friends and from Ward for being sick, Beaver fakes sick in order to get similar treatment; likewise, in Arthur Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when Beaver learns that his friend gets two set of presents from his divorced parents, Beaver tries to get his mom and dad to get a divorce; in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," one of Beaver's friend's mentions that Beaver is supposed to bring a gift to his birthday party; and Beaver thinks about all the "loot" Wally will get for his graduation in Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

parents figured their costs down to the penny, including sales tax.[15] Not that Wally and Beaver spent their money frivolously. As Liebman argued, domestic sitcoms, *Leave it to Beaver* included, espoused a sense of a "good" and "bad" consumerism,"[16] noting that:

> while the implicit reinforcement of consumerism is encouraged by the materially loaded-down television homes, the explicit message is more complicated, rendering consumer products as desirable but potentially dangerous, thereby encouraging *thoughtful* rather than impulsive buying.[17]

Throughout the series, Ward encouraged his boys to be thrifty, to spend wisely, and to avoid credit problems.[18] While Ward could indulge his children, he usually did not just hand money over, but, instead, tried to make his boys earn at least a part of it. [19]

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[15] The cost of items is mentioned in numerous episodes, including a $52.98 bike in Fran van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route, " *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); a $6.50 bow and arrow set in Connelly and Mosher, Keith Fowler and Norman Paul (story by Fowler and Paul), "Wally's Present," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); a hunting jacket for Ward that costs $45.12 with tax in Phil Leslie, "The Bank Account," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); a $16.98 telecope in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils;" a $2.30 magic set in Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor;" a $12.95 Alaskan sweater in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); a $19.00 letterman sweater in Connelly and Mosher, "School Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); a $7.50 orchid for Wally's date in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); a $23.76 with tax jacket for Beaver in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); a $15.00 vest for Eddie in Conway and MacLane, "Credit Card;" a $3.75 sweatshirt for Beaver in Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); 69-cents for hair tonic for Wally in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes Into Business," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); $40.00 for a used surfboard in Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys;" a $42.00 sports coat in Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); a $40.00 imported jacket for Eddie in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); a $45 jacket, $16.50 pair of pants, and $23.75 pair of leather shoes for Eddie in Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); a $9.38 gas powered model, with tax, for Beaver in Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); and a $9.35 long-distance phone call in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[17] Liebman, 238-39.

[18] Ward encourages his boys to save their money in Leslie, "The Bank Account;" Ward is upset that Wally wants to spend seven dollars on a orchid for a date in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Orchid;" in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," Ward argues that a father cannot just give their child credit (as Eddie Haskell's father had done)—credit is something one earns.

[19] Ward encourages the boys to work to make their own money in van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route;" likewise, Ward tells Beaver he has to earn half the money for a canoe Beaver wants in Lou Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and tells Wally that he needs

Such lessons helped Mayfield kids grow into responsible consumers. As Liebman observed, consumerism in domestic sitcoms became an expression of maturity—of being able to make the right choices.[20] This was acknowledged in several episodes of *Leave it to Beaver*. When Beaver convinced Ward and June to let him buy his own ice skates, June noted that buying things for one's self was a "real sign of maturity and growing up."[21] While credit was frowned upon by Ward, many kids saw on-time payments as a right of passage into the adult world.[22] When Eddie convinced his father to help him gain credit in "The Credit Card," Eddie likened his card to "having a key to Fort Knox," bragging to Wally that he had "arrived."[23] When Beaver got into credit trouble in "Beaver Joins a Record Club," Ward was there to help Beaver, but not until he imparted a lesson on how one should never spend what they do not have (which seems more a holdover of the Depression-era experience than the post-war's credo of "buy now, pay later").[24]

Mayfield kids were not just consumers of material goods, but of popular culture as well. As noted above, while there are very few scenes of the Cleavers or their friends sitting down and watching television, the number of references to actual television shows, showed that Mayfield children were just as dependent on it. This reliance on popular

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to earn the money for a baseball uniform in Gifford Goldsmith, "Water Anyone," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); Ward is upset about being asked to hand money over to Beaver in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959) and in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates;" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," Ward is against Beaver making an impulse purchase.

[20] Liebman, 238

[21] Hoffmann, "Beaver's Ice Skates."

[22] Paladino, 98.

[23] Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card."

[24] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963)

culture reflected a reality for baby boom children. Andrew Edelstein, in his recollection of 1960s pop culture, recalled that:

> Growing up in an affluent suburb, sheltered from the 'real' world, made for an adolescence suffused with pop culture. At the time, I probably wasn't aware of the term or its sociological implications. Because of the key role it played in my day-to-day existence, pop culture just seemed to be a natural aspect of growing up.[25]

Indeed, TV—which accounted for much of the baby boom's popular culture—had become a central part of American family life. One respondent to the 1957 Steiner survey of TV viewing habits said "I feel like someone is dead" when the family television is out of service. Another respondent noted on how kids in the family insisted that a broken TV set be fixed quickly.[26] Parents, who began to use television to keep their kids "quietly preoccupied" worried that their kids would be getting into all sorts of trouble if TV were to suddenly vanish.[27] Mayfield kids also felt the importance of TV, which had made life without television unthinkable (even though Wally was depicted in two episodes as recalling a time without TV).[28] Indeed, life without television could prove as traumatic for the Cleavers as it was for the respondents to the 1957 Steiner survey. In one episode, Connelly—who rarely allowed his children to watch

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[25] Andrew J. Edelstein, *The Pop Sixties: A Personal and Irreverent Guide* (New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985), x.

[26] Gary Steiner, *The People Look at Television: A Study of Audience Attitudes*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 25.

[27] Ibid., 86.

[28] According to Beaver in Tibbles, "The Haunted House," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally could remember back to a time before television, and, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally notes that stories such as "Damon and Pithias" arose out of a pre-television era's need for interesting stories.

television[29]—and Mosher commented on the sacred nature of television, by having Beaver prove the veracity of one of his statements by crossing his heart and hoping to "never see television again."[30] Television proved such a powerful pull on Mayfield children, parents could use it as both reward and punishment. When Eddie moved out on his own, the freedom Beaver envied most was Eddie's control over his own TV viewing.[31]

Mayfield kids were well aware of the television programs of their time, from dramas, political panel shows, comedies, westerns, children's programs, and old horror movies run on TV (as an ABC series, *Leave it to Beaver* episodes tended to mention ABC programming more than that of other networks).[32] Westerns, the most popular

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[29] Karen C. Donovan, interview with author, 4 February, 2001

[30] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[31] Benji Bellamy's mother threatens to take TV away from her son for a week in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally notes that Beaver's current problem may result in him being restricted from television for "six months;" The boys think that spending the weekend without TV would be a horrible fate in Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); the boys also note they will miss TV when they go camping in Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); the importance of determining what one watches is noted in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), in which Beaver is excited to be able to pick what show to watch, and in Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School."

[32] Dramatic shows mentioned in the series include *West Point* in Connelly and Mosher (story by Bob Ross), "The Visiting Aunts," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); a reference to Lassie is in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); a reference to the number of lawyer-based series on TV appears in William Schilder, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Secret Life," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); a reference to the series in which Richard Boone played a doctor is in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils;" a reference to Elliot Ness is made in Ross (story by Kenneth Enochs), "Wally's Big Date,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), and references to *The Untouchables* series appear in Allan Manings, "The Clothing Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), and Conway and MacLane, "All Night Party;" *77 Sunset Strip* is referred to in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); the *Twilight Zone* is referenced in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver on TV;" *Perry Mason* is referenced in Manings, "The Clothing Drive;" *Route 66* is referenced in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963) and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV." *Peter Gunn* is referenced in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); a reference to Renfrew of the Mounties is in Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); a reference to *Ben Casey* is in Connelly and Mosher (story by David Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963) and a reference to *Men of Annapolis* is in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the

programs of the day were of particular prominence in the series. In "Wally's Practical Joke," when June noted that Beaver went to see the film *How the West was Won*, Ward said "It hardly seems necessary. They've been watching television for ten years, they already know how the west was won."[33] Mayfield kids were also well aware of popular stars from the various shows, as well, including heartthrob Kookie Burns from *77 Sunset Strip*, as well as Efrem Zimbelest, Jerry Lewis, and Mitch Miller.[34]

Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962) and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961). Political panel shows are noted in Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," with specific mention of the participants arguing all the time, as well as in Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962). There is also a reference to a fictional, local panel show, *Teen Forum*, on which Beaver appears in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV." *Mchale's Navy* is mentioned in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *I'm Dickens, He's Fenster* is referred to in Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," and *Dobie Gillis* is mentioned in Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys." The most common children's show reference was to *Captain Kangaroo*, which appears in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckies New Shoes," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963) and Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); the latter also has a reference to *Bozo the Clown*. There is a reference to "Crusader Rabbit" in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket," to *The Mickey Mouse Club* in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," and to *Huckleberry Hound* in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962). Monster and horror shows are noted on Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV" and Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); talk about TV's use of old movies in Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[33] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Ward also speaks to the ubiquity of westerns in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons;" a mention of Wyatt Earp appears on Theodore and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver notes that it is more fun to watch television programs about Indians than it is to read about them in the book *The Last of the Mohicans*; *Wagon Train* is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Landers Finace," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); when Wally tells Beaver, in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckie's New Shoes," that playing cowboys and Indians is "kid's stuff," Beaver asks why there are they so many grown-ups doing the same thing on television; Beaver plays cowboys in his room in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Connelly and Mosher, "Larry Hides Out," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and references are made to *Davy Crockett* and *Daniel Boone* in Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods;" Larry Mondello mentions *The Lone Ranger* in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize."

[34] The *77 Sunset Strip* character Kookie, played by Ed Byrnes, was voted 86th in "The 100 Most Memorable Moments in TV History," in *TV Guide* June 29, 1996. "Kookie's hepcat phrases, like 'the ginchiest' (the greatest) or 'piling up the Z's' (sleeping), were adopted by teenagers everywhere, and his landmark gesture—sliding his comb sensuously through his pomaded pompadour—spawned the hit song 'Kookie, Kookie, Lend Me Your Comb;'" Kookie was specifically mentioned in "Larry Hides Out," in which an insert shot shows that Larry's sister has a picture of him tacked to her bedroom vanity mirror.

More importantly, television had become for Mayfield children—like their real-world counterparts—a short-hand reference to life situations. Thus, racy situations in one's home or school life could be likened to soap operas or scenes from *77 Sunset Strip*. When Wally got into trouble because of Eddie and Lumpy, Beaver hoped that one of the two would turn themselves in just as Beaver had just seen in an episode of *Men of Annapolis*. When Wally told June about the high school's plan for an all-night graduation party, June likened it to something out of *The Untouchables*.[35] When Wally's girlfriend started going out with a different boy, Beaver said the situation was "like one

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[34] In Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity, *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert notes that his sister has a crush on Efrem Zimbalist Jr.; the reference to Jerry Lewis is from Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Composition," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); the reference to Mitch Miller is from Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); and the reference to Shirley Temple being a grown up lady on television is from Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[35] In Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), June says to Ward, "As they say in the soap operas, Darling, there's something you should know;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally likens the Cleaver home to *77 Sunset Strip*; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Model," when Beaver is threatened with legal action from a modeling agency, Wally says it is too bad that Beaver is not old enough to hire a lawyer and fight the company "like they do on television;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), while Beaver is worried someone might rob the class's cookie money that he and Larry have been trusted with, Wally notes that on TV people need to have at least $200 before a robber will tryu to take; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," Beaver begins to think, after his friends failed to see him on a TV show he had just taped, that he may have fallen into *The Twilight Zone*; in Manings, "The Clothing Drive," Wally likens June's dramatic appeal to Ward to something out of *Perry Mason*; in the same episode, Beaver likens Ward's old Tuxedo to a gangster suit he has saw in *The Untouchables*; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Good Deed," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Gilbert asks a homeless man if he has ever been to Chicago, where they have *The Untouchables*; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," Beaver assures Wally that Lumpy and Eddie will confess their role in the incident that got Wally suspended from the tract team, as he saw a similar thing happen in the series *Men of Annapolis*; in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," Eddie describes Alaska as a place that the guys from *Route 66* have not even been to yet; June likens the idea of an all night graduation party in Conway and MacLane, "All Night Party" to something that would take place in an episode of *The Untouchables*; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," Beaver names his per rat "Peter Gunn;" in Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpy's" Beaver, when asked to go to his room, says that such a punishment is similar to parents turning the TV set off when the action begins to get "good;" in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble," Eddie likens a lengthy discussion to that of a panel discussion; and, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when Ward begins to tell a moral lesson through the story of the fox, the bear, and the quicksand, Beaver wonders if Ward is referring to a cartoon.

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of those old Mickey Rooney pictures on TV."[36] When Beaver failed to come home on time after appearing on a teen panel show, Wally joked that Beaver, having tasted fame, may have taken off for Hollywood and started riding around in a sports car on *Route 66*.[37]

Mayfield kids and their actions were sometimes likened to those of popular TV stars, from Lloyd Bridges to Huntley and Brinkley to fictional characters like Ben Casey.[38] When Beaver got an offer to purchase an accordion, Beaver began to dream of the possibility of becoming famous and appearing on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.[39] Television also tended to make its own reality. When Wally talked with a policeman on the phone in "Mistaken Identity," Beaver asked Wally how could Wally be sure it was an actual police officer. As Wally said, "I've seen enough television to know what a real policeman sounds like."[40]

For as new as television was, Mayfield kids were depicted as wise to its commercialism. In "Beaver Plays Hooky," Wally described a local kiddy show as one which "shows those cowboy pictures between commercials." In "Wally Stay at Lumpy's," Gilbert talked about a commercial in which animated little characters wreck a

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[36] Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache."

[37] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV."

[38] in Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally likens Lumpy, who is planning on joining the merchant marines, to Lloyd Bridges; in Ross, "Brother versus Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally likens sophisticated/intellectual talk to Huntley and Brinkley; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," Wally worries that Beaver, appearing on a teen panel show, will try to be funny like author Bennet Serf; in Theodore and Mathilde Ferr, "The Silent Treatment," Junes says that the mother of two boys has to have the medical skills of a Ben Casey.

[39] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[40] Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity."

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person's stomach.[41] Beaver and his friends were aware of the idealistic limits of the medium, in which bad guys were always punished and that the hero never died. In "The Garage Painters," for example, Wally assured Beaver that Tom Sawyer would survive in the end of the story because the book had his name on it; "Guess it's like Wyatt Earp on television," observed Beaver. "If he was gonna lose, I guess they'd call it something else."[42] Mayfield youth were also aware of the stock sort of TV clichés, such as busting down doors.[43] Sometimes media myths died hard, as evidenced by Beaver's admission that he was quite saddened to find out that there were, in actuality, four Lassies.[44]

The series writers also took their fair amount of shots at the medium which provided their living. In "Beaver's Monkey," June tells Ward that Beaver's monkey Stanley had spent the day watching television, to which Ward replies, "I think that

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[41] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Play's Hooky," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959). This episode shows the star of a local kids show who, much like Buffalo Bob from *Howdy Doody*, shamelessly hawks a cereal known as "Chocolate Rockets." Interestingly enough, when Beaver and Larry try some of the cereal, they both hate it; in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), when Beaver sees Wally's sophisticated love interest drinking and smoking in a bar, Beaver likens the scene to a television commercial; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally Stays at Lumpys," Gilbert talks about a commercial which includes "funny little guys who wreck your stomach if you don't take the stuff that fizzes;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Larry recognizes a character in a movie he is watching as someone who he saw in a television commercial; and in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Kite Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert tries to prove that his father, who knows about electricity, is smart by tying it to a contemporary commercial, saying that "on television only the smartest looking announcers are allowed to tell you about it."

[42] Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters."

[43] When Beaver locks himself in the bathroom in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," Ward asks if he is going to bust the door down like they do on TV; Wally also makes as reference to police kicking in doors on TV in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[44] In Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie Spends the Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver notes that a bad guy on TV never does anything nice unless he is going to die; admiring the shadows that a pot-belly stove in a cabin in the woods makes on the wall in Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver says that, unlike TV, one never know how the shadows will turn out; Beaver notes the existence of four Lassies in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction."

medium has finally found its audience."[45] TV was also viewed as changing and degrading the culture, promoting bad music and loose standards for children.[46] TV was said to bring out the worst in people, causing them to act foolishly on camera, as crowds at televised football games had started doing.[47] Mayfield parents and kids were also aware of the gratuitous violence that had come to dominate TV (ABC's *The Untouchables* was a frequent target of such complaints).[48] In "Mistaken Identity," Ward complained that modern parents had little control over their children, something June blamed on television.[49]

Movies were just as important as television to Mayfield kids. As with television shows, there were specific mentions of popular movies as well as a fascination with movie stars—even an unknown "B" movie actor, as noted in one episode, could draw a

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[45] Tibbles, "Beaver's Monkey," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[46] In Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils" the *Wyatt Earp* theme song was likened to moaning; in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Wally's Dream Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), when Ward and June hear "good" music coming out of the den, June wonders if it is coming from the TV set, to which Ward replies television is only allowed to play good music on Sundays; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," Wally likens game show participants to people who "get up and make fools of themselves;" in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Competition," Beaver is seen watching a rather risqué, for its time, tell-all interview; when June worries that Wally's new hair style, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), may lead him to wearing leather jackets and motorcycle boots, Ward says that June has been watching "too many of those live television shows."

[47] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV."

[48] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Larry notes that there are almost as many killings in stories from Sunday school as there are on television; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Alan Lipscott and Bob Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver refers to Saturday night TV as being good because it has the highest number of people getting killed; in Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Helper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), when June decides not to go see a suspense movie with Ward, he responds that he and June will "jstay home tonight and watch people kill each other on television."

[49] Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity."

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crowd of Mayfield kids to a supermarket opening.[50] Not that famous stars did not carry a certain amount of weight in Mayfield, whose inhabitants came to idolize such contemporary actors as Burt Lancaster, Tuesday Weld—mentioned more frequently than any other TV or movie personality in the series—Sandra Dee, Tony Curtis, Bobby Darrin, and Jerry Mathers' personal favorite Rin Tin Tin.[51] Just as they had done with TV characters, Mayfield kids and adults likened one another to having looks or actions similar to such stars as Tab Hunter, Tony Curtis, Sal Mineo, Burt Lancaster, Cary Grant, Rock Hudson, the Gabor sisters, Doris Day, Caesar Romero, Peter Lawford, and Marlon Brando[52]

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[50] The film *Spartacus* is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher (story by Lipscott and Fisher), "Teacher's Daughter;" the movie *West Side Story* is mentioned in Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater;" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," Beaver refers to the Alamo as the place where John Wayne became a great hero; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," Ward notes how contemporary, $20-million epic films last four hours and make one feel unpatriotic if they walk out on them.

[51] Various stars are mentioned in a variety of episodes, including Burt Lancaster in Connelly, Mosher, Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert;" Adolph Monjue in Connelly and Mosher, "School Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Tuesday Weld in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit," Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods;" Tony Curtis in Ross, "Brother versus Brother" and Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit;" Bobby Darrin in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962) and Connelly and Mosher (story by Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver," the latter of which also includes a reference to Sandra Dee; Sal Mineo's character's death in *Rebel without a Cause* is referred to in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); and a vague reference to famous movie dogs like Lassie and Rin Tin Tin appear in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party."

[52] In Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), a girl in Wally's dancing class says that Wally looks like Tab Hunter; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Eddie refers to he and Wally going to a dance in sport coats and playing it "cool" as being like Tony Curtis; in Conway and MacLane (story by William Gargaro, Jr.), "Wally's Car Accident," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver likens being neatly dressed to being like Tony Curtis; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Model," Eddie mentions that Sal Mineo got his start in modeling; in Connelly and Mosher (suggsted by a story by Robert Paul Smith), "Next Door Indians," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Wally and his friends feel they will get rich by finding gold in the vacant lot across the street, they will become rich kids like Sal Mineo; in Frank Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Fred Rutherford says his son Lumpy is built like Burt Lancaster; in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," when Wally gets turned down for an athletic scholarship at State college, Beaver wonders if the school is looking for somebody built more like Burt Lancaster; Lumpy compares himself to Cary Grant in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally and Alma," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions,

Movies proved just as problematic for Mayfield parents as television. Just as parents worried about the time children spent with television, they were also worried their kids were spending too much time at the movies.[53] In several episodes, June was also depicted as being worried about the negative psychological effects horror and monster films had on the Beaver.[54] June and Ward also worried about finding wholesome films

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1959), Ward says that Wally's girlfriend Alma thinks of Wally as being like Cary Grant; in Conway and MacLane, "Double Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), when Beaver complains that girls are not reliable, Ward says Beaver has a very "Cary Grant" attitude toward women; in Connelly and Mosher (story by William Cowley and Peggy Chantler), "Beaver's Freckles," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Ward likens Beaver to the freckled kid in Our Gang comedies as well as to Arthur Godfrey; in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Fiance," Ward notes that he was once in love with Audrey Hepburn from *Roman Holiday*; in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Eddie, models his approach to women on Rock Hudson; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," when Wally says he took a shower before he went to see Mary Ellen Rogers, Eddies likens him to Rock Hudson; a similar reference is made to Rock Hudson in Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor;" in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Election," Mary Ellen Rogers says that Wally looks like Lloyd Bridges; when Wally grows a mustache in Conway and MacLane, "The Mustache," Beaver looks at it and tells Wally that he is "no Caesar Romero;" in Ross, "Beaver's Jacket" Wally says that Beaver's his new jacket has made Beaver think of himself as being like Frankie Avalon; in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Wally compares Beaver, who has given an expensive locket to a girl in his class, to Frank Sinatra—the father of the girl who received the locket likens his daughter to "one of the Gabor sisters;" Eddie says that his new jacket in Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card" "brings out the Peter Lawford" in him; in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie, the Businessman," June says Eddie's sport jacket makes him look like Peter Lawford; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," when Lumpy thinks Wally is dating Eddie's girlfriend, he calls Wally the "Elvis Presley of Mayfield High;" in Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date" Eddie likens Wally to Caesar Romero while Beaver notes that Wally learned how to eat in fancy restaurants from watching Rock Hudson movies "hundreds of times;" in Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," when the captain of a ship that Eddie is thinking about spending the summer on is compared to Captain Bligh, Wally notes that Eddie is "no Marlon Brando," who had recently starred in *Mutiny on the Bounty*; Wally jokes, in Hoffman, "Beaver's Autobiography," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), that Marlon Brando would star in the movie version of Beaver's life; Judy Hensler notes in Connelly and Mosher, "Baby Picture" that her mother thought Judy, as a baby, looked like Shirley Temple; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion," June mentions that Wally has eyes like Robert Horton and that Ward has eyes like Melvin Douglas; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," Gilbert describes a girl Wally likes as one who "goes away to school and she thinks she looks like Natalie Wood;" and in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," Eddie notes that he once said that he met Broderick Crawford in order to try and impress someone.

[53] In Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," Ward is upset that his sons would rather see a jungle movie than spend the weekend in the woods; Ward is sick of the kids spending six hours every Saturday in a movie theater in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), suggesting they need fresh air.

[54] In Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), June is worried that frightening pictures could leave permanent emotional scars on Beaver; in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), all the films Ward and June consider taking Beaver and his friend to are either horror related or otherwise unwholesome, with title such as "Jungle

for their kids, and, as noted in chapter three, at least two episodes mention the existence of adult films in Mayfield. In "Beaver's Old Buddy," Ward and June mistakenly thought that a fictitious film called "Flowers of Spring" would be an appropriate film for Beaver and his old friend who has come for a visit. A closer look at the newspaper ad revealed, however, that the harmless sounding film was "made in Sweden" and was rated for "adults only."[55] In "Wally's Glamour Girl," Eddie made mention of the adult theater in downtown Mayfield. In "The Credit Card," June commented on what she considered to be the sad trend of ambiguous films in which the "good guy" died in the end.[56]

As with television, the movies made their own reality for Mayfield children, who often compared their life situations—as well as their "knowledge" of such things as divorce and romance—to the movies.[57] Films could also influence the sort of play

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Massacre," "Wayward Girls Go to Town," "Congarilla," and "Vampire Valley," (which Beaver claims "more blood in it than any picture I've ever seen."); in Tibbles, "The Haunted House," Ward feels that Beaver thinks an old lady down the street is a witch because of ideas he has gotten from monster films; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Gilbert and Whitey want to see a film called "Iron Fiend," about mechanical man that robs banks and "starts killing people all over the place;" the film "The Mad Hypnotist" in the episode Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist" is billed on the poster as being "scientific" and "educational;" in "The Credit Card," Beaver notes a film is good if it has a lot of "good dying" in it; in Conway and MacLane, Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver notes that the theater had to take out four row of seats in order to handle all the killing in a new western film filmed in Cinerama; and, in "Beaver's Prize," Beaver is excited by a western in which four wagons fall off a cliff.

[55] Adult films are mentioned in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy" and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl."

[56] Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card."

[57] In Kober, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's House Guest," Wally says he knows about divorce from going to the movies; in Theodroe and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," Beaver, thinking about an old Bing Crosby film, wonders if college is really full of people singing all of the time; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke," smoke from Wally's car, due to a practical joke by Lumpy, is compared to a scene from the film *The Longest Day*; in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally says the current love triangle he is involved in is like something out of the movies; in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give," Wally says that Beaver, who is giving an expensive locket to a girl in his class, has seen too many romantic movies; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy," Wally warns Beaver that telling on a wealthy man who cheated at golf might result in a similar situation similar to one Wally saw in a movie, in which a man who cheated was kicked out of an officer's club; Beaver likens two life incidents to Jimmy Stuart movies in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's

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Mayfield kids engaged in Mayfield. In "The State versus Beaver," for example, Beaver pretended to drive a race car by miming the actions of an actor in a racing film he had seen. In "Cleaning up the Beaver," Wally and Beaver discuss the toy Indian and cowboy artifacts they use in their make-believe western play.[58] And, after Eddie saw a film in which the actors sported ducktail haircuts, Eddie, Wally, and some of the other boys at Mayfield high begin wearing their hair in similar fashion.[59] Film fantasy became intertwined with historic reality as well. In "Beaver Sees America," Beaver refers to the Alamo as the place where John Wayne, who starred in the movie version of the battle, became a great hero.[60]

Not that Mayfield kids were all that gullible. As with television, Mayfield kids seemed to know about special affects, aware that beneath every movie ape stood an actor in a gorilla suit. Film, like television, also had a certain predictability. As Wally observed in "Farewell to Penny," if two lovers start off a film by yelling at each other, they are sure to end up kissing each other by film's end. The writers were also able to take their shots, thought he characters, at schlock films and television, with Gilbert once

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Track Meet," and Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver," Eddie says a girl's father looked at him like Eddie was a teenage werewolf; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Practical Joke" Beaver's idea to pay anonymously for the damage Wally caused with Lumpys car was inspired by an Edward G. Robinson movie.

[58] In Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver and Larry pretend to be galley slaves being forced to row a ship ala a movie they once saw; in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," Wally and Beaver act like race car drives do in the movies; inspired by westerns, Wally has a toy set of spurs and Beaver has a tomahawk they play with in Manhoff, "Cleaning up Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Richard, Beaver's friend, gets the idea to switch jackets with Beaver based on a movie he once saw; and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Goes into Business," Wally, in hopes of inspiring Beaver to not give up his lawn-mowing business, talks about a movie in which a pilot got back into a plane after he had an accident.

[59] Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Haircomb."

[60] Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America."

referring to a B-horror picture as the sort of "crummy movie that will show up on television in six months."[61]

In looking at film and television, as well as other media, Mayfield kids were also aware of their lack of realism. For example, while the series has been chastised for creating a false sense of reality for countless viewers, it was Ward Cleaver who warned Beaver that life was not always like its depiction on television.[62] In "Tennis Anyone," Wally tells a new love interest that he once had his picture in the paper for running track. As an example of the type of detail the writers would include, however, Wally then notes how he was only posed by the photographer to look like he was running—poses similar to the same sort of shots Mathers, Dow, Billingsley and Beaumont would take as publicity stills for their own show.[63]

While Dow and Mathers would become featured attractions of television, movie, and fan magazines, as will be noted below, the Cleaver kids, within the context of the series, often commented on the highly idealized nature of theses magazines. In "More Blessed to Give," a maturing Beaver has fallen in love with a girl in his class. After winning a locket at a carnival he decides to give it to the girl. As Beaver admires the locket, he asks his friend Gilbert how it looks, to which Gilbert responds, "It looks just

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[61] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), after Beaver confesses that he has kissed Violet Rutherford, Whitey tells Beaver that people who kiss are in love and that they even kiss each other in movie magazines; in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," Larry notes that he is aware that there are people in ape outfits in movies; Larry, Gilbert and Whitey talk about movie trick photography in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Makes a Loan;" in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," Wally notes that he has seen enough movies to know that men and women who start out arguing, like Cary Grant and Doris day, always end up kissing by the end of the film; and in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," Gilbert refers to the film "Island of Fear," as the sort of "crummy movie that will show up on television in six months."

[62] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet."

[63] Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," Wally tells a young woman about how a picture he took for the newspaper's sports section had posed him to look as if he was actually running.

like an ad in a teen magazine."[64] In "Beaver's Graduation," Beaver worries whether he can truly conform to the image of teenagers that he has read about in the mass media:

> Beaver: I can't picture myself looking like one of those teenagers you see in those crazy magazines.
> Wally: Don't let that worry you, Beaver. Eddie says those guys aren't really teenagers. They're just a bunch of models the magazines hire to give us a bad name.[65]

While they may have been uncomfortable with these images, the Cleaver kids—and their parents—continued to read the magazines that commented on teenage culture. In "Beaver's Long Night," for example, the mother of one of Wally's girlfriends was inspired by a teen magazine to host a masquerade party for the kids. In "Blind Date Committee," Wally's shy date complained that she did not know how to conform to the female ideals she read about in teen magazine advice columns.[66]

In addition to teen magazines, Mayfield youth also took their cues from comic books, popular newspaper columnists, and Mad magazine, which was referred to in two episodes.[67] Connelly and Mosher also tapped into another contemporary fad—the late-

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[64] Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give."

[65] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Graduation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[66] In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), June notes that Mary Ellen Rogers mother had read an article about masquerade parties bringing out the best in teenagers and in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally's shy date complains that she has trouble conforming to the way girls in teen magazine columns portray themselves.

[67] Comic books are noted in a number of episodes, including Connelly and Mosher, "The Happy Weekend," and Connelly and Mosher, "The Bus Ride," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959); In Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally notes that his favorite English teacher brought in an issue of *MAD* magazine, which is also referred to by Eddie in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Sheep Dog," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Dear Abby is referenced in Conway and MacLane, "Untogetherness," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

1950s, early 1960s fascination that kids had with monster images. In one 1961 issue of *Car Craft* magazine, which boasted teenage hot-rodders among its readership, there were two advertisements for "weirdo" monster shirts, which sold stock and custom images of monsters on T-shirts.[68] This trend was picked up by *Leave it to Beaver*; in "Ward's Baseball," for example, there was an insert shot of Wally drawing a grotesque gargoyle creature in his notebook.[69] The episode "Sweatshirt Monsters" focused on Beaver's insistence on wearing a faddish monster sweatshirt to class.[70] While the episode clearly eschewed such behavior, this same fascination with monsters was parlayed into another successful Connelly and Mosher series—*The Munsters*—which, like *Leave it to Beaver*, is still popular in syndication today.[71]

Mayfield kids were also enamored with sports stars, with numerous mentions of baseball and football stars like Ted Williams, Don Drysdale, and Johnny Unitas.[72] The

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[68] *Car Craft*, August 1961, contains two monster shirt related ads. "Roth's 1962 Weerdo [sic] Shirt Catalog," from Roth Studios in Maywood, California notes that "Roth offers a complete selection of weirdo shirts for your individual needs." Customers were also invited to send in their own drawings to have placed on a sweatshirt for a charge of $5.50 (8); Another ad for Mouse Studios, Detroit Michigan, also offered Monster shirts for $5.50, as well as monster pictures on T-shirts for $2.50 and on paper for $1.00. Copy read, in part, "Mouse's shirts are best because they all have mouse's original monster on them!"

[69] Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[70] Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters."

[71] As noted in Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network Shows, 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine, 1992), 607, *The Munsters* debuted in 1964.

[72] Ted Williams is referenced in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles) "Beaver the Athlete," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959) and Connelly and Mosher, "The Broken Window," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); a Mickey mantle ashtray is referred to in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give;" in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Eddie refers to a college baseball player as "another Don Drysdale;" Beaver and his friends call Drysdale, who appears in a cameo, in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call; Drysdale and Mantle are mentioned in Connelly and Mosher (story by Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver;" The Dodgers and the Giants are mentioned in Conway and MacLane, "The Book Report," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero" there is a mention of an ex-little league champ being signed by the Yankees; Fred Rutherford jokingly compares Beaver to basketball player Bob Cuzzy, as well as makes a reference to the Los Angles Lakers in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); the Lakers are also mentioned in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Caddy;" Wally signs his

writers also commented, in several episodes, on the rash of celebrity endorsements which had become popular on television; a particular set of jokes were aimed at Mickey Mantle, who had been featured shaving in a television commercial. As Ward observed in "Ward's Baseball," one never caught older pro professional athletes "coming down to earth to shave on television or be psychoanalyzed in magazines" in his time. There was also a reference to one pro athlete of the period who had owned a beauty parlor.[73]

While Mayfield youth seemed much more interested in television and movies, they were not entirely isolated from the popular culture which had the greatest effect on the lived-experience of American youth—rock 'n' roll. As David Halberstam observed in his work on the 1950s, rock 'n' roll—particularly as seen through the personas of DJ Alan Freed, who coined the term "rock 'n' roll," and performer Elvis Presley—had represented nothing less than a revolution for youth culture. As Halberstam observed:

> In this new subculture of rock and roll, the important figures of authority were no longer mayors and selectmen or parents; they were disc jockeys, who reaffirmed the right to youthful independence and guided teenagers to their new rock heroes.

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football as Johnny Unitas in Tibble, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician;" The Green Bay Packers are mentioned in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy's Visit;" there is a mention of a sports figure by the name of Mule Sanders in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), as well as in Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero," there are numerous sports references, including Blanchard and Davies, John Arness, the San Francisco 49ers, the Colts, and the Rams; the reference to Sam Snead is in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962); the reference to Pancho Gonzales is in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," which also references the Davis Cup team; a mention of race car driver Steve Brophy is in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call;" and a mention of the Indianapolis 500 is in Ross, "Wally's License," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[73] There are mentions of pro-sports endorsements, selling shirts, footballs, and star likenesses on breakfast foods, soft drinks and car endorsements in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Wally Goes Steady," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver, watching Wally use after-shave, notes that Wally not only throws like a big leaguer, he shaves like one, as well; Mickey Mantle's shaving commercial is mentioned in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," and Connelly and Mosher, "Ward's Baseball," in which Ward notes that one never caught older pro sports athletes "coming down to earth to shave on television or be psychoanalyzed in magazines;" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," June tells Ward that Beaver should not be a professional o athlete as she cannot see him owning a beauty parlor.

> The young formed their own community. For the first time in American life they were becoming a separate, defined part of culture.[74]

While Halberstam's hyperbole detracts from the longer history of youth culture—which, as previously noted, began around the turn of the century—it is hard to overestimate rock 'n' roll's effect on American youth. As Halberstam said, rock was "a critical moment for the whole society: The old order had been challenged and had not held. New forces were at work....The young did not have to listen to their parents anymore."[75]

No surprisingly, parents were none too thrilled with this challenge to their already dwindling authority.[76] Animosity toward the musical form surfaced as early as Bill Haley's release of the song "Rock Around the Clock," which preceded Presley's work by two years. As youth historian Grace Palladino observed, Haley's rock anthem

> ...marked the official inception of teenage rebel culture that "Hardened adult hearts against the music. Rock 'n' Roll was the musical expression of a delinquent street culture, critics charged, which had to be nipped in the bud. It celebrated the wrong kind of values (and the wrong kind of people) and promoted a hedonistic view of life that mocked the very notion of wholesome adolescence..."[77]

Thus, it is not surprising that rock's message and importance was downplayed by the series, which appeared to see rock as more of a disturbing fad than the ingrained reality it

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[74] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 474. For a complete discussion of Halberstam's views on Elvis, see 456-484; it should be noted that while Halberstam sees the birth of modern youth culture taking place with the arrival of Elvis, there is a much longer history of youth culture as discussed through Paladino, Kathy Peiss, and The Damned and the Beautiful.

[75] Halberstam, 479.

[76] Ibid., 474.

[77] Paladino, 126-127.

soon became. While records were, in the late 1950s, a $50-million per year industry,[78] there were not nearly as many references to rock and roll as their were to TV and movies in *Leave it to Beaver.*[79] When it was featured, rock, more often than not, became another characteristic of youth played for laughs. This was particularly the case in "Beaver Joins a Record Club," which featured such exaggerated song titles as "Thump, Thump, Thump Went My Heart," "Wild Irish Geisha," "You're Driving Me Ape You Big Gorilla," and, following the contemporary "Twist" trend, Chubby Chadwick's "Surf Board Twist."[80] In that same episode, the canned laughter was turned up when Beaver refers to rock as "good music." Ward, no fan of rock, referred to Beaver's rock records facetiously as "rock 'n' roll rhapsodies."

June was no more a fan of rock than Ward, In "Beaver's Good Deed," when Wally came down the stairs with his ear pressed to a transistor radio blaring rock 'n' roll music, Junes asked him what he was doing. Wally said that he was listening closely because he did not want to miss anything good. When June reminded Wally that he was only listening to a twist record, Wally—out of step with most of teenage America—agreed, telling June that he meant he was listening for the news reports that the DJs read between songs. Other parents were also hostile to the form. Again, in "Beaver Joins a Record Club," Gilbert told Beaver that his father allowed his sister to join a rock music

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[78] Ibid., 155.

[79] In Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Bunny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally mentions that Mary Ellen Rogers got three records from a DJ who called her house; Fabian is referred to in Connelly, Mosher, Tibbles, "Beaver and Gilbert," Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy's Car Trouble," and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Accordion."

[80] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club." The twist, made famous by Chubby Checker, was so popular it inspired a number of episodes in popular culture, including an episode of the *Dick Van Dyke Show* called "The Twizzle;" The Twist was also mentioned in Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography," and

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record club on the condition that she promise not to play the music while he was at home. In "Beaver the Sheep Dog," Wally told a story of a girl from school who played the same record 40 times before her frustrated father broke it. Mayfield kids could also be enlisted to disarm the effects of rock; In "Party Spoiler," Gilbert laughed at the way teenagers danced to rock 'n' roll music. Even Eddie Haskell could be used to subvert rock's power; in "Beaver's Accordion," Eddie encouraged Beaver to go against his father's wishes and sign up for accordion lessons. When Beaver asked Eddie if Eddie really felt he could become a famous musician, Eddie replied, "if it could happen to Fabian, it could happen to anyone."[81]

Getting involved with rock also had its downside. In "Beaver Joins a Record Club," Beaver was depicted as being so lost in the music—almost hypnotized by it—he kept throwing away the little cards that he was supposed to send back to keep the club from sending more records. Over time, Beaver had amassed a rather substantial rock music library—and debt. When Wally tried to convince Beaver to do something about the problem, Beaver, lost in the rock music, pushed Wally aside, saying, "Don't bother me, Wally, I'm sailing."[82]

But not all the reactions to rock were negative, as the genre did find a place in Mayfield. In "Beaver the Hero," rock music played in the local malt shop and direct

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in Conway and MacLane, "More Blessed to Give," in which Beaver explains Wally's coming home late on the possibility of him being in the record store and "twisting in the booth."

[81] In Hoffmann, "Beaver's Accordion," when Beaver asked Eddie if Eddie feels Beaver can become famous, Eddie says "if it could happen to Fabian it could happen to anyone;" rock as "good music," odd names for rock songs, Gilbert's sister joining a record club, and the line about "sailing" appear in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club," in which Ward also refers to a rock song as "one of those rock 'n' roll rhapsodies;" the mention of a father breaking a record after his daughter played it 40 times in a row is from Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Sheepdog;" and in Conway and MaLane, "The Party Spoiler," Gilbert comments on rock dances as appearing funny.

references were made to Elvis, Frankie Avalon and Bobby Darrin.[83] In "Eddie's Double Cross," Beaver noted that he learned about "going steady" through popular music.[84] Eddie, the negative example, of course, was found singing a few rock-sounding phrases in several episodes,[85] and in "Beaver's Typewriter" Beaver talks about how Wally, inspired by Elvis, once wanted to take guitar lessons and grow his sideburns.[86] Rock was eventually accepted within Mayfield households, including the Cleaver's, with rock-based record parties featured in "In the Soup," "Wally and Dudley," "The Party Spoiler," and "Lumpy's Scholarship."[87]

Thus, while rock did not figure prominently in the series, it had its place in Mayfield culture. In "Don Juan Beaver," when Beaver tried to make a date with two girls, who eventually discover his duplicity, Beaver ended up alone for the evening, twisting to his record player. As he heard Ward come up the stairs, Beaver turned off the record and flopped down on the bed, as if he had been moping the whole time. Ward asked Beaver to come downstairs and watch TV, but Beaver said no. As soon as Ward left, Beaver turned on the record player back and happily twisted again.[88] Thus, faced with an evening with his parents or a night of dancing to rock music, Beaver chose rock.

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[82] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club."

[83] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero."

[84] Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross."

[85] See Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play," and Conway and MacLane, "Bachelor at Large."

[86] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter."

[87] Conway and MacLane, "In the Soup," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Conway and MacLane, "The Party Spoiler," and Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship;" note that Dudley, an awkward teenager, becomes popular after he plays boogie-woogie style piano at a record party in Tibbles, "Wally and Dudley."

Whether or not Beaver's real-life counterparts were actually twisting alone in their rooms, the adoption of rock 'n' roll, tempered as it was, was just part of the popular culture in which Beaver, Wally, and their Mayfield counterparts indulged. While overt messages of thrift and few images of TV viewing dominated the screen (who wants to watch a kid watch TV?), the underlying dialogue throughout the 234 episodes clearly revealed that Beaver, Wally, and their Mayfield counterparts were fully aware of the television, movies, sports heroes, and music that dominated much of their real-life counterparts' lives.

Leave it to Beaver in Popular Culture

While Wally, Beaver, and their Mayfield counterparts were awash in a sea of popular culture materials, Dow and Mathers were becoming stars in their own right. In addition to the television series, Mathers and Dow were also the subject of show novelizations, a Dell comic book series, three different board games, celebrity endorsements and other character-related items.[89] While this was not the first time such

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[88] Connelly and Mosher (story by Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver."

