

Ch 27 Section 2 The American Dream in the Fifties

The Organization and the Organization Man

Employment in the U.S.

- By 1956 majority of Americans not in blue-collar (manufacturing, industrial) jobs
- More in higher-paying, white-collar (office, professional) positions
- Many in services, like sales, advertising, insurance, communications

Conglomerates

- **Conglomerates**—corporation that owns smaller, unrelated companies
- Diversify to protect from downturns in individual industries

Franchises

- **Franchise**—company offers similar products, services in many places
- also the right to use company name and system
- Fast-food restaurants among first, most successful franchises

Social Conformity

- Many employees with well-paid, secure jobs lose individuality
- Personality tests see if job candidates fit in company culture
- Companies reward teamwork, loyalty, encourage conformity
- A disadvantage of standardization in American business was it discouraged individuality

The Suburban Lifestyle

The Baby Boom

- 1950s, 85% of new homes built in suburbs
- 1945–1965 **baby boom**—soaring birth rate after soldiers return

Advances in Medicine and Childcare

- New drugs fight, prevent childhood diseases
- **Dr. Jonas Salk** develops vaccine for poliomyelitis
- Pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock writes popular guide for parents
- Baby boom impacts economy, educational system

Women's Roles

- Magazines, TV, movies glorify role of homemaker, mother
- Over 1/5 of suburban wives dissatisfied with their lives
- 1960, 40% mothers work; limited opportunities, less pay than men

Leisure in the Fifties

- Shorter work week, paid vacation, labor-saving devices free up time

The Automobile Culture

The Interstate Highway System

- Local, state roads link cities, suburbs to schools, shops, work
- Interstate Highway Act—nationwide highway network unites country
- Highways enable long-haul trucking, new towns, family vacations
- Towns near highways prosper; those near older, smaller roads decline

Mobility Takes Its Toll

- Auto boom stimulates new businesses— e.g. drive-in movies
- Cars create social, environmental problems— e.g. accidents, pollution
- Upper-, middle-class whites leave cities; jobs, businesses follow
- Economic gulf widens between suburban and urban
- also widens gap between middle class and the poor

Consumerism Unbound

New Products

- **Consumerism** (buying material goods) equated with success
- Numerous new products appear on market in response to demand

Planned Obsolescence

- **Planned obsolescence**—making products that get outdated, wear out
- makes consumers buy or want to buy new ones

Buy Now, Pay Later

- Credit purchases, credit cards, installments extend payment period
- Private debt grows; consumers confident of future prosperity

The Advertising Age

- Most people have satisfied basic needs; ads encourage extra spending
- Psychological appeals in ads lure consumers to particular products
- Ads appear in all media; television emerges as powerful new tool