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# The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs

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Almost every Friday night between 1949 and 1956, millions of Americans watched Rosemary Rice turn the pages of an old photograph album. With music from Edvard Grieg's "Holverg Suite" playing in the background, and with pictures of turn-of-the-century San Francisco displayed on the album pages, Rice assumed the identity of her television character, Katrin Hansen, on the CBS network program *Mama*. She told the audience about her memories of her girlhood, her family's house on Steiner Street, and her experiences there with her big brother Nels, her little sister Dagmar, her Papa, and her Mama—"most of all," she said, "when I remember that San Francisco of so long ago, I remember Mama" (Meehan and Ropes 1954).

Katrin Hansen's memories of her Norwegian immigrant working-class family had powerful appeal for viewers in the early years of commercial network broadcasting. *Mama* established itself as one of CBS' most popular programs during its first season on the air, and it retained high ratings for the duration of its prime time run (Mitz 1983:458). The show's popularity coincided with that of other situation comedies based on ethnic working-class family life—*The Goldbergs*, depicting the experiences of Jews in the Bronx; *Amos 'n Andy*, blacks in Harlem; *The Honeymooners* and *Hey Jeannie*, Irish working-class families in Brooklyn; *Life with Luigi*, Italian immigrants in Chicago; and *Life of Riley*, working-class migrants to Los Angeles during and after World War II.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of this subgenre of ethnic, working-class situation comedies on television network schedules seems to run contrary to the commercial and artistic properties of the medium. Television delivers audiences to advertisers by glorifying consumption, not only during commercial breaks but in the programs themselves (Barnouw 1979). The relative economic deprivation of ethnic working-class households would seem to provide an inappropriate setting for the display and promotion of commodities as desired by the networks and their commercial sponsors. Furthermore, the mass audience required to repay the expense of network programming encourages the depiction of a homogenized mass society, not the particularities and peculiarities of working-class communities. As an artistic medium, television's capacity for simultaneity conveys a sense of living in an

infinitely renewable present—a quality inimical to the sense of history permeating shows about working-class life. Yet whether set in the distant past like *Mama*, or located in the contemporaneous present, the subgenre of ethnic working-class situation comedies in early network television evoked concrete historical associations and memories in their audiences (Boorstin 1973:392–397).

Anomalous to the commercial and artistic properties of television, these programs also ran counter to the dominant social trends in the era in which they were made. They presented ethnic families in working-class urban neighborhoods at the precise historical moment when a rising standard of living, urban renewal, and suburbanization contributed to declines in ethnic and class identity.<sup>2</sup> They showed working-class families struggling for material satisfaction and advancement under conditions far removed from the *embourgeoisement* of the working class celebrated in popular literature about the postwar era. They displayed value conflicts about family identity, consumer spending, ethnicity, class, and gender roles that would appear to be disruptive and dysfunctional within a communications medium primarily devoted to stimulating commodity purchases (see Table 1).

The dissonance between ethnic working-class situation comedies and their artistic, commercial, and historical surroundings might be explained by the persistence of artistic clichés and the conservatism of the entertainment business. Though four of these seven television programs previously existed as radio serials, radio popularity did not guarantee adaptation to television: many successful radio series never made that transition, and television networks actually made more profit from productions specially created for the new medium (Allen 1985:126, 164; de Cordova 1985). Even when radio programs did become television shows, they underwent significant changes in plot and premise. Television versions of urban ethnic working-class situation comedies placed more emphasis on nuclear families and less on extended kinship relations and ethnicity than did their radio predecessors.<sup>3</sup> Those changes reflect more than the differences between television and radio as media: they illuminate as well significant transformations in U.S. society during the 1950s, and they underscore the important role played by television in explaining and legitimizing those transitions to a mass audience.

More than their shared history in radio or their reliance on common theatrical traditions from vaudeville and ethnic theater unites the subgenre of urban ethnic working-class situation comedies. Through indirect but powerful demonstration, all of these shows arbitrated complex tensions caused by economic and social change in postwar America. They evoked the experiences of the past to lend legitimacy to the dominant ideology of the present. In the process they served important social and cultural functions, not just in returning profits to investors or attracting audiences for advertisers, but most significantly as a means of ideological legitimation for a fundamental revolution in economic, social, and cultural life.

### **The Meaning of Memory**

In the midst of extraordinary social change, television became the most important discursive medium in American culture. As such, it was charged with

**Table 1.**

Program	Ethnicity	Occupations	Location	Dwelling
Mama	Norwegian	Carpenter	San Francisco	house
The Goldbergs	Jewish	Tailor/Small Business	Bronx/Long Island	apartment/house
Amos 'n Andy	Black	Cab Driver/Hustler	Harlem	apartment
The Honeymooners	Irish	Bus Driver/Sewer Worker	Brooklyn	apartment
Life with Luigi	Italian	Shopkeeper	Chicago	apartment
Life of Riley	Irish	Machinist	Los Angeles	duplex/cottage
Hey Jeannie	Scottish/Irish	Cab Driver	Brooklyn	apartment

**Table 2.**

Program	Star's Gender	Children	Father or Male Lead	Mother or Female Lead	Extended Family
Mama	Female	Three	Distant but warm	Competent	Relatives/neighbors
The Goldbergs	Female	Two	Distant but warm	Competent	Relatives/neighbors
Amos 'n Andy	Male	None	Irresponsible	Hostile	Lodge brothers/in-laws
The Honeymooners	Male	None	Irresponsible	Hostile	Neighbors
Life with Luigi	Male	None	Irresponsible	Warm	Neighbors
Life of Riley	Male	Two	Incompetent	Warm	Neighbors
Hey Jeannie	Female	None	Irresponsible	Competent	Neighbors/boarder

special responsibilities for making new economic and social relations credible and legitimate to audiences haunted by ghosts from the past. Urban ethnic working-class situation comedies provided one means of addressing the anxieties and contradictions emanating from the clash between the consumer present of the 1950s and collective social memory about the 1930s and 1940s.