[89] There are three Beverly Cleary Berkley Medallion paperbacks, each with a collection of six to eight stories adapted from the series. The first book, published in 1960, was simply titled "Leave it to Beaver," (New York: Berkeley Medallion) and featured six stories. The second Clearly book, published in 1961, was titled "Here's Beaver," and contained seven adaptations form the series. The third book, also published in 1961, was called "Beaver and Wally" and featured eight stories from the series. There was also a Whitman "Authorized TV Adventure" of the series, again, simply titled "Leave it to Beaver," by Cole Fannin published in 1962 by Whitman publishing, as well as a Golden Book published sometime earlier. In 1958, kids could color along with Beaver in "Beaver's Big Book to Color," authorized edition (New York: Saalfield, 1958). The book did not feature a complete story line, but consisted of vague scenes, such as Beaver catching a ball or Beaver at the school carnival. A number of the pictures in the book also feature animals, trees, and inanimate objects that have no connection to the series itself. Dell also had a comic book version of Leave it to Beaver, releasing several issues in their TV Comedy series during the course of the series. The series could also do valuable governmental work. Both an episode on savings bonds, *LITB*, 1960, and a one page color comic section, in *Boy's Life*, December 1960, 42, was devoted to Beaver's learning the value of buying U.S. Savings Bonds. There were also three *Leave it to Beaver* based board games, including one with a futuristic theme, one with a western theme, and

merchandising had been attempted—there had been books and merchandising for many past popular culture child stars, including *The Little Rascals*—the level of merchandising, spurred by the early-1950's example of Walt Disney's *Davy Crockett* series craze,[90] expanded to include numerous ways in which American children could experience the Beaver.

Perhaps one of the best ways viewers got to learn about the show's stars, outside of the show itself, was through children and teen specialty magazines. Ostensibly presenting a portrait of the child behind the star, these magazines, part of the same industry as television, walked a fine line between glamorizing and normalizing the lives of Dow and Mathers. Arthur Sasso, writing a piece on Mathers for the children's magazine *Calling All Girls*, noted that while Jerry differed in some respects from the character he played, "sometimes it's difficult to see where Beaver begins and Jerry ends."[91] A profile of Mathers in *Jack and Jill* two years later reached a similar conclusion:

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one called "Beaver's Money Maker" game in which Beaver tried to win money for the material items he desired.

[90] Crockett, a minor political figure from the 1840s whose contemporary legend was created by the Whigs who had hoped to make political gain over the everyman hero of Andrew Jackson, has long stood as a mythical figure in American folk culture. According to Margaret J. King, author of "The Recycled Hero: Walt Disney's Davy Crockett," in Michael A. Lofaro, ed., *Davy Crockett: The Man, The Legend, The Legacy, 1786-1986* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), Disney's Crockett amounted to a second-coming for the hero. "A study of the Davy Crockett craze challenges the conventional definition of craze as an ephemeral occasion," writes King, "something trivial and superficial that passes without leaving any mark. Instead, it suggests that such popular events are at least as strong a force in shaping popular ideas as more official underpinnings of culture, such as the conscious politics of government and of formal education, forms usually regarded as the most influential in shaping public opinion and action." (138). According to King, one of those resulting actions was not only millions of sales of Davy Crockett coonskin caps, but the sale of four million copies of the sixteen different versions of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" that made up the $300 million industry that grew up around the Disney Crockett (140-47). See Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 24, who says that the first real youth product craze was the Davy Crockett coonskin cap.

[91] Arthur J. Sasso, "Leave it to Beaver" *Calling All Girls*, October 1958, 42-43.

> Off screen it's a little hard to decide whether he's really Jerry or Beaver. Even his friends can't tell you. Perhaps Jerry does not always know. Mrs. Mathers thinks that's because he's so much like himself on screen. Jerry doesn't act, he just *is*.[92]

While the similarity of these two articles may be attributable to some qualities that Mathers and Beaver actually shared, such observations were most likely the result of a Hollywood publicity industry bent on likening its celebrities to the lives of its readers. Indeed, if *Leave it to Beaver* was to be considered realistic in its depictions of children, it stood to reason that the actors should seem like real to the every-day kids watching the series.[93]

While there are many ways to read the 1950s and early-1960s literature on Mathers and Dow—including taking the material at face value—one is struck by the sheer number of times in which the two stars are likened to the supposed normal activities of the assumed average reader. While Sasso's article, for example, points out how Dow, the celebrity, moved from a fictional school set to schoolroom on the set of *Leave it to Beaver*, the article tied this uncommon event to the average teen, saying that "even in the land of make-believe, the Three R's are still a must for everyone."[94] Jerry and Tony may have been stars, but, when it came to education, they were no different from any other American child. As the *Jack and Jill* article observed:

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[92] Maureen Myers Remenih, "Leave it to Jerry," in *Jack and Jill Magazine*, October 1961, 8.

[93] See Tinky Weisblatt, *Will the real George and Gracie and Ozzie and Harriet and Desi and Lucy please stand up? The function of popular biography in 1950s television*, (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1991), 301, whose work on star biographies revealed that the biography is often as much a part of Hollywood-PR rhetoric as it is actual star sentiments.

[94] Sasso, 48.

> ...Jerry still has to go to school. He does that for three hours a day right on the set. He and Tony Dow...and the other boys and girls appearing in the series, share a little classroom built into the corner of the huge sound stage. Right now, for his science class, Jerry is making some interesting discoveries about how plants grow. A long table at one end of the classroom is covered with sprouting sweet potatoes, sprouting peanuts, sprouting all-sorts-of-things.[95]

An article by Johnny Jason in *Teen* magazine went so far as to show how Dow, like most kids, dreaded homework and long study sessions (which, again, may very well have been true).[96]

These magazine articles also seemed to normalized the child actor's family life. A picture in the *Jack and Jill* article had Mathers sitting by the fireside with his real family in as idealized a setting as that of his fictional family.[97] Mathers' home life was also mentioned in a *Children's Playmate* article, which briefly discussed Mathers' pets—a German Shepherd, three parakeets, and a cat.[98] Sasso's article painted Mathers as an all-American boy who played with toy soldiers, had hobbies, and dreamt of some day becoming a major league baseball star (apparently there were even more glamorous professions than being a TV star).[99] *Jack and Jill* also played up the hobby angle, featuring Mathers among more than a dozen plastic models that he had built (so many models, in fact, that they could not all be seen within the frame of the magazine photograph).[100] The *Teen* article on Dow also showed the star doing normal teen

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[95] Maureen Myers Remenih, 9

[96] Johnny Jason, "Tony's Tree House," *Teen*, April 1960, 26-7.

[97] Maureen Myers Remenih, 11.

[98] *Children's Playmate*, February 1959, 2-3.

[99] Sasso, 44.

[100] Remenih, 10.

activities such as swimming, jumping on his trampoline, and working on a go-cart that he and his father built.[101] Perhaps the greatest nod to Mathers' normalcy was in *Jack and Jill's* discussion of his lunch habit:

> Despite all the delicious and fancy dishes on the menu, Jerry has the same thing every day. The waitress knows what to bring him without even asking. The Beaver always has a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich and a glass of chocolate milk![102]

Thus, not only did Jerry look like a kid, act like a kid, and hate school like a kid—he even ate like a kid (and, lest we forget, he *was* a kid).

Another way the articles were able to preserve the actor's childlike qualities were to prove that stardom had not gone to their heads. *Jack and Jill*, which had argued that the key to Jerry's success was in Jerry being himself, portrayed Mathers as a humble actor.[103] When Sasso asked Dow how things had changed since he became a star, Dow replied:

> Everything's pretty much the same...since I've started doing television work. A few of my friends kid me about it. But I still met them after school like I used to, to play ball or to just head down to the drug store to have a malted. I'm not impressed that I'm on television. And I hope my friends never are.[104]

Again, it is important to note that while many such statements serve to reinforce Mathers and Dow as the type of normal, everyday kids they were attempting to portray, one cannot discount taking the articles at face value, particularly in Dow's case. Indeed, Dow

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[101] Jason, 26-7; similar examples found in *Jack and Jill*, 10.

[102] Maureen Myers Remenih, 9.

[103] Ibid., 11, noted Mathers is "humble abut his acting."

[104] Sasso, 45.

is known, and continues to be known, for having a very down-to-earth, soft-spoken quality. Interviewers seemed to come away with the same impression of Dow. As Sasso observed:

> Girls are always complaining because boys don't act like gentlemen. Well, girls, you'd better wangle an intro to Tony. He's a gent on all counts. There's something warm about Tony's interest in other people. His many friends all claim there was never a nicer guy than Tony Dow. At 14, this is a pretty good record to set.[105]

Actress Brenda Lee, who wrote a monthly column in *Teen Life*, noted that Tony, who she had gone out with on a publicity date, was "one of the nicest boys I ever dated."[106] While much of Lee's article was hyperbole designed to promote her own projects, her assessment of Dow, may, again, have been quite accurate.

But regardless of how down-to-earth the actors were, their mere inclusion in a magazine showed that they enjoyed a certain privilege and status neither shared nor endured by the average kids who read them. When Mathers, who had started collecting rocks during the early years of the show, mentioned that interest during an interview, readers replied by sending the star rocks from where they lived.[107] Unlike most kids, Tony Dow had a two-story tree house in his yard, complete with electrical outlets, running water, a TV, and, as one article noted, a view of the San Fernando Valley.[108]

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[105] Jason, 27.

[106] "Brenda Lee," *Teen Life*, September 1961, 46.

[107] Remenih, 10-11.

[108] Jason, 24.

Dow was also portrayed, in the same teen magazines he would poke fun at in the show, as part of the in-crowd of teenage stars, including Brenda Lee. [109]

Indeed, Dow, much more than Mathers, had become the sort of teen idol that Wally, Eddie, and Beaver would certainly have read about in their own teen magazines.[110] As Lamparski observed, Dow "developed a large and loyal following among viewers attracted to good-looking high school boys".[111] Dow's entry into pin-up status took place quite early in the series, as evidenced by this excerpt from a 1958 issue of *TV Star Parade* magazine:

> New to the Pinup package, TONY DOW...would rather be a football hero. Only a year ago, Tony couldn't 'care less' about dolls. Entering high school and age thirteen he still prefers gang play to going steady, but confesses that mixed parties are 'kinda fun.' Tony's new awareness of the sweater and skirt crowd is creeping into Leave it to Beaver, where he plays older brother, Wally. A good athlete, a good Joe and good looking, he's rated 'cool, casual and regular' by debs and guys. Last chart check showed him 5'4" and sprouting...[112]

Dow, like fellow heartthrobs Ricky Nelson and Fabian, found his picture plastered, often times out of context, in a number of magazines. For example, Dow was one of 72 headshots featured on the inside cover in an issue of *Teen Life*.[113] Dow was also

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[109] In another Brenda Lee article, "Brenda in Teensville," Lee talks about her recent visit to Alaska as well as a teen party in which Tony Dow, in a tux, was seen with Beverly Washburn on his arm (36).

[110] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Graduation."

[111] Richard Lamparski, *Whatever Became Of...?*, eighth series (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1982), 88-89

[112] "Tony Dow," *TV Star Parade*, December 1958, 49.

[113] *Teen Life*, November 1961.

portrayed as a strong athlete in Sasso's article,[114] and Jason's article played up Dow's muscular build.[115]

In addition to purchasing magazines, teens who wanted to share these star's lives could also buy specialty photograph packages. The "Official Photo Library," of Hollywood, California, offered several collections of photographs—including shots of Dow and Mathers—that they would mail to fans for $1.00 per four-by-five-inch glossy. That dollar would also put the fan on a studio mailing list, assuring the customer "loads of mail telling you of all the happenings inside the studios as well as loads of free pictures of actual scenes!" By finding the scoop on the stars before their friends did, the ad promised teen customers that they would "Be the envy of everyone!"[116]

For those who did not want to invest the extra dollar, articles in magazines like *Teen Life* offered a more intimate portrait of favorite teen stars. For example, a September 1961 issue of *Teen Life* featured a photo essay of Brenda Lee's date with Tony Dow, explicitly stating that the magazine had taken the photos so fans could "spend the day with" the pair. [117] The captions and photos included shots of Dow and Lee's lazy walk together, as well as a shot of Dow and Lee sitting at the piano (Tony is "pretty good on the 88s," writes Brenda, or whatever publicity person actually wrote the article). There was even the sense of Brenda indulging in the same sort of guilty pleasures her female readers might enjoy:

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[114] Sasso, 45.

[115] Jason, 26.

[116] Folder from Official Photo Library, Hollywood CA.

[117] "Brenda Lee," *Teen Life*, 63

> We filled up on a lot of 'junk,' and I promised myself I'd go on a diet tomorrow. And I did![118]

In case fans might have missed Lee's mention of her new film within the six pages of text (a narrative which does not mention Dow, the only male actor featured in the photographs, until the last paragraph), there was a headshot of Lee and Dow, the ocean in the background, set to the following "romantic" caption:

> I'm telling Tony about my new picture, *Two Little Bears*, being filmed at 20th. He said he would like to visit me on the set. I hope he does.[119]

Fans even had the opportunity to become part of an inside joke featured in the article, in which Dow was pictured on a scale looking somewhat bewildered at his weight; Lee—supposedly behind Dow's back—had "secretly" placed her foot on the scale. Noting in the caption that Tony was worried that he had gained some wait, Lee, with a wink and a nod to her readers, wrote, "Tony'll learn the truth when he sees this."[120]

Teen magazines were very good at personalizing these articles, often giving the appearance of a one-on-one rapport between celebrity and reader. In *Modern Teen*, for example, a column called "On the Hot Seat," featured different teen idols speaking to a "touchy problem we all face." Comments were not presented in narrative form, but as a series of quotes, interspersed among various headshots of the Hot Seat subject, one of whom was Tony Dow. Dow's first comments presented the reader with his "touchy" issue—getting parents to stop treating teens like they are still little kids:

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[118] Ibid., 45.

[119] Ibid., 46.

[120] Ibid., 47.

> You know how parents and relatives are. They always want to pat you on the head or something like that. They start it when you're a kid and they keep it up even after you've gone into high school.

Dow was then depicted as taking great pains to make sure that readers knew that his parents did not actually share this problem:

> ...Now don't get me wrong. I've got the greatest parents in the whole world. But the idea is, no one wants to be treated like a kid after he's stopped being one. And a lot of parents never catch on.

Dow went on to present examples of other "babied" teens, whose mothers continued to pick out their clothes or watch them as they get their haircut. Dow concluded his comments with a call for the same sort of understanding and open parenting promoted within the *Beaver* series itself:

> Me, I've been lucky. My mom's the world's greatest. She thinks I should make my own decisions, and she lets me do just that. My pop's the same way. Like I say, I've been lucky.
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> ...I wish every parent in the world, and every adult too, for that matter, could be like *my* folks. Not talk down to us and treat us like kids all the time. You know? Wouldn't that be a great new world?[121]

Dow also shared his ideas in a similar feature (both in layout and in tone) in *Dig!* Magazine. Rather than comment on a "touchy" subject, *Dig!* asked its teen stars to comment on the sort of things they did not "dig." Tony's rants basically echoed the themes that the mass media had ascribed to teens of the period—themes which were so common and mundane, they were sure to strike a chord with some adolescent readers: not

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[121] "On the Hot Seat: Tony Dow," *Modern Teen*, circa 1960, 35 (this was from a collection of Tony Dow and Jerry Mathers collectibles sold on Ebay that featured the single page torn out from the magazine).

knowing what to talk to a girl about on a first date, being worried about one's body and appearance, never having enough time to do some of his favorite things, being viewed as a young man to some people and as a kid to others, and about having to give into various social rules and behaviors. Dow ended his comments with a concern that, in many ways, echoed the fears about growing up that were expressed by Wally and Beaver in the final episodes of the series, in which Dow was depicted as admitting to "the weird feeling I get when I think about being 'out on my own' in a couple of years."[122] Yet while these concerns were ascribed to an average kid, they were again being filtered through a mainstream middle-class adult publishing company whose agenda was to print material that rang true—or at least had some semblance of a connection to teen lives—to get kids to accept and or purchase the material.

In perhaps the strangest connection between viewer and star, *Teen Life* sponsored a monthly look-alike contest in which readers could earn a dollar if they happened to have a famous-looking face. In the November 1961 issue of *Teen Life*, a young boy from Corpus Christi, Texas won the contest for his resemblance to Tony Dow (or, as the magazine put it, for being "well endowed"). While there was a bit of resemblance between Dow and the reader, the magazine played the similarity for all it was worth, noting "he looks enough like Tony Dow to make us wonder???? [sic]"[123] This look-alike contest brought *Leave it to Beaver's* ironic journey into popular culture full circle: the average viewer got his picture published in a magazine because he looked like a kid who was playing an average teen. Sasso is not the only one confused as to where the

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[122] *Dig!* circa 1960, 28 (again, a single torn out page from the magazine, date unknown)

[123] *Teen Life*, November 1961, 55.

characters and actors begin and end, for the student of popular culture faces the same problem in tracing the circular nature of reality and depiction. On the one hand, Mayfield kids are awash in a sea of popular culture—so much so that it affects their speech, their play, and the way they view the world. On the other hand, these stars become part of the popular culture, undoubtedly effecting its viewers, feeding them both realistic and non-realistic images of the own lives. While Dow and Mathers were no doubt glamorized by the media hype and use of their likenesses in a variety of ancillary products, the interviews and appearances within mass media were, in part, designed to posit Dow and Mathers as the non-TV stars they were supposed to depict.

Consumerism and popular culture were as much a fact of life of Mayfield youth as it was of American baby boomers. Mayfield kids, portrayed as consummate consumers and viewers of popular culture who incorporated that popular culture into their fictitious lives, were in may ways quite similar to the kids they were supposed to be portraying. The Cleaver boys may not have been into rock 'n' roll as much as their contemporaries, but they certainly bought into the same popular and commercial culture as the viewers they were trying to mine. While the Cleaver boys could hardly be called a mirror of American youth, they were certainly not a fantastic fabrication, either, for their portrayal of and role in popular culture maintained a sense of connection between Mayfield kids and their real-world counterparts.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
LEAVE IT TO BEAVER AND EDUCATION

Wally: Gee, mom, every day's hard at school.
Beaver: The hardest part's waiting 'til 3:00.[1]

In the episode "Beaver Plays Hooky," Beaver and Larry, quite by accident, end up ditching school. While skipping school was depicted in part as one of the "timeless" rites of passage of youth, the series could not afford to look like it was endorsing such activity. To that end, Beaver's teacher, Miss Landers, told Larry and Beaver in the final scene that missing school was like throwing a day out of one's life. Imploring Beaver and Larry to never repeat this offense again, Landers told the boys, "There's so much to learn, and so little time to learn it."[2]

Landers imperative was certainly in step with the national priority placed on education in post-Sputnik America. Not that education had not always been valued in America. As Joel Spring argued in his history of American education, one of the fundamental elements of American education has been to prepare its citizens to function in a democracy.[3] That civic function of education was not lost on 1950s Americans. The introduction to "The Federal Government and Education," part of the Hoover Commission task force on Public Welfare chaired by former President Herbert Hoover and published in 1950, noted that "The emphasis on education in the United States stems

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[1] Phil Leslie, "The Bank Accont," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[2] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[3] See Joel Spring, *The American School, 1642-1996* (New York: The McGraw Hill Companies, 1997), 52. See also Gerald L. Gutek, *American Education, 1945-2000: A History and Commentary* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2000).

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from our basic belief in the worth of the individual and that the state exists for the individual rather than the individual for the state.

> In our concern for the continuation and further development of the democratic process, we are firmly committed to the principle that the development of the individual intellect and understanding is essential. If the government is to be by the people, the people must have insight. If the government is to be for the people, it must provide the facilities for attaining that insight.[4]

While the Hoover Commission report, which was primarily used to justify the entrance of the federal government into locally controlled school systems, was released seven years before Sputnik's launch, it also showed an awareness of the connection between education and national defense, noting that "Whether we think nationally in terms of civic or general literacy, *defense needs*, welfare of individuals, industrial effectiveness, or a host of other important considerations, we come to the conclusion that an adequate education in the states is essential [italics added]."[5]

The link between education and defense became much more prominent in the wake of Sputnik, which tended to displace progressive ideas of education—which had been a part of the educational debate since the early twentieth century—with a "back-to-basics" curriculum that emphasized mathematics and science. As Brooks observed in *The Great Leap*, Sputnik had left American educators with the idea that America had fallen behind in its ability to produce scientists capable of great scientific endeavors.

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[4] Hollis P. Allen, *The Federal Government and Education: The Original and Complete Study of Education for the Hoover Commission Task Force on Public Welfare* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1950), 1.

[5] Allen, 287.

> Now came the rude awakening. It wasn't so much that we were militarily threatened by the new developments—apparently for the present, we weren't—as simply as that we had been beaten. Nor did the new sense of chagrin and unease disappear when we managed to orbit our first satellite early in 1958. Our scientific leaders told us emphatically that we were now derisively behind in the space race; our education authorities added with equal emphasis that we were behind in the education race.[6]

Education historian Lawrence Cremin, who saw the 1950s as the time of the collapse of progressive education, agreed with the sudden speed with which the focus of education change. "When the Russians launched the first space satellite in the autumn of 1957," wrote Cremins, "a shocked and humbled nation embarked on a bitter orgy of pedagogical soul-searching" that was aimed at regaining the technical supremacy which had been seemingly challenged by the Soviets.[7]

While state and local authorities had long insisted on keeping the federal government out of education, The Soviet challenge found Eisenhower, himself reluctant to get the federal government involved in education, signing the 1958 National Defense Education Act, which provided categorical federal support for science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction. While ostensibly providing for an emphasis on the teaching

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[6] John Brooks, *The Giant Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), 223.

[7] See Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the American School: Progressivism in American Education* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962), who writes that "The surprising thing about the progressive response to the assault of the fifties is not that the movement collapsed, but that it collapsed so rapidly" (347). Much of the history of education, including the works of Lawrence Cremin, , *The Transformation of the American School: Progressivism in American Education* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962),347-353, argue that the basic change that occurred after the Cold War was the loss of progressive education and the replacement of a more conservative back to basics approach. While Sol Cohen, in his *Challenging Orthodoxies: Toward a New Cultural History of Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) looks at the role language and discourse of education may indicate a different transformation, complicates this history, it is one in which most historians acknowledge that post-Sputnik America encouraged a change in American educational imperatives. As Brooks observed, "in the face of the new scientific and technological advances, the old methods in many cases had seemed good enough for a century or more suddenly came to appear as dangerous anachronism. Education, it began to be said, was technologically and underdeveloped country; it was due for its belated industrial revolution" (220-221).

of physic, math and chemistry, the act also set the precedent for federal involvement in education that would expand greatly during the Johnson administration.[8]

Sputnik was just one factor driving the increased emphasis on education. The baby boom and the rise of suburban communities across American had ushered in a new wave of students as well as an extensive school construction program. Between 1950 to 1960, the elementary school age cohort of age five to eleven increased from 24,300,000 to 35,500,000.[9] Beaver Cleaver stood as a fictional representation of one of the 35-million baby boomers who found themselves in grade school during the late 1950s.

While the series certainly had the historic aspect of speaking to the importance of education in the post-Sputnik period, it also carried a rather ahistoric idea of school as a timeless entity that needed to be tolerated. Indeed, Mayfield kids were often depicted as being quite cold to the idea of school and studies. School was not necessarily seen as the gateway to a better life, at least among Mayfield children, but as an evil that was to be endured. As Wally observed in "The Big Fish Count," there were two things that kids would always have to put up with: "Dirt and Homework."[10] Just as publicity material on Mathers and Dow attempted to draw the actors closer to their real-life counterparts through their dislike of homework and studying, the series, from the first episode, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," took an "us versus them" attitude between students and school. This attitude was apparent from the opening of the first season episode, introduced by Beaumont in voice-over narrative:

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[8] Gutek, 46-47.

[9] Gutek, 44.

[10] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "The Big Fish Count," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

> When you were young you had your own set of values. Values that nothing could change. An ice-cream cone was a snow-capped mountain of sheer delight. An autographed baseball was more precious than rubies. And a note from the teacher meant only one thing—disaster...[11]

Beaver not only spent the rest of the episode anxious about the letter his teacher, Miss Canfield, had sent home to June, but the better part of the series set in an adversarial relationship with school itself.

Viewing the episodes in which school was featured or discussed, it is clear that few Mayfield boys found school enjoyable.[12] As evidenced in "New Doctor," "Beaver's Tonsils" and "Beaver's Pigeons," kids would rather be sick—even have an operation—than go to school.[13] When Beaver got a new clock radio in the resolution of "Beaver Finds a Wallet," Wally told him that he could use it to wake up for school in time; Beaver added that he could use if for something "good" as well. The school itself was a symbol of a sort of oppression to be avoided. As Gilbert observed in "Substitute Father," there

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[11] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957).

[12] There are numerous examples of school being, at best, a place a child must tolerate. For example, after June asks the boys if they had a hard day in school in Leslie, "The Bank Account," Wally replies that every day is hard and Beaver add that the hardest part is waiting for school to end; in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver writes that ducks are lucky, in part, because they do not have to go to school; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Wally's Play," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally notes that boys and girls mixed clubs are prohibited by the school, which has rules against kids "having that much fun;" in Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Eddie the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), when June notes that the first day of a job is always the hardest, Beaver reminds her that was exactly what she had said about school, which also got worse; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver finds a Wallet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when Ward tells Beaver to use Beaver's new clock radio to help him get up for school in time, Beaver says he will use it for "something good, too;" and, in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver, the Sheepdog," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), after June asks Beaver how school went, he said it was okay because no teachers yelled at him, which was perhaps the best a Mayfield kid could hope for.

[13] In Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Tonsils," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally notes that if Beaver has to have his tonsils out he may be lucky enough to miss school for an entire week; Beaver becomes jealous of Wally's illness in Connelly and Mosher, "New Doctor," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), and is disappointed when he fakes sick on a day in which kids only had a half-day of school; and when Wally notes that it is a shame that Beaver got sick on a weekend as he will not miss any school, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

was "no sense hanging around in school when you don't have to."[14] When Wally and Beaver planned on breaking into the school to retrieve a practical joke that Beaver had left in his teacher's desk drawer, Wally says doing so would be easy—after all, who would want to break into a school?[15] Likewise, in "No Time for Baby Sitters," when June asked Gilbert how he was enjoying the current school year, Gilbert replied that he liked it about as much as he did the year before, with his inflection clearly implying that he continued to dislike it. On the rare occasions when June or Ward made the mistake of referring to school as something fun or enjoyable, Wally and Beaver were there to bring their parent's back in line.[16] In "Lost Watch," for example, when Ward commented on how the kids must be anxious to get back to school after the summer break, Wally responded, "Hey, that's pretty funny."[17] Perhaps Beaver summed up the Mayfield kid's view of school best through the following dialogue:

> June: Did you have a nice day?
> Beaver: No, I went to school.[18]

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[14] Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Connelly and Mosher (story by Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), and Connelly and Mosher, "Substitute Father," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[15] Connelly and Mosher (sotry by Leslie), "Beaver's Crush."

[16] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver's Tree," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally and Beaver, respectively, are surprised to hear June associate the idea of school with fun; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Arthur Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), after Ward has convinced Beaver to sell a car Beaver won and use the money for college, Beaver writes an ad for the cars that says he is selling it use the money "for going to college instead of having fun."

[17] Richard Baer, "Lost Watch," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[18] Connelly, Mosher, Gwen Gielgud, "One of the Boys," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

This disdain for school was sometime expressed, albeit mildly, as a reaction to school authority. Indeed, while Beaver's classmates often respond to their teacher in a seemingly happy, unison rendition of "Yes, Miss Landers," there was always a rather mechanical tone to the line that mocked the convention.[19] School kids also found ways to challenge authority while acting within the rules. There are numerous scenes in which Larry Mondello or one of the other kids in class asked ridiculous questions just to try to get a rise out of their teacher. While Beaver and Wally never engaged in such behavior, there were a few episodes in which Beaver played the class clown.[20] Mayfield kids were also depicted as being wise to the "dog-and-pony" show aspect of administrative school visits. In "Mother's Helper," and "Teacher Comes to Dinner," for example, Mayfield students were seen practicing "putting on their best faces" for an upcoming visit by some high-placed school official, indicating that such perfect student behavior was not the norm.[21]

For the most part, however, Mayfield students were depicted as trying to keep a low profile in school.[22] In "Beaver's Report Card," Beaver was surprised to find that he

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[19] This sense of insincerity is clearly evident in classroom scenes from numerous episodes, including Frank Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), and Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver Takes a Walk," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[20] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James) "Beaver's Ring," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), after the teacher leaves the room, Larry sets the classroom clock ahead and threatens to punch anyone who tells on him; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Bunny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), none of the kids in a school play seemed to be listening to their harried teacher; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Gilbert makes a wise remark, sotto voce, in class; and Larry Mondello asks silly questions to get the teacher's goat in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Most Interesting Character," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

[21] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Helper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961). In Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), the class is practicing singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" for a visiting superintendent. Larry, who does not sing well, is being directed by Miss Landers to just move his lips through the song. The kids are also instructed to wear a white shirt on the day of the visit.

received a B+ in math and told Wally that he was going to ask Miss Landers about it.[23] Wally, the voice of experience, warned Beaver to leave well enough alone:

> Wally: Look, I've been going to school all my life. You can't get in trouble for keeping your mouth shut.[24]

Part of the fear of teachers lay in Mayfield youths' inability to see teachers as real people who watched TV, fell in love, and had children.[25] The teacher mystique was confronted directly in the Christopher Award winning episode, "Teacher Comes to Dinner," in which June invited Beaver's favorite teacher, Miss Landers, for supper. When Larry Mondello learned of this highly unusual act—a kid eating with a teacher—he told some of the other boys in his class who paid Larry a quarter for the privilege of climbing a tree near the Cleaver yard and watching the event. "She might even smoke," exclaimed Larry. When Landers caught the boys watching her, she confronted Larry, who tried to explain himself by saying that "None of us ever saw a teacher eat before." The episode resolved with Landers explaining how teachers were just like anyone else.[26]

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[22] In Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver's Tree," when a school poem has Beaver missing the tree he left behind at his old house, Wally passes the poem off as just an example of how one can get into trouble by "paying attention in school;" in Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," Beaver agrees to read carefully the rules about riding the school bus, figuring that there was no sense in getting int ruble before school began (implying, it seems, that there are enough ways to get in trouble at school itself).

[23] Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Beaver's Report Card," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); as noted in chapter six, Eddie and Lumpy had changed the grade on Beaver's report card as part of a cruel joke.

[24] Ibid.

[25] In Conway and MacLane, "The Book Report," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver is surprised to learn that school principal Mrs. Rayburn knows about the TV schedule, although Rayburn says that she uses the schedule to stay ahead of the children in her school; in Connelly and Mosher, "Miss Lander's Finace," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver is upset that his favorite teacher, who he saw in a short tennis skirt, is getting married.

[26] Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Teacher Comes to Dinner."

This was not the only time the script writers tired to expel myths about teachers. When Beaver suggested to Wally that teachers had jobs that allowed them to hide fromt eh world, Wally, in his bridge between child and adult, spoke for the profession:

> Wally: ...Teachers have just as many problems as anybody else. They have to go home at night and take care of their families, have to pay the rent, the income tax, have to worry about the car breaking down....and then, on top of that, they have to come in the morning and face 40 or 50 stupid looking kids. If you think that's hiding from the world, you're way off the beam.[27]

Beaver had heard this argument before. Since the first episode, Beaver was taught that teachers could also be friends. In "Beaver Get 'spelled," Miss Canfield told Beaver that he was wrong to automatically assume that teachers were his enemy. Extolling teachers as self-sacrificing individuals, Canfield recited the famous anonymous quotation, "a good teacher is like a candle. It consumes itself to light the way for others."[28] In "Beaver and Poncho," Canfield also showed Beaver how teachers have deep concern for their students, particularly those in trouble. Miss Landers argued much the same line in the episode "Beaver and Kenneth," in which Beaver's classmate had stolen items from other students in Beaver's class. In "Eddie Quits School," the Mayfield High principal was depicted as being very concerned about the fate of Eddie Haskell, who had recently dropped out of school.[29]

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[27] Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[28] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled."

[29] Candle quote from Ibid. Miss Landers notes that boys who get in trouble need special help and attention from their teachers in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960); and Wally's principal, Mr. Farmer, tries to get Eddie to come back to school in Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

Even if Mayfield kids could accept their teachers as human, it did not mean that they were responsive to their educational agenda. Even in a post-Sputnik America supposedly motivated toward high achievement, there seemed to be an unwritten code among Mayfield boys, Wally and Beaver included, that they should never do more work than what the teacher had asked for. In a world in which kids had learned to navigate the system and play all the angles, there seemed to be little percentage in being an over-achiever. In one scene during "Her Idol," Wally is depicted as drawing an amoeba. When Beaver asks Wally what an amoeba is, Wally, who has not bothered to study ahead, tells Beaver that he will find out the next day when the teacher tells him.[30] Activities such as reading for pleasure and doing extra homework were also eschewed by Mayfield kids. When Ward asked Wally and Beaver, in "The Garage Painters," to read a book instead of watch television, the Cleaver boys asked Ward why he was punishing them.[31] Mayfield kids also worked hard at avoiding their homework;[32] even thinking about academic subject—and thinking in general—was a task relegated to school.[33]

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[30] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Her Idol," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958). Other examples can be found in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when students in Miss Canfield's class recite a poem, they do it as a matter of going through the motions, with little or no emotion; the same occurs in Connelly, Mosher, Tibbles, "Wally's Haircomb," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), in which Beaver has to learn a "hunk" of poem and has no interest in learning any more than he has to; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), while June is surprised to find Wally doing homework on a Saturday, it turns out that Wally had to "jam" 80 more words into a composition so it would meet the word-length requirement.

[31] Connelly and Mosher, "The Garage Painters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959). In Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver notes that watching Indians on television is better than having to read about them in a book; and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver makes a distinction between reading a book for fun and reading one for a book report.

[32] As a matter of priority, Wally, in Connelly and Mosher, "Lumpy Rutherford," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), one of the series' first episodes, decides to play checkers with Beaver before they do their homework, so that they will not run out of time to play checkers if they do their homework first; in Connelly and Mosher, "Family Scrapbook," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), the last episode, Ward

Such examples of under-achievement were not just fodder for comedy, but part of an undercurrent common to all sitcoms which, as part of their genre, applauded normalcy. Indeed, just as the sitcom family was not supposed to be either too rich or too poor, sitcom kids were expected to be neither too dumb nor too smart.[34] This middling imperative became clear in "Beaver's I.Q.," in which Beaver's I.Q. test revealed that he was a genius. After school officials told Ward and June that Beaver's talent must be nurtured, they took Beaver to a special school where he was interviewed by its headmaster, Dr. Compton. While Ward and June were excited at first by Beaver's intelligence, they became quite concerned with the sort of progressive school Dr. Compton was describing. For one thing, the school had no competitive sports program, which Compton argued only served to bring out the "natural antagonisms" of a child—a line which was obviously not expected to play well with the middle-class sensibilities of the average American viewer, nor with the series overwhelming emphasis on developing a competitive nature (as will be explored below). Ward and June were also struck by the fact that the school building looked more like a clinic than a traditional school—a place

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notes that the boys enjoyed looking at the old family album in part because it got them out of doing their homework for a little while.

[33] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Pigeons," Wally says he is having a test yet did not bring any books home because he had no homework to do; When June corrects Wally and Beaver's English usage on a Saturday in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds a Wallet," Beaver argues that it is not fair to have to watch grammar on a Saturday; when Beaver is sitting on the bed thinking in Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally asks Beaver why he is thinking when he is not in school; when Beaver gets the idea that he has done all the work he needs to do to graduate grammar school in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Graduation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver begins goofing off, figuring any work above and beyond what is necessary is useless.

[34]In Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," Beaver is worried that he may have to go to the "dumb class;" in that same episode, Penny says that Beaver is in the "dumb" reading group, which Beaver corrects as being in the "second reading group;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Judy says, in front of another girl, that Beaver sits in "the dumb row" at school and also points out that Beaver missed six words in his last spelling test while aggrandizing her own academic ability.

in which Beaver might be more a subject of study than a kid. Worried that they would be taking Beaver out of his normal public school environment, Ward and June begin having second thoughts about the school. The problem was resolved for Ward and June when Charles, a new kid in Beaver's class, revealed that he had switched I.Q. tests with Beaver to avoid getting reassigned to the very same sort of progressive school. The message of the program—growing up average is preferred to growing up a genius. The episode ends with Ward and June quite content to have their unexceptional son back.[35]

Robert Lewis Shayon, a TV and Radio writer for *Saturday Review*, was quite disturbed that *Leave it to Beaver* would eschew genius in the post-Sputnik age. "The real dilemma," wrote Shayon, "was left untouched, not merely, because 'Leave it to Beaver' is just television entertainment, because the choice which in true life presses on us as a nation is too painful to face.

> Do we not desperately need geniuses for survival? How shall we make them eat calculus and like it—if their own desperate, inner compulsion is to be the captain of the football team and the most popular man in class? President Eisenhower, his Cabinet, and Congress may lay heroic plans for producing the brainpower the nation requires, but citizen lip-service to the cause is not enough....We are certainly not going in the right direction if we teach our children to suspect or dislike [genius] or assume that a high development of intellect is incompatible with "normalcy" or popularity.[36]

Of course, as with most elements of the situation comedy, Mayfield educational values are steeped in contradictions. While the middling nature of normalcy was desired, there was also a keen sense of competition and achievement expressed in the series that did fall in line with the post-Sputnik education imperative. Ward may not have wanted his son to

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[35] Connelly and Mosher (story by Rick Vollaerts), "Part-time Genius," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[36] Robert Lewis Shayon, "Beaver's Booboo," *Saturday Review*, February 1, 1958, 26.

go to a progressive school, but he and his Mayfield counterparts held high expectations for their sons, nevertheless. In "Larry's Club," for example, Mrs. Mondello expressed that she was sure her son would become the head of a big company one day (a preposterous dream for those viewers who knew Larry, but a dream never-the-less). Beaver's friend Richard Rickover said that his father expected him to be a doctor. When Beaver failed to prove his athletic prowess in "The Younger Brother" and "Beaver the Athlete," Ward resigned himself to "settling" for Beaver being a scientist or doctor.[37] In "Beaver's I.Q.," Ward was quite proud to hear that Wally planned to study engineering or science.[38]

Ward showed his understanding of the Cold War education imperative in other ways as well. When Wally asked for an advance on his allowance so he could buy parts to get his World War II-surplus walkie-talkie fixed, Ward justified the advance, albeit jokingly, on being in the interest of the nation's science plan.[39] As noted in the last chapter, when Wally indicated that Eddie's material items were more important than Wally's own good grades, Ward was quick to counter that education was much more important than cheap material goods.[40] Indeed, while the boys would often view school as a punihment, the scripts throughout the six-season run left no doubt of the importance

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[37] Connelly and Mosher, "Larry's Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Connelly and Mosher (story by Tibbles), "Beaver the Athlete," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959). In Conway and MacLane, "Summer in Alaska," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Eddie notes how he wants to duplicate Charles Dana's example and write a book before going on to college; and Beaver's friend Richard says that he is going to be a doctor in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Spot Removers," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[38] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q."

[39] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[40] Conway and MacLane, "The Credit Card," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

education played in the Cleaver boy's lives—and absolutely no doubt that both Beaver and Wally would go to college.[41] Not only had Ward and June been saving for college of years, through savings and insurance policies, but the boys were often asked to convert impractical gifts or turn over at least a part of their birthday or holiday money to their college fund.[42] This college imperative echoed what was going on in the nation's colleges, whose enrollments were expanding in the wake of World War II.[43] As Connelly's daughter Karen Donovan recalls, Joe Connelly also placed a great emphasis on all of his kids going to college. "Oh, yes. I mean, there was not doubt about it," recalled Donovan, "no matter how well or how poorly I did in school, I was going on [to college], there was no doubt about that..."[44]

Getting to college, of course, meant preparation and determination. While Ward did not hold out impossible expectations for his kids, he did expect them to perform to their personal best.[45] Ward was always making his sons prioritize their studying, which

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[41]As early as the 1957 episode Connelly and Mosher (story by Norman Tokar), "Brotherly Love," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), June talks about how Wally will one day go to college; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hugh Beaumont), "A Horse Named Nick," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward jokingly says to June that Wally and Beaver promised not to run away with the circus until "after they finish college."

[42] Ward encourages the boys to save for college in Leslie, "The Bank Account;" likewise, when Beaver wins a car in Connelly and Mosher (story by Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest," Ward convinces him to sell it and use the money for college; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Hero," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally tells Beaver that Ward took out "a whole insurance policy out just to send you to college;" when Wally fails to get a athletic scholarship, Ward and June, in Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), point to the fact that they have been saving for years for Wally's education.

[43] For figures on college enrollment after 1939, see Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep: The United States Since World War II*, second edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 264.

[44] Karen C. Donovan, interview with author, 4 February 2001.

[45]in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), an ad for a typewriter company claimed that students who used typewriters got better grades; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert notes that his dad was so happy that he got a good grade on an English test, his dad would not even care if he found out that Gilbert

he felt would ensure their academic success.[46] During two episodes it was revealed that the Cleaver boys were not to receive house guests while studying.[47] Indeed, for all their talk of doing as little work as possible, episode blocking had the Cleaver boys, particularly Wally, sitting behind a desk studying as opposed to watching television. Ward also tried to instill in his boys a sense of persistence, telling Wally and Beaver that they could achieve anything they put their minds to, whether it was selling a foul-smelling perfume or learning how to use a typewriter.[48] While June felt comfortable with Beaver being "an average little boy," Ward, as noted in chapter five, felt "an average little boy doesn't have a chance these days."[49] Just as the United States was competing on international level, Ward felt his boys needed to compete as well. One of the best ways to develop a competitive spirit was though organized sports. While this posed no problem for Wally, who was depicted as a natural athlete, Beaver, as the younger of the

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had cheated on it; and in Joseph Hoffmann, "Beaver's Autobiography," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Ward notes that while he does not always expect his kids to get A's, he does not want to see them fail.

[46] Ward enforces the importance of homework in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's IQ," saying that Beaver will be very sorry later in life if he does not study now—later in the episode, when Beaver finds that he is still in the top ten percent of his class in intelligence, Beaver thinks he can take it easy, but Ward says that it means Beaver has to work harder to live up to his potential; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test, when Ward sees Beaver balancing his books on his feet in, Ward notes that there is a better purpose to which to put those books. Later in the same episode, Ward says that studying is the only way to insure good grades.

[47] In Tibbles, "Wally's Pug Nose," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward tells a friend calling for Wally, that Wally is not allowed to receive calls until his homework is done; and in Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys," Ward tries to discourage Eddie from seeing Wally while Wally is studying; Ward, saying that Wally has his future at stake, encourages Wally to study in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[48] Ward tells the boys they could really sell the perfume they ordered if they tried hard enough in Mel Diamond and Ben Gersham, "Perfume Salesmen," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957); By the later years of the series, Beaver had learned his lesson, vowing to stick to his typewriter in order to learn how to type in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Typewriter."

[49] Connelly and Mosher, "The Dramatic Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

two, was quite happy to play sports for the sake of being "with the other guys," something that Ward had trouble understanding.[50]

Developing a competitive spirit was most overtly dealt with in "Beaver the Athlete," in which Beaver drew a great deal of attention from his classmates by clowning around on the baseball field, pretending that he could not hit the ball. When Judy Hensler hit a homerun, Beaver became worried that he would not be able to perform to her level. Afraid to come in second to a girl, but unsure of his ability, Beaver resorted to clowning when he returned to the plate the next day. But the students were no longer laughing. While Ward's words of developing a competitive spirit seemed to fall on deaf ears, Beaver's fear of being second to a girl drove Beaver to spend an entire evening practicing for the next game. While the episode seemed to venerate Ward's point of view, it should be noted that June disagreed with Ward pushing Beaver toward athletic competition, arguing that the fact that Beaver had brought up his grades in school showed that Beaver had, in his own way, the drive to succeed.[51]

While some episodes promoted competition, others balanced it with lessons on good sportsmanship; indeed, Mayfield kids were expected to be humble in their fortune and gracious in their defeat. When Lumpy won a football scholarship over Wally, Wally was the first to suggest throwing a party in honor of his friend's good fortune.[52] One also had to win honestly. In the "Younger Brother," after Beaver failed to perform to the standards Wally had set on his old basketball team, June suggested that Wally ease ego's

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[50] Ward tries to encourage Beaver's competitive spirit in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets Adopted," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Athlete," and Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother."

[51] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Athlete."

[52] Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship."

Beaver and let him win a game of checkers. Wally felt that was cheating and Ward agreed: a person had to win fair and square.[53]

This sense of earning one's way in the world was in line with the meritocracy assumed by the series. As Diane Ravitch pointed out in her history of twentieth-century school reform, the popular optimistic sentiment which had existed in the schools since the late-nineteenth century had people believe that public education was a democratic institution in which all kids would have an "equal chance to develop their mental powers to the fullest."[54] As Ravitch noted:

> This was the American dream, the promise of the public school to open wide the doors of opportunity to all who were willing to learn and study. The schools would work their democratic magic by disseminating knowledge to all who sought it.[55]

Leave it to Beaver episodes enforced this sense of a functional meritocracy quite clearly in a variety of episodes. Eddie eschewed studying and failed a test while Wally studied and earned a ninety-two. When Beaver accused State college of favoritism when they gave Lumpy a football scholarship, Wally told Beaver that such things no longer happened. When Wally suggested that the high school principal might have fudged on a chart which showed his school performed better than another, Ward noted that such a thing was highly doubtful.[56] Even Beaver's old pal Gus the fireman knew that the days

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[53] Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother."

[54] Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 19.

[55] Ibid., 20.

[56] Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship," and Raphael Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), respectively.

of privilege were gone. In "Beaver's I.Q.," Gus noted how his older brother got rich by selling off parcels of land he had owned: "Things are different now. You gotta work for your money. You've got to do the doing. You gotta' study hard, get a good job, work at it, and stick to it. Those easy days is over."[57]

Gus's sentiment was echoed—as well as undermined—in "Wally and the Fraternity," in which Wally and Eddie tried to get accepted to a top college fraternity at Ward's old alma mater. The episode opens with Eddie trying to convince Wally and another student, Fred, that personal connections made in fraternities were more important than classroom knowledge. Wally and Fred quickly put Eddie in his place:

> Wally: Cut it out, will ya' Eddie. It doesn't matter who you get next to, you still need an education.
> Fred: Yeah, that old business of who you know instead of what you know is out the window.

Nevertheless, Wally soon agreed that being part of a good fraternity could have its advantages. Showing the unevenness of some of the series most powerful messages, the rest of the episode involved Eddie getting Ward to put in a good word for Wally and him at Ward's old fraternity, Alpha Kappa. While Ward paid lip service to the fact that Eddie and Wally would still have to be invited to the fraternity on their own merit, there was little doubt that Ward's letter of introduction improved their chances of being rushed.[58] As noted earlier, this was not the only time that Ward's connections made a difference;

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[57] Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q."

[58] Conway and MacLane, "Wally and the Fraternity."

Ward also pulled strings to help Lumpy Rutherford get a second chance at a football scholarship he lost due to poor math grades.[59]

Before getting into college, of course, one had to graduate. As Wally noted in an episode on Beaver's graduation from grammar school, "graduation's a day that parents look forward to even more than kids do."[60] To that end, Ward and June had to make sure that neither of their kids got side-tracked on their way to graduation. In "Wally Goes Steady," Ward and June became worried that Wally was seeing too much of his current girlfriend, Evelyn Boothby. To make matters worse, Evelyn's sister, just a few years older than Evelyn, had recently gotten married. When June heard that Wally and Evelyn were going to spend an evening with Evelyn's sister and her husband, June was beside herself with fear—would this young couple undermine all that she and Ward worked for? Would their hopes and dreams for Wally be lost on an early marriage that would surely distract Wally from college? June did not have to worry for long. When Wally got to Evelyn's sister's apartment, he was shocked by the shabby surroundings and poor furniture that stood in sharp contrast to his own comfortable home. Wally was further dissuaded by Evelyn's husband Tom, who came home hollering at his wife and complaining about the boss, whom Tom referred to as the "hatchet man." While one cannot read any script with absolute certainty, this script clearly eschewed early marriage with Wally giving up any notions he might have had about leaving school and getting married.[61]

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[59] Conway and MacLane, "Lumpy's Scholarship."

[60] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Graduation."

[61] Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Wally Goes Steady," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

A similar distraction occurred in "Eddie Quits School," in which Eddie dropped out of school to take a job at a gas station for $80.00 per week. While Ward was impressed by Eddie's salary, he was quick to point out to Wally that Eddie could have done a lot better in the long-run had he stayed in school. Over the course of the episode, Wally found that Eddie, like Tom, had become a slave to his boss. Eddie was also depicted as being too busy working to spend time with Wally and his other friends. At the end of the episode, Wally got the school principal to ask Eddie to come back to school, an offer that Eddie, disenchanted with work, gladly accepted.[62]

Wally, level-headed boy that he was, stayed in school and away from marriage, and, in one of the last episodes, "The All Night Party," received his degree. While putting the sheepskin up on the wall, Wally reflected on the hard work that went into it. When Beaver asked Wally whether or not it was all worth it, Wally's reply was unequivocal: "What do you mean was it worth it? Sure it was worth it."[63]

In getting Wally to that point, the series walked a fine line between catering to the average, middling viewer as well as the education imperative. While one was not to be an over-achiever, one was certainly expected to graduate, go to college, and get a good job. While learning may not have been fun, the alternatives, such as early marriage and dropping out of school, were unthinkable. To live the life Ward and June had accomplished—the same life that Ward and June wished for their sons—required one to do well, stay in school, and learn how to compete. But making one's way successfully in the world required more than a degree, more than academics. It also required an understanding of how to survive within social structures. While part of that was learned

[62] Conway and MacLane, "Eddie Quits School."

[63] Conway and MacLane, "The All Night Party."

in Mayfield schools, most of it was taught—or supposed to be taught—within Mayfield homes.

"Don't they teach you any manners..."

One day, after Wally committed some social faux pas in the kitchen, June turned to him and asked:

> June: Wally, don't they teach you any manners at school?
> Wally: You know, that's funny. At school their always saying don't they teach you any manners at home.[64]

While the line was played for laughs, the Cleaver home was an incubator of perceived standards of appropriate social behavior and the development of manners. While most Mayfield homes seemed to fail in this attempt, the Cleavers were quite successful. As Wally's teacher, Mr. Blair once observed, "One thing that makes a teacher's job easier is having parents who teach their boys and girls proper conduct at home."[65]

Ward and June's interest in instilling a proper set of manners in their children was not completely out of line with its times, although, according to Gans, lower middle class members of suburbs such as Levittown—not exactly the status of the Cleavers, but certainly a demographic of the viewing audience—were more concerned with their children's manners and behavior than their wealthier counterparts.[66] Nevertheless, Ward and June were certainly perfect models of civil behavior.

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[64] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960).

[65] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test."

[66] Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 202.

The dinner table, where the Cleaver family shared nearly every evening meal, was one of the main venues through which manners were learned. Indeed, the Cleavers dining rituals seemed to be taken directly from a page of Victorian dictates established by Beecher and Stowe some sixty years earlier:

> To persons of good-breeding, nothing is more annoying the violations of the conventional proprieties of the table. Reaching over another person's plate; standing up, to reach distant articles, instead of asking to have them passed; using one's own knife and spoon for butter, salt, or sugar, when it is the custom of the family to provide separate utensils for the purpose; setting cups with the tea dripping from them; using the table cloth instead of the napkins; eating fast and in a noisy manner; putting large pieces in the mouth; looking and eating as if very hungry, or as if anxious to get at certain dishes; sitting at too great a distance form the table, and dropping food; laying the knife and fork on the table-cloth, instead of on the edge of the plate; picking the teeth at the table: all these particulars children should be taught to avoid.[67]

Viewed in total, *Leave it to Beaver* served as a compendium on the proper way to dress, speak, act, eat and chew at the dinner table.[68] Not that Wally or Beaver were depicted as

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[67] Catherine Beecher and Harriet Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: or, Principles of domestic science; being a guide to the formation of economical, healthful, beautiful, and Christian Homes* (1896; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 206-7.

[68] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Crush," Ward tells Beaver to eat with his mouth closed; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "The Shave," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), June tells Wally it is not appropriate to talk about shaving at the dinner table; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver wonders why June bothers to make the food look nice when all people really want to do is eat it; in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Wally tells Beaver that a buffet is like the line at school lunch, but there is no "shoving" allowed; Wally dresses for a night out in a white dinner jacket, a sign of high society, in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961); when the family goes out to dinner in Connelly, Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Most Interesting Character," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), both Beaver and Wally wear jackets at the table; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver is directed to put his elbows down at the table. Beaver says he wishes he could eat out all the time so he does not have to be polite, but June notes one needs to be polite wherever they eat; in the same episode Wally wonders why they have to use silverware when eating outside; in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Larry talks about how he likes to eat outside as there is no one to yell at you if you spill something; a similar sentiment is expressed by Beaver in Conway and MacLane, "A Night in the Woods," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), who talks about how one can forgo manners when eating in the woods.

understanding the need for the trappings of the table. Consider the following exchange from "Beaver and Kenneth."

> Wally: Hey, mom. Isn't it kind of rough on you always eating in the dining room with all these plates and silverware and stuff? Wouldn't it be better if you just let us eat right over the sink?
> June: Now, Wally, you and Beaver wanna have good manners and eat like civilized people, don't you?
> Wally: Sure, but why can't we just be civilized when we got company?[69]

Just as Connelly had been attracted to the Listerine ad which showed a boys' trek toward understanding the nuances of accepted social behavior, much of the humor of the series came out of Wally and Beaver's boyhood discomfort with that expected sort of behavior, including the dreaded dancing school which stood as another center of Beaver and Wally's education in the social graces.[70] While there was the full expectation that Beaver and Wally would one day come to appreciate such behavior, the series was required—if it was to remain faithful to portraying the mind of a child—to question the seemingly mysterious behavior of "civilized" people. Wally and Beaver learned that a boy needed to keep his rambunctiousness in check at social events and that, in a gendered world, girls required special attention and treatment.[71] One also needed to be polite, and

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[69] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Kenneth."

[70] In Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), June says that while the boys hate going to dancing school now, they will appreciate not being "wall flowers" later in life; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffman and Lou Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), June notes that dancing school will teach the boys manners and "prepare them for the future;" and, as June notes in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," a boy needs to learn the proper social graces, and cannot "go through life wearing blue jeans and a t-shirt."

[71] Wally notes that the school dance committee, in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee" *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), has appointed two students to make sure no "guys throw any sandwiches;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffmann and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," June tells Beaver how to act in a dance receiving line; in Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward tells Wally to hold the door for his date and to treat her like a lady; in

watch one's language. As Wally once explained, if one uses "crummy words" people will think he or she is a "creep."[72]

Wally and Beaver did not always accept these conventions without question (although the questions were always posed to provide humor as opposed to challenge the authority which was enforcing the rules). As Ward noted in several episodes, including "Cleaning up Beaver," taking a stand against such manners was something that all children did—Ward included.[73] Wally, Beaver, and their friends were forever trying to find ways to get out of dressing up and wearing ties.[74] To Wally, dances and cotillions were not preparation for life, but preparation for being a snob.[75] For the time being,

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Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Chauffer," when Wally wants he and his date to ride to a dance along with six other couples, June calls he idea "disgraceful" and forbids Wally to do so.

[72] In terms of being polite, see Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday,"*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), in which June explains to Beaver how sometimes one avoids the truth to not hurt someone's feelings; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffman and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," Wally tells Beaver that it is a good idea to be polite to a date's mother; and, in Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Ward and June tell Beaver that he must go to a party he does not want to go to as it is the polite thing to do. In terms of watching one's language, Wally apologizes for accidentally uses the word "sweat" in front of his mom in Conway and MacLane, "The Younger Brother," and Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test," when Beaver wonders about the emphasis on grammar, Wally says it is because people judge others by the way they speak.

[73] In Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Ward notes that he puts silverware on the table backwards as a hold over from his prep school days, in which he was "striking back at the social order."

[74] In Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Beaver wears white gloves and bows to his partner, yet questions all of these rituals; Wally, who has accepted them, places a hanky on a girl's shoulder before dancing in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffman and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Theodore and Mathilde Ferro), "Friendship," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), June gives Beaver a list of rules for eating at Larry Mondello's house, leaving Beaver to wonder how he can have a good time while remembering all of the rules; in the same episode, Wally asks June what would happen if he and Beaver waste all the time learning manners and end up being tramps, to which June replies that at least Wally and Beaver will be "charming tramps;" Eddie notes that he and the other boys can "ditch" their ties when they get out of view of Wally's father in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "The Hypnotist," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver and Richard are eager to ditch their ties at a dance in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffmann and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," and Lumpy is quick to get rid of his tie in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver the Bunny."

Beaver just had to accept and follow the rules as close as he could, whether it was opening a letter with the word "dear"[76] or accepting a dinner invitation because it was the polite thing to do. As Wally once told Beaver, "It's good manners to tell somebody you'd be happy to go with them even if you'd rather be dead."[77] While such lines were played for laughs as opposed to undermining authority, no one can say exactly how such lines were interpreted among the viewers. While scripts may have set out to normalize such conventions, the jokes may also have fostered questions that challenged authority.

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[75] Wally describes cotillions as creepy and snobbish in Connelly and Mosher, "Dane Contest," and Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance," respectively.

[76] Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus." There is also an element of this in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," in which Wally notes that "honorable mention" awards are a nice way of giving something to people who lose.

[77] In Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), even though Beaver and his old friend have a miserable time with each other, both Ward and June and the other boys parents make the kids reluctantly go through the motions of saying what a good time they had and how they look forward to seeing one another again; the same happens in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Guest" when Larry Mondello leaves the Cleaver's house; in Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," even though Wally is mad that his parents are making him enter a dance contest, Wally, before leaving the table, as a matter of rote, thanks June for supper; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Glamour Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Wally notes that one always writes that one likes a girl, even if that is not the case; in Connelly and Mosher, "Uncle Billy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when Uncle Billy asks June if he wants him to help with the dishes, June asks if he really wants to, to which Uncle Billy replies, "No, but it's always polite to offer, isn't it, boys?"; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Takes a Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Gilbert says his sister acts quiet in Sunday school so people will think that she is well behaved; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Long Night," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962)*LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Gilbert, who is sleeping over, notes that he brought pajamas to sleep at the Cleaver's house, but that he sleeps in a summer camp t-shirt at home; the idea that even the Cleaver boys act different somewhere else is seen in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Ward assures June that Wally and Beaver will behave at Aunt Martha's as before they left he "made them promise they would absolutely not behave like they do around here;" in Tibbles, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver the Magician," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when Junes asks if Beaver was polite and courteous when Ward dropped Beaver off at Aunt Martha's, Ward notes that Beaver was too tired after the long car ride to be anything but polite; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffmann and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," Wally and Lumpy refer to each other as "Wallace" and Clarence" at a dance; in that same episode, Beaver says that rules keep people from having a good time.

Do the Right Thing

"If you don't learn the rules when you're
a kid, you may never learn them at all."
--Ward Cleaver[78]

More important than manners was the character education and lessons in morality that so clearly emerge from most *Leave it to Beaver* episodes. While some episodes hinted that a "little white lie" was acceptable, there was very little gray area as far as truth and honesty were concerned.[79] Where Fred Rutherford would discourage his son from telling the truth, Ward was always on the side of honesty, regardless of the consequences. When Wally got punished for throwing towels in the boys locker room, Ward sided with Wally's coach, saying "Boys can't go around breaking the rules."[80] As Ward observed in "Sweatshirt Monsters"—in which Beaver got in trouble for wearing a sweatshirt with a picture of a monster on it to school—a "thing is either right or it is wrong."[81] Teachers also reinforce the rules. When Eddie cheated in "Wally's Test," Wally's teacher Mr. Gannon said that students must learn to follow the rules for the sake of order: "Maybe it's not a good system," said Gannon, "maybe it will be revised later, but it's what we

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[78] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[79] In Hoffmann, "Ice Skates," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Ward refers to Beaver's lack of dishonesty as being what Beaver considers a "convenient evasion;" Ward refers to Beaver's use of Wally's old English test as being a "misrepresentation" in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's English Test;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," June is forgiven for sparing Beaver's feelings by lying that she liked a gaudy blouse Beaver had given her for her Birthday; and in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Gets 'spelled," Beaver and Wally have no problem faking their bath and brushing their teeth, which is presented as a mild child trait as opposed to a problematic lie, while talking about how Beaver cannot throw away a note the teacher sent home as that would not be honest.

[80] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Track Meet."

[81] Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

have. It's the same outside of school. Learn to live with it now or be unhappy men and women." [82]

Learning to follow such rules was a major series theme. Indeed, while a feminist perspective on the series reveals the self-sacrifice and control expected of women depicted in the series, a wider view shows that *Leave it to Beaver* expected such sacrifice and control from all of its characters. This aspect of the series is rooted in the long-standing cultural theme of adherence to rules and self-control which became central to most popular idealized family images.[83] Because Mayfield, like most sitcom towns, was supposed to represent a functional world, one had to do the right thing to avoid chaos.[84] Wally, as the older brother, was under particular pressure to avoid temptation and set a good example for Beaver.[85] In terms of self-control, Wally usually performed admirably; not only did he fight the temptation of smoking, drinking, and pre-marital sex in "Box Office Attraction," [86] he also avoided getting involved with a group of elitist high school boys rumored to be the coolest kids in school. As Wally told Ward in the episode's

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[82] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Test."

[83] Beecher and Stowe noted, "...children can be very early taught that their happiness, both now and hereafter, depends on the formation of *habits* of submission, self-denial, and benevolence" (277); According to Burns, quoting Clemens, "Catholic childrearing had to stress the development of 'self-control' and the dominance of mind and will over emotions'" (81).

[84] See *The Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1995), in which Liebman made a similar observation regarding *Father Knows Best*: the series, wrote Liebman, is "purely a morality play, following a pattern of "euphoria, conflict, parental lecture, shame, and self-recrimination followed by acquiesces to the parental conservative agenda and resulting pride that one has done the 'right thing.'" (144).

[85] Ward notes that Wally needs to set a good example for his brother in Connelly and Mosher (story by Fran van Hartesveldt), "The Pipe," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Wally notes this himself in Conway and MacLane, "The Poor Loser," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Ward says that he also has to set a good example if he is to get Beaver to do the right thing in Blau, Connelly and Mosher, "Community Chest."

[86] Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Box Office Attraction," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

resolution, "You know something dad. I don't ever think I'll be a cool guy." Ward, a product of "the straight and narrow," assures Wally that he has made the right decision, saying "Well, son, some of us never make it."[87] In "Eddie's Sweater," when Eddie thought Wally had stolen his girl, Wally actually let Eddie hit him without hitting Eddie back.[88] Indeed, one of the only times Wally lost his composure was in "Wally's Weekend Job," in which Wally exacted retribution on Eddie and Lumpy, who had pulled a cruel practical joke on Wally.[89]

Self-control was augmented by a sense of honor. A Mayfield child was expected to be honorable and avoid doing things that would tarnish his good name. They were also expected to honor promises and maintain other's trust.[90] One was not to take money for a job that they failed at, even if the other person insisted payment be accepted.[91] One

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[87] Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys."

[88] Connelly and Mosher (story by Enochs), "Eddie's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[89] Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[90] In Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), when Beaver and Larry are short the money that they owe the cookie company, the company representative talks about how the inability to trust someone is very sad; in Ross, Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Tooth," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), a dentist offers to give Beaver every toy in the dentist office toy box if Beaver feels any pain during the procedure. Beaver is surprised the dentist would trust him to tell the truth, but the dentist notes that if Beaver will trust him to work on his teeth, the dentist will trust Beaver at his word; in Tibbles, "The Haunted House," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Ward tells Beaver that he is counting on Beaver to show up to walk a neighbor's dog unless he has some very good reason as to why he cannot, indicating Beaver has to be responsible keep his word.

[91] Wally refuses to accept his pay for a poorly done job in Connelly and Mosher, "Chuckies New Shoes," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Takes a Bath," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Conway and MacLane, "Parking Attendants," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963); Beaver refuses to take money for a poorly done job in Tibbles, "Haunted House;" and both Wally and Beaver refuse to accept pay when they lose a neighbor's cat in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat Out of the Bag," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

also had to be willing to make sacrifices for other members of the family, accepting a bit of unhappiness or disappointment to help others feel happy.[92]

The Cleaver boys were also expected to fight the little bouts of temptation that kept them from doing the right thing. When Beaver found a wallet full of money, he knew enough to turn it into the police, much to the dismay of his pal Larry Mondello who wanted to keep it. Likewise, when Beaver found a well cared for dog, he knew he would have to return it to its rightful owner. Wally knew that he was not supposed to sneak into movies by claiming that he or Beaver were eligible for the young children's rate, and when Beaver won a contest by unfair advantage, he was the first to admit that he did not deserve the prize. Beaver even knew that it was wrong to take advantage of animals. Not only did Beaver sour on the idea of raising chinchillas when he found out they were killed for their fur, but he also let a collection of frogs free when he learned the company he was going to sell them to were going to "croak" them to use them for science experiments.[93]

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[92] Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[93] Beaver has to admit to the class that he did not write the poem he won a prize for in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Poem;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Cat out of the Bag," Wally tells Eddie, who wants to say he is under 12 to get into a movie for half-price, that Ward told him not to do something like that—interestingly enough—"anymore;" Ward is proud that Beaver turned in the $89.00 he found in a wallet on the street in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Finds A Wallet," in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Poncho," Ward convinces Beaver that he must try to find the owner of a dog he found; in Manings, "The Clothing Drive," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Beaver admits to his class that he had an unfair advantage in getting more time to contribute clothes to a clothing drive, getting applauded by my Miss Landers for his "good citizenship;" when Wally hopes that the blind date he agreed to go out with in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher, "Blind Date Committee," is not a "gopher," Ward notes that Wally should not spoil his kind act with such an attitude; and in Breslow and Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frogs," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Beaver cannot follow through with turning the frogs he had collected in to a medical experimentation lab, even though doing so would get him enough money to buy the canoe he wants.

Mayfield kids were expected to be honest. Indeed, very few lies went unpunished in Mayfield, whether it was Judy lying about her father's life in a school assignment or Wally trying to keep a car accident a secret from his father.[94] Lying was depicted in several episodes as downright un-American, with early episodes often placing a picture of George Washington in the background of a lying child.[95] While a small child might be forgiven for telling a fib, older boys like Beaver and Wally had no excuse for such indiscretions. Thus, when Wally inadvertently mislead his parents into thinking that his weekend trip to the woods was going to be supervised by one of his friend's parents, he ultimately realized not only that he was wrong, but that he no longer needed his parents to tell him what was right and wrong.[96] This theme was played out again in "Beaver's Birthday," in which Beaver had lied to Ward and June about where he got the money to buy a new gas-powered model; when June asked Ward whether or not Beaver was too

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[94] Judy lied about her father's past in Connelly and Mosher, Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Most Interesting Character;" Wally withholds information on his car accident in Conway and MacLane (story by William Gargaro, Jr.) "Wally's Car Accident," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963). See also Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), in which Ward says that Beaver should not complicate his new found responsibility by lying; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver was so distraught over having lied about winning a bike that he gave it away to a church; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Library Book," Ward tells Beaver about how one lie leads to another. When Beaver says he does not think he is smart enough to hold onto that many lies, Ward expresses that he hopes Beaver never thinks he is smart enough to do so; in Conway and MacLane, "The Book Report," Mrs. Rayburn lectures Beaver, who cheated on a book report, saying that no assignment is worth throwing away one's good name. This sort of justice was not always consistent, however, as in another late series episode, Hoffmann, "Beaver's Laundry," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally and Beaver hide the fact that Beaver overloaded the washing machine with soap—rather than get in trouble for it, however, since everything turned out okay, the truth was never revealed to Ward and June, with no punishment delivered.

[95] George Washington's picture in the background of Beaver lying is seen in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Price of Fame," as Beaver is about to break into the principal's office; in Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," as Beaver does nothing to stop an inflated story of his rescuing a lost canoe; and in Connelly and Mosher (story by David Levinson), "Don Juan Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), in which he breaks a date with a girl. The Washington portrait is also in the background in the Connelly and Mosher, "Cookie Fund," as an older boy named Roger lies to Beaver and Larry to rob them of the classes' money they had been trusted with.

[96] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

old to be lying, Ward responded, "No, dear, but he's too old to think he can get away with it."[97]

While telling the truth could sometimes be difficult, as evidenced in several *Leave it to Beaver* episodes, the functional world of Mayfield held that a person who told the truth had nothing to fear.[98] The Mayfield conscience would not have it any other way. As Ward said in "Beaver's Bike," in which Beaver's new bike is stolen, the conscience is a powerful thing and the boy who stole the bike was destined to live in guilt and shame for the rest of his life. There was never any doubt that Wally and Beaver had a good sense of right and wrong. As Beaver revealed in "The School Bus," he and Wally got caught for doing bad things because they looked guilty when they did something wrong.[99] It was that conscience, more than anything else, that kept the Cleaver boys on the straight and narrow. In "Beaver's Fortune," Beaver observed:

> Beaver: I might be a lot worse kid than I am if I wasn't afraid of being caught doing stuff.
> Ward: Well, I suspect that's true of all of us.[100]

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[97] Conway and MacLane (story by Ross), "Beaver's Birthday."

[98] Truth has its price. In Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), when Wally told Eddie the truth about what a girl had said about him, Eddie got mad at Wally. As Ward points out, Socrates was poisoned for telling the truth; in Conway and MacLane, "Beaver on TV," Beaver is frustrated when his friends do not believe he was on television. Ward likens this to others in history who have told the truth while no one listened, noting that all one had to do was to keep telling the truth regardless of what anyone said. In John Whedon, "Beaver's Bad Day," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver, having lied earlier, finds that Ward assumes he is lying later when he is indeed telling the truth.

[99] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Bike." See also Conway and MacLane, "Poor Loser," in which Beaver feels guilty about getting Wally to give him a ticket to a baseball game that Wally was supposed to go to. In Connelly and Mosher, "School Bus," Beaver notes that he and Wally get caught because they look guilty when they do things wrong, implying that, unlike other Mayfield kids, they have a conscience.

[100] Theodroe and Mathilde Ferro (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Beaver's Fortune," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959).

Of course, there were those in Mayfield who would try to convince the Cleaver boys otherwise. In "Tell it to Ella," in which Beaver complained about his parents being more strict than his friend's parents, Ward warned Beaver against following the advice of such people who "go all through life trying to prove that the things that are good for them are wrong."[101] As Ward told Beaver in "Sweatshirt Monsters," "wrong is wrong even if someone says it's right, and right is right even if someone says it's wrong."[102] Peer pressure was depicted as daunting of a force as it was in the real world. In "School Picture," for example, Beaver's friend Gilbert made a deal with Beaver to make a face as the photographer snapped a class picture. While Gilbert failed to follow through on the plan, Beaver made the face and ruined the class picture. As Ward noted in the episode's resolution, Beaver should have expected as much from Gilbert: "When a person comes up with a bad idea, he's usually the first person to double cross you."[103]

Indeed, the road to doing the right thing was quite complicated in a town filled with kids bent on making mischief and refusing to follow the rules of accepted behavior (within the confines of what sort of behavior television would allow its characters to violate, of course). Many of Beaver's messes stemmed from Beaver not having the strength of character to resist the chiding of his friends. Beaver's earliest foil in this regard was Larry Mondello, who, by insinuating that Beaver was "chicken," could talk Beaver into such things as using his father's drill without permission, riding a go-cart illegally in the street, and even smoking a pipe behind his parents back. As Beaver

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[101] Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[102] Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters."

[103] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher), "School Picture."

observed in "The Pipe" episode, it was "Hard to do the right thing when you have a friend like Larry Mondello."[104] This theme was elaborated on in the following conversation between Beaver and Ward in "Yard Birds."

> Beaver: But, gee dad, you always start out to do what you're supposed to do and then all this neat stuff come along and you always end up doing what you're not supposed to be do.
> Wally: Yeah dad, you know how it is.
> Ward: Sure I do. I was your age once and the same kind of thing happened to me. But it's still my duty as a parent to jump on you when you do something like this.
> Beaver: Boy, it must be harder being a father than it is being a kid.[105]

Wally and Beaver knew, of course, that they had to face up to their responsibility when things went wrong. As Ward observed in "Beaver Plays Hooky," "when you break the rules you have to explain yourself to the people who make them."[106] Ward also made sure that his boys knew that it was ultimately up to them to do the right thing.[107]

Ward also expected his sons to accept their punishment without question. As Liebman noted in her study of 1950's era domestic sitcoms, central characters like Bud Anderson of *Father Knows Best*, the Nelson boys of *Ozzie and Harriet*, and Wally and Beaver of *Leave it to Beaver* had a firm understanding that whatever punishment they

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[104] The in-text reference is from Connelly and Mosher (story by van hartesveldt), "The Pipe;" Larry has Beaver use his father's drill in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Runs Away," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Larry convinces Beaver to ride the go-cart in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[105] Conway and MacLane, "The Yard Birds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[106] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver Plays Hooky."

[107] in Manhoff, "Voodoo Magic," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), when Beaver tries to blame sneaking into a movie on Eddie Haskell, Wally admits they were ultimately responsible, an admission June says she is glad to hear; in Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," Beaver is applauded for standing up in front of his class and telling that the story of his heroism was vastly overstated; Ward tells Beaver in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), that one has to admit when they make a mistake.

received was ultimately one they deserved. [108] In "Ward's Golf Club," Beaver accidentally broke one of Ward's golf clubs. After spending his own money to have it fixed, Beaver finds out that Ward had actually broken the club earlier. Upset at the "bad break" he got by fixing a club he had not broken, Ward was quick to remind Beaver that his problem resulted from taking Ward's club without permission. As Ward told Beaver, "when you do things like this, you're going to be surprised how many bad breaks you get." [109] Likewise, when Beaver's sneaking caused him to destroy a ring his Aunt Martha had sent him, Ward made Beaver write a letter to Aunt Martha explaining how the ring was lost. While Ward destroyed the letter, considering the act of writing it "punishment enough," Ward explained to June that it was a necessary exercise: "What's the sense of going through a great deal, dear, if you don't learn something from it." [110]

"For your own good"

"You know your mother and I love you very much. And you know anything we do is always for your own good."
--Ward Cleaver[111]

While a young Wally viewed adult rules as being quite arbitrary in the 1957 episode "Beaver Gets 'spelled," by the 1963 episode "Tell it to Ella," Wally—once again serving as spokesperson for adult convention—was depicted as demonstrating a pretty fair understanding of why parents enforced rules and exacted punishments:

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[108] Liebman, 144.

[109] Ross, "Ward's Golf Clubs."

[110] Connelly and Mosher (story by James), "Beaver's Ring."

[111] Connelly and Mosher (story by Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest."

> Wally: Mom and dad don't make up the rules just to make 'em up. They're doing them for your own good.
> Beaver: For my own good? What are you doing, Wally, practicing being a father or something.[112]

In many ways, Wally was a father in training—one, who, over the course of the series, came to understand that parents had a method to their madness. As Wally said in "Beaver's Dance," "Even when your parents are hittin' ya, they're just trying to help."[113]

Time and again, episodes resolved with the realization that if only Wally and Beaver had listened to their parents, their troubles could have been avoided.[114] Indeed, discipline was depicted by the series as an expression of parental love and concern. Through various episodes, sympathy was not to be paid to the boy who got punished, but the boy who had indifferent parents who had neither the strength of character nor the

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[112] Conway and MacLane, "Tell it to Ella."

[113] Quote fromConnelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Dance." When Ward and June accidentally got Wally and Beaver fired from their paper route in van Hartesveldt, Connelly and Mosher, "Paper Route," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally notes they only did it because they care and they were lucky to have parents who did; in Connelly and Mosher, "The State versus Beaver," Wally admits that every time Ward balls them out it is for their own good; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Weekend Job," Wally notes that Ward was mad at him the way "parents get at their kids when they really care a lot about them."

[114] In Richard Baer, "Wally's New Suit," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally admits Ward was right and that his new suit would make him look to gaudy; in Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Helper," Wally admits that parents tend to know what is best for their kids; in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver, after having purchased a sweater he later saw a girl wearing, admits to Ward that he should have listened to him; in Connelly and Mosher (story by van Hartesveldt), "The Pipe," Ward shows Beaver that, as with smoking, the things parents tell kids are bad for them are really bad for them; in the end of Hoffmann, "Ice Skates," Beaver says that he could have avoided his problems if he would have come to Ward and June, who are both good for helping them; in Conway and MacLane, "Tennis Anyone," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), after ignoring Ward's advice about a love triangle, Wally later admits to June that he should have listened to Ward; at the end of Conway and MacLane, "Sweatshirt Monsters," Beaver admits that he was a "dope" to give into peer pressure; in Conway and MacLane, "Long Distance Call," Beaver admits that while he though he might get away with making an expensive long distance call, it was not fun to go sneaking behind his father's back; in William Schiller (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally Buys a Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Ward is happy to hear Wally say that he appreciated Ward's help in keeping him from buying a lemon; in Conway and MacLane, "Wally's Car," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), Wally realizes his parents are making him get rid of a $25 junker for his own good; and, in Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters," Beaver's teenage Babysitter Judy admits how her parents, in denying her wearing makeup, were only trying to help her do the right thing.

desire to discipline their children. Eddie Haskell was one of those unfortunate boys, as was Wally's one-episode friend Scott, whose enviable, carefree lifestyles were posited as pathetic manifestations of parents who did not care.[115]

To that end, Wally and Beaver came to appreciate the rules their parents enforced and the punishments they exacted. Such understanding was often played out through Wally and Beaver literally begging their parents to keep them from making the same sort of mistakes in the future.[116] Such scenes must have seemed strange to viewing kids who most likely did not make such appeals to their own parents. Interestingly enough, most appeals for future intervention were met by a comments from Ward saying that no parent could truly expect their children to consistently follow their parent's advice. Consider the following exchange from "Wally's Haircomb," in which Wally had come to appreciate the concerns June had regarding the faddish ducktail hair style he had adopted:

> Wally: Could you kinda do me a favor? Well, from now on, every time I do something kind of creepy, could you tell me it's kinda creepy?
> Ward: Every time, Wally? Oh, I don't think so. That would take half the joy out of childhood.[117]

This exchange is problematic for many reasons, none the least of which being the reality that while Wally's hair style may have made him look like a creep to his parents, it

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[115] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Haircomb," Wally says, in the resolution, that Eddie is unlucky because he does not have parents like Ward and June; in the end of Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Weekend Invitation," Scott, the teenager who tried to get Wally to make Ward and June think Scott's parents were going to chaperone a weekend at a cottage, notes how his parents appear to be too busy to care about him, saying that he wishes his parents would care enough, even once, to say no (in spite of this, Wally is still upset that Ward has refused to let Wally go, but says that since there are other things Wally will want, such as a car, he felt there was "no percentage" in making a big fuss).

[116] In Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver Won't Eat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Manings, "Stocks and Bonds," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), and Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Football Award," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), after Beaver or Wally agree to always listen to Ward and June, even Ward notes that a parent cannot expect such behavior and blind trust from their children.

[117] Connelly and Mosher, "Wally's Haircomb."

allowed him to conform to his friends. Once again, the series made clear that conformity to long-standing adult standards was preferred to conforming to the supposedly ephemeral standards adopted by their peers.

Not that the scripts had completely left reality. Mayfield kids—Wally and Beaver included—did not always accept their punishments eagerly. In "Beaver's Big Contest," for example, while Beaver admitted that it would be impractical for him to keep the car he won in a raffle, he was still hurt when his parents made him sell it "for his own good."[118] When Beaver told Larry that a kid should do as he is told, Larry quickly added, "Yeah, but it's pretty hard for kids to always do what your told because you get told so much."[119] The same theme was expressed in "Mistaken Identity;" when Beaver told his friend Richard that parents enforced rules for their kid's own good, Richard sent a corrective to viewing parents saying that such advice might be better heeded "if they didn't yell it at you."[120] Even Ward acknowledged how hard it is for kid's to listen to their parent's advice: "...I guess parents have always had a knack for making the right thing seem pretty dull and unattractive."[121] Thus, many of these moments, heavy-handed as they were, also had the appearance of a dialogue going on between parent and child indicating that both parties had a responsibility in conforming to accepted standards.

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[118] Connelly and Mosher (story by Kober), "Beaver's Big Contest." Such sentiments are also expressed in Conway and MacLane, "No Time for Babysitters" and Ross, "Wally's License," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[119] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Prize."

[120] Connelly and Mosher, "Mistaken Identity," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[121] Connelly and Mosher (story by Ross), "The Visiting Aunts."

Ward's understanding aside, there was no doubt that shows like *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* had rather conservative lessons in their resolutions that the fictional kids—at least the star characters who served as positive role models—eagerly accepted. Because these messages were granted such prominence in the episode's resolutions, they may account for why viewers have ignored the other more complicated elements of the series. Indeed, having a kid give up a stylish haircut so eagerly in an era that lay on the cusp of such great cultural change—particularly the sort of cultural change that occurred immediately after the series left the air—must have rung quite hollow to the baby-boomers who, in large part, began finding fault with such arbitrary rules of decorum enforced by the "establishment." While it would be historically inaccurate to posit all baby-boomers as being in opposition to authority—conservatism obviously survived the sixties—the same media which so relentlessly defined baby-boomers in such terms would soon come to choke on its most hopeful depictions of harmonious parent and child relations as depicted in such *Leave it to Beaver* scenes.

Growing Up

"...there comes a time when you just have to stop saying 'no' to your child and let him find his way for himself.[122]
--Ward Cleaver

Why the formal education? The manners? The attention to rules? Most likely because the series was, in many ways, founded on the premise of seeing children through

[122] Quote from Connelly, Mosher, Gielgud, "One of the Boys;" this need to let a child decide questions on their own is also noted Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Wally's Dream Girl," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961), in which Ward and June agree that children are not checkers that parents can make the moves for; in Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," Ward tells June that parents cannot make two brothers get into a "loving mood" if they are angry with each other; and in Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963), Ward says that parents cannot force kids to do what is good for them.

the transition from childhood to adulthood—an adulthood that would be no different from that of Ward and June. In doing so, Wally and Beaver followed a trajectory of modern childhood that was assumed—and in many ways *was*—similar to that of their real-world counterparts.

Because the characters of the series grew over time, the problems with growing up changed at different points in the series history. One of the initial changes the series explored involved the five-year age difference between Wally and Beaver and how Wally's adolescence interfered with his relationship with his younger brother.[123] As *TV Guide* described in 1958:

> Basically, Wally (played by Tony Dow) is a 12-year-old boy constantly trying to move away from childhood and into manhood. His brother Beaver, whom we've tagged at 7, is constantly pulling him back into childhood.[124]

Not that Beaver and Wally got along all the time; as brothers, they had their share of spats and arguments.[125] Many of these arguments came out of Wally's need to be with his own peer group, often leaving him trying to ditch the Beaver. As Wally said in "Wally's Girl Trouble," hanging around a littler kid like Beaver made him look like a

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[123] Beaver and Wally growing apart is seen in a number of early episodes. In Connelly and Mosher, "Lonesome Beaver," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Beaver feels left behind when he is told he is too young to join Wally's scouting group; in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," Beaver is sad that Wally seems more interested in girls than in him; Ward notes that Wally and Beaver are growing apart in Connelly, Mosher, Keith Fowler and Norman Paul (story by Fowler and Paul), "Wally's Present," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), and Conway, MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Doll Buggy," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

[124] "Tom Sawyer (Junior Grade)," *TV GUIDE*, 1 February 1958.

[125] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally, the Businessman," Beaver, mad that Wally will not extend him credit on the igloo bars, calls Wally a rat and a "pile of garbage;" in Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "June's Birthday," when Wally and Beaver each call each other dumb; in Connelly and Mosher (story by Tokar), "Brotherly Love," June, inspired by a poem about brothers in Quotes form the Arabic, tries to get two boys to stop fighting with each other; and, in Gabrielson, "Beaver Becomes a Hero," Ward reveals that his brother used to hit him constantly.

"sap."[126] Yet, in the end, family obligations trumped popularity, and Wally and Beaver could always count on each other.[127]

The biggest change in Wally and Beaver's relationship came when Wally became "aware" of girls, which he pursued with a subdued-yet-steady passion. This change made no sense to a younger Beaver, who still viewed girls as creeps. To Beaver, the allure of women was like a disease which had taken hold of his older brother.[128] Not that there was any "hope" for boys avoiding the opposite sex. In the heterosexual world of Mayfield, falling in love with girls was just a part of growing up male. Whether it was the sort of puppy love Beaver experienced with his teachers, or Wally falling for one of his high school classmates, guys were destined to succumb to that "bad feeling" of falling in love, which ultimately led a young man to his ultimate destination—marriage.[129]

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[126] In Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," Wally tells Beaver that Beaver hanging around him makes Wally look like a "sap;" in Katherine and Dale Eunson, "Beaver's Sweater." Wally tells his parents that kids at school would look at him funny if he was seen sitting with Beaver at lunch; in Breslow and Hoffmann, "Beaver's Frog," Wally helps his brother, even though it makes him look like a "creep;" and, in Connelly and Mosher, "Borrowed Boat," Wally is upset that Beaver would rather go somewhere with Larry Mondello than with him.

[127] In Connelly and Mosher, "Wally the Businessman," Beaver loans money to Wally because he does not want Wally to look bad for being short the money he owes to the ice cream bar company; Wally decides to help Beaver collect frogs in Breslow and Hoffman, "Beaver's Frogs," even though doing so makes him look like a "creep."

[128] In Connelly and Mosher, "Dance Contest," after Beaver tells Larry he is upset that Wally is getting interested in girls, Larry notes that he went through a similar situation with his older brother, who would start screaming at him just by saying hello; Wally notes, in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Her Idol," that his ideas on girls had changed when he was more interested in meeting girls at the movies than in throwing rocks at them; in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," June says that Wally's interest in girls is going to be rough on Beaver and on "the whole family;" becoming interested in girls and personal grooming also signaled a change between Beaver and Wally in Manhoff, "Cleaning Up Beaver;" in the Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," Wally notes that girls and baths stop making a guy sick around the same time; and in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Spot Removers," Wally, although he is dating, appears to have some ambivalence about girls, telling Beaver that with some girls, he'd rather be eating than dancing, and with others, he'd rather be dancing than eating.

[129] The first crush could be the worst. When Beaver falls for his teacher, Miss Canfield, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Leslie), "Beaver's Crush," he tells Wally that he does not think he will ever forget her. Wally admits that he has never gotten over his first crush; Beaver and Wally talk about the "sick feeling"

While Wally, the epitome of the normal, healthy American boy, seemed to glide into adolescence without a hitch, Beaver was not as lucky. As Mathers became older and lost the sort of "cuteness" for which his character was famous, his acting seemed a bit strained. Consequently, stories appeared to shift more toward Wally, who had always been depicted as an adolescent. Whether or not Mathers' turn from cute little kid to gawky teen had anything to do with Mathers' less than stellar performance in later episodes (a subjective appraisal, to be sure), it did seem to prompt an episode, "Nobody Loves Me," which dealt overtly with the sense of awkwardness and angst teens felt as they stumbled from boyhood to manhood.

The episode begins with Beaver and his friend Richard standing in front of a bookstore window and looking at such book titles as "You and Your Child," "Understanding Your Teenager," and "The Problem Child."

> Richard: Look at all the books telling what's wrong with kids.
> Beaver: Boy, I never knew we were so creepy before.
> Richard: Well, we're not really creepy. We're only creepy to our parents.
> Beaver: Gee, I don't think my parents think I'm creepy.
> Richard: Sure they do...It's just that they don't talk about it when you're around.[130]

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they get being around a girl they like; when Wally looks longingly at a girl at a dance in Gersham and Diamond, "Wally's Girl Trouble," Larry observes that his brother did the same thing before he got married; in Ross, "Brother versus Brother," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962), Wally talks about how liking girls sneaks up on a guy; in Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver and Violet," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), Beaver vows to stay dirty and messy and never like girls, but Wally says that all changes around age 14 or 15; likewise, in Connelly and Mosher, "Dramatic Club," Wally notes that girls and baths stop making a guy sick around the same time. By the end of the series, Beaver himself began being interested in girls in such episodes as Conway and MacLane, "Farewell to Penny," Connelly and Mosher (story by Hoffmann and Breslow), "Beaver's First Date," Conway and MacLane, "Merchant Marine," and Katherine and Dale Eunson, Connelly and Mosher (story by Katherine and Dale Eunson), "Beaver Sees America," with Beaver noting in each episode that the feelings he has for girls have taken him by surprise.

[130] Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Nobody Loves Me," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

When Beaver, who seemingly has no clue as to the changes he is going through, asks Richard about the meaning of the title of the book, "The Awkward Age," Richard says it refers to the time when "a kid gets clumsy and awkward and ugly and nobody likes him."[131]

Beaver, who suddenly becomes conscious of his own puberty (would he have escaped knowledge of it had it not been for his pal Richard?), begins noticing a few incidents at home that convince him that his parents no longer love him. For example, when Beaver spills a glass of water, Ward tells him to try and not be so clumsy, evoking a rather heated response from Beaver, who, already sensitive to his clumsiness, says, "Throw me in reform school for spilling a glass of water."[132] Beaver begins to feel worse when Ward and June forget to kiss him good night.

Over the next few scenes, Beaver grows more depressed. Nostalgic for his own childhood, Beaver goes to visit his old teacher, Miss Landers, who talks about how Beaver has shot-up like a beanpole. Not flattered by what Landers obviously meant as a compliment, Beaver is further upset when Landers calls him "Mr. Cleaver" and fawns about all the "cute" little fellows that now populate her class—cute little fellows from whom Beaver feels quite distant. Beaver next visits his old friend Gus the fireman, who also cannot stop talking about one of the cute little kids who is now hanging around the fire station—again, much like Beaver used to. Quite depressed, Beaver walks the streets of Mayfield, running into his friend Richard, who is sitting on a bench. Reluctant to go home and face his parents, Richard has made up a pathetic little game; he will not allow

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

himself to go home until he sees a New Jersey license plate. In the meantime, Wally, who has talked with Beaver earlier, explains Beaver's feelings to Ward and June. When Beaver comes home complaining that he feels sick, Ward and June devise a plan to fix their beloved son's pubescent ego. While taking Beaver's temperature, Ward begins telling June about a man at the office whose teenage son has gotten the silly notion that his parents have stopped loving him. June, picking up on Ward's child-psychology gambit, talks about how parents not only love their children as they age, but come to respect them "if they turn out the way" the parents had hoped. Beaver falls for the overt child psychology and, within less than thirty minutes, has made peace with his puberty.[133]

While this episode is quite problematic in its resolution, if only because Beaver is so taken in by Ward and June's obvious tactic to diffuse the situation, it is quite interesting in that the series producers bothered to address the issue at all. Richard's fear of facing his parents and Beaver's walk through his nostalgic past—which required the revival of two characters who had disappeared from the series—showed a sense of continuity that was rare among such affective family sitcoms. More importantly, the episode showed that despite its optimistic resolution, growing up was not easy. Lurking below the surface of the episode—albeit *way* below the surface of this episode—was the reality of the chemical, physical, and emotional changes that a record number of baby-boomers were simultaneously experiencing.

The change from childhood to adolescence not only required emotional adjustment but brought new responsibilities. In the last few seasons of the series, Wally

[133] Ibid.

bought a couple of cars and received his driver's license. As Ward observed in "Wally's License," this was just the beginning of the trajectory toward adulthood:

> Ward: We're learning that our kids finally grow up. This is the beginning—driving a car. Then off to college. Then get a job. Get married. Children.[134]

Parents were not fully comfortable with such change. June was particularly frightened by Wally's growth. Afraid of the responsibility that a car entailed, for example, June tried to convince Ward not to let Wally get his license too soon. Taking the event to the sort of emotional extreme that the series often attributed to women, June saw Wally's driving as just a few short steps away from her becoming a grandmother.[135] June also became alarmed when Wally asked if he could skip the family vacation and stay in Mayfield with the Haskells for the Summer in "Untogetherness." While June fussed about this situation, Ward, ever the level-headed father, acknowledged that Wally was almost an adult and had "the right to make his own decisions."[136] As Ward had observed in one of the earliest series' episodes, "Captain Jack," "You can't hang on to the things you love forever. You have to turn them loose. To give them a chance."[137] While Ward was

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[134] Ross, "Wally's License."

[135] Ibid.

[136] Conway and MacLane, "Untogetherness," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[137] Quote from Connelly and Mosher, "Captain Jack," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1957), Wally also has an awareness of growing older and having more freedom in Elan Packard, Harry Winter, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Newspaper," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1959), in which Wally notes he will be able to vote in eight years. In the same episode, June notes that things will change between the boys because they are growing up; in Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "Beaver's I.Q.," June tells Beaver that he will grow up and have a wife and family of his own one day; interestingly, after making their first trip alone on a train, Wally comes back and notes that the house seems to be getting smaller, indicating his growth, in Connelly and Mosher, "Train Trip;" and, in Connelly and Mosher (story by Manhoff), "Tenting Tonight," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958), Wally assures Beaver they will be okay staying outside as they are "almost grown up."

talking about Beaver and Wally's attachment to their pet alligator, the analogy to parent and child was quite palpable, even in that early episode.

Growing up was also quite scary to kids. As Dow noted in an article in *Dig!* Magazine, he was troubled by the conflicting emotions of wanting independence while suffering from that "weird feeling I get when I think about being 'out on my own' in a couple of years."[138] Indeed, while Mayfield kids were anxious to grow up, they were also worried about what that entailed. As Wally observed in "Wally's Dinner Date," in which Wally arranged to take a date to an expensive restaurant, "As a guy gets older, having fun sure gets complicated," a sentiment with which Ward heartily agreed.[139] In "Beaver Joins a Record Club," Beaver learned that being responsible for his actions—in this case, paying for debts he had amassed—was no easy task.[140] While the kids envied adult freedom, they saw that such freedom often called for great self-sacrifice. In "Ward's Problem," Wally became upset when Ward had to cancel a camping trip in order to take Beaver to a school event:

> Ward: You're in high school now. You ask to be treated like a man. Alright, suppose you were in my place? What would you do?
> Wally: [having gotten Ward's point] It always doesn't work out so well, being treated like a man?
> Ward: No, Wally, it doesn't.[141]

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[138] *Dig!*, circa 1960, 28.

[139] Katherine and Dale Eunson (story by Connelly and Mosher), "Wally's Dinner Date," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[140] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver Joins a Record Club," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1963).

[141] Connelly and Mosher (story by Ed James), "Ward's Problem," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

Thus, not only was the world they lived in less than ideal, the world they were going in to, as adults, was froth with foreboding:

> Wally: Well, it's just that a guy begins to realize that being grown up is a big responsibility.
> Beaver: Yeah. Maybe that's why dad worries about us so much. He knows about all the stuff that can go wrong in a guy.
> Wally: Yeah. I guess I never knew I had it so good when I was a kid.[142]

But, just as kids got used to dancing school and girls, they would also adapt to adulthood. In "School Picture," Beaver, unable to envision himself as a father, tells Wally, "if a kid ever called me dad, I'd be so scared I wouldn't know what to do." Wally, however, assures Beaver that having such feelings was only natural.

> Wally: ....You'd probably feel creepy at first but then you'd get used to it like our dad did.[143]

Thus, the trajectory was clear: Beaver would grow up, get married, and have a child, who, according to Wally, would make the same stupid mistakes Beaver had made:

> Beaver: Think I'll ever understand the stuff dad tells us?
> Wally: Well, sure you will, but it won't do you any good.
> Beaver: How come?
> Wally: Well, cause by that time you'll have a whole lot of kids of your own and they'll be just as stupid as you are now.[144]

While such lines were played for laughs they also revealed the angst typical of Mayfield youth. And while Wally and Beaver were eager to engage life, they also knew it carried

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[142] Ross, "Wally's License."

[143] Conway and MacLane (story by Connelly and Mosher) "School Picture."

[144] Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Rat," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1961).

its own set of challenges. To that end, the Cleaver boys themselves—particularly Beaver—could craft a comforting image of their past into which they could retreat. Indeed, before America became nostalgic for the supposed idealized images of *Leave it to Beaver*, Beaver became nostalgic for his own past. Of course, just as Ward had learned in "The Happy Weekend," in which he tried to give his boys a taste of his rural childhood, Beaver learned that the past was not an easy thing to recapture.

"Wouldn't it be neat if a guy could stay a kid all his life?"

In "Beaver's Old Buddy," Beaver is disappointed to find that the good time he imagined he would have when his old friend came by to visit proved less than what he had expected. Surprised that some of the things from his earlier childhood had lost their allure, Beaver went to Ward for counsel:

> Beaver: I always thought that growing up was one of the neatest things that could happen to a guy.
> Ward: Oh, well growing up is a pretty neat thing, Beaver, if you really grow up. And it's all right to look back on the good times you had. But if you try to relive them, somehow they're never as good the second time around....Sad thing is, there are some men my age who are still trying to be little boys...[145]

While Ward had certainly advanced beyond being a little boy, his own frequent calls to his youth almost seemed to encourage Beaver's own nostalgia. Not only had Beaver retreated into nostalgia in "Nobody Loves Me," he also felt such emotions in "Beaver's

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[145] Conway and MacLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Old Buddy." In the same episode, Beaver said he has a hard time imagining being a grown up and scaring kids the way adults scare him, but Ward assures Beaver that no man never truly forgets his own childhood. The idea that growing is a continual process is found in Ross, Connelly and Mosher, "Mother's Day Competition," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1960), Tibbles, "The Haunted House," Theodore and Mathilde Ferro, "The Silent Treatment," and Conway, McLane, Connelly and Mosher, "Beaver's Doll Buggy."

Tree," "Wally's Present," "The Forgotten Party," and "Boarding School."[146] As June observed in "Beaver's Old Friend," in which Beaver grew nostalgic for his old teddy bear, "We all like to hang onto something that reminds us of some happy occasion of the past.[147]

Beaver was well aware of the power of nostalgic items. In "Eddie's Double Cross," Beaver asked June if he can buy back his old jeans, which he had just donated to the local rummage sale. Beaver said the jeans reminded him of the "good times" he had at summer camp, and argued that he could put them on and "have a good time even if he's not having one."[148] In "Beaver's Trains," Beaver grew nostalgic for his old electric trains, which he already promised to give to a younger boy in the neighborhood. As Beaver and his friend Gilbert started cleaning the old trains, the two re-discovered the toy's allure. When Wally teased the two boys about playing with such toys, Gilbert, aware of the peer pressure involved, said that it was okay to do it as long as none of their peers found out about it. Soon, Beaver became determined to keep his trains:

> Beaver: Boy Wally, I wonder whatever made me think I was too old to play with trains?
> Wally: I don't know. I guess because everybody was always telling you at school and at home to act like a man. Pretty soon you forget how to act like a kid.
> Beaver: Wouldn't it be neat if a guy could stay a kid all his life?

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[146] Beaver gets nostalgic for summers at the lake in Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Boarding School," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958); Beaver gets nostalgic for his old tree in Connelly and Mosher (story by Conway and MacLane), "Beaver's Tree;" Beaver is nostalgic for the old days when Wally had big birthday parties in Connelly, Mosher, Fowler and Paul, "Wally's Present;" Wally says that old friends are sometimes better than new friends in Connelly and Mosher, "Forgotten Party;" As Beaver contemplates going to an Eastern prep school, he gets nostalgic for an old neighborhood dog, an old tree in which he had carved his initials in, the old fire station, and the old friends he will leave behind.

[147] Connelly, Mosher, Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Old Friend," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1958).

[148] Connelly and Mosher, "Eddie's Double Cross."

> Wally: Aw, you'd never get away with that. But you know, when you get really old, they got something called a second childhood.
> Beaver: No foolin'? ...At least I got something to look forward to.[149]

While Beaver eventually got over his new found love of trains, such nostalgic feelings resurface in the final scene of the series' last episode, "Family Scrapbook," a retrospective episode featuring popular scenes from previous shows. The story began with Ward and June cleaning the house and finding a number of items from their children's past. In addition to the old photo album, which became the vehicle for the episode flashbacks, June discovered an old wind-up monkey which Ward reportedly purchased for Beaver on the day he was born. After showing scenes from such episodes as "Beaver Gets 'spelled," "The Shave," "Teacher Comes to Dinner," and "Beaver and Andy," the boys returned to their room as Ward and June reflected on their sons' remarkable growth:

> Ward: "They're not little boys anymore. They're responsible individuals now, practically grown men."

The line was immediately followed by the final scene, in which Wally and Beaver sat on the floor and marveled at the antics of Beaver's old wind-up monkey. Thus the series ended with Wally and Beaver greeting their adulthood with a reminder from the past.[150] Just as Gans had observed, people lived with a foot in several worlds. Just as Ward had never forgotten his childhood, one could bet that neither would Beaver or Wally.

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[149] Conway and MacLane, "Beaver's Electric Trains," *LITB* (Gomalco Productions, 1962).

[150] Connelly and Mosher, "Family Scrapbook."

The series, itself, of course, had become a nostalgic reminder all its own. Ending in 1963, the series would go into reruns just as American youth began to reject many of the lessons Ward and June and their middle-class school system had tried to instill. While *Leave it to Beaver* was never as far removed from its time as has been assumed, the time during which it left the air was so seemingly different from that in which it began that it quickly dated the series. Jacobs and Jones, in their article on the series published in the 1980s, noted how the series ending seemed to coincide with the end of "American innocence:"

> ...it wasn't just the boys who had grown up, but America as well. The nation, in 1963, was just entering one of its greatest periods of flux. The dreams of American youth were changing dramatically, and the wholesome sedate world of the Cleavers no longer reflected those dreams. Suddenly the nation's youth was identifying much more with Eddie Haskell. Sympathy, perhaps, had shifted from the Beave to the Creep. Eddie had become the hero for most of us growing up on the other side of the screen.[151]

While there was never such a thing as a period of American innocence, the series did mark the end of the baby-boom's innocence, as children born in the late-1940s and early 1950's moved into adulthood. The cultural changes that accompanied that growth included the realization that the functional meritocracy the Cleavers seemed to belive in was not working out for all. It is that cultural change to which we now turn.

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[151] Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones, "Leave it to Beaver," *TV Gold*, Movieland Publishing, Inc., 1986, 9.

CHAPTER NINE:
THE DAY JERRY MATHERS DIDN'T DIE IN VIETNAM

"Return to 'Leave it to Beaver' where we
find Beaver left as an ulcerous stomach"
--Des McAnuff
"Leave it to Beaver is Dead"[1]

Sometime in 1968 or 1969, one of the wire services had supposedly reported that Jerry Mathers had been killed in Vietnam. That same evening, actress Shelly Winters, supposedly appearing on the *Tonight Show*, mentioned the report of Mathers' death, followed by an impassioned plea to stop the war which had just robbed America of one of its most innocent icons. While the report of Mathers death and the subsequent pleas by Winters cannot be confirmed—indeed, not only was Mathers' death greatly exaggerated, it is quite possible that the report of that death and Winters reaction were also little more than urban legends,[2]—the day Jerry Mathers *did not* die in Vietnam became a part of American culture lore.

Mathers, who was serving in the Air National Guard during the time of the Vietnam War, had ironically been kept from going overseas because the military wanted to prevent the very type of story that surfaced regarding Mathers. So why were people so willing to believe the story of Mathers' death? Why have people repeated the story of the report and Winters reaction to it as fact? As snopes.com, a web site devoted to urban legends, noted, part of the answer lies in the story's underlying plausibility. After all,

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[1] Des McAnuff, "Leave it to Beaver is Dead," published in Mac Wellman, ed., *Theater of Wonders: Six Contemporary American Plays* (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1985), 149.

[2] See www.snope.com, an internet site which researches urban legends, was unable to find evidence of Shelly Winters *Tonight Show* appearance and believes that the report of the death itself may be an urban legend. The URL for this page is http://www.snopes.com/radiotv/tv/beaver.htm

late-1960s news reports were filled with innocent American boys who were being killed in Vietnam. According to the snopes.com site, Mathers, who had basically dropped out of the public's eye after *Leave it to Beaver* was cancelled in 1963, appeared in full dress uniform at the Emmy Awards ceremony in 1967, a year or two before the supposed report of his death. The idea of innocent "Beaver Cleaver" growing up to be killed in Vietnam thus presented an nearly irresistible target for a market ripe for such urban legends.[3]

By the 1980s, with a new first-run version of *Leave it to Beaver* underway, the story of Jerry Mathers' falsely-reported death had become a staple of cast biographies which began appearing in popular magazines. Not only had Beaver supposedly been killed in Vietnam, but other urban legends speculated that Ken Osmond had become either Alice Cooper or porn star John Holmes, or that Tony Dow had married his TV mom, Barbara Billingsley.[4] As *People* observed in 1985, "So suburban-perfect were the Cleavers...that Americans desperately needed to destroy the myth."[5] Viewed in the post-Vietnam age, Mathers' "death" seemed to point to a sudden realization of just how far these shows had strayed from the reality of America.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Reports of Mathers having been thought to have died in Vietnam appear in numerous sources, including Josh Hammer and Susan Peters, "Still The Beaver After 20 Years, Jerry Mathers Joins Tony Dow for a Bittersweet Return to Mayfield," *People*, 7 February 1983, 95. Richard Lamparski, *Whatever Became Of...?*, eighth series (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1982), 201, reported the death rumor, as well as the Shelly Winters appearance, in his entry on Jerry Mathers with Fagen, Herb. *...And Jerry Mathers as "The Beaver"* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1998), noting the while Mathers family had a reaction out on the story within 24 hours, many fans still thought Mathers was dead. Also see Lamparski, 89, for discussion of urban legends regarding Ken Osmond.

[5] "TV's Re-Run madness: As sitcoms stage a comeback, look at what happened to the stars of your best-loved shows," *People Weekly*, 4 March 1985, 97.

This was not the first time that *Leave it to Beaver* or its characters were seen as unrealistic or part of an overtly optimistic ideal. Indeed, in a 1958 interview with Jerry Mathers, children's magazine writer Arthur Sasso observed:

> Jerry, in his role as Beaver...lives in an imaginary world that is always loving and trusting. The cowboys that Beaver sees on television are real, everything his mom and dad say if a fact. It is a sunny world where there is always a happy ending for a little boy, whether he is good, or even when he is bad...just so long as he is sorry.[6]

Mathers himself, interviewed by *TV Guide* at the end of the first season, said that he felt Wally was a bit unrealistic for hatching such ridiculous schemes to extricate Beaver from trouble.[7] Furthermore, Robert Lewis Shayon, a popular writer from *Saturday Review*, referred to the Cleaver family as "Mr. and Mrs. Average-American parents living in their typical *Good Housekeeping* home."[8] Nevertheless, it was not until the late-1960s that the fiction of *Leave it to Beaver* became synonymous with fantasy.

As media historian Darrell Hamamoto observed in *Nervous Laughter*, "Before too long, problems of racism, inequality, and war began to clash with images of peaceable sitcom communities like Central City, Mayfield, Mayberry, Hillsdale, and Springfield."[9] Suddenly, the media before 1963—the year *Leave it to Beaver* left the air—seemed little more than a chimera held by consumerist dupes and idiots too stupid to have seen the capitalistic crimes being perpetrated upon them. Even though the seeds of

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[6] Arthur J. Sasso, "Leave it to Beaver" *Calling All Girls*, October 1958, 42.

[7] "Busy as a Beaver," *TV Guide*, 28 June 1958, 10.

[8] Robert Lewis Shayon, "Beaver's Booboo," *Saturday Review*, 1 February 1958 , 26.

[9] Darrell Y. Hamamoto, *Nervous Laughter: Television Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1989), x.

social change ran much deeper than the arrival of a new decade (indeed, all of the changes that took place in the 1960s, particularly those affecting authority, women, and the family, had their roots in the industrialization and commercialization of Western society, as well as in the changes the parents of the baby boom had been experiencing since the end of World War II), the popular myth was that, within a few short years, America had changed from a *Leave it to Beaver* consensus to a scene dominated by war, civil rights, feminism, and the counterculture.[10] As Hal Himmselstein, in *Television Myth and the American Mind*, observed:

> *Leave it to Beaver* framed a sociocultural milieu immediately preceding the social upheavals of the Vietnam era, the free-speech movement, the revolt against the traditional authority of the family and the state ideological apparatuses, and the ascendance of women toward equal partnership in the work experience. The quiet idealized, insulated life of the suburban middle landscape would soon be confronted with a harsher reality outside our television screens.[11]

As Americans confronted a seemingly new world, *Leave it to Beaver* became what a variety of people willed it to be. Jerry Mathers may not have died in Vietnam, but, to paraphrase the title of Des McAnuff' play "Leave it to Beaver is Dead," *Leave it to Beaver* was dead.

The "Vast Wasteland"

The opinion of *Leave it to Beaver* as a hopelessly white, happy picture of 1950s America arose not really because it had painted such a portrait of America, but because of the cultural capital of the 1960s that began complicating the way Americans saw their

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[10] Perhaps the best discussion of this is found in Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom & Social Change* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[11] Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 127.

nation and themselves. While many middle-class Americans who enjoyed the "age of affluence" came to believe that the nation's problems had been eradicated by Progressivism, the New Deal, and a post-World War II economic boom that lead to real economic growth, historical facts and cultural artifacts emerged to show that America was a deeply troubled nation. And television seemed to be doing very little about addressing those problems.

This fact was not lost on Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton Minow, who, on May 9, 1961, delivered a speech at the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D.C. [12] Speaking to the executives and programmers who had the ability to effect a change in network television, Minow labeled the great bulk of 1960's TV fare as little more than a "vast wasteland" that consisted, in part, of "formula comedies about totally unbelievable families..."[13] Minow, who served as FCC chairman from 1961 to 1963, was well aware of the power television had to transform the American heart and mind. To Minow, broadcasters were not merely engaged in a commercial enterprise, but an historical task of great magnitude. Likening television to the hydrogen bomb, Minow stated that "...just as history will decide whether the leader's of today's world employed the atom to destroy the world or rebuild it for mankind's benefit, so will history decide whether today's broadcasters employed their powerful

[12] Need to note that Minow was not really the first in FCC to attack TV standards. "Television: The New Cyclops," *Business Week*, 10 March 1956, notes that as early as 1955, a speech by FCC Chairman George C. McConnaughey argued that while some TV was informative and enjoyable, he felt that the FCC would have to step in if the networks did not do something about minimum standards (78).

[13] Address by Newton N. Minow to the National Association of Broadcasters, Washington D.C., 9 May 1961, as reprinted in Frank J. Kahn, ed., *Documents of American Broadcasting*, third ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1978), 285.

voice to enrich the people or debase them."[14] In order to uplift, of course, TV had to commit to providing a wider range of choices that included programs offering "more diversity, more alternatives. It is not enough to cater to the nation's whims—you must also serve the nation's needs."[15]

Noting how television had grown from novelty to important social force, Minow exhorted the media executives to take on the mantle of leadership and make a commitment "to make our people aware of their world."[16] To Minow, this task was of supreme importance to American freedom. "I urge you to put the people's airwaves to the service of the people and the cause of freedom," said Minow. "You must help prepare a generation for great decisions. You must help a great nation fulfill its future."[17] Minow backed his charge with the FCC's power to re-license stations, saying that re-licensing would be measured in part in how successfully broadcasters met that national need.[18] Quoting from the National Association of Broadcaster's own "Code of Good Practices," Minow said that "'Program materials should enlarge the horizons of the viewer, provide him with wholesome entertainment, afford helpful stimulation, and remind him of the responsibilities which the citizen has toward his society.'"[19] That goal, Minow believed, could only be achieved through "imagination in programming, not sterility; creativity, not limitation; experimentation, not conformity; excellence, not

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[14] Ibid., 284.

[15] Ibid., 286

[16] Ibid., 284.

[17] Ibid., 291.

[18] Ibid., 287-88.

[19] Ibid., 290.

mediocrity. Television is filled with creative, imaginative people. You must strive to set them free."[20]

The Other America and *The Feminine Mystique*

The producers that Minow was appealing to were part of a cultural milieu beginning to explore the very sort of problems that would become fodder for more liberal late-1960s and early-1970s sitcoms and dramas. As social critiques turned from worrying about the fate of the inner-directed, organization men and towards that of the minorities who populated an "Other America," the "totally unbelievable families" to which Minow had referred looked strange indeed.[21] In addition to Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of American Cities* (1961), Richard Carson's seminal environmentalist work *Silent Spring* (1962), and Simon Debouvier's *The Second Sex*, perhaps the most significant works challenging the notion of an affluent society were Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique*. While neither of these were the first word on poverty or sexism, respectively, they were the works that captured the hearts of a growing number of Americans committed to social change.

Harrington's simple, eloquent work proceeded from a basic premise: "In a nation with a technology that could provide every citizen with a decent life, it is an outrage and a scandal that there should be such social misery."[22] Harrington argued that, contrary to John Kenneth Gailbraith's popular *Affluent Society*, which depicted only pockets of

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[20] Ibid., 291.

[21] See works such as William Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man*, (New York: Smon and Schuster, 1956), and David Reisman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), whose societal critiques involve white middle-class concerns.

[22] Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 17.

isolated poverty in the United States,[23] there were as many as forty to fifty million Americans, in a nation of 180-million, who lived in an "other America" of poverty and despair.[24] To make matters worse, modern suburbanization coupled with the reality of an uneven affluence had rendered American poverty invisible.[25] Through a series of eight chapters, Harrington provided vivid images of the various classes and subsets of the poor, from urban and rural poor, to alcoholics, the disabled, the elderly, and, most significantly for Harrington, the impoverished people of color who struggled to survive in a racist America.

Most significant to Harrington's work was his adoption of Oscar Lewis's concept of a "culture of poverty,"[26] which argued that poverty was not simply an economic condition in which one lived, but, as Harrington observed, "...an institution, a way of life....Everything about [the poor], from the condition of their teeth to the way in which they love, is suffused and permeated by the fact of their poverty."[27] If this cycle was ever to be broken, argued Harrington, it would be up to his affluent, middle-class, reform-minded readers to effect that change.[28] While the book only enjoyed modest sales in its first few months, *The Other America* got good reviews in the liberal and radical press,

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[23] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 250-58.

[24] Harrington, 1.

[25] Ibid., 5-10.

[26] See Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), who notes how Oscar Lewis had used the term "culture of poverty in *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty*. Isserman is quick to note that Oscar Lewis not happy with culture of poverty way it was used, with Lewis saying in his own work he felt culture of poverty applied to only one-fifth of those in US poverty; as Isserman observed, Harrington, however, "used the term far more loosely as a virtual synonym for being poor" (216).

[27] Harrington, 17.

[28] Ibid., 168.; for more on Harrington's life, see Isserman.

building Harrington's reputation.[29] Lyndon Johnson was very affected by Harrington's work, recruiting Harrington into the Administration to help with its "War on Poverty." Harrington, as a socialist, however, found that he was to have little effect in the war on poverty.[30] Nevertheless, it was Harrington who brought the topic of poverty to the nation's attention.

While Harrington's work has no serious discussion of mass media, it was the image promulgated by the mass media that prompted the opening line of Harrington's book:

> There is a familiar America. It is celebrated in speeches and advertised on television and in the magazines. It has the highest mass standard of living the world has ever known.[31]

According to Harrington, this mediated image had become, in many ways, an unreachable window on American affluence that flaunted wealth and luxury in the face of those caught in the vicious cycle of the poverty. As Harrington observed, "Psychological depravation is one of the chief components of poverty....And the terrible thing that is happening to these people is that suddenly they feel themselves to be rejects, outcasts. At that moment the affluent society ceases to be reality or even a hope; it becomes a taunt."[32] While Harrington was talking about the affluent society itself, as opposed to its mediated images, his first sentence clearly shows that affluence and its image were often viewed as one in the same. Thus, when Harrington's argued that there was a "tragic gap

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[29] Ibid., 198-99.

[30] Ibid., 212.

[31] Ibid., 1.

[32] Ibid., 31.

between the ideal and the possible," adding a "sense of disillusion, of failure...to the indignity of poverty,"[33] he was in effect arguing that the trappings of modern affluence, including the domestic sitcom, inflicted great psychological harm against those who aspired to but could never fully achieve its perceived image of perfection. This concept of the taunt looms large in later critiques of the domestic sitcom in general and of *Leave it to Beaver* in particular (as will be discussed in chapter eleven).

Two years after Harrington "introduced" American readers to the victims of poverty, the images of the happy, contented homemaker—of the June Cleavers and Donna Reeds—came crashing down under the weight of Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. Taking mass media—along with Freudian psychology and Parsonian sociology to task—Friedan attacked the very notion that anatomy was destiny[34] and argued that American women needed to regain something they had lost to the feminine mystique—their identity.[35]

While Friedan best articulated the concept of the feminine mystique, she was not the first to address the media's part in women's subordinate role in modern society. As Friedan noted herself, a 1956 *McCalls* article, "The Mother Who Ran Away," which focused on a woman who had grown tired of her role as housewife and mother, received the biggest readership in the magazine's history.[36] Gerhard Falk, in *Sex, Gender, and Social Change: The Great Revolution*, noted that television and magazines had begun

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[33]Ibid., 82.

[34] Betty Friedan, (1963; reprint, New York: Laurel, 1983), 79.

[35] Ibid., 71.

[36] Ibid., 50.

covering the crisis of the dissatisfied housewife in 1960.[37] In 1961, President Kennedy had set up a Presidential Commission on the status of women, which issued its first report 1963, the same year Friedan's work was published.[38] Nevertheless, while women had already begun working outside of the home before the *Feminine Mystique* appeared, making the book more cathartic than seminal, one cannot underestimate the powerful effect this book had on the American psyche.[39]

As Friedan revealed in her autobiography, *It Changed My Life*, there were a number of factors that motivated her toward writing *The Feminine Mystique*. On the one hand, as the daughter of Jewish immigrants living in Peoria, Illinois, Friedan had suffered from social injustices that made her sensitive to the plight of others. She also had witnessed her mother's discontent as a housewife and vowed not to be like her. One of the turning points in Friedan's life came as a student at Smith College, where she delighted in being taken seriously as a person who had the power to affect humanity.[40] After working as a labor writer during World War II,[41] Friedan eventually got married herself, noting in her autobiography that "domestic bliss had suddenly become chic, sophisticated, and whatever made you want to be a lady editor, police reporter, or political activist, could prevent or destroy that bliss—bourgeois security, no longer

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[37] Gerhard Falk. *Sex, Gender, and Social Change: The Great Revolution* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of American, 1998), 22.

[38] Ibid, 28.

[39] As John Brooks, *The Giant Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), citing the growing number of women joining the work force in the 1950s, observed, "the vast popularity of The Feminine Mystique might be accounted for by the circumstance that it provided millions of women with sorely needed philosophical justification for what they had already done anyway" (346).

[40] Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Woman's Movement* (New York: Dell, 1991), 4-5.

[41] Ibid., 7-10.

despised."[42] It was around 1949 that she met Carl Friedan, who was starting a summer theater in New Jersey. "He brought me an apple and told me jokes that made me laugh, and he moved in."[43] The same year her son Danny was born. The family ultimately moved to an eleven room Victorian house, with Friedan raising three children, serving as a member of the PTA, planning buffet dinners, and, gradually, on the side, working on her book.[44]

Friedan was never one of the typical housewives she depicted in her work. Unlike most wives and mothers—unlike most people in general—she had a career as a successful magazine writer. Indeed, Freidan's work on *Feminine Mystique* grew out of an article she had been writing on the women with whom she had gone to Smith. While researching her article, Friedan found that the women expressed a similar sense of dissatisfaction with their domestic roles, and the idea for her book took shape. Starting with a supposed Golden Age of idealistic and heroic women who had been depicted in the mass media of the 1930s and 1940s,[45] Friedan argued that a set of cultural imperatives which had developed after World War II and continued through the 1950s left suburban

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[42] Ibid., 8.

[43] Ibid., 7.

[44] Ibid., 13-17.

[45] Friedan, *Mystique*, 80-102; Friedan's idea of a golden age may have been overly optimistic. In her own text, she notes that while one-quarter of women had worked outside the home by 1940, only a "miniscule 2.5% of mothers were 'career women.'" (190). JoAnne Meyerowtiz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *Journal of American History*, (March 1993), 1478, argues that Friedan's use of examples from the media were reductive and that her study revealed the greater ambiguities that existed in the popular literature of the times she reviewed. In trying to answer why her "version of history" differed from Friedan's, Meyerowitz notes that "the most gracious...explanation is that we used different, though overlapping, sources," with more ambivalence expressed in the articles Meyerowitz had focused on. Meyerowitz goes on to state that while Friedan may not have read the sources "incorrectly," she did seem to cite them "reductively," choosing pre-war era stories that "embraced public achievement" while choosing postwar stories that tended to embody "domestic ideals"(1479).

American women reveling in their own domestication, dreaming only of being "perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands....They gloried in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: 'Occupation: housewife.'"[46] At the same time, argued Friedan, American women knew that there was something wrong. Something was missing. They knew that they suffered from an unnamed problem that

> ...lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century of the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—"Is this all?"[47]

The feminine mystique weighed so heavily on the modern woman, she was "ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction" with a problem that so many other women silently shared.[48] This "problem that has no name," argued Friedan, kept women from "growing to fill their human capacities" and was taking a great toll on the "physical and mental health of our country."[49] With the memory of the Holocaust still fresh in the American mind, Friedan likened the suburban home to what she called a "comfortable concentration camp:

> Have not women who live in the image of the feminine mystique trapped themselves within the narrow walls of their homes? They have learned to adjust to their biological role. They have become dependent, passive, childlike; they have given up their adult frame of reference to live at the lower human level of

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[46] Friedan, *Mystique*, 18.

[47] Ibid., 15.

[48] Ibid., 19.

[49] Ibid., 364.

> food and things. The work they do does not require adult capabilities; it is endless, monotonous, unrewarding. American women are not, of course, being readied for mass extermination, but they are suffering a slow death of mind and spirit. [50]

Like Ralph Ellison's nameless narrator in *The Invisible Man*, who can find freedom only after gaining his identity, American women, argued Friedan, had to find their identity as well.[51] As Friedan wrote:

> It is my thesis that the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity—a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique. It is my thesis that as Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic sexual needs, our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role.[52]

At bottom, Friedan argued that women would achieve self-realization not just through a part-time job, but through doing meaningful "creative work of her own."[53]

While Friedan laid blame for the Feminine Mystique at many places, from Freudian psychology to Parsonian sociology to sex education, Friedan argued that the chief purveyor of the mystique was mass media and its use of the "sexual sell."[54] Because the "business of America is business" and because women are the main consumers of many goods, Friedan argued that the profit motive necessitated women's

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[50] Ibid., 307-08.

[51] Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (New York: Twentieth Century Library, 1993).

[52] Ibid., 77.

[53] Ibid., 344.

[54] Friedan, *Mystique*, 206-232.

return to domesticity.[55] Thus, the "image machine" reinforced the suburban housewives role as happy, docile, subservient servant:

> The public image, in the magazines and television commercials, is designed to sell washing machines, cake mixes, deodorants, detergents, rejuvenating face creams, hair tints. But the power of that image, on which companies spend millions of dollars for television time and ad space, comes from this: American women no longer know who they are. They are sorely in need of a new image to find their identity...[56]

Much like Harrington, who saw the image of affluence as little more than a cruel taunt to those who had no hope of attaining it, Friedan saw the relentless feminine mystique as one which had the power to induce great psychological harm. Having been a part of the great "image machine" herself, Friedan wrote:

> [I could] no longer deny my own knowledge of its terrible implications. It is not a harmless image. There may be no psychological terms for the harm it is doing. But what happens when women try to live according to an image that makes them deny their minds? What happens when women grow up in an image that makes them deny the reality of the changing world?[57]

While Friedan did not discuss the family sitcom in any more depth than did Harrington,[58] her description of the American housewife fit perfectly with the popular image of June Cleaver, Margaret Anderson, and Donna Reed. As Friedan observed:

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[55] Ibid., 206.

[56] Ibid., 72.

[57] Ibid., 66

[58] unlike academics of the 1980s-present, who have seen television as the last remaining remnant of the feminine mystique, Friedan was much more concerned with the magazine depictions, which are not part of the contemporary academic discussion because, unlike sitcoms, magazines do not make for saleable re-runs.

> The suburban housewife was the dream image of the young American women and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American housewife—freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illness of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children,. her home. She had found true feminine fulfillment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to a man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of.[59]

While neither Harrington nor Friedan's work contained a single word about *Leave it to Beaver*, the stories they told of poverty, racism, and sexism made it difficult to accept, without question, such seemingly happy, contented pictures that were still being re-run into American homes each day. As media historian Susan Douglas observed in her highly personal look at the role of women in modern mass media, the domestic sitcom stood in sharp contrast to the personal and political worlds her generation knew:

> After we'd watched the perfect, secure, harmonious families on The Donna Reed Show or My Three Sons, we watched our parents fight with each other, yell at us and hit us, and plot their divorces. We also saw, on the same TV that brought us fictional, conflict-free towns like Mayfield and Springfield, all-too-real places like Selma and Birmingham, where real Americans couldn't vote or send their kids to college, where real parents lost their children to bombs planted in churches, and where real teenagers were clubbed mercilessly by police for sitting at a Woolworth's counter
>
> We were starting to gag, in fact, on the widening disjunctures between our lives, what we saw on the news, and the increasingly infantile and surreal offerings of network television."[60]

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[59] Friedan, *Mystique*, 18.

[60] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are, Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 143.

"Quit jerking us off and give us something real"

Douglas was not the only one gagging on the disjuncture between fact and fiction. The "imaginative, creative" people of television, inspired perhaps by Minow and certainly by the cultural changes among which they found themselves, began to create the fictional television family anew. Not that Connelly and Mosher, along with other TV producers, had not been complicating the image before the late-1960s. Indeed, as already observed, Connelly and Mosher and their writers had touched on such aspects as poverty, divorce, and a general sense of dissatisfaction that marked modern life in general and the 1950s specifically.

Perhaps one of the first network attempts at complicating the image of the family was a 1960 TV pilot, *Daddy-O*. Produced by *George Burns Show* producer Rod Amateau, along with humorist Max Schulman, the pilot began with the image of a warm family moment, reminiscent of a late-1950's era sitcom. As the camera pulled away from the scene, viewers were surprised to find that they had been watching a mediated moment taking place in a fictional, television family. The star of the fictional family, Ben Cousins, played by Don DeFore, was facing a crisis, wanting to remove his family from television and pursue a career as a carpenter to do meaningful work of lasting value. The fictional producer of the series, Albert Shapian, played by Lee Phillips, tried to convince Cousins to remain on the show, as does his family, which had gotten used to the notoriety. As Hamamoto observed, "...by its merciless lampoon of the family, American

society, and its dominant cultural beliefs, *Daddy-O*" was unable to win favor with the sponsors and the project never made it to the air.[61]

While network television did not seem ready for such a critique of the American family—after all, *Leave it to Beaver* and *The Donna Reed Show* were still in first-run in 1960—there had already been a cultural assault on affluent America. While much of this had come from the 1950s Beat movement, expressed through the writing of such creative poets as Allen Ginsburg and Jack Kerouack, a new generation of Beat-inspired comedians like Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl began gaining success with their own satirical humor. As media scholar Hal Himmelstein observed in *Television Myth and the American Mind*, comics like Bruce and Sahl opened the "creaky, conservative doors of our dominant medium to the satiric comedy-variety series of the 1960s and 1970s.....Sahl and Bruce led the walk away from the suburban middle landscape and into an urban world in which social revolution would seem a meaningful response."[62] The cultural shift that Bruce and Sahl had tapped into—fed, in part, by the civil rights movement, the "War on Poverty," and Friedan's expose of the feminine mystique—was not lost on the media, which, motivated by profit, realized that advertising costs could be targeted at certain "desirable" viewers in demographic categories that appeared to support the cultural, social, and political changes of the time.

If any one element was responsible for the change in tone of network television after 1963, it was the change in the way viewership was measured by networks and advertisers. Up until the late-1960s, television ratings data, as collected by the A. C.

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[61] Hamamoto, 154-56.

[62] Ibid., 187.

Nielson Company, had been based on raw numbers of households tuned to various shows at specific times. Those numbers were based on viewing logs or "diaries" kept by some 1,200 randomly selected homes that supposedly represented a cross-section of American viewers. Using such raw numbers, a network like CBS, which tended to have programming which appealed to a more rural, older-viewer base, remained the number one network. While data on age and sex were sometimes used in computing advertising costs in the 1960s, it was not until the late-1960s that Paul Kline, programming chief of third-rated network NBC, began pushing the idea of a "quality buy," with shows that delivered a more upscale viewer with more disposable wealth. To Klein, it was not the number of households that mattered, but the composition of those households.[63] Since it was assumed that upscale viewers were more concerned with liberal social issues, television programming changed to reflect those values.

While it is common media lore to view CBS television's *All in the Family* as the watershed event marking what Todd Gitlin labeled "relevant programming," NBC had already been making significant programing changes, particularly in terms of shows featuring African-Americans in prominent, non-stereotypical roles. The first of these programs, *I Spy*, a light-heated espionage drama that co-starred Bill Cosby as the first African-American actor in a starring role in a dramatic series, debuted in 1965. Three years later, NBC debuted the series *Julia*, which starred Diahann Carroll as the first black woman to be cast as a non-domestic star in a situation comedy. While many critics claim that Julia was too tame and too out of touch with the African-American experience to be taken seriously, the series attracted a large number of viewers, emerging as number seven

[63] Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 208.

overall in the Nielson ratings during the 1968-1969 television season. Also successful was the 1967-1975 NBC series *Ironside*, which featured Don Mitchell in a recurring role as an African-American who had made the transition from juvenile delinquent to aide to Police Chief Ironside, played by Raymond Burr. Between the 1968-1969 to 1970-1971 seasons, *Ironside* climbed from sixteenth to fourth-place overall in the Nielson ratings.[64] After *I Spy* left the air, Bill Cosby appeared in a his first self-titled NBC comedy series (1969-1971), in which he played Chet Kincaid, a school teacher working and living in a lower middle-class neighborhood.

Second-place network ABC—the network which had carried *Leave it to Beaver* for the bulk of its first-run—also produced shows with more diverse images. *Room 222*, produced by ex-*Leave it to Beaver* director Gene Reynolds, starred African-American actors Lloyd Haynes and Denise Nichols, along with recurring African-American student characters Heshimu as Jason Alan, Ta-Tanisha as Pam, and Eric Laneuville as Larry. The series, which was shot, in part, on the campus of Los Angeles High, explored a number of meaningful issues, such as drugs, the generation gap, prejudice, and death, and won many awards and commendations from educational and civil rights groups.[65]

Room 222 was not just a show with diverse characters, but one that played to the youth market, another desirable target at which the other networks were aiming. Again, NBC appeared to take the lead with the 1965 prime time rock 'n' roll music showcase, *Hullabaloo*, which ran through 1966. NBC also played to youth with the drama *Then Came Bronson*, in which star Michael Parks, upset by the suicide of his friend, gave up

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[64] Ratings data for *Julia* and *Ironside* from Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network Shows, 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine, 1992), 1100-1101.

[65] Hamamoto, 100.

his job as a big city reporter to tour the nation on a motorcycle, looking for a better, more meaningful life (much like the main character of *Daddy-O*). Perhaps NBC's hippest program was *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*, a breakaway hit that emerged as the number-one rated show for both the 1968-69 and 1969-70 television seasons. The sketch comedy-variety series bordered on the controversial and introduced new phrases such as "look that up in your Funk and Wagnall's," "You bet your bippy," and "Sock it to me" into the American lexicon.[66]

Laugh-In, for all its success, was but a faint copy of the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, which had debuted nearly six-months before *Laugh-In* in 1967. To Himmelstein, *The Smothers Brothers* represented a genuinely oppositional milestone in TV history as a show that "satirized almost every hallowed American institution, especially its political institutions...." with [Tom and Dick Smothers] having "a strong social conscious" and "a personal commitment to exposing social ills..."[67] Not that CBS was committed to such political commentary at the time. Indeed, *The Smothers Brothers* was cancelled a year later when the program producers failed to submit scripts in time for standards and practices' approval. While *Smothers Brothers* was a taste of things to come, CBS, which was wildly successful with traditional, older viewers, walked a cautious path toward more socially aware programs. In 1968, for example, CBS aired the *Doris Day Show*, which intially debuted with Day starring as a widow with two children who had gone to live on her father-in-law's farm. While the series derived its humor

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[66] Ratings data, Brooks and Marsh, 1099-1101.

[67] See Himmelstein, 189, who gives various examples of controversial material in the *Smothers Brothers*, including Pete Seger singing "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," the presidential campaign of Pat Paulson, and another segment which was cut from the show featuring a Harry Bellefonte song sung under clips from the violence at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago.

from Day's attempt to adapt to rural life, the comedy ran thin and the next season saw Day relocate to the big city where she balanced her life as a single mom with her new career as a secretary for a national magazine. It was not until after the debut of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in 1971 that Day was transformed by the network from single mom to single, independent woman who wrote for the magazine. Not that the change helped. Day, unable to shake her image as romantic comedian, was unable to attract the sort of audience the networks had come to desire. As Bud Yorkin, co-creator of *All in the Family* once observed, "Coming out of the sixties, the climate was right, the kids were letting it all hang out, the kids didn't want to see Doris Day: 'Quit jerking us off and give us something real.'"[68] That something "real"—or at least very different from the sort of programming that had passed for realism in the past—was about to be delivered by Robert Wood, the same man who would cancel *Doris Day* and the CBS lineup of rural comedies including *Mayberry RFD*, *Green Acres*, *Petticoat Junction*, and *Gomer Pyle*.

In 1969, Robert D. Wood was serving as the head of CBS's five owned and operated (O&O) stations (local affiliate stations owned by the network); the O&O was a profitable part of network television, accounting for seventy-percent of the network's pre-tax profits in 1970.[69] One of the problems CBS faced, however, was that while it was the number one network nationally, four out of its five O&O's located in metropolitan areas were losing revenue from shows that played better in rural markets. One such show was *Hee Haw*, which debuted in 1968 on CBS television and became wildly successful in overall numbers. The problem, as *Hee Haw* producer Sam Lovello revealed in his

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[68] Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 211.

[69] Ibid., 206.

autobiography, was that while the show would be seen by twenty-million viewers per week, the majority of them were rural viewers who were not part of the demographics desired by the big sponsors.[70] Frank Stanton, then president of CBS, felt that the network executives were too far removed from the everyday life of the viewers and promoted Wood to president of the network in early 1969.[71] "The first inquiry I made," recalled Wood, "is what can we do to maintain the leadership of our network while at the same time putting it through a test—of changing the character of the network from more bucolic material to more fresh or updated, contemporary, whatever you want to call it."[72] Aware of the social and cultural drift towards the left that had been taking place in American culture,[73] Wood was committed to making sure that the 1970-71 CBS season would "go young, go urban, and more 'realistic.'"[74] William Paley, venerable head of CBS since 1928, approved of this change, as, of course, did the CBS sales executives.[75] Wood's winning strategy was based on an idea that was quite different from that which had inspired the affective family sitcom. Rather than assume a homogeneous, evenly distributed affluence among its audience, the network would recognize the vast difference that existed among its viewers.[76] Wood was not alone in this thought. Worried about the challenge being posed by the emerging cable industry and the concept of

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[70] Sam Lovello, *Life in the Kornfield: My 25 Years at Hee Haw* (New York: Boulevard, 1996), 20-22.

[71] Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 206.

[72] Ibid., 207-08.

[73] Ibid., 210

[74] Ibid., 209.

[75] Ibid., 210.

[76] Ibid., 219.

"narrowcasting"—the practice of catering to a specific audience—networks and their affiliates began to realize that the idea of a national family representing some consensus America was no longer viable. As Paul Kline of NBC commended, the networks were making a "shift from the rhetoric of 'mass tastes' to that of 'quality demographics'..."[77] In May of 1970, Wood, speaking at the sixteenth annual CBS affiliates conference, announced his new strategy, noting that "Neither past performance nor present popularity is sufficient any longer to guarantee pulling power..." Wood continued, arguing that CBS had to be innovative as opposed to imitative, and that they had to "attract new viewers of every generation, reflecting the educated and sophisticated in American life, people who live in every part of the country. We are taking a young, fresh, new approach to programming. The rookies are going to be given their chance."[78]

Thus, what Minow had argued for a decade earlier—television that served the national interest—had become good network business. Much like the affective family programs that had preceded it, the new wave of programming was, at bottom, concerned with the bottom line. Where affective family shows followed trends set by uneven post-World War II affluence and the imperatives of the parents and children of the baby-boom, the new shows would follow contemporary social trends that allowed for more overt social criticisms.

Nowhere in television was social critique more evident than in Norman Lear's *All in the Family*. Debuting January 12, 1971, the series, with its loud-mouthed bigoted father, Archie Bunker, and liberal, long-haired son-in-law Mike Stivick, jetisoned all the

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[77] See Paul Kerr, "The Making of (The) MTM (Show)," in Jane Feuer, Paul Kerr and Tise Vahimagi, *MTM 'Quality Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 1984), 65.

[78] "CBS-TV affiliates strike a harmonious chord,' *Broadcasting*, 11 May 1970.

assumptions about the affective family. If there was, indeed, an anti-Cleaver family, the Bunkers, with their heated controversial conversations, replete with racial and ethnic epitaphs, was it. As Hamamoto had observed, *All in the Family* had moved the situation comedy from apolitical refuge to "the political arena."[79]

Norman Lear, along with co-producer Bud Yorkin, had taken the idea for the series from Johnny Speight's British program, *'Til Death Do Us Part*, which itself centered on the generational conflict between a conservative father and his liberal son-in-law. To this basic concept, Lear added recollections of the conflict he experienced with his own father, who, according to Lear, had his own bigoted ideas, along with the racial and social issues that were being played out in the culture at large. Lear initially sold the idea to ABC, which was already experimenting with more liberal programs. However, after their hip 1968 comedy-variety series, *Turn-On*, failed after just one episode, ABC passed on Lear's controversial property.[80]

Lear's new series fit perfectly with Wood's new vision for CBS, and programming chief Fred Silverman bought the series as a 1971 mid-season replacement. The network was well aware of the uniqueness of the sitcom it had acquired, so much so that its debut announcement in *TV Guide* reflected a sense of trepidation with which the network approached the show. Using the vernacular of the recent moon landing, a short *TV-Guide* close-up article advertised the debut of *All in the Family* as a watershed event, writing that "Situation comedy takes a giant step with this social satire. The series will explore American prejudices by looking at how those of one middle-class family—if

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[79] Hamamoto, 103; see also Richard P. Adler, *All in the Family: A Critical Appraisal*, (New York: Parager, 1979), xxxix.

[80] Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 212.

viewers can take the heat...." While the close-up noted that "True to the series controversial nature, the subject matter for tonight's episode was undecided at press time—CBS executives might even change the program's title"[81] the truth was that CBS executives had become nervous with the language and sexual content of the first episode. Just as they had done with Beaver's "Captain Jack" episode, which had called for a toilet tank, CBS asked Lear to replace the first episode with the second episode, which was less verbally explicit. Lear refused, later recalling that he felt that the "American public was ready to accept the degree of reality that *All in the Family* presented."[82]

Just in case America was not ready, CBS reinforced their New York switchboard. Only 1,000 calls were received be episode's end, with the majority of them being positive. Part of that was due to the dismal ratings the episode received, attracting a fifteen-percent share, meaning that eighty-five percent of all homes that had tuned in to television at that time were watching something else.[83] Such numbers would soon change, however, with *All in the Family* literally dominating the 1970s, becoming the number one show for five seasons (1971-1976) and remaining in the top twenty for an additional three.[84]

By the end of its first season the series had been canonized as a huge watershed—which, in many ways, it was. One of the most interesting takes on the series came from

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[81] TV Guide close-up, reprinted in Donna McCrohan, *Archie & Edith, Mike & Gloria: The Tumultuous History of All in the Family* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1987), 32.

[82] Ibid. Lear excerpt from testimony Lear gave at a senate subcommittee on Constitutional Rights on the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 1972, appearing on page 32.

[83] Louis Solomon, *TV's First Family* (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1973), 19.

[84] Composite ratings data from Brooks and Marsh, 1101-1103.

Louis Solomon, whose 1973 scholastic book on the subject posited television in terms of pre and post-*All in the Family* periods:

> Up until the night of January 12, 1971, none of television's 9,000 and some nights had been much different from any other night. The most used and abused word in video vocabulary is "new," but in tube talk it doesn't mean original or fresh. It means the same as before: don't make waves; and above all don't offend anybody....

Solomon continued, noting how TV fare before *All in the Family* tried to keep the television screen "unblemished by the realities of everyday existence." Arguing that TV was a family medium, Solomon placed *All in the Family* in the context of the affective family sitcoms which had made for standard TV fare before the Lear series debut:

> In these upper-middle class, respectable, greeting card families there was no sex, no politics, no stronger language than "holy cow!" They heard no evil, spoke no evil, saw no evil. There was no outside world.
>
> Then on that cold January night, mid-season replacement time in TV, into that hallowed, unchangeable, never-never land, tromped the first situation comedy Dad who could never be nominated Father of the Year – Archie Bunker.[85]

Solomon's words had, in essence, defined what would become the Mayfield Mystique in which a formally uninvolved, irrelevant world of sitcoms was suddenly replaced by meaningful, "relevant" programming.

While Solomon did not mention *All in the Family* in direct opposition to *Leave it to Beaver*, Norman Lear did. Commenting on *All in the Family* in a 1986 *New York Times* article, Lear said:

> We followed a whole bunch of shows like *Father Knows Best*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Green Acres*, and other shows of the '60s. They were all fine shows, but you

[85] Ibid., 7-9.

> would think by watching them that America had no blacks, no racial tension, that there was no Vietnam. As people asked me about the points of view, I thought, "My God, by omission, look at the points of view of the earlier shows: wall-to-wall television comedy that would let you think there were no problems in the 1960s."[86]

Other comparisons were made between the two series as well. Media writer Donna McCrohan, in her history of *All in the Family*, directly compared the difference between the middle-class set of *Leave it to Beaver* with the working class set of *All in the Family*. McCrohan was particularly struck by Archie Bunker's lack of home library—standard features of the Cleaver and Anderson homes.[87] In another part of her work, McCrohan proposes how Wally and Beaver might have dealt with a scene in which Edith Bunker, working as a volunteer in a home for the aged, honored an elderly woman's wish to die without heroic measures: "Golly, Wally, should we let her croak?" "Naw, Beaver. Dad'll yell and Mom'll cry in the mashed potatoes."[88] One of the only things these two series seemed to have in common was the acknowledgement of the bathroom. While *Leave it to Beaver* did this in subtle ways which had been all but forgotten by 1971, *All in the Family* announced the bathroom's existence loud and clear with an off-screen toilet flush—the first time such a sound was heard on a televised comedy.

As Bob Wood observed, *All in the Family*—taken with its counterparts like *Maude* and *The Jefferson's*—had "changed the face of television."[89] Joining that change

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[86] *New York Times* article reprinted in McCrohan, 23-24.

[87] McCrohan 77, 79.

[88] Ibid., 72.

[89] Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 213. It should be noted that *All in the Family* was not viewed as totally unproblematic; other critics were quick to point out that, in many ways, television had not changed all that much: "While many television critics continued to praise the series for its efforts at 'breaking old taboos,'" wrote Himmelstein, "the cultural climate, of which television was but one part, had in fact already sanctioned that breaking-down. Television, as always, through its most persuasive creators, followed"

was another CBS sitcom, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Never as popular as *All in the Family*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* featured Mary Tyler Moore as a young, single girl balancing her work and personal lives amidst an ensemble cast of caring friends and co-workers who substituted as her family. As Janet Maslin observed in a 1980 piece for the *New York Times*, such workplace families became popular at a time when the family itself became "hard to explain."[90] Of course, Maslin may have been reading a bit too much into the media. As Christopher Lasch had observed, mass media was reacting not necessarily to the failure of the family but to "American societies belief in the family." As Lasch argued, the mass media, more interested in novelty than in following any political agenda, had come to give "as much publicity to feminism, cultural radicalism, and denigration of the family as they had once given to 'togetherness'..."[91] Taylor agreed, noting that the new wave of CBS programs were not just a recognition of changing family structures that were occurring in the real world, but a convenient vehicle that

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(172). To Jones, in *Honey, I'm Home*, the family in *All in the Family* may have been different, but it was still a show about family: "[Lear] was an intellectual liberal but an emotional conservative. Whatever he may have *thought* about social revolution, he seemed to yearn for continuity and family" (211). To Jones, 213, the ultimate message of *All in the Family* is that, in a world gone crazy, the family will endure.

[90] See Janet Maslin, "In Prime Time, the Work Place is Where the Heart Is," *New York Times*, 10 February 1980. See also Jane Feuer, "MTM Style," 56-7, in Jane Feuer, et al, who argues that MTM replaced the embattled nuclear family with a work family which served as substitute.

[91] According to Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977, part of this was due to the general failure not of the family, but of American societies belief in the family: "Caught in the crossfire of generational revolt and the revolt of women, the domestic revival expired," wrote Lasch. "Once again the family found itself under heavy criticism, this time as the symbol of a sentimental privatism universally repudiated in an equally sentimental search for 'community.' Feminists condemned domestic life more bitterly than before....Spokesmen for the counterculture joined the attack, accusing the nuclear family of promoting neurotic individualism. Lesbians and homosexuals became politically militant. The news media, biased, as always, not in favor of any particular program or point of view but simply in favor of novelty—gave as much publicity to feminism, cultural radicalism, and denigration of the family as they had once given to 'togetherness'..." (135).

allowed programmers the opportunity to reach the "new target audience of career-oriented upscale viewers presumed to favor work over family goals."[92]

The Mary Tyler Moore Show, with its focus on an independent single woman, seemed a perfect way for the media to address the new wave of American feminism that had started in the 1960s. Though Moore's character was never a feminist heroine—Mary Richards was much too deferent to her male boss, Lou Grant, and much too fixated on finding a husband for that—she did present one of the few independent single women on television who tried, each week, to answer the musical question posed in its opening theme song—"How will you make it on your own?"[93]

Not that *Mary* was the first one to broach this question. Single women had been trying to survive on television since the late-1950s, with Eve Arden in *Our Miss Brooks*, and Rose Marie's Sally Rogers character in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. The modern sitcom single girl had been pioneered by Marlo Thomas, whose ABC series *That Girl* debuted in 1966. Thomas played Ann Marie Brewster, an aspiring actress struggling to survive in New York. Portrayed as a somewhat dimwitted and easily flustered girl who often called on her wealthy father or boyfriend, Donald Hollenger, for help, Ann Marie was, nevertheless, according to Gerard Jones, "somewhat daring by sitcom standards" of the time.[94] Not that Ann Marie rang true for real single women living in New York. In 1971, 27-year-old television writer Diane Rosen complained of how Thomas failed to

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[92] Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 13.

[93] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, speaks well of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, which she says "actually featured a single woman on her own without a steady boyfriend and with a steady job" (167).

[94] Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home: Sitcoms, Selling the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 184-5.

capture—as did anyone else on TV at the time—the reality of the single woman.[95] A more accurate, and certainly more diverse single woman was attempted by African-American actress Dianne Carroll, whose series *Julia*, while failing to gain critical acceptance, did model a single mother in a more contemporary setting than say Lucille Ball of *Here's Lucy* and *The Lucy Show* or Doris Day and *The Doris Day Show*.

Moore's first major acting job was as Happy Hotpoint, a pixie who danced happily atop Hotpoint appliances. From there she landed a role as an objectified pair of legs (she was never seen above the waist) in the TV series *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*. Moore's break came when she landed the role of Laura Petrie in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, which, after a slow start, grew to become one of the most famous shows in television history.[96] While Laura Petrie could and did stand up to her husband Rob, she was best known for her sobbing trademark line, "Oh Rob!" When Van Dyke and company decided to end the successful series after five seasons on CBS, Moore attempted to move into film, including her role as a modern nun in *Change of Habit* (1969), a film which was produced by Joe Connelly.

While the film did not receive much critical acclaim, and while it has the dubious distinction of being Elvis Presley's last film, it is important to note that the film featured, for its time, a more progressive message on the importance of racial understanding. The basic plot of the James Lee, S. S. Schweitzer and Eric Bercovici script involves three young nuns (who are also nurses) who go to an urban minority community to assist

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[95] Diane Rosen, "TV and the Single Girl," *TV Guide*, November 6, 1971, 12.

[96] For more information on the history of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* see Ginny Weissman and Coyne Steven Sander, *The Dick Van Dyke Show: Anatomy of a Classic* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1983); Vince Waldron, *Classic Sitcoms: A Celebration of the Best in Prime Time* (New York: Collier Books, 1987), 77-132; and Vince Waldron, *The Official Dick Van Dyke Show Book: The Definitive History and Ultimate Viewer's Guide to Television's Most Enduring Comedy* (New York: Hyperion, 1994).

young, idealistic doctor John Carpenter, who is played by Presley. To help the nuns interface more effectively with the community, they will work under cover, with the gruff old father of the local parish the only one aware that the three women are nuns. While the film's title refers to the nuns lack of wearing a habit, the title carries a double-meaning through which the audience is admonsihed, in both the title song and the message of the film itself, to change their ways of thinking in order to live more effectively in "changing times." While Moore's story involves her test of faith as she falls in love with Elvis, the film is most interesting for the story involving Sister Irene Hawkins, a young African-American nun who, having "escaped" the ghetto long ago, finds herself being tested as she re-enters the urban miliue. As the film progresses, Hawkins, played by Barbara McNair, challenges the white lona shark who has terrorized the urban community. Interestingly enough, when the loanshark begins to attack Sister Irene, a community-wide brawl is averted by the intervention of two militant African-Americans, who emerge in the film as heroes. In this way, the film grants agency not only to the white characters, but to the African-American characters themselves, providing a more complicated picture of Joe Connelly's career as writer and producer.[97]

While the film was not a success for Moore, television was always willing to take Moore back. An appearance on a show with former co-star Dick Van Dyke in 1969 renewed network interest in Moore, who parlayed this into the founding of a new production company, MTM Enterprises, which she headed with then-husband Grant Tinker. The new CBS series, created by James L. Brooks, originally cast Moore as a

[97] William Graham, dir., *Change of Habit*, Universal Pictures, 1969.

divorce'.[98] When network officials balked—some allegedly feared viewers would think Moore had left *Dick Van Dyke*—the producers settled for Moore as a single woman in her early thirties who had just left her small hometown after being jilted by her lover.[99] The first episode has Mary coming to Minneapolis, getting a new apartment, getting a new job, and leaving her fiancé. Mary's adventure as a single girl would last from September 1970 though May of 1977. As Jones observed, Moore was neither a feminist nor a traditionalism, but a "woman in between—the nice girl, groomed to be June Cleaver or Samantha Stevens and then suddenly required to be an independent adult."[100]

The idea of setting the series in an actual place—Minneapolis—was not new to television (*The Dick Van Dyke Show* had taken place in the very real suburb of New Rochelle, New York), but it did tend to distance the series from shows like *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*, which, while not isolated from the world, were purposely set in "Anytown, USA." As James L. Brooks observed, "We wanted to do something that seemed like it was the real world.' Mary Tyler Moore added, "At first people said 'Why Minneapolis?' Why not Minneapolis? It's a sophisticated city and it's certainly something new on the tube. It's not Anyplace, USA and it's not Los Angeles...Just having four seasons on a show is refreshing."[101]

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[98] For a complete history and critical appraisal of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, see Robert S. Alley and Irby B. Brown, *Love is All Around: The Making of the Mary Tyler Moore Show* (New York: Delta, 1989), particularly 1-10, which offers a good history of Moore and the series' creation.

[99] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 194-95.

[100] Ibid., 201. See also Serafina Bathrick, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show: Women at Home and at Work," in Feuer, et al., who labeled Mary Tyler Moore's role as "historically regressive," in that each episode ended with a "return to a 'working order' that affirms traditional family hierarchy" (130).

[101] Don Freeman, "Mary Tyler Moore; 'I'm not a Comedienne; I React Funny,'" *Show*, October 1972, as quoted in Feuer, et al, 75.

Perhaps the most complicated and oppositional series of the period was the 1972 series *M*A*S*H*, which took the affective work-place family and set it in the middle of a mobile army surgical hospital in the Korean War. Produced by former *Leave it to Beaver* director Gene Reynolds, along with Larry Gelbart, the series was based on the wildly successful Richard Hooker novel and Robert Altman film of the same title. The series placed reluctant draftee doctors and assorted other military personnel in contact with a regular army machine that mirrored the callousness and destruction being waged by the then-continuing Vietnam war. Not only was *M*A*S*H* a far cry from previous military based sitcoms like *Sgt. Bilko* and *Gomer Pyle, USMC* (a series which had been playing successfully on CBS during the middle of the Vietnam war), but it was, in many ways, unlike anything television had seen before. Where *All in the Family* featured flushing toilets and yelling family members, *M*A*S*H* had exploding bombs, blood, and gore. As Himmelstein observed, "its creators, writers, directors, and actors, of whom Larry Gelbart, Alan Alda, and Bert Metcalfe stand out, had on numerous occasions the courage to be oppositional—a rare act in contemporary commercial television."[102]

*M*A*S*H* is particularly interesting in the context of this study when one considers that the America it was depicting was the same America, give or take a few years, as depicted in *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Leave it to Beaver*. The producers of the series seemed to capture the distance 1970s America stood from the 1950s by superimposing the following title over the first episode's opening scene: "1950: hundred years ago." Indeed, much had changed in the intervening thirty years, at

[102] Himmelstein 180; as Himmelstein observed, 194, despite what some critics had said about *MASH* being a basically traditional series reinforcing traditional values, *MASH* was one of television's truly oppositional sitcoms of the 1970s.

least in terms of television and what it was allowed to depict. While Beaver would refer to the Korean conflict once in *Leave it to Beaver*, *M*A*S*H* referred to it week after week for eleven years on primetime television.

The 1950s was also the historical backdrop of Gary Marshall's ABC comedy, *Happy Days*, which, while never as important or oppositional a series as *M*A*S*H*, certainly tried to portray the 1950s as a more complicated period. While the series quickly eroded into a vehicle for the wildly popular Arthur Fonzarelli character, played by Henry Winkler, early season episodes had the white middle-class Cunningham family confront such topics as bomb shelters and racism. To further distance them from 1950s contemporary sitcoms, TV mom and dad Howard and Marion Cunningham, played by Tom Bosley and Marion Ross, were presented as sexually active parents who shared a bed and admittedly enjoyed getting "frisky." For a medium as prudish as network television, this represented, sadly enough, quite a step forward for progressive producers and programmers (although a step backward from the sort of social involvement afforded by *All in the Family* and *M*A*S*H*).

Truth, of course, is stranger than fiction, and perhaps the most important family series of the 1970s, in terms of providing a more realistic portrayal of the family, was the PBS documentary, *An American Family*, which, more than any other series, showed the distance that had come between the affective family sitcom of the 1950s and the family in 1970s actuality. Produced by Craig Gilbert, the 12-hour series, which aired between January and March of 1973, centered on the lives of the real-life Loud family, whom Craig had filmed between May 1971 and January 1972. Over the 12-part series, the audience was introduced to Lance Loud, the family's openly gay son, the Loud's oldest

daughter, who became sexually active during the series, the loss of Mr. Loud's business and the break-up of the Loud's marriage. The Louds were not so unusual in the problems they faced, but in the distance they stood from the family ideal to which so many aspired. As reporter Anne Rophie observed in her forward to the book based on the series:

> Of course, like the Louds, we all deny. We all equivocate, make nice appearances, look our best and rage inside at compromises that have compromised us too much. Our children are not the visions we had dreamed and our guilts for their failures follow us about like the mendicants in India spoiling our view of temple or palace. This is very much the American experience coast to coast, education or not, poor or rich, intellectual or workingman, and it was just this common experience Craig Gilbert wanted to get on film."[103]

At bottom, the series spoke to what Rophie saw as the new epigram for the modern American family: "'Be it ever so hollow, there's no place like home'"[104]

While Joe Connelly had tried to adapt to the new "relevant" esthetic with *Change of Habit*, as well as with the *Insight* television series on which he worked with Father Elwood Keiser, Bob Mosher, who had began working with *Mayberry R.F.D.*, along with other producers who had gotten rich off the rural sitcoms, seemed to have little place to go in this new network milieu. Gene Reynolds, on the other hand, had graduated from *Leave it to Beaver* to *Room 222*, *M*A*S*H*, and, later, the dramatic series *Lou Grant*.

Perhaps the most interesting of the *Leave it to Beaver* alumni was Alan Manings, who not only served as executive producer of *Good Times*, a show which focused on life in a Chicago ghetto, but as the co-creator of *One Day at a Time*, the first situation comedy to feature a divorced woman. *Good Times* had been created by two African-

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[103] Anne Roiphe, "Introduction" to Anne. Introduction to Ron Goulart, *An American Family* (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1973, 26.

[104] Ibid., 27.

Americans, and was one of the first to look at an African-American underclass family struggling to survive in the Chicago projects and its importance in television history cannot be underestimated. *One Day at a Time*, created by Manings and Whitney Blake, starred Bonnie Franklin as Ann Romono, a divorced mother of two teen-age daughters. Produced by Norman Lear, the show confronted the issues of its day, particularly as they related to sexuality and the modern family. Unlike Mary Richards, Ann's world was never as neat nor as friendly, particularly in terms of her oldest daughter Julie, who brought beer into their apartment, had sex with boys, and even had an affair with an older man. Even Betty Friedan was impressed with the series, noting that it's sassy heroine was "not only a sympathetic, likeable divorced mother, as attractive as her teenage daughters, but...has a younger boyfriend who adores her!"[105] While *One Day at a Time* never directly compared itself to *Leave it to Beaver*, Ann Romano, as a woman who was willing to leave her comfortable middle class home and successful husband in an attempt to find something more, was about as far from June Cleaver and Donna Reed as one could get.

Perhaps no television program displaced the happy domestic image better than Lear's syndicated series, *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, a five-night per week combination soap opera, sitcom, and black comedy. Mary Hartman, played by Louise Lasser, was a victim of the feminine mystique as promulgated by the media, which had clearly sold her a domestic ideal in which she desperately believed—so much so that it

[105] Friedan, *Changed*, 57.

eventually led to her mental breakdown. [106] As Goran Tamm, Hans Hanson, and George Gordon observed:

> In all her glory [Mary is] one of the most pathetic figures of our era: the modern housewife—who really believes what advertisers and media simplifiers have told her, because she *wants* to believe them. Eventually this fiction disclosed its premise: a reverse analogy of Ibsen's Doll House. Mary, outside the house, wanted to get *in*. The delusion annihilates Mary—or drives her mad—because she has been so cruelly victimized by the shallow cultural ideals she worships.[107]

Mary Hartman, more caricature than character, was perhaps Lear's finest commentary on the Feminine Mystique. The show was also an excellent example of the media being aware of its own damaging effects. Mary believed that she could find true happiness if she just followed life as it was portrayed in the magazines and on television. Whether or not the public at large suffered from such delusions, the series clearly eschewed the idea of one big happy national family. In just a little over a decade, *Leave it to Beaver* and the ideals for which it seemed to stand, were, indeed, dead.

"But is Eddie Haskell Really Alice Cooper?"

In September of 1965, the first episode of the second season of *The Munsters*, another Connelly and Mosher show, featured a recycled *Leave it to Beaver* plot in which Eddie, the young son of Herman and Lily Munster, decided to run away from home. Using reverse psychology, much like Ward Cleaver had done in "Beaver Runs Away," Herman lets Eddie run away. When Eddie actually leaves, Herman is beside himself:

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[106] Himmelstein, 181.

[107] Goran Tamm, Hans Ingvar Hanson, and George N. Gordon, *Man in Focus: New Approaches to Commercial Communications* (New York: Hastings House, 1980) 26.

> Herman: I don't know what went wrong with my child psychology. It always worked on *Leave it to Beaver*.

This was not the first time Connelly and Mosher used the *Munsters* to displace the image of the family ideal of which their work had been a part. In "Family Portrait," for example, the Munsters were chosen as the "Average American Family" by a national magazine (until the magazine photographers get a look at them). "Country Club Munster" has the Munster family joining the same sort of posh country club to which the Cleaver's had belonged. Indeed, the basic premise of *The Munsters* itself was to turn the supposedly perfect world of the family upside down with hideous monster creatures who consider themselves beautiful and view their "normal" cousin Marilyn Munster as the family ugly duckling who needed to be explained away.

A 1964 issue of *Mad* magazine had also done a quick parody of *Leave it to Beaver*. The simple, single panel comic featured a drawing of a sidewalk reminiscent of the one in the original *Leave it to Beaver* titles. Lying atop the cement was an open pack of matches. The irony of a piece of litter cluttering the clean streets of Mayfield made for a simple yet strong statement of the assumed lack of "realism" in the supposedly blissful, perfect Mayfield.

While there were a number of other parodies that existed from the 1970s through the present, perhaps the strongest comment on the series was made through playwright Des McAnuff's 1970's experimental play, "Leave it to Beaver is Dead." The play centers on a group of friends, Dennis, Saverine, and Luke, who had, at one time run an illegal clinic designed to wean drug addicts. After Dennis went away to school to pursue a degree in medicine, Saverine and Luke embarked on a new venture the called "The

Show," whose central purpose was to help clients off of their addition to the lies perpetuated by mass culture, particularly television. As Saverine explains in the first act:

> ....There are more than many mindless manias in the naked city. When the guests start to request survival courses for which no instructions exist, either take them into the gloom, Igor, or turn your face to the wall. They are not asking for methadone or pills, nor points. But they've put in at least ten thousand hours at the tube. Ten thousand hours is quite a fix. Time for a little fine tuning.[108]

As the play opens, Dennis, who has washed out of pre-med, is on his way back to the drug clinic, which he hopes to re-open. Saverine and Luke, along with an ex-addict named Lizzard, remain committed to "the show," however, and decide to run a psychological game on Dennis. Because Dennis had been somewhat of a macho high school hero, ala Wally Cleaver, Saverine and Luke decide to place Dennis in the middle of an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, shot-through with several doses of modern realism. As the "Leave it to Beaver" scene progresses, Luke appears as Eddie Haskall, Dennis plays Beaver, Saverine plays Ward, and Lizzard plays June.

> Luke: Hello, Mrs. Cleaver. I must say you look ravishing today. Oh, you've had your hair done, I see. I noticed little Theodore out on the lawn playing. My, how he's growing.
> Dennis deeply in the game, splits to another part of the room
> Lizzard: [tongue–in-cheek. With bite] Wally's probably in his room, Eddie. I think he wants to be alone with his new professional football.
> Luke: Why, thank-you Mrs. Cleaver. I'll just quietly show myself up there as Wally has some chemistry homework.[109]

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[108] Des McAnuff, "Leave it to Beaver is Dead," 159.

[109] Ibid., 198.

Luke's miming of Eddie's guile is right on target, as is Lizzard and Saverine's characterization of Ward and June, showing that McAnuff must have put in his own time at the television set.

> Lizzard: Ward!
> Saverin: Yes, Dear?
> Lizzard: I'm worried about the boys.
> Saverin: Why, is something the matter?
> Lizzard: I don't like to be suspicious but I can't help feeling that they're up to something.
> Saverin: Now, June.[110]

Lizzard and Saverine, true to the June and Ward characters they were mocking, meet with the boys. As Dennis joins in playing the part of the Beaver, the conversation moves from civil cordiality to gritty confrontation, with Luke and Dennis' innocent "Gosh, ya" and "Golly, Gee" lines soon being replaced with Dennis suddenly saying "Fuck You" to Saverine's Ward.[111] As the scene progresses, Dennis, as the Beaver, holds a straight razor to Ward's throat, threatening the beloved father figure as "Beaver" contemplates intercourse with his mother:

> Dennis: Gee, Dad. Wally was just showing me how to shave so I'll know when I grow up and get hairy like you. Gee. Hey, dad. [Moves the razor closer] Look at me. I bet I know how to work the razor just like a big person, eh Wally?
>
> Dennis tries to have Saverin's face. Saverin doesn't move. Dennis draws the razor over Saverin's cheeks.
>
> ...
>
> Saverin: That's very good, son, but put it away and do some homework.

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[110] Ibid., 198-99.

[111] Ibid., 199.

> Dennis: No, really, dad. Doesn't that feel nice? Mom really loves it when your cheeks are smooth so that she can dig her nails in and make little trenches. Maybe if I shave off my fuzz she'll do it to me too. What do you think, Dad? [He presses the blade on Saverin's jugular vein.]
> Saverin: Go ahead, champ.[112]

Dennis now backs away from Saverine's Ward. Realizing that he is the victim of his own faith in a system which has failed—a system based on the ideals promoted by such shows as *Leave it to Beaver*—Dennis turns the straight razor on himself. [113] As Dennis frantically moves the razor closer and closer to his throat, he stops short of slicing himself, having reached a catharsis and coming to grips with his own departure from his *Leave it to Beaver* past. Referring to the rumor of Mathers' "death" in Vietnam, Saverine moves in to reassure Dennis that *Leave it to Beaver* is, indeed, dead:

> Saverin: He's dead. Did You know?
> Dennis: Fuck it!
> Saverin: Jerry Mathers. He died. Tripped and stubbed his toe on a mine in Viet Horror. They're trying to bring him back to life.
> Luke: But is Eddie Hascal really Alice Cooper. Or is he dead?[114]

Dennis, convinced of the power of "The Show," tries to run a show of his own with deadly results, but the main point has already been made. Baby boom Americans, as portrayed by Mary Hartman, have grown up to believe in an idealistic world which, in fact, never existed. That McAnuff chose "Leave it to Beaver" as the shorthand for that set of lies is telling of the cultural meaning ascribed to *Leave it to Beaver*.

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[112] Ibid., 199-200.

[113] Ibid., 200.

[114] Ibid., 201.

McAnuff's play conformed to what playwright Mac Wellman had labeled the "Theater of Wonders," an "edgy, intuitive path to explore the full damage done by the onslaught of political lies, right-wing hucksterism, and general consumer-society madness on the inner person" To Wellman, American theater, circa the late-1970s, had become dull and predictable, reduced to what Wellman called:

> ...a universal absolute consisting of an interlocking set of nostrums concerning what is important in life. Love triumphs over all. Honesty is the best policy. There is nothing that succeeds like success. When the going gets tough the tough get going. And, in especial: the emotional contentedness of a person is the most important thing in the world. Much of the peculiarity of the American well-made has its origin in this perfect reality of content, a reality whose perfection resides chiefly in the fact that it does not exist. What gets left out is the gritty, grainy truth of the world.[115]

To correct this problem, argued Wellman, the American theater needed playwrights like McAnuff who were willing to "suggest that things are not as they appear; that the world is a dangerous and deadly place, where courage and clear-headedness are at a premium."[116] As Wellman argued, "only bad artists name what they cherish, because what is cherished, or revered, or loved, will immediately be used as a tool by the powers that be."[117] To Wellman, "Leave it to Beaver is Dead" was important because it brought out "All the wild anomalies and contradictions of our time....And what fine contempt for everything that is commonplace, unthinkingly compromised, and complacently for sale."[118] At bottom, Wellman felt that plays like "Leave it to Beaver is Dead" allowed

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[115] Mac Wellman, "The Theater of Good Intentions," *Performing Arts Journal 24*, (1984), 70.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 66.

[118] Mac Wellman, "Introduction," "Theater of Wonders," x.

the modern theatre to confront this new concept of realism head on while escaping its "politics of denial."[119]

The same sort of theme, albeit in a less dramatic way, was played out in Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones' parody of the series, *The Beaver Papers: The Story of the Lost Season.* Released in 1983, the book postulates what might have happened had the May, 1963 cancellation of *Leave it to Beaver* been followed by an onslaught of great writers—both living and dead—rushing to write treatments in an attempt to save the series. As much a parody of literary greats as it is of the series, the book consists of 25 script treatments "written by" such authors as Jack Kerouac ("Dharma Beaver"), John Steinbeck ("The Beaver of Wrath"), Ingmar Bergman ("Cries and Beavers"), Raymond Chandler ("Farewell, My Beaver") and Ernest Hemingway (A Clean, Well Lighted Beaver").

Like "Leave it to Beaver is Dead," the book juxtaposes the simplicity of the series against the complexities of life. In their introduction, for example, Jacobs and Jones write "[*Leave it to Beaver* writers] MacLane and Conway completed a script in which Beaver gets a flat tire and conceals it from his parents, but network executives, although impressed with its daring, decided that it didn't quit fit their standards for new blood."[120] The authors point to the series' "Anytown, USA" location in the first treatment, "Dharma Beaver," written in the style of Jack Kerouac, with Eddie Haskell not searching for America, but for "where in America we are."[121] In addition to the treatments, Jacob and

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[119] Mac Wellman, "Theater of Good Intentions," 62.

[120] Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones. *The Beaver Papers: The Story of the "Lost Season"* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1983), ix.

[121] Ibid., 2-3.

Jones provide a running commentary on various reactions that network executives and other public figures had to the proposed turns these authors had been suggesting for the series. In the commentary following "The Beaver and the Fury," a parody of Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury," Jones and Jacob's featured a parody of Billy Graham's "reaction" to the new turn the series was taking. Calling it "putrid corruption of a once-healthy body of American morality," Jacob and Jones posit Graham as saying that God had spoken to him, demanding that he "must lead the eyes of Christians back to the Cleavers of yore and away from this modern Mayfield and Gomorrah where an Eddie Haskell can triumph in his scarlet worldly themes."[122] In the parody's epilogue, Jacob and Jones bring the "mythical" seventh season in direct contrast with the more involved 1970's television which had "followed" it. As Jacob and Jones observed:

> In the last twenty years, television has been graced by a number of worthwhile programs. Critics have acclaimed such shows as "The Smothers Brothers," "All in the Family," "The Waltons," "M*A*S*H," and "Hill Street Blues." But none of these, despite the excellence they attained within their limits, transcended those very limits. None of them transformed television into a medium to be reckoned with. None of them fired the enthusiasm of the worlds literati the way "Leave it to Beaver" would have, had it been allowed to live.[123]

Irony is the key to parody, and the obvious irony here is that *Leave it to Beaver*, as it existed in the popular imagination, could not possibly have transformed its limited medium. It could not possibly have made TV a force to reckon with. In order for this message to work, of course, there had to be a certain level of cultural belief in the underlying simplicity of the series. While Jones, in his work on family sitcoms, would

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[122] Ibid., 57.

[123] Ibid., 107.

later acknowledge that *Leave it to Beaver* was more complicated than the average 1950's family sitcom (in *Honey, I'm Home*, Jones is actually one of the first authors to complicate the role of the series in TV sitcom history, noting how it did stand apart from such shows as *Father Knows Best* and *Ozzie and Harriet*), his parody depended on—and worked because of—a general consensus that *Leave it to Beaver* was not much different from any of the other domestic sitcoms of its day.

Such opinion was clearly a part of the popular culture, of the late-1970s and early 1980s, which used the series as comedic fodder in a number of film and television send-ups. Tony Dow and Jerry Mathers appeared as grown-up versions of Wally and Beaver commenting on a courtroom trial in the 1977 film, *Kentucky Fried Movie.* The film was produced by the Zucker Brothers, whose 1980 hit comedy *Airplane* also featured Barbara Billingsley as a jive-talking airline passenger. The comedy in that scene was not simply derived from Billingsley being an older white woman who spoke with a exaggerated African-American dialect, but that "June Cleaver" was speaking with that dialect. Tony Dow, Frank Bank, and Ken Osmond, along with a number of other child actors from the 1950s through the 1980s, appeared in the 1983 film *High School USA*, while Jerry Mathers played a police desk sergeant in the 1989 comedy film *Down the Drain.* The 1982 film *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* feature's a clip from the *Leave it to Beaver* episode "In The Soup." A 1979 *Saturday Night Live* sketch, starring guest host Ricky Nelson, featured Nelson wandering among a number of 1950s TV families, which included the Cleaver kitchen.[124] There was also a sketch in which John Belushi played Beaver Cleaver, trying to explain why he had "told" everyone that he had died in

[124] See a discussion of these episodes in Stephanie Coontz, *The WayWe Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 514-15.

Vietnam.[125] An SCTV parody of the series juxtaposes the clean image of the series with an alcoholic Ward and a gay Eddie. In the end of the sketch, Beaver shoots Eddie through the heart.

The squeaky-clean, asexual image of the series was juxtaposed against the sexual connotations of the word Beaver, as well, with comedic capital derived from June's frequent claims that Ward may have been "too hard on the Beaver." One 1985 humorous greeting card, for example, quipped that the most erotic words ever said on a television show were "Gee Ward, did you have to be so hard on the Beaver?!" Happy Birthday.[126] News anchorwoman Linda Ellerby also relates a story in her book, *And So it Goes: My Life in Network Television*, by explaining how network executives had once referred to her short-lived late-night television show, staffed predominantly by women, as "Leave it to Beaver." The irony of The lily-white Cleavers having the same last name as Eldridge Cleaver also showed up in an Acme Greetings greeting card whose front cover pictured two white kids with a stereotypical image of a militant African-America below the caption, "The Cleavers: Wally, Beaver, and Eldridge." Inside the card read, "Happy Birthday from Ward, June and the Boys."[127]

So pristine was the Claver image by the 1990s, Frank Bank, who had played character Clarence "Lumpy" Rutherford, wrote a tell-all biography in which he claimed to have had sex with thousands of women, a practice which started even during the days

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[125] Mathers, 161.

[126] "A Birthday Question?! What are the most erotic words spoken on TV?" Greeting card, Kalan, Inc., Philadelphia, PA., 1985.

[127] Kevin Pope, "The Cleavers:...," Greeting card, Recycled Paper Products, Inc., 1986.

of filming the *Beaver* series. This angle was played up by a 1998 *TV Guide* interview with Bank and Mathers:

> Bank: "You know what? Jerry's six years younger. He didn't really enjoy [that era]. he got more of the backlash, he got more of the civil disobedience. I mean it was the 60s and Vietnam. I was there for Utopia. I was there at the beginning of the sexual revolution. I was there for cruising Hollywood Boulevard, surfing, the beach, Frankie and Annette. I was there in the prime age to enjoy all these things, so when the sexual revolution started, I was holding the cannon, and it was great."[128]

Banks book, along with Mathers' biography, also blow off the clean image of the set by relating a story involving a run-in with Marlon Brando on a closed movie set. Apparently Brando was none too thrilled with the young actors and yelled get those "fucking kids off the set." Before leaving, Bank gave Brando the finger.[129]

A 1980s punk-rock band out of Texas that had gained some notoriety melded the acid rock of Jimmy Hendrix's group, The Experience, with the placidly of *Leave it to Beaver*, calling itself "The Hugh Beaumont Experience." The early 1980s also saw the arrival of two novelty songs based on the series: "Something's Wrong with the Beaver," by Kinky Friedman and the Lost Texas Jewboys and "Beaver Cleaver Fever" by an all-girl punk rock group that reportedly formed in the San Francisco County Jail.[130] The soundtrack for the film Kafka featured titles based on *Leave it to Beaver*; a popular newspaper comic strip by Ward Sutton went by the name of "Ward's Cleaver,"[131] and a Parody of murder mysteries written by Barbara Collins included an entry called "Eddie

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[128] Ted Johnson, "Lunch with Beaver & Lumpy," *TV Guide*, 17 October 1998, 41.

[129] Ibid., 42.

[130] Mathers, 169-170.

[131] "Ward's Cleaver Strikes Gold," *Minneapolis St. Paul*, June 2000, 32.

Haskell in a Short Skit."[132] Thus, if *Leave it to Beaver* was not dead, it had certainly been transformed into a shorthand for the sort of simplicity and bliss that seemed anachronistic in the 1970s brief moment of "relevance." What these producers forgot, however, was that *Leave it to Beaver* had been quite relevant in its time. Not that anybody cared. *Leave it to Beaver* could be a fun thing to parody, but as the 1980s rolled around, no network show wanted to look remotely like *Leave it to Beaver.*

"the warts...its progenitors ignored"

While popular perception posited the 1950s sitcoms as little more than happy lily-white postcards, the affective family sitcom was far from dead. Indeed, by the 1980s, as different family and psuedo-family shows continued to enter the market, the affective family was soon to make a reappearance, albeit with a very different twist. Perhaps the most significant of these was Bill Cosby's 1984 NBC series, *Cosby*, which not only helped to revive the struggling third-place network but breathed new life into a sitcom format which had been pronounced all but dead. While *Cosby*'s star family, the Huxtables, were a loving, upscale, affluent nuclear family much like the Cleavers, they were African-American. Cosby, inspired by Harvard professor of psychiatry, Alvin Poussant—who argued that TV shapes perceptions of how white and Black kids see themselves—used the series as a vehicle to not only entertain but enlighten.[133] Indeed, Poussant was employed to review scripts for the series. According to Berry Gordon, between *Good Times* and *Cosby*, America was able to finally see "Black families with

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[132] Barbara Collins and Max Allan, *Murder-- His and Hers: Short Stories* (New York: Five Star, 2001).

[133] Hamamoto, 136.

proactive parents who taught solid values whether they were struggling or very affluent." [134]

While *Cosby* was wildly successful, it was not without its critics, many of whom argued that the series, like *Julia*, did not do enough in speaking to the problems less affluent African Americans faced in modern society. While *Cosby* did address such issues tacitly—the Huxtables son, Theo, played by Malcolm Jamal Warner, had an "End Apartheid Now" poster in his bedroom, for example—the Huxtable family did appear to exists in an idealized color-blind world with working parents who, like Ward Cleaver, always seemed to have plenty of time to devote to their children. This was particularly amazing considering that Cliff Huxtable was an OB-GYN and his wife Claire was an attorney. Nevertheless, the show remained quite popular, carried not only by Cosby's personality, but by a fine ensemble cast of supporting adult and child actors.

While Cosby presented life from a black, upper-middle-class perspective, three late-1980s series—*Married with Children*, *Roseanne*, and *The Simpsons*—took a comical—and, in the case of *Roseanne*, critical—look at life from a working-class perspective. *Married with Children*, which debuted on the Fox Network in 1987, can perhaps best be described as a live-action comic strip which, much like Maggie and Jiggs, exaggerated all the worst elements of married life. As Les Brown observed, "In a marked departure from the idealized, suburban domestic comedy, the show centers on a quarrelsome working-class family in an unkempt household."[135] The series, which centered on life with the Bundy family, departed from sitcom tradition by not having a

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[134] Gordon L. Berry, "Black family life on television and the socialization of the African American child: images of marginality," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (Summer 1998), 233-42.

[135] Les Brown, editor, *Les Brown's Encyclopedia of TV*, third ed. (Detroit: Visible Ink, 1992), 338.

single admirable or idealistic character within the star family. Al Bundy, the father, was a loud-mouthed sexist who was often bested by his over-sexed wife Peg and his two obnoxious children. Humor for the series was derived more from double-entendre and bathroom humor as opposed to actual situation or plot, which often seemed the vehicle for off-color, non-politically correct humor. In many ways, the series had brought the popular image of family life to full circle—a harrowing institution from which one desperately needed to escape.

While ABC's *Roseanne*, which centered on the fictional Conner family, also brought a cynical view to the family, it provided a much more serious comment on American family life, often making important statements on the helplessness faced by put-upon working-class families. As television critic Roseanne Freed observed, "The contradictions played out with dark sarcasm in the fictional troubles of the Conner brood are very likely the home truths viewers face in their own lives: financial woes, battles between parents and children, the rocky road to the future."[136] As Himmelstein observed, shows like *Married with Children* and *Roseanne* made the blue-collar worker the in-group, "caught in a web of disrespectful children, a vague, politically defocused awareness of their socio-economic marginalization, and a general feeling of helplessness and inadequacy."[137] As Brown observed, "...where Cosby presents an idealized family circle, Roseanne's is imperfect, unglamorous and somewhat vulgar. TV audiences seemed immediately to appreciate the honesty of the show."[138] According to Freed,

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[136] Rosanne Freed, "The gripes of wrath: Roseanne's bitter comedy of class," *Television Quarterly*, (Fall 1999), 90-99.

[137] Himmelstein, 119.

[138] Les Brown, 469.

Roseanne, as producer of the series, had a game plan "inspired by a kind of domestic feminism: expand television's limited depiction of women. She deplored a sitcom tradition in which 'the mother is absent or an idiot or dead,' and where 'we don't hear nothing female or motherly or womanish.'"[139] Roseanne was also interested in mocking the middling nature of previous sitcoms. Talking about the older sitcoms, Roseanne star Roseanne Barr told Freed, "everything was about striving to have middle class values and a middle class life, and I wanted to make fun of that."[140] Unlike *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver*, the series showed that neither parenting nor the functional imperatives of honesty and responsibility were enough to extricate one from the problems of "forces outside their control."[141] This sort of working-class family was a rarity on television. One researcher, looking at network television from 1946 to 1990, counted just eleven shows out of 262 featuring blue-collar headed households.[142] As Himmelstein observed, these shows dared to "show the warts that its progenitors ignored."[143]

The Simpsons, another comical look at working-class life, began as a cartoon featured in segments on the *Tracey Ullman Show*, which debuted on Fox in 1988. A year later, the show became its own weekly series, centering on the life of the Simpson family, which lived in the mythical town of Springfield, home to a decrepit nuclear power plant at which inept Homer Simpson, the father, worked, ironically, as a plant safety monitor. Like the Bundy's and the Connors, the Simpsons appeared much more confrontational

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[139] Freed, 90-9.

[140] Ibid., 90-9.

[141] Ibid., 90-9.

[142] Ibid., 90-9.

[143] Himmelstein, 137.

than previous TV families. While the eldest Simpson, Lisa, was a high achiever, much smarter than the rest of the members of the family, her brother, Bart—the most popular character on the series—was proud of his under-achiever, semi-bad boy status. Skateboarding through town and acting the class clown, Bart's future was clearly that of his fathers—a rather stupid man who had no higher aspirations than basic survival and the satisfaction of his own simple desires. As Freed observed, the *Simpsons*, along with *Roseanne* and *Married With Children*, "burrowed beneath the rhetorical facade of Family Values. They suggested with startling frankness that the dysfunctional family might be the most normal family on the block."[144]

While some saw the route these series took in problematic terms, undermining family values and American morality (see chapter 11), Freed, in response to an attack on the series by *USA Weekend* Magazine writer Alice Hoffman, wrote "Those who despise Roseanne—her TV character or her public persona—often seem to hate her for not being a '50s sitcom wife ... If my kids attitudes about family dynamics and sexuality and what it means to be human are even slightly influenced by TV images, and I believe they are, I prefer that they be influenced by Roseanne Arnold, not Donna Reed." [145]

Gerard Jones brought the series in direct contrast with *Leave it to Beaver*, calling *Roseanne* the "bravest, truest, most penetrating" sitcom ever made. As Jones observed:

> [The Connors] are bright, cynical, but financially unsuccessful heartland suburbanites, struggling to survive in a hostile America and raise (just halfway decently) their three combative, anything-but-cutesy kids. They're boomers and they're modern TV characters—self-conscious, worldly, smart-ass—but they're also parents of a nuclear family, well-meaning but disappointed heirs to the

[144] Freed, 90-9.

[145] Ibid., 90-9.

> legacy of the Andersons and Cleavers. At its best, Roseanne perfectly captures the despair, humor, frustration, and durability of people caught in the gap between promise and reality, well aware of what's happening to them, unable to change it, finding ways to enjoy it. Jobs are lost, businesses go under, one daughter elopes at seventeen with her sleazy boyfriend, the other disappears into sullenness and comic books. Yet they find a way to keep going, week after week. Just like the country. Just like the sitcom."[146]

Freed was also aware of the way *Roseanne* "subverted" what appeared to be "traditional depictions of family, gender and class on television." Echoing Jones comments, Freed noted that, "Unlike the relentless optimism of most sitcoms, the show delivers gritty personal disappointments momentarily interrupted by fleeting triumphs" that illustrated "the gap between the ideal and the real." [147]

Both *Married with Children* and *Roseanne* commented on *Leave it to Beaver* through two episodes that made fun of the family sitcoms they had seemingly risen above. On the 200th episode of *Married with Children*, titled "You'd Better Shop Around," which was broadcast in 1991, the Bundy children mercilessly tease Jerry Mathers who, much like in real life fashion, was doing a cheesy store opening as he pondered the meaninglessness of living his life as the Beaver. "People who hated *Married with Children* were very mad at me because they said it was demeaning and wondered how I could do it," observed Mathers in his autobiography. "However, a lot of people said that it was really great that I could spoof myself so well. I've always made it a point to never take myself too seriously."[148]

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[146] Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 270.

[147] Freed, 90-9.

[148] Mathers, 193.

In 1995, the seventh season *Roseanne* episode, "All About Rosey," featured clips from past shows introduced by Roseanne Barr and the "Sitcom Mom Welcome Wagon," headed by Barbara Billingsley, who was joined by other sitcom mothers Allie Mills (*The Wonder Years*), June Lockhart (*Lost in Space*), Isabel Sanford (*The Jeffersons*) and Patricia Crowley (*Please Don't Eat The Daisys*). While the episode drew from mothers who represented a diverse range of family sitcoms (the *Wonder Years*, for example, was a 1980's program that itself complicated the image of the family), the episode clearly brought the edgy nature of *Roseanne* in sharp relief with the rest of sitcom history. This was accomplished primarily through Barbara Billingsley, who was dumfounded by the frank discussions and situations that had appeared on the series. Noticing Roseanne's tattoo, Billingsley laments, "Back in my day a mother never had a tattoo." Billingsley also complained about the episode in which Roseanne kissed a woman, as well as the series discussions of marijuana, foul language, and teenage sex. In the process, Billingsley was berated by Roseanne for not taking a stand against Ward, playing on the popular myth of Mathers' death by screaming that Beaver many not have gotten killed in Vietnam if June had expressed her opinions more strongly.[149]

Thus, all the nuances and complexities of *Leave it to Beaver*, including those related to June Cleaver, were undone by a popular image that seemed destined to depict affective as phony and raunchy as real. As Peggy Noonan, writing about *The Simpsons*, had observed in *Good Housekeeping*, it was indeed odd that by the 1990s, "a cartoon could be more real than anything in black and white."[150] And, thus, the media did what

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[149] Rob Ulin and Leif Sandaas, "The Clip Show: All About Rosie," *Roseanne* (Carsey-Werner Productions, 1995).

[150] Peggy Noonan "The realest show on TV," *Good Housekeeping*, June 1997, 216.

it did so well—patted itself on the back for keeping up with the times, for getting real, and for killing, once and for all, the image of the Beaver and shows of its ilk.

"Roll-Over, Ward Cleaver..."

By the 1990s, the myth of television progress was well established. When *Time* covered the debut of the 1997 Ellen Degeneris episode in which Degeneris' character came out as a lesbian, they titled their article, "Roll-over, Ward Cleaver...and tell Ozzie Nelson the Sad News. Ellen Degeneris is Poised to Become TV's First Openly Gay Star. Is America Ready or Not?" [151] In a side-bar article, writer Bruce Handy outlined the supposed linear "progression" which television had made from Lucille Ball's pregnancy to *Maude's* abortion to *Murphy Brown's* decision to become a single mom.[152] A year earlier, *TV Guide* made a similar comment on the changing nature of modern television, drawing the difference between the problems of 1960s and 1970's shows versus those of the 1990s:

> [The] Brady's worried about having wrecked car, Mad About You Paul's sister afraid to tell parents she's a lesbian; Happy Days coke is drink; 90210 it's illegal substance; Walton's grandpa master of domain as owned house, Seinfeld master cause he didn't masturbate; Little House two girls fight over cookie, on Friends, Monica and Rachel fight over condom; you get the picture.[153]

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[151] Bruce Handy, "Roll-over, Ward Cleaver...And Tell Ozzie Nelson the News. Ellen Degeneres is Poised to Become TV's First Openly Gay Star. I America Ready or Not? *Time*, 14 April 1997, 78-82.

[152] Ibid.

[153] "That Was Then, This is Now," *TV Guide*, 13 July 1996, 14

A 1995 article in *Parenting* also looked at the changing nature of the sitcom in an article titled, "Cleaver vs. Connor."[154] A May 2000 *Parenting* magazine made a more direct comparison between fictional June Cleaver and the less-than-perfect moms existing in the real world of early twenty-first century America. As Suelain Moy wrote, June Cleaver was the "mother of the 1950s"—so picture-perfect she could vacuum in high heels—but today's moms are less "perfect" and show what it's like to be overworked and under-appreciated."[155]

But just how far had the sitcom come? While the Bunker's, Huxtables, Bundy's, Simpsons, and Connors—particularly the Conners—provided alternative views and comments on the American family, each of these series, confrontational as they were, were still centered on loving nuclear families like the Nelsons, Andersons and Cleavers.[156] Even the 2001 series *The Osborne's*, as referenced in the introduction, were a loving nuclear family. While some sitcoms of the 1970s, such as *Maude*, *All in the Family*, and *M*A*S*H*—as well as family-based shows like *Roseanne* and *The Simpsons* of the 1980s and 1990s—attempted to show women in more complex, less sexualized manners, much of television, in general, depending on titillation and sexuality that, in many ways, was an offshoot of the more socially involved series of the 1970s, which, in an effort to present a more "realistic" or edgy tone found a greater tolerance within the general audience for sexualized images. Susan Douglas, in her epilog to *Where the Girls Are*, agrees, noting that it had become harder during the 1990s to find a strong female

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[154] "Cleaver vs. Conner," *Parenting* , March 1995, 105

[155] Suelain Moy, "The Evolution of TV Moms, *Parenting*, May 2000, 31.

[156] See Himmelstein, who noted that *Roseanne* "is still a traditional suburban-middle-landscape comedy of reassurance that focuses on the strength of family bonds" (135).

character on television for her daughter to identify with.[157] As Douglas wrote on the state of 1990s mass media female characters:

> In one moment, the media exhorted women to be equal and active; in the next, they urged them to be subordinate and passive. Sound familiar? We had been hearing it all our lives.[158]

Patricia Loud, mother of the Loud family featured in the PBS series *An American Family*, was quite upset with the negative media attention she had received and complained that she felt she and her family had been used for titillation.[159] It should come as no surprise, however, that *TV Guide*, in 2002, named *An American Family* as one of the most real moments on television.[160]

As prudish as television and the American public can be, it is in the area of sexuality and other former taboo areas of 1950s television—including the bathroom—upon which progressive television has concentrated.[161] While the sort of political content common to *All in the Family*, *Sanford and Son* and *Maude* have tended to disappear from television, the sexual innuendo and more direct confrontation of sexuality and basic

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[157] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 296; see also "You've come Which Way, Baby?" *Women's Review of Books 17*, July 2000, 20-2, which argues that modern female characters, such as Alley McBeal, are being portrayed in the same sexist way as women were in the 1950s.

[158] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 189

[159] Patricia Loud, "Letter to The Forum For Contemporary History," Feb 23, 1973, reprinted in Roiphe, 234-238

[160] "Greatest Shows of All Time," *TV Guide*, 4 April 2002, 40, applauds *American Family* for being the first TV show to feature an openly gay male, Lance Loud.

[161] Himmelstein, quoting producer Gene Roddenberry, notes that most improvements in network acceptance of contentious content has been in "sexual areas....But, really, basic things like the industrial-military complex, morality of the United States, the selling of weapons to other countries all over the world—the things that writers want to talk about—you really can't get that on television...." (29).

human functions have remained.[162] The center of this has been the gradual unveiling of the toilet. From *Leave it to Beaver's* toilet tank and ubiquitous open bathroom door to Archie Bunker's toilet flush to Dr. Mark Green using a urinal on screen in an episode of *ER*, television has become a modern day Baal Peor, with a public fascinated by the public display of defecation.

Thus, notions of "progressive images" in television in general and of the family sitcom, specifically, have—to borrow a phrase from historian William Chafe—come down to a "progressive mystique" in which the perception of some positive change substitutes for actual change itself. In the case of the 1950s sitcoms versus present offerings, this is done by juxtaposing a black and white past against a full color present, with the strength of the image alone serving as a substitute for substance. Such juxtaposition is used in the promotion of the older images themselves. As Jones observed in his discussion of the way retro cable networks Nick and Nite and TV Land promote their old shows—*Leave it to Beaver* included—Jones noted that they mock their own product to posit them as "amusing trash, useful in ridiculing past generations that were supposedly simpler and dumber."[163] As Lynn Spigel observed in her essay on the way 1990's viewers viewed nostalgic sitcoms, "...the idea that the viewer is somehow more enlightened than the characters (and audiences) of the past is absolutely central to the interpretation the network solicits.

> Thus, both in individualized texts and in its institutional strategies of syndication, television recontextualizes the past in terms of contemporary uses and perspectives. Indeed, like my students, television engages in a kind of historical

[162] "That Was Then, This is Now," 14.

[163] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 101.

> consciousness that remembers the past in order to believe in the progress of the present.[164]

That sort of political juxtaposition is, in many ways, how the film *Pleasantville* works. By placing 1990s teenagers into opposition with those of the 1950s, the media serves as a conduit for what passes for progressive change. Mindless 1950's optimism gives way to gritty realism; small-town narrow-mindedness gives way to tolerance and understanding; even the black and white nature of the older sitcom blossoms into color as both sexuality and race are confronted in the modern milieu. Neither the Cleavers nor the modern families in *Pleasantville* are any more realistic in that neither capture the family nor their world with any great precision. Nevertheless, the media, along with some scholars, continue to promote the "new" as "real," and in doing so, rob previous series, like *Leave it to Beaver*, of their complexity. Of course, as Himmelstein observed, the myth of such older series, "though shaken, would live on."[165] How *Leave it to Beaver* has continued to live on is the topic of the next chapter.

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[164] Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and the Postwar Suburbs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 362.

[165] Himmelstein, 127.

CHAPTER TEN:
LEAVE IT TO BEAVER IN POPULAR MEMORY

In one of the more interesting ironies of the *Leave it to Beaver*, Ken Osmond—TV's original bad-boy, Eddie Haskell—became a Los Angeles police officer whose distinguished career included being shot at three times in the line of duty.[1] For all his heroics, Osmond never completely escaped the Eddie Haskell persona, making personal appearances as the character through to the present. By 2001, having been retired from the LAPD, Osmond made as many as twelve to fifteen personal appearances per year at malls, home and garden shows, and half-time events. While some visits involved public speaking, Osmond is usually on hand to sign autographs and meet and greet fans. Osmond, who now restores antique cars, enjoys these events, which tend to draw a decent crowd of fans. While reactions, according to Osmond, "run the entire gamut...most are courteous and kind."

> I get treated like a King, I make some money, I have a good time, and I'm pulled away from my tools, which is good for me. Otherwise I'd be out in the shop working, because that's what I do.[2]

As Osmond noted in Mathers' autobiography, "I come home from these things and my ego is really inflated. It's terrific..."[3]

Mathers has also continued to do such appearances in shopping centers, car shows, and on college campuses. In his autobiography, Mathers captures the

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[1] Ken Osmond, interview with author, 14 December 2000; see also Ron Miller, "Eddie's Eager to Be in 'Beaver' Again," *The Hartford Courant*, 16 January 1983.

[2] Ken Osmond, interview with author, 14 December 2000.

[3] Jerry Mathers with Fagen, Herb. *...And Jerry Mathers as "The Beaver"* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1998, 210.

simultaneous sense of joy and repetitiveness of these events, writing "It's fun that someone is even interested enough to ask me the same question for the millionth time."[4] Why do fans come out to see such television icons as Mathers and Osmond? Part of the answer lies in the nostalgia that baby boomers and other generations of *Leave it to Beaver* fans and viewers have come to feel for these characters. Like the series itself, Mathers, Osmond, and the rest of the cast of *Leave it to Beaver* have become icons of a simpler, less complicated time.

"Whatever Became of...?"

The word nostalgia was first used in 1688 by Swiss Physician Johannes Hofer to describe the melancholy bouts of homesickness experienced by Swiss mercenaries. The word did notcome into popular usage as a de-medicalized term until the 1950s.[5] According to sociologist Fred Davis, who studied the nostalgia craze that erupted in the 1970s, the roots of nostalgia lie in social change.[6] As Davis argues, nostalgia is always more about the present than it is about the past, noting that "present anxieties, concerns, and existential discontinuities...evoke and amplify" nostalgic feelings.[7] To Davis, nostalgia is used to soothe the complexities of the past, offering what Davis called a "momentary shelter from a worrisome but finally inexorable future."[8] Nostalgia finds its

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[4] Josh Hammer, Susan Peters, "Still the Beaver After 20 Years, Jerry Mathers Joins Tony Dow for a Bittersweet Return to Mayfield," 95

[5] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York, Free Press, 1979), 1.

[6] Ibid., 106.

[7] Ibid., 135.

[8] Ibid., 116

soothing powers, argues Davis, in the idea that "a good state existed in the past, and that despite problems of now, can be proven worthy again."[9] In the process, nostalgia mutes the negativity or complexity that may have been associated with the particular item of the past.[10] While there are numerous examples of nostalgia through the 1950s, Davis feels that social changes of the 1960s lead to a notable increase in nostalgia during the 1970s. As Davis observes, "rarely in modern history has the common man had his fundamental, taken-for-granted convictions about man, woman, habits, manners, law, society, and G-d...so challenged, disrupted, and shaken."[11]

Perhaps the most significant change over the past half-century has been how the artifacts of a mediated society—including television—have become items for which many have become nostalgic. As Davis observes, "whereas once the nostalgic reminiscence of...a thirty-five-year-old was likely to turn to memories of the wide-porched house on Elm Street, the escapades of the gang of kids on the block, and the warm dinner gatherings of family and in-laws on Sunday afternoons, today it is more likely to fix on old TV shows, dancing to rock 'n' roll records, and such popular fads of the period as hula hoops and trampolines."[12] Part of this may have to do with the intimate nature of the mass media, particularly television in which, as Jacobs and Jones observed, "Memories of episodes begin to mix" with one's own memories of their lived

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[9] Ibid., 36.

[10] Ibid., 37; See also Raymond Williams, *The Country and City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), who argues that the passion for rural life the British tend to have is used to obscure the problems that capitalism and industrialism have caused. Cultural historian Michael Kammen comes made a similar observation in his *Mystic Chords of Memory, The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991, 701, in which he argues that people tend to de-politicize the past; while the past certainly does get simplified, the process of simplification can be political in itself.

[11] Davis, 106.

[12] Ibid., 130.

experience.[13] As popular writer Andrew Edelstein observed, shows from the 1960s, catered to a generation that had grown up entirely with television:

> I am a member of the generation for whom TV has always been a part of the household. I assumed that the huge square box called the Admiral had always been sitting in my parent's living room.[14]

Halberstam concurs, noting that "It was the television images of the era that remained so remarkably sharp in people's memories, often fresher than memories of real life."[15] As Mathers observed in his autobiography, "I grew up in people's living rooms, so I'm like an old friend."[16]

The fact that these "old friends" remain within a media that has grown more diversified over the years, particularly with the narrowcasting of cable broadcasting outlets as well as those of the internet's world wide web, Davis argues that the nostalgic remnants of the mediated past, by "proffering the personalities, plots, and styles from five, ten, and twenty-five years ago to feed our nostalgic reverie...not only bring millions together in mind and time but also fashion for us the color and contour of much of our intersubjective culture..."[17] Thus, even in a diversified media, nostalgic images have the power to transcend "class, race, and region, particularly with mediated senses of the

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[13] Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones, "Leave it to Beaver," *TV Gold*, Movieland Publishing, Inc., 1986, 7.

[14] Andrew J. Edelstein, *The Pop Sixties: A Personal and Irreverent Guide* (New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985, 53-54; Davis, 122-24, discusses the mingling of "personal" and "collective" nostalgias, and argues that it is possible for one to attached great personal meaning to popular culture artifacts.

[15] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 514

[16] Sam Whiting, "Caught in the Jaws of the Beaver, Jerry Mathers, About to Turn 50, is Still Living in `Mayfield,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 May 1998, 36.

[17] Davis, 132.

past"[18] and bring about a sort of collective understanding—a national culture, if you will—of the media's nostalgic past.[19] Because such images, coming out of a corporate structure, are so uniform, their "possibilities for subsequent recycling, manipulation, and symbolic control are...greatly enhanced."[20] Thus, *Leave it to Beaver* can do in re-run what it supposedly had been doing during prime-time—speaking to a national family ideal which lives on as a symbol of a golden age of which the series itself, as noted in chapters three through eight, was wary.

Part of this nostalgia is accomplished in the look and feel of the old series itself. Again looking to Davis, each art form has its own way to create a nostalgic feel, which can change over time.[21] Thus, the purveyors of nostalgia in television use older images, black and white film and video, and a stylized script to evoke a more sentimental feeling. As David Marc noted in *Comic Visions*, commercial uses of these nostalgic images vary by venue. While cable's Christian Broadcasting Network shows family sitcoms as part of an idealized, cozy family, the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS), as well as Viacom's Nick at Nite and TV Land use the shows to evokes a campy image that play off their own product as a hokey artifact.[22] Sometimes the image is used to promote various values, such as TV Land's 2003 series of spots that show various TV families enjoying dinner together and imploring their real-life viewers to do the same to affect a positive family

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[18] Ibid., 112.

[19] Ibid., 128.

[20] Ibid., 130.

[21] Ibid., 85-90.

[22] See David Marc, *Comic Visions* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 51, as well as Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home: Sitcoms, Selling the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 101.

change. Regardless of how the images are used, by the 1970s nostalgia had become big business. In his chapter "Contemporary Nostalgia," Davis talks about the rise of a nostalgia industry in 1972, with that year's revival of *Liberty* Magazine, the remarketing of revised nostalgic-looking radios, a nostalgia book club, and the availability of long-play recordings of 1930s and 1940s radio shows.[23]

The market for nostalgia manifests itself in a variety of ways. One way caters to the seemingly insatiable appetite for news of former television and movies stars who had disappeared from view. To that end, *Leave it to Beaver* became fodder for such nostalgic retrospectives as the popular Richard Lamparski *Where Are They Now* series, which looked at the fate of stars of the past. The eight edition of the popular Lamparski book not only featured a picture of Beaver, Ward and June on the cover, but singled out the Beaver on the back-cover notes as one of 150 personalities covered in the book, enticing potential readers by promising to answer "What does Beaver Cleaver do these days..."[24] In the 1970s, *People* magazine, which also looked back at stars of the past, did a small story on Mathers, who was then working as a loan officer at a bank (Mathers later recalled that the story led to people believing that Mathers was working as a lowly bank teller in the 1970s, an assault on his character's supposedly perfect middle-class suburban roots).[25] In 1978, *Teen Bag* magazine ran a picture of a graying Hugh Beaumont, along with Billingsley, Tony Dow, and Jerry Mathers, captioned simply as "Ever watch Leave

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[23] Davis, 118-19

[24] Richard Lamparski, *Whatever Became Of...?*, eighth series (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1982), front and back covers.

[25] Mathers, 151

it to Beaver reruns? Here's how the family looks today."[26] That same picture was cropped and redistributed as single shots in a 1978 copy of *Rona Barrett's Gossip* magazine, this time in a feature article titled "Whatever happened to "Beaver," "Wally," "June," and "Ward"? Catch up with the Cleaver Clan TODAY!"[27] The next page featured "then and now" pictures of the Cleavers, as well as pictures of Osmond. The simple captions themselves simplified the series by contrasting the actor's fictional persona with their then-current real-life status. The caption under Dow lists him as the "prototypical older brother every kid dreamed of having. Today, Tony owns contracting firm [sic]; he and wife Carol have one son." Mathers was described as the "...ingenious imp, who excelled at bugging 'Wally.' Now married, Jerry's in the real estate business." Billingsley was referred to as "June Cleaver," who "always wore a neat shirtwaist and had cookies and milk in supply for her television 'family.'" The comment under Ken Osmond's picture was quick to point out Osmond's work as a police officer. Referring to Osmond as "archetypical, slimy punk 'Eddie Haskell,' it's ironic that now Ken Osmond's a policeman! Remember his snide greeting, 'Good *evening*, Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver—& hello, Theodore ('Beave's' real name)?'"[28]

The caption under Beaumont's picture is particularly revealing of the way in which the popular media not only simplified the series, but conflated its characters with those from other series. For example, while Ward Cleaver was never seen smoking a pipe in a single *Leave it to Beaver* episode, the caption writer, perhaps confusing

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[26] "TV Views," *Teen Bag '78 Spring Annual*, Spring 1978, Lopez Publications, Inc., 80.

[27] Untitled, *Rona Barret's Gossip*, February 1978, 70-1.

[28] Ibid., 71.

Beaumont with Fred MacMurray's pipe-smoking father on *My Three Sons*, read "No real-life dad could tolerate 'Wally' and 'Beave's' antics by benignly sucking a pipe, but as 'Ward Cleaver,' Hugh Beaumont did."[29] And, thus, such one line descriptions became, in part, the way 234 episodes were remembered.

Nostalgia for the series is also manifested though the work done by former series' stars. In the mid-1970s, Jerry Mathers and Tony Dow starred in a production of "Boeing, Boeing," at the Tiffany Theater in Kansas City. According to Mathers, while there was no overt mention of the stars' connection to *Leave it to Beaver* in any of the promotional literature, the strength of their names helped the box office sell out the entire six week run within ninety minutes. A four week extension, according to Mathers, was sold out again within forty-five minutes. "We played to packed rooms," boasted Mathers in his autobiography, "and on opening night we appeared on the front page of the *Kansas City Star*."[30] In 1979-1980, Mathers and Dow starred in an 18-month, ten city tour in a production of the play, "So Long, Stanley," which was written by TV writers Robert Schiller and Robert Weiscoff.[31] As Mathers observed in his autobiography,

> After each show, we'd come to the lobby, and in most cities where we performed *Leave it to Beaver* was still running on TV. Of course, that helped because we had audiences who had grown up on it. The audience participation was very interesting. We'd be signing autographs in the lobby, and the fans would have memorabilia that we'd never seen before.[32]

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[29] Ibid., 71.

[30] Mathers, 154

[31] Lamparski, 201; Josh Hammer, Susan Peters, "Still The Beaver After 20 Years, Jerry Mathers Joins Tony Dow for a Bittersweet Return to Mayfield," *People*, 7 February 1983, 95.

[32] Mathers, 158.

As noted in chapter nine, Mathers and Dow also landed various campy cameo roles in a variety of films and specials. In 1981, for example, Mathers appeared in the made-for-TV movie, "The Girl, The Gold Watch, and the Dynamite."[33] That same year, Mathers took a job as a disk jockey for KEZY-AM in Anaheim, California, fielding calls from fans who, for the most part, wanted to know what had happened to the rest of the cast. "What I found out was just how many legions of Beaver fans were really out there," wrote Mathers in his biography.[34] Mathers also recalled appearing at a *Leave it to Beaver* marathon in San Francisco which, despite torrential rains, drew hundreds of fans. "The rains came down and it poured for hours, and there was talk of cancellation," recalled Mathers. "But when the doors opened, it seemed like people would never stop coming in. I signed autographs and pictures for hours..."[35]

All the while, *Leave it to Beaver* continued playing in reruns—and continued making money. Perhaps no one has proved that more than the cable industry, lead by Viacom's Nick at Nite and its sister network, TV Land, which both specialized in airing nostalgic series. Even before *Leave it to Beaver* was adopted by the cable giants, the series, by 1985, was already running in 189 markets in the United States, as well as in 20 foreign countries, dubbed in 14 languages.[36] The series that was so much a part of its time was now a nostalgic relic—one that had its own cultural currency of serving, much as Fred Davis had suggested, as an oasis in a continually changing world. As the family

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[33] Lamparski, 201.

[34] "The Beave is Back and We Got Him: Jerry Mathers Still Popular After All These Years," as quoted in Mathers, 164.

[35] Ibid., 164.

[36] Nancy Rutter, "The (re)making of the Beaver," *Teen Age*, March 1985, 27.

continued to change, American viewers seemed ready to give Beaver a new lease on life. The media was quick to oblige, this time with a brand new *Leave it to Beaver.*

Still the Beaver

In 1983, Brian Levant, producer for the ABC series *Mork and Mindy* and *The Bad News Bears* joined forces with *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley* producer Nick Abdo to write a script for a TV movie reviving *Leave it to Beaver.* Levant first had the idea for the revival back in 1975, when America seemed to make a more nostalgic turn toward the series, which was appearing in nearly 190 markets at the time.[37] In an interview appearing in Mathers' autobiography, Levant admitted that the series provided him with fond memories from his youth, recalling it in the sort of simple terms that most had begun envisioning the series:

> I was really weaned on *Leave it to Beaver.* I actually remember watching the first episode "Beaver Gets 'spelled." I was eight or nine years old, and as a younger brother myself I could really relate to it. When I was in high school the country was torn apart by Vietnam. So every day after school it was a welcome respite from the real world. I could disappear for a half hour into a world where the worst thing that could happen to you was to have your mom buy you a girl's sweater, and you would have to wear it to school. Here was this little island of sanity and familial support."[38]

Levant's telefilm begins on a nostalgic note, as well, focusing on an old Cleaver family picture, circa 1957. Billingsley, in voice-over, is speaking to Ward (who had died, both in real life and in the film), commenting on her continuing concenrs for the Beaver. This nostalgic moment is quickly juxtaposed against a modern-day Beaver, now the father of

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[37] "Beaver's Back For More Fun-Filled Adventure," *Disney Channel Magazine*, November 1984, 2.

[38] Mathers, 166-67.

two sons—Corey, ten, and Oliver, seven—getting kicked out of the house by his wife Kimberly. Beaver, who has also lost his job, leaves the house dejected, vowing to return.

The film cuts to Wally, who, on the surface, seems to have done a great deal better than Beaver. A successful attorney, he has married his high school sweet heart Mary Ellen Rogers—a character from the old series—and is in the process of building a new house. Yet for all their happiness and good fortune, Wally and Mary Ellen are unable to have a baby (a plot twist that had media historian Hamamoto compare Wally's impotence to "America's waning powers since the time the original program first aired").[39] Still a bit of a jock, Wally complains that he is tired of watching his friends, including Eddie Haskell—who runs the shoddy construction company that is building Wally's house—raise kids while he and his wife are childless.

In the meantime, Beaver, with no place left to go, boards a bus and makes his way back to Mayfield. When June learns that Beaver is getting divorced, she invites him to stay with her. Wally, whose home is under construction, is also living with June. As with the original series, popular psychology was utilized and parodied in the new series, this time through scenes of Beaver trying to help his kids adapt to the divorce. When Beaver comes to pick up his sons for a weekend outing, for example, his son Oliver is wearing a cape. When Beaver asks why, Kimberly replies, in matter-of-fact manner, that Oliver's secret identity is his way of dealing with his hostility towards Beaver.

The discussion of psychological adjustment is also provided by Beaver's old pal, Richard Rickover, who is now depicted as a successful Mayfield psychologist. In one scene, Richard and Beaver discuss how children have become more sophisticated—a

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[39] Darrell Y. Hamamoto, *Nervous Laughter: Television Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1989), xi.

problem that parents had been complaining about since the turn of the century. After Beaver runs into his old friend Larry Mondello, who has become a Krishna followerBeaver asks Richard to explain why Larry opted for such a lifestyle. Through that discussion, Richard reveals how so many Mayfield kids had envied the Cleaver family; when Beaver humbly says that his family was nothing special, Richard notes that the rest of Mayfield was envious of all the love in the Cleaver home. At that moment, Beaver comes to envision Mayfield in much the same way as nostalgic viewers—as a trouble-free, uncomplicated place that is perfect for raising children. Determined to bring his kids to Mayfield, Beaver tries to enlist Wally's help in suing for custody. While Wally balks at the idea, June encourages her oldest son to help Beaver in his first real attempt at taking on responsibility.

Beaver's immediate problem of winning custody of his kids is resolved when Kimberly arrives at the Cleaver home and asks Beaver to take care of the kids while she goes overseas to study veterinary medicine. Thus, without a fight, Beaver has achieved his dream. His boys can grow up in Mayfield, which, incidentally, had changed in at least one respect—it was now home to at least one African-American child, who had become a friend of Beaver's son Oliver. Glad to have custody of his kids, Beaver, true to form, is soon overwhelmed by the responsibility. In one scene, for example, Beaver comes home with gifts for his two boys—a guitar for Corey and a baseball for little Oliver. When Beaver hits Oliver with the ball, the young boy is scared off by the sport. Wally, just trying to be nice, suggests they use a tennis ball, which is softer, which gets Oliver back into the game but leaves Beaver jealous of his brother's ability to handle the situation.

When Wally later finds Beaver's older son Corey, who has run away from home, Beaver begins to confront reality. Harkening back to the persona he had developed in the original series, he comes to realize how overwhelmed he has been by adulthood and the responsibility it entails. Unable to expect very much from himself, he realizes that others have failed to expect things from him as well. Having faced up to this problem—having finally put away the wind-up monkey of his youth, so to speak—Beaver vows to his kids that as long as they work together they will make a great family. In the end, the loving family becomes the antidote for an uncomfortable world.

The movie ends with June giving her house to the Beaver. Comforted that Beaver is getting along well with the boys and that Wally and Mary Ellen have finally had a baby, June goes to Ward's graveside to assure him of the successful conclusion those long years of childrearing have yielded, noting that all the years of struggle were worth it and that she is no longer "worried about the Beaver."[40]

Village Voice writer Tom Carson, a baby boomer who recalled the series, was enthralled with the movies first thirty minutes, which he described as "close to thrilling because it was incorporating all of our feelings about the series into itself, and making the distance, *our* distance, between then and now the substance of the story, through associative editing that, in this context, felt both rapturous and painful." While Carson was disenchanted with the way the film allowed Beaver to successfully go home again (something that even Ward, from the old series, had proven time and again to be impossible), he stops short of dismissing the film and the series it revived, arguing that *Leave it to Beaver* had become a part of the baby boomer's identity. "...television

[40] Brain Leavant and Nick Abdo, "Still the Beaver," (Universal, 1983).

doesn't just depict Hometown, U.S.A.," writes Carson. "for a lot of people, it *is* Hometown U.S.A, and when they diminish that feeling by calling it camp, they only end up disinheriting themselves."[41] Just as Davis had observed, mediated life had become something for which one could become nostalgic.

Carson was not the only one taken with the TV movie; *Still the Beaver* debuted on March 18, 1983, scoring a 50 share in its last half-hour in the cities of Detroit, Chicago, and New York, and gaining a total of 65 million viewers, making it the highest rated CBS film of 1983.[42] The film resulted in a media blitz that featured reunions and salutes for the stars on shows such as *Good Morning America*, *Match Game*, *Family Feud*, and *Hollywood Squares*. Local television stations hosted Beaver-thon marathons, and in Milwaukee, WKTI-FM sponsored a contest in which the winner would spend New Year's Eve 1984 with Mathers. At Huron High, in Michigan, the intramural softball team called itself "The Almighty Cleavers."[43]

Still the Beaver was part of the first wave of similar television show revivals. A March 1985 article in *Teen Age* observed, "The good ole days are gone, and the question now facing ABC, CBS, and NBC is how to get them back. Everybody knows you can't live in the past. But nobody has said you can't re-create it—and that has been the network's design of late....hoping to lure back huge audiences those shows used to attract." The article continued, noting that the three networks had brought back more than 30 series in 1985 alone, from *The Brady Bunch* to *The Wild Wild West* to another

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[41] Tom Carson, "Bringing it All Back Home," *The Village Voice*, 5 April 1983, 56.

[42] Mathers, 168; Susan Morgan, in "Worried About the Beaver," *The Village Voice*, 27 May 1986, noted that the telefilm won the "highest rating it its time slot" (46).

[43] Mathers, 168.

Connelly and Mosher series, *The Munsters*.[44] That same month, *People* ran a cover story on a phenomenon they called "Re-run madness:" "As Sitcoms stage a comeback, look at what happened to the stars of your best-loved shows," read the magazine's cover, which featured a gatefold in which pictures of a young Mathers and Dow were among 27 panels of scenes from such shows as *M*A*S*H*, *I Love Lucy*, *Mary Tyler Moore*, and *Flipper*. The article, "Play it Again and Again and Again," by Fred Berstein, discussed the financial boom these show represented:

> As independent TV stations and cable proliferate and as a generation raised on Gilligan's Island grows nostalgic, yesterday's sitcoms have become a lucrative commodity. How lucrative? In the 30 years that it's been in syndication...I Love Lucy has earned $300 million.[45]

Of course, the article itself was cashing in on the nostalgia craze. Not only did the intro feature trivia questions—including one about the city in which *Leave it to Beaver* was located—it also featured a two page survey in which readers could vote for the best television of all time, which included nominations for Billingsley and Beaumont as best TV mom and dad (results to be announced in the annual readers poll issue in April 1985).[46]

While CBS passed on its option to turn *Still the Beaver* into the series, the Disney Channel, impressed by the telefilm's success, optioned the work to appear on their network in 1985.[47] According to Mathers, he was paid $45,000 per weekly episode to

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[44] Lee Goldberg, "TV Revivals: What's Old is New Again," *Teen Age*, March 1985, 22.

[45] "TV's Rerun Madness...As sitcoms stage a comeback, look at what happened to the stars of your best-loved shows," *People Weekly*, 4 March 1985, 94.

[46] Ibid., 104 and 107.

[47] "Kaleena Kiff: Photo Essay," *Just About Horses*, July/August, 1988, 4-5.

reprise his role as The Beaver (Mathers had been one of the only stars to get continuing money from the *Leave it to Beaver* series).[48] The series became a number one show for Disney.[49] Levant, who served as producer of the series, embarked, as Connelly and Mosher had before him, on a massive talent hunt to find kids who had, as Levant noted, "wide-eyed innocence with a polished performance." Levant interviewed some 600 kids in the process of casting the new series.[50] In the transition to television, Beaver's sons were now named Kip and Oliver, and Wally and Mary Ellen's little Ward was replaced by a nine-year-old daughter named Kelly.

According to a *People* magazine interview, Abdo and Levant were hoping to "...injecting a hardy dose of reality into the once-idyllic suburb where the Beaver grew up."[51] To that end, the series continued with Beaver as a single-father. As Mathers said in a 1985 interview, "I'm divorced in the new show because we didn't want to alienate people living in single-parent households. We wanted to take them in and show them that even though they are having troubles and it's a troubled world, there are people who are coping with these problems."[52] As Ella Taylor observed in the 1980s, this move posited Beaver as "a true child of his generation: jobless, divorced, and confused."[53] At the same time, the series promised to deliver the Cleavers as a symbol of an enduring family just right for the troubled 1980s. As the Disney Channel magazine observed, "In

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[48] Mathers, 174.

[49] Ibid., 178.

[50] "Kaleena Kiff," 4-5.

[51] Josh Hammer, Susan Peters, 95.

[52] Rutter, Nancy, 27.

[53] Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 26.

reuniting these actors, 'Still the Beaver' also renews the Cleaver family spirit—the readiness to share problems and solve them together—which has not been dated by the passing years."[54] Noting that three generations had now grown up with the Cleavers, Disney magazine said that the new show recreated "the Cleaver's world of love and laughter," which still helped the new generation of Cleaver kids survive the "puzzling process of growing up."[55] Levant also saw he series as a balm for the times, noting in a Disney Channel magazine article that he hoped "today's kids can grow up with Kip and Kelly the way we grew up with the Beaver."[56]

> The show was also seen as an antidote to a perceived lack of decency that had corrupted television in the wake of such shows as *All in the Family* and the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*. In pre-show publicity, Levant talked about how the major networks had backed away from such family oriented, wholesome shows, noting that "Luckily the Disney Channel believes that stories about living families never go out of style..."[57] Disney itself promoted the show, through its Disney Channel magazine, as a series that preached values seemingly missing from contemporary television fare, noting that viewers would be "warmed by the same current of human understanding and solid values which gave Leave it to Beaver its special appeal."[58]

In another article, Dow credited the success of the new series to the fact that it also provided a family-oriented feel. "People kept asking for a show like the original, because they are tired of watching silly TV. And they remember that watching TV was a family activity, that there used to be shows like 'Beaver' that the whole family could watch.

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[54] "Beaver's back For More Fun-Filled Adventure," 3.

[55] Ibid., 2.

[56] Ibid., 3.

[57] Ibid., 2.

[58] Ibid., 2.

Delivering that today is very difficult, and I think if we would have come back in an exploitative way, the new show wouldn't have made it."[59]

The new series, while never as powerful or interesting as the original, spoke to many of the assumed set of childhood universals and moralistic lessons: older brothers discover girls and move away from their younger siblings; kids who break the rules get in trouble; a child is never to old to enjoy time with his or her family; children who lie must face the consequences of their actions. Some episodes borrowed directly from original series plots. In one episode, Kelly refused to kiss a boy in a school play, just as Beaver had done. In another episode, Kip's desire to win a go-cart was crushed by a phony magazine subscription service that took advantage of him. Several episodes involved Eddie Haskell's son Freddie, who had inherited his father's guile (although Freddie was not nearly as miserable as his father had been).[60] Levant tied the new series to a comforting, timeless quality of childhood that could assure viewers that some things—particularly in Mayfield—had not changed:

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[59] Rutter, 26.

[60] Information on the shows are taken from episode descriptions as appearing in a variety of *Disney Channel* magazines. The first episode, "Growing Pains," which debuted November 7, is described in *Disney Channel*, November 1984, 8, noting that Beaver's son Oliver gets a job over Beaver's objections; that same issue discusses the November 21 episode, "Thanksgiving Day," in which Beaver's older son Kip feels that he is too old to spend Thanksgiving with the family. The *Disney Channel*, December 1984 issue, 13, describes the December 5 episode, "Supply and Demand," involves Wally's daughter Kelly who lies about a doll; The December 19 episode, "Pet Peeves," has Beaver's sons losing a pet tarantula. The *Disney Channel*, January 1985, 14, describes the January 2 episode, "Girl Talk," as Kelly not wanting to be kissed in a school play as Beaver worries about June, who is being wooed by an elderly man; The January 16 episode, "The Gladiators," involves older brother Kip growing way from younger brother. A *Disney Channel*, March 1985 issue, 13, describes the March 6 episode, "Dear Pen Pal," has Oliver wanting more brothers after he learns that his African pen pal has 17 brothers; the March 20 episode, "No Free Lunch," has Beaver's kids getting bilked by a company that offers a go-cart for kids who sell a certain number of magazines. In the *Disney Channel*, April 1985 issue, 14, The April 4 episode, "Haskells vs. Cleavers," has Eddie cheating to help his son's little league team, and the April 17 episode, "Slumber Party," has Kelly's party being ruined by a frog and overly-sophisticated girl who brings make-up to the slumber party. The *Disney Channel*, May 1985 issue, 16, features the May 1, episode, "Our Big Girl," in which Kelly becomes jealous when her mother gets pregnant; and the May 15 episode, "Steppin Out," in which Freddie Haskell, Eddie's son, proves to be afraid of dating.

> "The dolls have changed, the clothes have changed, the jargon has changed, but the trials and tribulations of childhood remain the same.
>
> "Kids still have the same trouble living up to what the world—and their parents expect of them. And they have to pass the same milestones. A boy still makes the change from liking frogs to liking girls..."[61]

As had happened with Mathers and Dow, the new child stars of the series found themselves the topic of various magazine articles, although not nearly to the level enjoyed by Mathers and Dow. As with Mathers and Dow, the articles tended to normalize the child actors lives. A June 1985 issue of the Disney channel magazine featured an article on Ken Osmond's real son, Eric, who played Freddie Haskell in the new series. After comparing the parenting styles of Ken Osmond and his alter ego Eddie Haskell, the article looked at Eric's home life as well as a discussion of his hobbies, which included riding dirt bikes and horses.[62] A 1988 article in *Just About Horses*, noted how Kaleena Kiff, who played Wally's daughter, had been riding horses since age six and had hoped to be an Olympic rider.[63] According to a WTBS press package, cast members Kipp Marcus, Kaleena Kiff, John Snee and Eric Osmond received almost as much fan mail as the original cast.[64] Due to a conflict between Disney and Universal studios, which was working in conjunction with Disney on the series, Disney dropped the series after twenty- six episodes. The series was picked up, however, in 1986, by Ted

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[61] Ibid., 3.

[62] "Life with Freddie Haskell's Father," *Disney Channel Magazine*, June 1985, 8

[63] "Kaleen Kiff," 4-5.

[64] "Beaver Turns 30,"" WTBS press release, 1987, 2 of 2

Turner's WTBS cable outlet which continued production of the series by ordering a total of 76 episodes, switching the name of the series to *The New Leave it to Beaver*.[65]

"...the end of all our childhoods"

With the new series in full swing and the original still airing in re-run, promoters of the series found various anniversaries and milestones that could be used to keep the series in the public eye. The first major *Leave it to Beaver* milestone celebrated was its thirtieth anniversary, led by WTBS, the cable station which continued to broadcast both the original series as well as *The New Leave it to Beaver*. According to Mathers, the reception for the thirtieth anniversary was "extraordinary," including honors from the Governor of Florida, where Universal Studios was located, along with Mathers being the Grand Marshall of that year's Indianapolis 500. There was a salute to *Leave it to Beaver* in the pre-game show of Super Bowl XXI, and Mathers was made the honorary mayor of both Universal City and Beverly Hills. There were also special programs honoring the series at the Museum of Broadcasting in New York, New York, and at the UCLA film school in Los Angeles.[66] Collectors videos and merchandise related to the series were released, and Universal studio tours planned a day-long party to celebrate the occasion.[67]

WTBS also created a special press kit touting all of these events. Like much of the popular literature of the series, there was a mix of traditionalism with the sort of change which had taken place between the old a new series. The materials celebrated the

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[65] Mathers, 182.

[66] Mathers 182; "Beaver Turns 30," 2 of 2

[67] "Beaver Turns 30," 2 of 2

show as being "more wholesome than milk and better than a fresh, hot chocolate chip cookie." The package also included a "letter from June Cleaver" promising that she would be at the ready with milk and cookies on hand (photos from the press kit actually featured Billingsley with a plate of cookies and pitcher of milk).

The press kit also included material that compared and contrasted the two series, literally through a set of "then and now" items that concentrated on the personnel of the series. There was a contrast drawn between Levant, a baby boomer, and Connelly and Mosher, the parents of baby boom children. Another contrast was drawn between the technical aspects of the series, from a black and white original to a color sitcom broadcast in stereo. Most significant was the idea of June Cleaver coming into her own as a modern liberated women who had eschewed the milk and cookies for a more modern and meaningful life, noting that the new sereis would have June going to City Council meetings, atending college and dating. [68]

Eleven years after the thirtieth anniversary came an even more significant milestone—Baby Boomer Mathers turned fifty. Sam Whiting, writing for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, met with Frank Bank and Mathers on that occasion, melding their current and fictional lives with Bank and Mathers TV personas.[69] As Whiting wrote, "Not only did he become the most lovable and enduring child star since Shirley Temple, but he, Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer are among the few who have seen their own obituaries."[70] Whiting's editor, Liz Lufkin, also commented on the milestone, noting that

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[68] "The Cleaver Chronicles," WTBS press release, 1987, page 1 of 2.

[69] Whiting, 36 .

[70] Ibid., 36.

Mathers' fiftieth birthday was a sobering event that translated into "the end of all our childhoods. I still think of him as 10."[71]

Between the thirtieth anniversary and Mathers turning fifty, the show seemed to be as much in the public eye as ever. According to the 1987 WTBS press packet, there were more than 70 regional "Leave it to Beaver" fan clubs operating. In 1989, People magazine ranked Mathers as one of the top TV stars of all time.[72] A 1993 *Entertainment Weekly* tribute to TV literacy, "TV Classic 101," featured Jerry Mathers, as the Beaver, circa 1959, on the issue's cover, with a thought-balloon hovering over thoughtful Beaver saying "Was it Socrates or Laurie Partridge who said..."[73] In 1995, a Chicago Tribune article voted Eddie Haskell as one of the 25 greatest TV characters of all time.[74] In 1997 Levant released an updated although ill-fated theatrical release of *Leave it to Beaver* starring an all-new cast set in a contemporary Midwestern setting. At the end of the twentieth century, reruns of the series were beating nightly news ratings and in some markets viewers were able to watch *Leave it to Beaver* five hours per day.[75]

Merchandising

In 1957, the Mathers' family, acting on behalf of their son, had asked for and received ten-percent of the gross on the merchandising of Jerry's face as the Beaver. While Mathers said later in 1998 that it would be difficult to get a deal like that today, he

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[71] Liz Lufkin, "TV Memories in Living Color," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 May 1998, 3.

[72] Mathers, 192.

[73] Cover, *Entertainment Weekly*, July 30, 1993.

[74] noted in *Brainstorms Holiday Gift Catalog*, Skokie, Illinois, 1996, 2.

[75] Whiting, 36.

also noted that the agreement had been renegotiated in 1998 to include items like videos and CD-ROMS. "In 1957, we would never have thought that people would still want to buy Beaver Cleaver coffee cups, T-shirts, hats, mouse pads, and more."[76] But, indeed, they did. Just as the series spawned a set of spin-off products during its first run, the merchandising of *Beaver*-related items continued into the 1990s. Mathers is well aware of the money to be made through his character. As Scripps Howard News Service writer T. J. Sullivan observed in 1993, "Mathers guards the Beave, a symbol of innocence for many generations, like a protective father. Part of it is his love of the character, and part is because a bad-Beaver image could rob Mathers of hundreds of thousands of dollars."[77]

Merchandising of the Cleaver likeness was particularly strong in the wake of the 1980's series revival, with posters, buttons, party favors, toys, T-shirts, Hallmark cards calendars, and commercials being offered. Mathers and Dow became the first non-athletes on box of Corn Flakes in the 1980s.[78] Series alum were still hot properties into the 1990s. In 1996, the Fall issue of Brainstorms Holiday Gift Catalog, a Skokie, Illinois-based upscale novelty mail order business featured Ken Osmond on the cover, holding the incredible goo gun, and yelling, in word balloon, "Hey Beaver, Take That, Ya Squirt." Inside the catalog, owner Marshall Cordell writes of his meeting with Osmond, with a caption harkening to Eddie's character: "Gee, Mr. Cordell, what a lovely catalog you have..."

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[76] Mathers, 98.

[77] T. J. Sullivan, "Jerry Mathers Turns the Beaver into cash cow," *The Detroit News*, November 3, 1995, as published online at detnews.com/menu/stories/23102.htm.

[78] Ibid., 183.

> Boy, was it exciting to meet Ken "Eddie Haskell" Osmond last summer when he graciously accepted my invitation to appear on the cover of the 1996 Brainstorms Holiday Gift Catalog. Wow, it's been almost 40 years since the Leave it to Beaver TV show premiered (1957-1963) and Eddie is still bullying and tormenting Beaver (see front cover). Painfully polite, dressed in his signature Mayfield High School letterman's sweater and looking virtually the same as I remember him, the Brainstorm's staff and I unanimously decided to dedicate this catalog to our new best friend Eddie Haskell and to feature "Eddie's Picks" throughout.[79]

The catalog hawked an authentic Mayfield letterman sweater, reportedly made by the same company which had made the original one for the series, as well as a collectors plate featuring "TV's most loveable character" Beaver Cleaver set against his 211 Pine Street home. One could also purchase baseballs autographed by Wally, Eddie or Beaver, described in the copy as "three unforgettable legends from classic American television," a t-shirt which said "My Best Friend is Eddie," and, the ultimate Beaver gift, a 1-800 number through which fans could book Ken Osmond for a personal engagement.

According to Osmond, the market for Beaver trivia extends beyond the baby boom. Sometimes the items are unlicensed products, as well as pictures with phony autographs offered on Ebay, representing somewhat of a "black market" in Beaver. "I do personal appearances where I sign autographs, and they bring their own items and it's not unusual for them to bring a photograph of Jerry and me together that Jerry has signed in the past; I've signed too many autographs next to Jerry and I know it ain't it."[80] By late 2003, the search string "Leave it to Beaver" on Ebay yields a number of items, including black and white films of the series for 16mm film collectors, promotional stills—some

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[79] *Brainstorms*, 2.

[80] Osmond, interview.

framed, some signed—light switch cover plates with Beaver's likeness, and sets of older collectors cards from the 1980s.

The series still has cultural currency. Jerry Mathers, for example, has become a frequent guest appearing on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. During one visit to, Mathers made George Foreman an honorary citizen of Mayfield, again integrating the fictional town after the fact.[81] In another episode, Mathers appeared along with former Hollywood "has-beens" Adam Rich, Charlene Tilton, and Florence Henderson, in a parody of the CBS television series *Survivor*. To prove they were true Hollywood survivors, the participants were challenged to perform various grotesque acts ala the CBS series. One of Mathers' challenges was swallowing a South American worm, a stunt which actually landed Mathers in the hospital. One tabloid journal documented the event, noting that, "For the next week, medical experts sought to save America's beloved "Beaver Cleaver." Mathers, who received $700 for his appearance on the show, appeared to be a good sport about the mishap, noting that he was not angry with Leno and that he would "go back on his show tomorrow." The article, like most articles about the stars of *Leave it to Beaver* featured a nod to the old series with a picture of Mathers, Billingsley and Dow above the simple caption "TV Heyday."[82]

The phrase *Leave it to Beaver* itself had become synonymous with a simplified, nuclear family portrait that was often juxtaposed against more modern family arrangements. A May 2001 *Newsweek* article on the changing nature of the family

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[81] Mathers, 9.

[82] "Leave it to Beaver's Star Battles Death After Tonight Show Stunt Goes Wrong," *National Enquirer*, 24 April 2001, cover, 41.

compared the modern trend toward single parent homes with June and Ward Cleaver, its lead noting:

> Just image what would happen if June and Ward Cleaver were negotiating family life these days. The scenario might go something like this: they meet at the office (she's in marketing; he's in sales) and move in together after dating for a couple of months. A year later June gets pregnant. What to do? Neither feels quite ready to make it legal and there's no pressure from their parents, all of whom are divorced and remarried themselves. So little Wally is welcomed into the world with June's last name on the birth certificate....[83]

In addition to items directly related to the series, an Ebay search on the phrase "Leave it to Beaver" will also bring up numerous items from the 1950s, from clothing to older fifties-style coffee pots that use "Leave it to Beaver" as an adjective to set the piece in its time and place. In 1989, National Press Publications offered a parenting handbook for working families titled, *Parenting: Ward and June Don't Live Here Anymore.* In addition to the title's juxtaposition of the Cleavers and the modern family, the inside copy read "The type of parenting you may have grown up with, the type Donna Reed and the Cleavers made popular on television, is probably not the type of parenting you are experiencing.

> Today's families aren't the "black and white" families of the 50's TV show. We are, because of our options as adults and a society, multi-colored technicolored families [sic]. What worked for Ward and June Cleaver, as you may have found out, is woefully simplistic and inadequate for your family.[84]

Even Tony Dow made a similar comment regarding the simplicity of the 1950s family image in *Dark Glasses and Kaleidoscopes*, a video explaining Depression and Manic

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[83] Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert, "Unmarried with Children," *Newsweek*, 28 May 2001, 46-48.

[84] Jim Dugger, *Parenting: Ward and June Don't Live Here Anymore* (Shawnee Mission, Kansas: National Press Publications, 1989).

Depression disorders. Dow, standing on a video set, opens the video talking about how the current set reminds him of the time he spent playing Wally Cleaver on *Leave it to Beaver*. "You know," continued Dow,

> The Cleavers lived in a pretty nice world. Oh, we had some real problems, but they were manageable, if you just applied the right principles....If only things were that simple. Since those days, I've learned a lot by traveling the winding roads of life. For example, I've learned that mental disorders can appear without warning in me or in my loved ones. They can happen no matter how good a person you are or how well you follow the standard common sense rules of living.[85]

This near-sacred image of the Cleavers was used by other merchandisers, as well. A commercial for Anderson windows features scenes of characters from famous sitcoms coming home, including a scene from an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*. Nick at Nite and TV Land have been prime examples of such juxtaposition. In one advertisement, a picture from a 1950's era children's magazine was updated to show Wally and Beaver standing in bathing suits. In this picture, however, Wally is covered with tattoos. The poster's headline reads: "Times Change, Great TV doesn't." In 2003 an Old Navy Commercial featured a parody of the *Leave it to Beaver* open, with the theme song under and a picture of a modern mom, dad, daughter and son leaving the Cleaver house. The payoff of the commercial came when it was revealed that they young boy playing the Beaver was African-American. A stylized version of the show's title theme also plays under an AOL commercial advertising its ability to block children from unsafe internet content (as if to take children back in time to an "internet" that was safe for all).

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[85] *Dark Glasses and Kaleidoscopes*, produced by the National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association, Chicago, 1997.

Escaping the Image

During the 1970s, Ricky Nelson, who, like Mathers and Dow, had grown up on television (in an even more conspicuous way as his TV family was conflated with that of his actual family), wrote the song "Garden Party," which tells of his troubles escaping the image of his past. To Nelson, the Garden Party is the venue in which one lives his or her future by reprising past success. In many ways, Mathers, Osmond, and Dow were set in a similar position, doing other things yet never quite able to escape the weight of these icons they had become. This situation was, of course, aided by the continual marketing of the series, as well as by their own concious decisions to be a part of the series.

Escaping the image was particularly troubling for Dow, who, early in his career, tried to move beyond the Wally character. To that end, shortly after leaving the series, he sought roles which were opposite that of his Beaver work, including the role of an unwed father in an episode of D. Kildare. Dow also played in a short-lived ABC soap opera called *Never Too Young*.[86] "I don't just want to walk on and walk off as some character from the 1950s," said Dow in an early 1980s interview with Andrew Edelstein.[87] Dow went on to say that while he is not upset when people recognize him, he was not particularly happy to be called Wally. "I'm not a real, bubbly outgoing personality." continued Dow. "I would like not to be associated with the character Wally. First of all, it has been more than twenty years since I did him, and in the second place, he's not taken seriously. He's kind of a milk-and-cookies character in a world where people want

[86] Josh Hammer, Susan Peters, 96

[87] Edelstein, 77.

blood and guts."[88] While he told *People* in 1985 that he liked working in the revival series, he noted that "Even if I play a murderer," he has said, "people say, "Gee, you're just like Wally.'"[89] Dow had made much the same statement to people in 1983, noting that he did not share Mathers' enthusiasm for nostalgia.[90] Dow, who has owned a construction company, worked as a sculptor, and, most recently, as a television producer, is proud of the work he has done since *Leave it to Beaver.*[91]

Indeed, as Dow had tried to do other things to move away from the Cleaver image, Mathers seemed to grow quite comfortable with being the Beaver. In a 1985 article in *Teen Age*, Mathers said, "People call me Beaver all the time...and it doesn't bother me at all. To me it just means that they were kind enough to watch the show and it made a big enough impression on them to remember me."[92] As Dave Forman, Program Director at KEZY, noted, "Jerry's one of the few people I know who considers his image of the past as just being a nickname."[93] While Mathers did seem more willing to continue being the Beaver, even Mathers could find the weight of the image a bit daunting. In one of the more ironic situations, Mathers recalled that while getting a divorce from his first wife, Rhonda, he was still connected to the Beaver, with his ex-wife telling the *National Enquirer* that he was not Ward Cleaver. As Mathers quoted the article in his autobiography,

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[88] Ibid., 77.

[89] "TV's Rerun Madness," 97.

[90] Josh Hammer, Susan Peters, 96.

[91] "TV's Rerun Madness," 97.

[92] Rutter, 27.

[93] Mathers, 164.

> He is a great guy and a good husband and father—but he is no Ward Cleaver." Wow! This was so weird to me. How can I compete with a fictional character? My own wife was seeking the type of love demonstrated by my fictional father to my fictional mother, who both sprang from the imagination of Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher in 1957.[94]

Much like Ricky Nelson and the "Garden Party," Mathers was aware that people have certain expectations of him. When he was working on the new series, for example, Mathers revealed in his autobiography that they had made him lose weight as people did not want to remember a fat Beaver. Mathers seemed well aware that viewers were using his past—both real and imagined—to suit their present: As Mathers recalled in his autobiography,

> People seem to expect, even demand, a certain public persona from me. Perhaps they need to remember Beaver Cleaver as he was. They need the youthful innocence and a bygone era to remain just as it was in time.[21]

By making Beaver the constant from which the present has moved, *Leave it to Beaver's* Mayfield became the place to which a troubled world could return. Watching the series, purveyed along with other domestic sitcoms, on Viacom's Nick at Nite and TV Land, or purchasing a product with a Cleaver character likeness, or collecting artifacts from the series seems to have allowed viewers to hold onto the past as they will it to be.
Just as Halberstam observed about Ricky Nelson, the Cleaver kids seemed unable to escape their childhood. "It was as if the public would not let him grow up and wanted him forever to be as he was cast as a boy," wrote Halberstam.[95]

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[94] Mathers, 198-9.

[95] Halberstam, 519.

In many ways, Beaver and the rest of the Mayfield gang are, like Ricky Nelson, caught in the garden party. The cultural weight of this series bears down upon its actors, who, in the end, must decide to avoid it or run with it. While Dow has, in many ways, been able to escape the character, and while Mathers and Osmond have lives beyond *Leave it to Beaver*, Mathers and Osmond have chosen to please themselves by pleasing others in encore presentations of characters created nearly fifty years ago. As long as the demand is there—and as long as there is money to be made—the revival will most likely continue.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:
"A CULTURAL MISDEMEANOR"

In *Mystic Chords of Memory*, cultural historian Michael Kammen argues that people, over time, tend to de-politicize the past while they historicize the present. If one considers de-politicization to be similar to simplification—in other words, if one thinks of sapping the complexities, political and otherwise, of a cultural artifact as an act of de-politicization—then *Leave it to Beaver* certainly seems to conform to Kammen's theory. However, one can also argue that the very act of simplification and/or de-politicization has political overtones. For example, when the networks set their current products against the black and white past of *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* (as discussed in chapter nine), they achieve political gain by positing themselves as harbingers of progressive change. The simplification of *Leave it to Beaver* has served other political interests as well. Those committed to social and cultural change during the 1960s and 1970s could gain a great deal by emphasizing the sexism and exclusionary look of affective family sitcoms that continued to appear in daily re-runs. June Cleaver made a particularly strong straw-woman for feminists. Indeed, one need look no further than the title of Joanne Meyerowitz's edited collection of material on women who made a difference during the 1950s—*Not June Cleaver*—to see how her image had been conflated with the mindless domestic sitcom. Conservative politicians, along with liberals catering to the perceived "family values" interests of the body politic writ large, found a great deal to be gained by divorcing the series from its contemporary discomfort to render it a symbol of an "traditional" America that the sitcom itself never truly purported to be. In the face of changing gender roles and norms, the perceived Cleaver

example provided an escape from disintegrating nuclear families, seemingly disrespectful kids, and supposedly declining values. Thus, far from being depoliticized, *Leave it to Beaver* has become a weapon in the arsenal of a number of social and political groups looking either to expose a "past that never was" or promote a way "things ought to be."

The "...symbol of everything...wrong with America"

As the Beat generation gave way to a new 1960s counter-culture which become involved in the free-speech movement, civil-rights, and the growing anti-war movement, remnants of the contented family—imagined and otherwise—became enticing targets. Jerry Mathers, as a self-confessed conservative college student and member of the Air National Guard during the 1960s, found himself an outcast in a society he saw as dominated by counterculture figures who "seemed to be having a lot more fun..." than he was.[1] "What bothered me most," wrote Mathers, "was being ostracized because of my short hair

> ....It seemed that the only people my age with short hair were the undercover narcs and the people who were in the military. Everybody on campus knew that if there was a riot on, we would be the one's who'd be called out to put it down.[2]

Indeed, by the mid-1960s, Mathers saw the image of Beaver Cleaver move from loveable all-American boy to "the symbol of everything supposedly wrong with America."[3]

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[1] Jerry Mathers with Fagen, Herb. *...And Jerry Mathers as "The Beaver"* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1998), 137-143, with specific quote from pages 142.

[2] Ibid, 140.

[3] Ibid., 142.

Steven Talbot, who played Beaver's friend Gilbert, also became aware of how problematic an association with the show could be during the late-sixties and early seventies. In April, 1970, Talbot, a social activist and self-described member of the New Left, went to New Haven, Connecticut to protest the arrest of Bobby Seale. While there, Tom Hayden informed the crowd that President Nixon had just announced that he was sending troops to Cambodia. Incensed, Talbot and 20,000 of his fellow protesters decided to return to their local campuses and organize a nation-wide student strike. When Talbot returned to his campus to organize, however, he was greeted in his college dinning hall by a giant poster inscribed with a typical line from his old *Leave it to Beaver* character: "'Strike? Gee, Beave, I don't know.'"

As Talbot recalled in a 1997 article for the online magazine, Salon.com, "I had been outed, publicly shamed:"

> ...a long-haired New Leftist in regulation denim work shirt and bell-bottomed blue jeans exposed as a former child actor in "Leave it to Beaver," the quintessential suburban sitcom. There was nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. I was Gilbert Bates, Beaver's friend.[4]

This was not the last time Talbot's *Beaver* past would come back to haunt him. In a 1982 article on Talbot's documentary of Dashiell Hammet, the *San Jose Mercury News* felt obligated to open their article with a nod to Talbot's *Leave it to Beaver* past.[5] Thus, for both Mathers and Talbot, *Leave it to Beaver* was no longer a simple TV show; it was a political statement from which there was seemingly no escape.

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[4] Stephen Talbot, "Living Down Beaver," http://archive.salon.com/aug97/mothers/beaver970822.html, August 22, 1997.

[5] David N. Rosenthal, "The Case of the Curious Filmmaker," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 6, 1982, 1C.

As argued in chapter nine, the simplified image of the homogenous, happy, affective family lay at the heart of the political problem *Leave it to Beaver* had come to represent. Indeed, while the affective family optimistically carried a blind faith in a consensus America, works like Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, along with actions from leaders of the civil rights and anti-war movements, revealed a more complicated world. Even the networks recognized the social change, adapting its programs and, consequently, antiquating its previous product. By 1993, when *Entertainment Weekly* ranked *Leave it to Beaver* as number twenty-seven in one of its insipid lists of popular shows, they felt compelled to temper its popularity by describing the series as "A chilling trip into the Heart of Whiteness. *The horror, the horror...* "[6]

The impetus for lines like this lay in the lessons Americans were coming to learn about race and segregation even before *Leave it to Beaver* appeared on the air. In the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. The Topeka, Kansas Board of Education* (1954), which reversed the legalized segregation of *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896), Thurgood Marshall, using studies by psychiatrist Kenneth Clark, showed that the overwhelming emphasis on whiteness that dominated American culture had a detrimental effect on the psyche of African-American children. Fourteen years later, in 1968, a report from the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, made in the wake of the 1966 and 1967 urban riots, made what media historian Hamamoto called, an "explicit connection

[6] *Entertainment Weekly*, 30 July 1993, 20. Rankings on these items are always subjective yet often try to affect some sort of method. In this case, the publishers argued they were basing their rankings of the series on "timelessness, nostalgia value, significance, number of episodes, years aired, number of cable channels that still showed the series, and whether or not they were available on video.

between the media and black underclass rebellion" arguing that the media had taunted blacks with white affluence "before the eyes of the Negro poor and jobless youth."[7]

While Hamamoto is quick to point out that structural inequality as opposed to the mere envy of material items played the most significant role in the rioting of the late-1960s, academics have continued to posit 1950s affective families as a taunt which threw white affluence in the face of a diversified audience that included the underclass. "As the...[1950s]...wore on," wrote Ella Taylor, in *Prime-Time Families*, "the television families became almost exclusively white as well as middle-class." [8]

Noting a number of studies which suggested that African Americans watched, on average, more television than their white counterparts, sociologist Berry Gordon argued that media images of African-Americans effected African American children in negative and positive ways.[9] Arguing that television is not only entertainment, but a socializing force that provides "role models and information which affect children's attitudes, beliefs and behavior,"[10] Gordon concluded that, "...when the learned behaviors are positive portrayals of Black family life, the child gains pro-social messages and values from the

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[7] Darrell Y. Hamamoto, *Nervous Laughter: Television Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 89, citing US Government Printing office, US National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968

[8] Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 26. Interesting to note that while Taylor puts *Amos 'n' Andy* in the list of "ethnic" sitcoms that were disappearing, she fails to note the conscious effort on the part of many middle-class blacks and particularly the NAACP, which worked very hard to remove the series from prime-time and, later, re-run.

[9] Gordon L. Berry, "Black family life on television and the socialization of the AfricanAmerican child: images of marginality," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (Summer 1998), 233-42.

[10] Ibid., 233-42

content. On the other hand, one can also assume that misrepresented or destructive images can produce undesirable attitudes and behaviors in the developing child".[11]

Mass media—from print advertisements to domestic sitcoms—were wrecking havoc with the female psyche as well. While Friedan did not discuss the family sitcom in any depth in *The Feminine Mystique*, she argued that things would change for women only when the idealized domestic image disappeared.[12] Speaking specifically to the image of women on television in her 1964 *TV Guide* article, "Television and the Feminine Mystique," Friedan argued that "...television's image of the American woman, 1964, is a stupid, unattractive, insecure little household drudge who spends her martyred, mindless, boring days dreaming of love—and plotting nasty revenge against her husband."[13] This image was exaggerated in television advertising, which, according to Friedan, presented the housewife as "drab, repulsive..." and "so stupid...she is barely capable of doing the most menial household tasks. Her biggest problem is to get the kitchen sink or floor really clean, and she can't even do that without a kind, wise man to tell her how."[14] What most bothered Friedan about women's televised image was that there seemed to be no " TV image of a woman acting in the world, not even of being interested in it."[15]

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Unlike academics of the 1980s-present, who have seen television as the last remaining remnant of the feminine mystique, Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963; reprint, New York: Laurel, 1983) was much more concerned with the magazine depictions, which have fallen out of academic discussion for the most part because, unlike sitcoms, magazines do not make for saleable re-runs). rarely discusses the television sitcom Essential to this effort was changing the image, which, while Friedan does not

[13] Betty Freidan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Woman's Movement* (New York: Dell, 1991), 59.

[14] Ibid., 60.

[15] Ibid., 61.

As the modern feminist movement grew in the wake of the founding of the National Organization for Women, June Cleaver and similar affective family mothers became convenient—and, in many respects, appropriate—symbols of the "sexual sell" as practiced by the mass media. As Douglas observed in *Where the Girls Are*, radical women became upset with media stereotypes that "were stealing their goals and ambitions. So they singled out the dominant media imagery of women for attack" through underground newspapers, newsletters, and New Left conferences."[16] The first issue of *Just Like a Woman*, a "publication of Atlanta's Women's Liberation," included in its statement its plans to provide a more complicated image of women:

> The media...portraying their image of women –as beautiful, sexy, and permissive household cleaning women and wives who can be manipulated and shaped to look just like an "ideal" woman. WE have a different view of our role in society...[17]

Electra, a publication of the National Organization for Women Task Force on the Image of Women, was also aware of the need to change the way the media represented women:

> Our purpose is to change the image of women in the media from a negative one to a positive one...women are portrayed as sex objects, dumb, helpless without men, emotional, and in wife and mother roles only.[18]

Part of that change would come through actions similar to those used by African-American civil rights groups: petitioning the FCC to change images that they found

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[16] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 151.

[17] Opening statement appearing on the front page of *Just Like a Woman: a publication of Atlanta Women's Liberation*, Volume 1, number 1, October 10, 1970, from *Herstory*, the Women's History collection, reel 16.

[18] *Electra*, published by the National Organization for women National Task force, Image of Women, Volume 1, number 1, November 1971, from *Herstory*, the Women's History collection, reel 17.

degrading and stereotypical.[19] While these articles referred more to their contemporary media than the 1950s images discussed here, affective family mothers were also mentioned in these publications. An issue of *ACT N.O.W.*, published in Chicago, Illinois, featured a one-panel comic depicting a middle-aged man locked out of his home, asking, "Harriet, does this mean that supper will be late?"[20] Another article in the popular feminist publication *Off Our Backs* conjured the image of *Ozzie and Harriet* in a review of teen romance novels, comparing the novel's milieu to a time machine bent on "revisiting Ozzie and Harriet."

> Everyone lives in a private house, in a small town, belongs to a nuclear family, and has white skin. Nobody is old, poor, gay...divorced, or a person of color. This is a world where girls are girls and boys are boys and nobody ever gets confused about who is who and how people are expected to act.[21]

While the author of this study was unable to find any direct mention or reference to June Cleaver in the sample of nearly 100 such publications, there were a number of generic references to the 1950s affective family mom. The October 1974 issue of the popular feminist publication *Off Our Backs*, for example, featured a campy image of a happy, June Cleaveresque mom as well as a comical cut of a winged woman dressed as a domestic happily pushing a carpet sweeper.[22]

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[19] "Tactics with the Media: Shows of Our Own," *N.O.W. Acts*, Santa Monica, California, Volume 3, number 3, September 1970, 3, from *Herstory*, the Women's History collection, reel 17.

[20] ACT N.O.W., volume 2, number 2, March 9, 1970, from *Herstory*, the Women's History collection, reel 17. It should be noted that the copy condition does provide a clear image of the one-panel cartoon; there appears to be an image on the roof of the house, but the author is unsure of what the image was.

[21] "Children's Books: 'Liberal' or Wasteland," *Off Our Backs*, volume XII, number 6, June, 1982, 15, from Michigan State University Special Collections.

[22] *Off Our Back*, Volume IV, number 10, October 1974, 10, from Michigan State University Special Collections.

One did not need to look to feminist publications, however, to find such parody. June's three affectations from the show—the ever-present pitcher of milk, the pearl necklace, and the high-heeled shoes—became frequent targets of the supposedly "progressive" media and academic critiques. While Friedan did not point specifically to June Cleaver, she did comment, in *Mystique*, on the way popular magazine ads depicted women as wearing eye makeup while they vacuumed their floors.[23] The legend continued in popular media through the 1970s. *Rona Barrett's Gossip*, a tabloid magazine, ran a nostalgic picture of June with the caption describing how she "always wore a neat shirtwaist and had cookies and milk in supply for her television "family."[24] A 1985 Disney Channel episode of *Still the Beaver* had June's granddaughter Kelly fascinated by her grandmother's pearls.[25] Stephanie Coontz referred to June's pearls in *The Way We Never Were*, as did a 1995 issue of *Mothering* and a *San Francisco Chronicle* article on Jerry Mathers in 1998.[26] That same year, the 45th anniversary of *TV Guide* described June Cleaver as "The quintessential '50s mother. A straight skirt, an apron and pearls—always pearls.[27] In 2003, TV Land network's special program, "Inside TV Land: Style & Fashion," which explored changing women's fashions over the past fifty years of television, also commented on June's affectations: "In Billingsley's case,

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[23] Friedan, Mystique, 65.

[24] Untitled, *Rona Barret's Gossip*, February 1978, 70-71

[25] *Disney Channel*, June 1985, 21.

[26] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992, 46-47; Adeline Eavenson, "Now I Know Why June Cleaver Vacuumed in Pearls," *Mothering*, Summer, 1995, 34; Sam Whiting, "Caught in the Jaws of the Beaver, Jerry Mathers, About to Turn 50, is Still Living in 'Mayfield,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 May 1998, 36.

[27] "Channel Surfing: TV has always had its fashion moments," *TV Guide*, 4 April 1998.

whether June Cleaver was chopping celery in the kitchen or tucking in the sheets around Wally's and the Beaver's beds or racing downstairs to greet husband Ward at the door, she wore her pearls. And on her feet? Back then, eager Mrs. Cleaver did her vacuuming in high heels."[28]

By the twenty-first century, there was no mistaking the popular image of June Cleaver—an unrealistic mother woefully out of step with the times. To Susan Douglas, *Leave it to Beaver* and shows of its type departed from an earlier set of domestic comedies—such as *The Honeymooners*, which not only emphasized the battle of the sexes but featured "female characters who looked like someone you might meet in real life..."—and replaced them with images like June Cleaver, whom Douglas described as "wasp-wasted, perfectly coiffed moms who never lost their tempers..."[29] In the late-1990s, playwright Wendy Wasserstein commented how her baby boom years were spent watching women like Marjorie Lord, Donna Reed and other women "who didn't seem remotely like my mother or other people."[30] In 1992, C. R. Hartmann, writing in *D&B Reports*, argued that it was, indeed, "Time to Mothball June Cleaver."[31] Seven years later, Deborah Werksman was a bit more direct: "I killed June Cleaver: modern moms shatter the myth of perfect parenting." Werksman's article was, like the others, quick to point out June's pearl-wearing and high-heeled vacuuming.[32]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 26-27.

[30] Bruce Handy, "Roll-over, Ward Cleaver...And Tell Ozzie Nelson the News. Ellen Degeneres is Poised to Become TV's First Openly Gay Star. I America Ready or Not? *Time*, April 14, 1997, 78-82.

[31] C. R. Hartmann, "Time to Mothball June Cleaver," *D&B Reports*, July, 1992, 52.

[32] Deborah Werksman, *I killed June Cleaver: Modern moms shatter the myth of perfect Parenting* (Naperville, IL: Hysteria Publications, 1999).

The world wide web is also full of papers and on-line opinion pieces and articles chastising June Cleaver. One such article, "My Rant About Society (or, How I Learned to Stop Bitching and Start Flambéing June Cleaver)," has an anonymous author discussing how her friend's insistence that she have children is pressuring her "to be June Cleaver."[33] A guest columnist in a student newspaper argued against the myth of June Cleaver perfection in a piece titled "Why I Hate June Cleaver, et al."[34] In "In Search of June Cleaver," Judith Timson countered Canadian Premier Mike Harris' blaming mothers for no longer being in the kitchen to make breakfast for their kids, by saying that such June Cleaver's were nowhere to be found in the modern neighborhood:

> Does June Cleaver live on any street still? Would we want her to? She was, of course, the quintessential housewife in the '50s television sitcom Leave it to Beaver, but in a society hungry for easy icons, June Cleaver has loomed far larger than that—an ironic symbol to some of the bad old days, and to others of a nostalgic reminder of how great it was when mom was at home.[35]

No one combined the taunt, the lack of realism, and the sense of exclusion of these sitcoms better than Stephanie Coontz, whose *The Way We Never Were* synthesized nearly two decades of "Beaver-ly" concern.[36] At bottom, Coontz argued that the domestic sitcom, seen constantly in re-runs, has ensnared Americans in a trap of trying to

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[33] "My Rant About Society (or, How I Learned to Stop Bitching and Start Flambéing June Cleaver)" located at www.freespeech.org/society/writing/anonrant.html.

[34] "Why I Hate June Cleaver, et al.," located at www.orst.edu/dept/Barometer/2000/...0/week6/fri/whyihatejunecleaveretal.html.

[35] Judith Timson, "In Search of June Cleaver: She's nowhere to be found in this neighborhood," located at www.chatelaine.com/read/family/junecl.html.

[36] Coontz, *Way We Never Were*, 29-36.

recapture an idyllic family past that, in actuality, never was.[37] In her follow up work, *The Way We Really Are*, Coontz revealed that the impetus for her first book came out of her frustrations as a family historian "bothered by widespread misconceptions in the popular press about 'traditional' families." To Coontz, it was important that people have a more realistic view of families besides the one they would get from their televisions, noting the "strengths, weaknesses, and surprising variability of family life in the past."[38] Coontz was also moved by her own students, whom she noticed tended to either feel guilty for not performing to the ideal or angry that their families did not live as presented on TV.

Coontz was quite influenced by Elaine Tyler May, whose *Homeward Bound* had argued, among other things, that Americans had retreated into the family in the 1950s because of a nuclear threat that lead people to look inward toward the family, as well as a rise of "containment" rhetoric which was as easily be applied to women as it was to Soviet aggression. Citing May, Coontz argued that the 1950s family was not "the last gasp of 'traditional' family life with deep roots in the past, but, rather, the first wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members needs through an energized and expressive personal life."[39] As Coontz so eloquently articulated, there was no such thing as a "traditional" family; the perfect family of the past was a media invention. As Coontz wrote, "The actual complexity of our history—even of our own personal experience..." was getting buried "under the weight of an

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[37] Ibid., 23.

[38] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 1.

[39] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 11.

idealized image."[40] Coontz went on to complicate the 1950s, showing how teen pregnancy and spousal abuse existed in that decade as well. Noting that many of the problems affecting family are structural and institutional—problems that lay beyond a parents control—Coontz argued that "The problem is not to berate people for abandoning past family values, nor to exhort them to adopt better values in the future—the problem is to build the institutions and social support networks that allow people to act on their best values rather than on their worst ones."[41] At bottom, Coontz argued that people had to step away from the idealized past, as

> half the people are torturing themselves trying to figure out what *they* did wrong in their families and the other half are torturing themselves trying to figure out what their *parents* did wrong. Seeing our family pains as part of a larger social predicament means that we can let ourselves—or our parents—off the hook. Maybe our personal difficulties are not *all* our families fault; maybe our family's difficulties are not *all* our personal fault.[42]

While Coontz's work is incredibly important in restoring the complexity of the lived-experience of 1950s American family life, it ignored the complexities of the affective family sitcom. While this may not be a bad trade off in the greater scheme of things, it *is* a trade-off replacing one myth with another. By positing the series as a hopeless lie devoid of any sense of realism or connection to its contemporary period, it robs the series of its complexity which itself spoke to the complicated nature of the decade itself. In doing, so the series becomes little more than an idealized image that, as Harrington had argued, taunts the public with a disappointing gap between ideal and reality.

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[40] Coontz, *Way We Never Were*, 1.

[41] Ibid., 22.

[42] Ibid., 287.

There is, indeed, a profound sense of disappointment that has followed *Leave it to Beaver* and similar sitcoms. Baby boomers were not just gagging on the disjuncture between myth and reality; many baby boom writers seemed deeply hurt by the dream that turned out to be a lie. Edelstein, in his popular ode to 1960's popular culture, for example, observed that fathers like "Ward Cleaver and Jim Anderson were the role models that kids hoped their dads would emulate. We were disappointed when the reality proved to be something different."[43] In his work on the 1950s, Dave Halberstam writes that the failure to achieve such family perfection was internalized by a generation as an overall failure:

> To millions of other Americans, coming from flawed homes, it often seemed hopelessly unfair to look in on families like this. Millions of kids growing up in homes filled with anger and tension often felt the failure was theirs. It was their fault that their homes were messier, their parents less human...and less understanding than the television parents in whose homes they so often longed to live.[44]

Commenting on the series in a 1986 magazine article, TV critics Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones observed,

> It was The House, on The Street, in The Town, in America. No one knew where in America it was....But that was appropriate. It would have been wrong to know just where they were. Because the Mayfield of Leave it to Beaver was just America.
>
> Of course it was an America that never existed. There has never been a town with streets so clean and cops so friendly and schools so harmonious and marriages so stable. There was never a time when men were so happy with their jobs, when family life and community life were so closely knit and satisfying.
>
> And there was never a generation of boys so wholesome, so basically honest, so well-balanced and considerate, not even in 1957 when the show

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[43] Andrew J. Edelstein, *The Pop Sixties: A Personal and Irreverent Guide* (New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985)72.

[44] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), 512.

> premiered. Certainly those of us watching, on the other side of the screen, were never so good. The trouble we got into wasn't so innocent, and we never got out of it with such dignity...[45]

Sanford Pinsker, another popular writer, seemed equally disappointed: "Imagine my surprise," wrote Pinsker," when I discovered that nobody, absolutely nobody, actually lived the life I secretly envied, and that my Jewishness or their goyishness had nothing to do with it.

> Look for realism on TV sit-coms and you will search in vain, for none of the television families that caught on big in the 1950s had the remotest relationship to life as it was actually being lived in the suburbs, the small towns, or the big cities. Rather, what they served up was a sanitized version of the nuclear family according to Life magazine--a world where corporate America had jobs for those men willing to don gray flannel suiting, and wives were offered the rewards of tract homes and kitchens filled with the latest appliances...Still, what defined the fifties for most of us were...the families I tried mightily to identify with on "Father Knows Best" and "Leave It to Beaver."[46]

To director Oliver Stone, the taunt of the 1950s family sitcoms led to pathological behavior. Labeling these sitcoms as "subversive to reality," Stone said that "lots of people just couldn't live up to the image and cracked. There are a lot of walking wounded around today as a result of the tone of the 1950s."[47]

An interesting example of such disappointment took place on the 1995 Oprah episode, "TV Families Then and Now." The show, which featured Susan Douglas as one of its panelist, began with a number of actresses from old and new series, drawing comparisons—as the media is want to do—that showed how far the media had come

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[45] Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones, *TV Gold*, Movieland Publishing, Inc., 1986, 5.

[46] Sanford Pinsker, "My Immigrant Family, the Popular Culture, and Me," *Judaism* , V44 (Spring 1995), 245-52

[47] Nathan Gardels, "The David Letterman Disease," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Spring, 1995, 40-1.

since the 1950s. The first guest on the show was Barbara Billingsley, who, over the course of the 1980s and 1990s had become *the* mother of all TV moms:

> Winfrey: My first guest is one of the most popular moms in TV history. She was always there for her sons, Wally and Beave...and she's here for us today....Do you think, really, though, that...[*Leave it to Beaver*] sort of set the standard for what America thought America was like?
> Mrs. Billingsley: I think it was like that.
> Winfrey: At your house it was, but—at your house it was.
> Ms. Billingsley: Well, don't you think it's the ideal?
> Winfrey: I do think it's the ideal, but we're going to be talking later along...about how...so many people thought that was the ideal, but in their real lives it wasn't. And you know, I wanted—I always wanted my mom to be like you. I wanted milk and cookies when I came home from school. I didn't want to ever—you know—have anybody hit me or upset me. I wanted a discussion about it—'Just go to your room and we'll talk about it later, Beave.' But, you know, that wasn't happening in my house and—nor in most homes. Did most of you live like Beave...
> Several Unidentified Audience Members: (In unison) No.[48]

Oprah's rejection of the ideal as a painful reminder of a past she obviously had not shared—a reaction so clearly echoed by her audience—speaks to a number of issues, none the least of which being the audiences cognition of the lie that these suburban sitcoms had turned out to be. The most important result of Oprah's rant against "the Beaver," for the purpose of this work, is that it is just one of dozens, if not hundreds, of such rants which simplified the overall complicated nature of *Leave it to Beaver*. Even though Wally had told Beaver, time and again, to curb his expectations; even though Ward had told Beaver that life and television were not to be confused; and even though June Cleaver expressed, on rare occasions, a less than satisfied view of her lot in life, the Mayfield Mystique posited the series as little more than a horrible lie from beginning to

[48] "TV Families Then and Now," *Oprah*, episode transcript (Livingston, New Jersey: Burrelle's Information Services, 1995).

end. As Jacobs and Jones observed, "Leave it to Beaver was a monument to an America that we always wanted and never quite reached."[49]

There is another side to the Mayfield Mystique—one that, through the same process of simplification, posits the series as a "golden age" of family and childhood that has somehow been lost. Even though Ward Cleaver pined for such a Golden Age himself, the Cleavers and their fictional contemporaries became beacons of decency and hope to a world that had seemingly rejected time-tested family values.

"Common decency, where are you?"

In 1994, author Rick Namey wrote a parody of conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh's 1992 bestseller, *The Way Things Ought to Be*. Writing under the pen-name Rush Limburgher III, Namey brilliantly captured Limbaugh's style and hyperbole. In one of the book's essays, Namey, as "Limburger," blamed the collapse of modern values on the disappearance of a particular TV series:

> After a great deal of thought and study on the subject, I have determined the exact date and time that America began its dramatic downward slide. I have discovered absolutely when our national malaise began. I have identified the very genesis of our out-of-control government spending. I have pinpointed the date of the advent of our loss of international prestige and our inability to compete on the world market. I have fixed the precise time of birth of moral decay and crime.
>
> It was the minute that those idiots at ABC decided to cancel "Leave it to Beaver."
>
> Many sociologists and psychologists have correctly noted that the values depicted by "the Beave" were symptomatic of everything that was right with America at the time. But none have actually grasped the full truth. Only I have the courage and the insight to observe that LITB (as we in the "biz" call it) was, in fact, wholly responsible for the general social stability of its time. Further, the cancellation of the program along with the loss of its values to our culture were the factors absolutely responsible for the occurrence of the horrible decade we

[49] Jacobs and Jones, *TV Gold*, 5.

> now know as "the sixties." This, of course, was the era that gave us drugs, crime, hippies, civil rights, feminism, recycling, and all of the other things that are wrong with this country today.[50]

The parody works, of course, because, while even the real Limbaugh would not advance such an inane argument, the Raney piece tapped into a very real cultural element of the 1990s—a belief that life had drastically changed over the past fifty years (which it had) and, more importantly, that the media was to blame for this change.

The Limbaugh parody also works because, in reality, the simplification of the series had, through the 1970s and 1980s, posited the Cleavers and Mayfield as mythical characters who served as a point of departure from what had become the standard media fair. Thus, the very same media which derided the series as too white and too sexist held it up as a patriotic model of an American past perfect. In July 1996, for example, *TV Guide* featured a cover story titled "What Happened to Family TV?" Juxtaposed against the question was a picture of Jerry Mathers and Barbara Billingsley, circa 1958, standing outside of the Cleaver home with an American flag waving prominently in the background (indeed, the photo was part of a series taken for the cover of the 1958 Fourth of July issue). The cover of the 1996 issue further teased readers, inviting them to read why *Leave it to Beaver*, set against modern television, now seemed like "ancient history."[51]

Not that such a comment was all hyperbole. In many respects, the America that *Leave it to Beaver* tried to reflect did seem like ancient history, at least in terms of the

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[50] Rick Namey, *Buy This Book & Make Me Rich: Rush N. Limburgher III* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1994), 136-37.

[51] Cover of *TV Guide*, 13 July 1996 for story with caption: "What happened to Family TV? Sex, violence, and lewd jokes have invaded early evening viewing. Find out why shows like Leave it to Beaver seem like ancient history. "

family. In 1950, for example, less than one-quarter of all households were owned by single people; by 2000, almost half of American households owners were unmarried. Between 1970 and 1998, the number of children living in two-parent households dropped from 90 percent to 74 percent for white children, 58 percent to 36 percent for African-American children, and 78 percent to 64 percent for Hispanics.[52] While it is true that there has never been a traditional American family per se, the two-parent nuclear family so evident in the myth and reality of the 1950s had increasingly become the reality of a smaller minority of Americans.

Not that these changes were gladly greeted by all—particularly political conservatives who looked at the changing families as a moral problem as opposed to one based in institutional and economic changes. Allan Carlson, President of the Rockford Institute, for example, argued that people had failed to place the family at the center of the moral universe.[53] In the 1980s, J. John M. Phelan, in *Disenchantment: Meaning and Morality in the Media*, argued that American problems resulted from its apparent lack of moral clarity.[54] In 1986, Phyllis Schafly argued that Americans were not divided among rich and poor, but among those who had and who did not have family values.[55] Republicans—and, later, Democrats—latched onto this concept of "family values" for political gain.[56] Others who bemoaned the loss of family saw it as a combination of out-

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[52] "Unmarried with Children," *Newsweek*, date 46-8.

[53] Allan Carlson, "The Family and the Constitution," *The Family in America 3*, 1989, 8.

[54] J. John M. Phelan, *Disenchantment: Meaning and Morality in the Media*, (NY: Hastings House, 1980), 35

[55] from "Two-Class American society" *The Phyllis Schafly Report 19*, 1986, 1.

[56] Coontz, *The Way We Really Are*, 5-7.

of-wedlock pregnancies and the absence of fathers, which could often be tied to the collective loss of "Ward Cleavers;" indeed, by the 1990s, one could find popular magazine articles, like that of journalist David Blankenhorn's, titled "Paging Ward Cleaver—Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem."[57]

The family had become so embattled that the existence of such families merited special attention from congress. In 1995, Representative James A. Barcia of Michigan entered the following anniversary notation in the congressional record. Barcia, summing up his anniversary salute, argue that,

> In these days of disintegrating families, it is reassuring to see a strong, stable marriage built on love, respect, and trust. They show the rest of us by example that a marriage can truly endure.[58]

Serving as an anchor in this changing world of family were those nostalgic remnants of the past—the television shows which had comforted baby-boom viewers during their youth. Jacquelyn Mitchard, in *TV Guide*, tired of the edginess and trendiness of contemporary programs, lamented shows like *The Andy Griffith Show*, which she recalled as "kinder programs that once let our children go ever so gently to "good night..." [59] Such sentiment had, by the 1990s, allowed Mathers and company to move beyond nostalgia to take on a near-sacred place within the American collective memory. As Mathers noted in the introduction to this autobiography, "Leave it to Beaver has

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[57] David Blankenhorn, Nicholas Lehmann, "Paging Ward Cleaver--Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem," *Washington Monthly*, April 1995, 39-41

[58] U. S. Congress. House. 1995. "HAPPY 53D ANNIVERSARY TO HELEN AND HUBERT JOLLY." *Congressional Record*, July 13, 1995, Page E1440, from *Congressional Record Online* via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov].

[59] Ilene Rudolph, and Mike Hammer, "Imagine June Cleaver in a Bustier," *TV Guide*, 13 July 1996, 18.

become a cherished cog of our television heritage, and I'm proud to be a lasting part of that wonderful tradition. Parents who watched the show with their children are today's grandparents, even great grandparents. Yesterday's children are today's parents."[60] The sacrilization of the characters cannot be underestimated. While Mathers had appeared in some R rated films, including a couple of brief scenes as a lackadaisical desk sergeant in the film *Down the Drain*, by the 1990s, a Mathers' press package noted the star's reluctance to spoof the image. Referred to as "An Icon of Generations," Mathers' press material noted that he did not do any projects that would harm the image of wholesomeness he had forged through the series.[61] Ken Osmond was equally reluctant to do off-color appearances; "Beaver is apple pie and grandma," said Osmond, "and I don't do R stuff."[62]

At bottom, the series had come to stand for something that went far beyond its original intent. Far from being a well-crafted, humorous show that happened to comment on its times, it had become a simplified expression of a idealized life that was not to be tampered with. This transformation was evidenced by Mathers' conclusion in his autobiography, which juxtaposed the series against a post-Clinton impeachment America:

> If you purchased this book, you were a fan of at least one version of Leave it to Beaver. You were attracted to it because it was about everyday life in an innocent, mythical town. A community where you could live. No Presidential sex scandals in Mayfield. No bigotry or racism. No weapons of mass destruction.

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[60] Mathers, 1.

[61] www.t-e-i.com/jerrymathers.html.

[62] Ken Osmond, interview with author, 14 December 2000.

> The fact is that Mayfield and the Cleaver family do exist, in all our hearts. Someday there may be a LITB convention, and we can all get together and dress in our retro clothes. Even though the event is crowded, we will still be polite to each other. The worst word in our vocabulary will be "creep." It will be a celebration of who Americans really are and can be in the twenty-first century. A national social movement based on the teachings of Ward, June, Beaver, and Wally Cleaver will quickly take over the world. A world where everyone will sit down for dinner as a family after washing their face, hands, and behind the ears.
>
> I look forward to seeing you there."[63]

Mayfield was never this idyllic. Indeed, the television of Mathers' time came under fire, as well; in 1955, Jack O'Brian's "Too Much Sex in TV," sounded suspiciously like the work of late-1990s media detractors:

> Early in TV's swaddling history, the challenge to morality of plunging necklines and dirty dialogue was met and defeated. Always it must be met, and always it IS defeated. The lowering of moral standards happens frequently in all art forms, from the frankly vulgar—burlesque—to the highest cultures of the art museums, the legitimate theater, poetry, novels; wherever creative imagination erupts."[64]

Just as with modern critics, O'Brian found the home to be a sacred area which needed to be kept free of smut. While O'Brian, fresh out of the McCarthy era, paused at the suggestion of censorship,[65] he did note that the best way for viewers to stave off the "next" outbreak of televised smut would be to complain to corporate sponsors.[66] The resulting self-censorship, O'Brian argued, was always preferable to letting the government get involved.[67]

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[63] Mathers, 202

[64] Jack O'Brian, "Too Much Sex in TV?" *TV Star Parade*, November 1955, 7.

[65] Ibid., 10.

[66] Ibid., 8.

[67] Ibid., 10.

The perception of declining TV morality continued to take its toll in the 1960s, with attacks on Barbara Eden's visible Belly button in *I Dream of Jeannie*, to reactions against the political statements of *The Smothers Brothers*. By 1975, in the aftermath of shows like *All in the Family*, various media watch groups put pressure on the networks to check the mature nature of its programming. In 1976, the networks agreed to a 8:00 PM to 9:00 PM family viewing hour which, as Gerard Jones described, would "fit the standards of language and subject matter akin to those that had prevailed on prime time before [*All in the Family* creator] Lear had come along."[68] But, by the 1980s, the network's voluntary family hour was gone. After 1987, the rise of such shows as *Married with Children* brought more parents clamoring for an end to media indecency.[69] In 1989, Michigan housewife Terry Rakolta, upset by an episode of *Married with Children* in which wife Peg Bundy encountered a homosexual and a woman who took off her bra, organized a boycott of show advertisers that resulted in a few advertisers canceling and Fox moving the show from 8:30 PM to 9:00 P.M.[70]

As television became more explicit in the 1990s, *TV Guide* again drew a comparison between television's past and present by asking its readers to "Imagine June Cleaver in a Bustier."[71] Inside that issue, *TV Guide* cited a study conducted by the Media Research Center in Virginia that had counted 29 uses of the word "ass," 13 uses of the word "bitch," and 40 references to out of wedlock sex taking place during the family

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[68] Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home: Sitcoms, Selling the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 234.

[69] Rudolph and Hammer, 21.

[70] Himmesltein, 133.

[71] Rudolph and Hammer, 18.

hour, raising the question, "How did family time turn into cursing, conniving, and carousing time?"[72]

The media seemed to confront yet another moral impasse during the 1990s when actress Ellen Degenris decided to make her lesbianism part of her character in her show *Ellen*. While some liberals applauded the honesty of the move, many conservatives saw it as obligatory smut. Conservative religious leader Jerry Fallwell referred to Ellen Degenris as Ellen Degenerate.[73] D. Randall Murphree, editor of *American Family Association Journal*, saw the moment as a sad cultural drift for the American public, writing that "TV is one of our culture's greatest teachers, but just how—and what—does prime time teach? Any careful observer of human nature knows that what we immerse ourselves in, we become. A culture that immerses itself in casual, illicit sex will become a culture adrift in a sea of moral irresponsibility. Parents should stay on the alert--the flood is still building!"[74] William Kristol, editor of the conservative *Weekly Standard*, noted, on the eve of Degeneris's coming out, that "There is so much that Hollywood already does that is bad for kids that this is just a drop in the ocean. What is most annoying is the false courageousness of it. All they are going to get are applause and approbation. A really courageous act would be if she were to come out as a Republican or a pro-life Christian."[75]

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[72] Ibid., 18-19, discusses how a survey by conservative Media Research Center in Virginia counted 29 uses of ass and 13 of bitch, as well as 40 references to out-of-wedlock sex, in family hour.

[73] Handy, 78-82.

[74] Ibid., 78-82.

[75] Handy, "sidebar article," 81.

One way to deal with the problem was to follow Rakolta's lead and exert pressure on the advertisers. Ironically, Steve Allen, who had, during his heydey, been accused of featuring sexual inendo in his *Tonight Show*—including, among other things, a visit from a scantily dressed Tina Louise[76]—became, in 1996 the National Honorary Chairman of the Parents Television Council. Founded in 1995 and located in Los Angeles, California, the PTC offered the "private sector solutions to restore television to its roots as an independent and socially responsible entertainment medium..." Calling television the most powerful force, the PTC claimed the medium was "undermining the positive values parents are trying to instill in its young ones." In addition to tracking programming on an elaborate system the PTC dubbed the "Entertainment Tracking System," the PTC also issued an annual guide to family friendly—and not-so-friendly—programming, discussing what shows were appropriate or inappropriate for children.[77] While the organization does not officially call for censorship, one celebrity member link from the organization's web site leads to an article written by actor and PTC member Dean Jones titled "Censorship: A Defense."[78] According to Jones, "The American people are fast coming to the conclusion that there is nothing 'free' about letting filmmakers defecate in the national parlor because we dare not 'censor' their incontinence." Again, the media was seen as a all powerful, corrupting force of the nation's youth and values.[79]

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[76] O'Brian, 9.

[77] "About Us," located at www.parentstv.org/PTC/aboutus/main.asp.

[78] Dean Jones. "Censorship: A Defense," located at www.christianity.com/CC/article/0,,PTID1000|CHID74|CIID187778,00.html

[79] "Celebrity Advisory Board" located at www.parentstv.org/PTC/advisoryboard/main.asp

Not that government was not willing to get into the act, at least in an advisory capacity. In early July, Senator Ernest Hollings, introduced a Senate measure that would require a Family hour.[80] On July 18, 1996, the second session of the 104th Congress entered House Resolution 484, in which 75 congressmen gave bi-partisan support to urge networks to adopt voluntarily a family hour time slot as they had done in the 1970s. Citing statistics and polls that showed that families were concerned about the detrimental effect television had on their children's life, the resolution stated that "the national broadcast television networks should renew their commitment to voluntarily reserving the first hour of prime-time broadcasting for programming suitable for American family members of all ages."[81]

Republicans were not the only ones interesting in keeping tabs on the media. On the same day that the 1996 family hour resolution was passed, Senator Joseph Lieberman entered his "State of Television Today," into the congressional record. Lieberman started his message indicating that he and fellow Senator Conrad of North Dakota were giving a big "thumbs down" vote to the upcoming 1996 season, which Lieberman said was filled with television that "has become so wild, so vulgar, so morally repugnant that it has actually become a threat to our children, a threat from which they need protection."[82] Citing a study from the Center for Communication Policy at UCLA, which claimed that violence on television remained a serious problem, Lieberman noted that "the American

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[80] Randolph and Hammer, 21.

[81] Congressional Record: September 19, 1995 (Senate) [Page S13813-S13814]
From the Congressional Record Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov].

[82] Congress. Senate. 1996. Senator Joseph Lieberman, "THE STATE OF TELEVISION TODAY," entered into the Senate record 18 July, 1996, S13813.

people do not need a study to tell them what they already know about the state of television today." While excessive violence, according to the study Lieberman cited, has been somewhat limited from years before, the study did suggest that vulgarity on television had become an "increasing problem." Telling of how his constituents continually complain about the state of television, circa 1996, Lieberman complained that "We are lowering the standards of what is acceptable in our society, and we are sending a message to our children." In an appeal to the president of the Senate, Lieberman said,

> I would encourage my colleagues to watch some of these new shows, new shows that are premiering this week. Those of you who once may have watched ``Car 54, Where Are You?" will probably end up asking ``Common Decency, Where Are You?" on television today." [83]

Citing examples of profanity on such upcoming network shows as ABC's "Wilde Again," and the CBS series "Bless This House," Lieberman expressed his outrage that it occurred within the confines of what used to be the 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm network family hour.

> Some of this stuff is obviously appropriate for adult viewing. But to put it on at 8 p.m. when families have been watching television is an insult to those families. The networks' commitment to that concept of the family television viewing hour has obviously eroded.

Network executives, according to Lieberman, dismissed the vulgarity problem by either claiming that they were following societal trends or, as one NBC official had said, arguing that "It's not the role of network television to program for the children of America."[84] While Lieberman acknowledge that children had other venues such as The

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

Disney Channel and Nickelodeon, he pointed out that "many children will continue to watch these channels, and their behavior will continue to be influenced by what they see on TV."[85] As the father of a seven-year-old, Lieberman personalized his concern, arguing that "Television executives need to recognize that they are part of a larger civil society to which they, like we, have obligations, and that the first amendment is not a constitutional hall pass that excuses them from their responsibilities to that civil society."[86]

Stopping short of threatening censorship, Lieberman made a rather veiled threat, noting that "the reality is that the networks are moving so far away from reflecting the values commonly shared by most people in this country, let alone the interests of most people in this country, that they are inviting a reaction unless they discipline themselves."[87] Much as Minow had done more than 30 years earlier, Lieberman was bringing the power of the federal government to bear on yet another media problem. However, where Minow was seeking to expand the diversity of programming and looking for innovation—an innovation that ironically ushered in the very types of programming that found that honest depictions would also include more grit, more vulgarity—Lieberman was calling for network executives to use more restraint. Failing to realize that the television of his youth had been accused, by some, to be too vulgar, Lieberman, much like Ward Cleaver, seemed to be trying to sell the life he enjoyed as a

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

child back to the American people he represented. Indeed, before he quoted from the objectionable series referenced above, Lieberman noted:

> ...I am going to quote from shows that are shown in the family hour on television today. It makes me feel like my childhood was a long time ago, and I am sure parents are yearning again for the time when they could turn on the television and not worry about being embarrassed to sit there with their children and hear what they hear—being worried about letting their children watch without them.[88]

Lieberman's speech, along with the Clinton administration's calls for V-chip technology which would help parents filter out inappropriate shows for their children, showed the importance "family values" and "family viewing" held within the political arena. While the politicians stopped short of censorship and overt government action—just as they had in the past—they gave the appearance of a concerned legislature fighting to return a sense of decency to a medium from which it has seemingly long since vanished.

While it was certainly true that TV had stretched the bounds of what it had been doing fifty years ago, particularly in terms of sexuality and obscenity, the problem was not so much about content as much as it was about where that content was being played. While such ideas and language were fine for the modern multiplex, with its long-standing ratings system, television was just too accessible for such irresponsibility. Pointing to shows like *Leave it to Beaver* and other early affective family sitcoms seemed to show the way back to a civility that had long since vanished from American popular culture—a civility that others have linked with a phoniness and an impossible ideal that brought psychological hardship for those who failed to duplicate it. Thus, the great dichotomy of such shows emerges: Are viewers better off with a gritty realism or an unattainable

[88] Ibid.

dream? Are they better served by a dose of realism or a shot of saccharine? Is there any middle ground?

Arriving at a Middle Ground

As noted in chapter ten, Mac Wellman, in his preface to his collection of modern plays which included *Leave it to Beaver is Dead*, argued that the good playwright does not write about what he or she loves as it becomes subverted by the "powers that be." This artistic turn toward the underside of life had combined with a fierce anti-authoritarianism bent in American culture which surfaced in American popular culture. The belief that all that was sacred—including the affective family bonds of the early situation comedies—was nothing more than a sham that led to what one 1990's popular writer had called the "David Letterman's Disease," named for the comedian and nighttime talk show host whose lack of reverence for anyone or anything had cast American popular culture in a terminal sense of cynical hipness. Director Oliver Stone, himself a target of the conservative groups which blamed the media for undermining American values, had come to believe that the cynicism in American culture had perhaps gone much too far. In a 1995 interview in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Stone noted that "David Letterman is far more dangerous to values than I am. He doesn't have values; he makes fun of values. For Letterman, everything is an object of ridicule—it almost doesn't matter who is on his show.

> There is no discussion of issues or values, just constant, remorseless ridicule of everything and anything. To the extent that kind of show sets the tenor of discourse I think we have a real problem.

> You can also see this in the advertising for grunge clothing. The kids are rebellious, snotty, sticking their butts in the air. The "fuck you" attitude reigns in advertising. That is very deeply anti-social.
>
> Good art restores values. It aims to destroy the false--not all values, not all authority—and create the good and virtuous.[89]

At bottom, Stone agreed that the anti-authoritarian pendulum had swung much too far in the other direction and that the culture needed to readjust to reach a sense of equilibrium.[90] Stone was not alone in his beliefs, as many popular writers were beginning to look at the artifacts of that affective family in a new, more complicated light.

New conceptualizations of the affective family sitcom in general and *Leave it to Beaver*, specifically, came from a variety of sources. For example, while Friedan had worried that the persistence of the image of domesticated females caused psychic harm to women, feminist scholar Susan Douglas explained how her personal experience with the media had actually given her something to run from as opposed to emulate:

> As I watched all these martyrs on the large and small screen, I also watched a woman in real life: my mother. She didn't seem to have much more control over her life than they did, and, as a result, she was what you might call testy much of the time. So it wasn't just that I wanted to avoid ending up as *Queen for a Day*. I especially wanted to avoid ending up like my mom.[91]

Indeed, Douglas notes that growing up with the mass media in the 1950s and 1960s presented a variety of images, often conflicting, presenting them not with a single image,

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[89] Gardels, 41.

[90] Ibid., 41.

[91] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 42.

but with a variety of messages, many of the conflicting. According to Douglas, the media of her youth

> urged us to be pliant, cute, sexually available, thin, blond, poreless, wrinkle-free, and deferential to men. But it is easy to forget that the media also suggested we could be rebellious, tough, enterprising, and shrewd. And much of what we watched was pourus, allowing us to accept *and* rebel against what we saw and how it was presented.[92]

At bottom, Douglas, who congratulated Friedan and the working women of her mother's generation who set the pace for modern feminism, argued that the reality of her emergence as a feminist was not in spite of mass media but because of it: "The truth is that growing up female with the mass media helped make me a feminist, and it helped make millions of other women feminists too, whether they take on that label or not."[93]

Coontz, in her second book, *The Way We Really Are*, revised her outlook on the series. Where she had once posited series like *Leave it to Beaver* as the work that caught America in a nostalgia trap, she was now willing to admit that the people in its time were never as duped by the series. As Coontz writes, "At the time, everybody knew that shows such as *Donna Reed*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best* were not the way families really were."

> People didn't watch those shows to see their own lives reflected back at them. They watched them to see how families were *supposed* to live—and also to get a little reassurance that they were headed in the right direction. The sitcoms were simultaneously advertisements, etiquette manuals, and how-to lessons for a new way of organizing marriage and child raising....The secret of their appeal, I suddenly realized [after becoming a parent], was that they offered 1950s viewers,

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[92] Ibid., 9.

[93] Ibid., 7.

> wracked with the same feelings of parental inadequacies as I was, the promise that there were easy answers and surefire techniques for raising kids.[94]

Citing no more evidence from the series than she had used in her first book, Coontz argued that the 1950s sitcoms "were aimed at young couples who had married in haste, women who had tasted new freedoms during World War II and given up their jobs with regret, veterans whose children resented their attempts to reassert parental authority, and individuals disturbed by the changing racial and ethnic mix of postwar America.

> The message was clear: Buy these ranch houses, Hotpoint appliances, and child-raising ideals; relate to your spouse like this; get a new car to wash with your kids on Sunday afternoons; organize your dinners like that—and you too can escape the conflicts of race, class, and political witch-hunts into harmonious families where father knows best, mothers are never bored or irritated, and teenagers rush to the dinner table each night, eager to get their latest dose of parental wisdom.[95]

People also began re-examining the series itself to see if it revealed any greater insights into its contemporary period. In his Masters thesis, Neil Lillico argued that *Leave it to Beaver* could be used as a pedagogical tool on parenting. Lillico was also one of the first to begin looking at the June Cleaver as more than just a mindless, compliant domestic. While Gerard and Jones had done much to simplify the series through their own writings about it, it was Jones, in his history of the family sitcom, that began to posit the series as more cynical. In a chapter in *Honey I'm Home* called "Meeting in the Middle," Jones refers to *Leave it to Beaver* as the best of the domestic sitcoms, which varied for it predecessors in that it paid attention to the detail to kids stuff and that it

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[94] Coontz, *Way We Really Are*, 38.

[95] Ibid, 39.

"created a much clearer picture of time and place than *Father Knows Best*."[96] To Jones, the "most striking difference between Springfield and Mayfield, however, was that Springfield didn't have an Eddie Haskell.

> Bud [Anderson of *Father Knows Best*] had a couple of rambunctious pals, but they were basically good kids....none of them was a long-term friend of the Anderson kids, who picked their companions as carefully as Margaret picked her china. But Eddie, the creep, who smoozes with parents, torments little bothers, and tricks his pals into mischief, was Wally's best friend. He was a regular supporting character who frequently got more screen time than June.[97]

Cultural critic Steven Stark, in his work on the sixty most important shows and events of television history, 1947-mid-1990s, found *Leave it to Beaver's* failure not in its lack of realism, but in its complete devotion to the mundane details of childhood that made the series less popular in its own time. As Stark wrote, "this was a new and different type of situation comedy because the situations...were too realistic to be humorous"[98] Stark was also one of the first critics to see *Leave it to Beaver* not as an artifact of an older form but the forerunner of things to come. As Stark observed, "the verisimilitude of *Leave it to Beaver* was so powerful that it is now widely assumed that the fifties were exactly the way this show portrayed them. That sort of shtick makes this show an odd forerunner, not only of *The Wonder Years* but of the whole wave of shows ranging from *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* to *M*A*S*H* which attempted to bring a new

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[96] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 124.

[97] Ibid., 125.

[98] Stephen Stark, *Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today* (New York: Delta Books, 1997), 110.

level of seriousness to television comedy in the seventies. That's one reason why *Leave it to Beaver* did not catch on until that era."[99]

Perhaps the strongest argument regarding the series came from Stephen Wizenburg, a communications professor at Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa, who argued, in an article in *Television Quarterly*, that "Family sitcoms from the early days of television rarely get the respect they deserve. Abused by standup comics, sociologists and television critics, the old-time domestic situation comedy is the one form of broadcast entertainment that is almost always trashed as being "unrealistic," "sexist," and "impossibly ideal." Wizenburg backed this assessment with research he had conducted with senior level students in a course titled, "Topics: Sitcoms." Wizenburg's students had developed a coding scheme for a content analysis of sitcoms from the 1950s through the 1990s. The students discovered that half of the shows from the fifties seemed realistic, while only 35 percent of the sitcoms of the 1990s qualified to the students as realistic. As Wizenburg revealed, his students found *Leave it to Beaver* to be the most realisitic sitcom, followed by the 1980's sitcom *Family Ties* and the 1990's sitcom, *Home Improvement*.[100]

Wizenburg, citing media scholar Mary Ann Watson's assessment of June Cleaver as hopelessly unrealistic, noted that his students, armed with census data from the period, "concluded that 50's TV families were not far from what reality was to a majority of Americans." According to Wizenburg, 82-percent of his students responded that sitcoms

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[99] Ibid., 111.

[100] Stephen Winzenburg, Stephen, "The reality of situation comedies," *Television Quarterly*, v. 27 no. 4 (1995), 33-5.

from the 1950s were realistic. Wizenburg even added the comments of minority students from his class who had concurred with these findings:

> Patrick, a middle-class African-American student, wrote, "50's TV was very mirror-like in reflecting reality" of that time period. Sam, raised in the upper class suburbs of Detroit and Chicago, wrote, "The shows of the 50's reflected the family setting and values" of the decade. An inner-city minority student named Samantha concluded, "The television sitcom was reality to some people at that time ... it reflected 50's society.

According to Wizenburg, media scholars like David Berkman, who had recently argued that Rosanne represented television's most realistic family, refused to "accept the fact that reality to many people can include traditional family values...."What he calls the show's 'bold reality,'" wrote Wizenburg, "may be fantasy to those raised in a conservative, functional household where people verbally love and respect each other."[101] Turning to his students once again, Wizenburg noted that they were "split 50-50" on whether or not *Roseanne* represented life any more realistically than a series like *Leave it to Beaver*.[102] While one can question Wizenburg's research methods from sample size to the way in which he might have presented the project to his class—his hypothesis going into this study—the study's validity is not as important as the change it showed in the way academics have come to view this and other series.

Perhaps one of the most interesting revisionist opinions on the series comes from Stephen Talbot, who had, for so long, tried to escape the stigma of having been associated with the series. Toward the end of his Salon.com article, Talbot argues that he can now forgive himself for that past indiscretion of having appeared on *Leave it to*

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

Beaver. "There is one other reason for the show's lasting appeal," writes Talbot. "And here I enter revisionist territory that would confound and appall my 21-year-old New Left self. Despite its obvious white-bread limitations and its hideous laugh track, "Leave it to Beave" has some "redeeming qualities," which included the attention to the relationship between brothers and the child-centeredness of the series. In reflecting on the episode "Beaver's Doll Buggy," Talbot noted that "The episode becomes a meditation on the rigid sex roles of the '50s.

> The hapless Beaver finally abandons the doll buggy in a ravine rather than suffer further trauma. Ironically, Gilbert passes by, spots the abandoned carriage, and salvages the wheels for his homemade car. Later, he commiserates with the Beave about the dangers of crossing gender lines (not in those words exactly). That's the only hint of the social revolution that would erupt a decade later. It's enough that we're left with the image of our everybody trapped in a suburban hall of mirrors -- it's funny, it's harrowing (from the kid's perspective), there's even a hint of Buster Keaton. And it's hard to expect much more from a sitcom, I realize.[103]

At bottom, Talbot concludes, "For years, I've figured I had to atone politically and aesthetically for appearing in 'Leave it to Beaver.' I'm still not off the hook, but I'm beginning to think maybe I could get away with pleading no contest to a cultural misdemeanor."[104]

Was it possible that *Leave it to Beaver*, with its attention to pecuniary interests, its exposure of the cruelties of the world, and its attacks on the hypocrisies of the adult world allowed those who watched the series to take from it something quite unintended by its producers? Was Beaver's dissatisfaction and lack of understanding of the adult world simply a precursor to the challenges some of his real-life counterparts would

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[103] Talbot, "Living Down Beaver."

[104] Ibid.

mount? Did *Leave it to Beaver* and other shows of its type foster other emotions besides envy of affluence and affective nuclear families? Such questions can only be answered by viewer response to the series which, unfortunately, is not a part of this work outside of those published authors whose comments have been recorded herein. Nevertheless, finding the answer to these questions was not the point of this work, which has been more concerned with looking at how a complicated series became simplified over the course of some fifty years. Indeed, if we are to use popular culture to help us understand how it reflects and informs our world, than we must be prepared to deal with the complexities of that popular culture as opposed to relying on vague assumptions that fit particular political points of view. Only through looking at the way the series was put together and exploring the complicated messages that it effected can we truly understand how the series might have affected those who watched it.

Having looked at the series in its complexity, a few lessons do emerge. On the one hand, this work attempts to give the reader a better appreciation for the breadth of topics covered by Connelly and Mosher, whose writing joined the affective family form with a more cynical approach to life that raised as many questions as it answered. This work has also tried to show that while the series has now become both revered and reviled for its simplistic portrait of a confident America, the episodes were never that confident and never that simple—the series was nostalgic before it it became nostalgia. That fact speaks to the most important lesson of this work: just as Joe Connelly learned to concentrate on the good in his life, the American collective memory has robbed Connelly and Mosher's work of its complexity and focused on its most affective aspects which were part but not all of the show. The media does this to make their current product seem

more progresive. Liberals do it to correct the historical record of a simplsitic and blissful fifites. Conservatives and others who preach family values do it to "preserve" a family ideal which never truly existed. A good many others do it because it brightens their childhoods and serves as a pleasant escape from a seemingly troubled present. Regardless of the reason for the simplification, one thing is certain. Just as Ward Cleaver, we are rarely at comfort with our time.

APPENDIX

Table 1 on the following page shows data regarding the affective, ethnic, suburban and nuclear status of families as depicted in the 26 family-based television sitcoms that debuted on network television between 1947 and 1957 (the year in which *Leave it to Beaver* debuted). An affective family was defined as one in which family members worked together to resolve problems in a generally non-confrontational manner. A family was coded as ethnic if it had one or more main characters who were part of a minority group. Families that were depicted as living in small towns or other non-urban environments were coded as suburban. Finally, a family was coded as nuclear if it consisted of a mother and father, or mother, father and children who lived in a single-family dwelling. If the household included extended family members, it was not coded as nuclear. All data for these shows was based on the authors viewing of these series, or on series descriptions as noted in *The Complete Directory to Prime-Time Network TV Shows 1946-Present.*[1]

[1] Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime-Time Network TV Shows 1946-Present* (New York: Ballentine, 1992).

TABLE 1: AFFECTIVE, ETHNIC, SUBURBAN AND NUCLEAR STATUS OF NETWORK TELEVISION FAMILY SITCOMS DEBUTING 1947-1957

Series Title (year of appearance)	Affective	Ethnic	Suburban	Nuclear
Mary Kay and Johnny (1947-49)	no	no	no	yes
Growing Paynes (1947-48)	yes	no	no	yes
Aldrich Family (1949-52)	no	no	yes	no
The Goldbergs (1949-54)	yes	yes	no[2]	yes
The Life of Riley (1949 & 1953-57)	no	yes	yes	yes
I Remember Mama (1949-55)	yes	yes	no	yes
Beuhlah (1950-52)	yes	yes		yes
I Love Lucy (1951-56)	no	yes	no[3]	yes
Burns and Allen (1951-58)	no	no	yes	yes
Stu Erwin Show (1951-54)	yes	no	yes	yes
Leave it to Larry (1952)	no	no	unknown	no
I Married Joan (1952-54)	no	no	yes	yes
Ozzie and Harriet (1952-64)	yes	no	yes	yes
My Little Margie (1952-54)	yes	no	no	no
Jamie (1953)	yes	no	unknown	no
Make Room for Daddy (1953-63)	no	yes	no	yes
Pride of the Family (1953)	yes	no	yes	yes
My Favorite Husband (1953-55)	no	no	no	yes
Ethel and Albert (1953-55)	yes	no	no	yes
Jack Benny (1953-64)	no	yes	yes	yes
Father Knows Best (1954-62)	yes	no	yes	yes
Life with Father (1954)	yes	no	no	yes
That's My Boy (1946)	no	no	yes	yes
Honeymooners (1955)[4]	no	no	no	yes
It's Always Jan (1955)	yes	no	no	no
Leave it to Beaver (1957-1963)	yes	no	yes	yes

[2] The Goldbergs were depicted moving to the suburbs in their final 1954 TV season.
[3] The Ricardo family in *I Love Lucy* moved to the suburbs in their last season.
[4] Previously, *The Honeymooners* were a regular sketch that appeared from 1951 to 1954 in the *Jackie Gleason Show*.

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