The consumer consciousness emerging from economic and social change in postwar America conflicted with the lessons of historical experience for many middle- and working-class American families. The Great Depression of the 1930s had not only damaged the economy, it also undercut the political and cultural legitimacy of American capitalism. Herbert Hoover had been a national hero in the 1920s, with his credo of "rugged individualism" forming the basis for a widely shared cultural ideal. But the depression discredited Hoover's philosophy and made him a symbol of yesterday's blasted hopes to millions of Americans. In the 1930s, cultural ideals based on mutuality and collectivity eclipsed the previous decade's "rugged individualism" and helped propel massive union organizing drives, anti-eviction movements, and general strikes. President Roosevelt's New Deal attempted to harness and co-opt that grass roots mass activity in an attempt to restore social order and recapture credibility and legitimacy for the capitalist system (Romasco 1965). The social welfare legislation of the "Second New Deal" in 1935 went far beyond any measures previously favored by Roosevelt and most of his advisors, but radical action proved necessary for the Administration to contain the upsurge of activism that characterized the decade. Even in the private sector, industrial corporations made more concessions to workers than naked power realities necessitated because they feared the political consequences of mass disillusionment with the system (Berger 1982).

World War II ended the depression and brought prosperity, but it did so on a basis even more collective than the New Deal of the 1930s. Government intervention in the wartime economy reached unprecedented levels, bringing material reward and shared purpose to a generation raised on the deprivation and sacrifice of the depression. In the postwar years, the largest and most disruptive strike wave in American history won major improvements in the standard of living for the average worker, both through wage increases and through government commitments to insure full employment, decent housing, and expanded educational opportunities. Grass roots militancy and working-class direct action wrested concessions from a reluctant government and business elite—mostly because the public at large viewed workers' demands as more legitimate than the desires of capital (Lipsitz 1981).

Yet the collective nature of working-class mass activity in the postwar era posed severe problems for capital. In sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts, workers placed the interests of their class ahead of their own individual material aspirations. Strikes over safety and job control far outnumbered wage strikes, revealing aspirations to control the process of production that conflicted with capitalist labor-management relations. Mass demonstrations demanding government employment and housing programs indicated a collective political response to problems previously adjudicated on a personal level. Radical challenges to the

authority of capital (like the 1946 United Auto Workers' strike demand that wage increases come out of corporate profits rather than from price hikes passed on to consumers), demonstrated a social responsibility and a commitment toward redistributing wealth, rare in the history of American labor (Lipsitz 1981:47-50).

Capital attempted to regain the initiative in the postwar years by making qualified concessions to working-class pressures for redistribution of wealth and power. Rather than paying wage increases out of corporate profits, business leaders instead worked to expand the economy through increases in government spending, foreign trade, and consumer debt. Such expansion could meet the demands of workers and consumers without undermining capital's dominant role in the economy. On the presumption that "a rising tide lifts all boats," business leaders sought to connect working-class aspirations for a better life to policies that insured a commensurate rise in corporate profits, thereby leaving the distribution of wealth unaffected. Federal defense spending, highway construction programs, and home loan policies expanded the economy at home in a manner conducive to the interests of capital, while the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan provided models for enhanced access to foreign markets and raw materials for American corporations. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 banned the class-conscious collective activities most threatening to capital (mass strikes, sympathy strikes, secondary boycotts); the leaders of labor, government, and business accepted as necessity the practice of paying wage hikes for organized workers out of the pockets of consumers and unorganized workers, in the form of higher prices (Lipsitz 1981).

Commercial network television played an important role in this emerging economy, functioning as a significant object of consumer purchases as well as an important marketing medium. Sales of sets jumped from three million during the entire decade of the 1940s to over five million *a year* during the 1950s (*TV Facts* 1980:141). But television's most important economic function came from its role as an instrument of legitimation for transformations in values initiated by the new economic imperatives of postwar America. For Americans to accept the new world of 1950s' consumerism, they had to make a break with the past. The depression years had helped generate fears about installment buying and excessive materialism, while the new Deal and wartime mobilization had provoked suspicions about individual acquisitiveness and upward mobility. Depression era and wartime scarcities of consumer goods had led workers to internalize discipline and frugality while nurturing networks of mutual support through family, ethnic, and class associations. Government policies after the war encouraged an atomized acquisitive consumerism at odds with the lessons of the past. At the same time, federal home loan policies stimulated migrations to the suburbs from traditional, urban ethnic working-class neighborhoods. The entry of television into the American home disrupted previous patterns of family life and encouraged fragmentation of the family into separate segments of the consumer market.<sup>4</sup> The priority of consumerism in the economy at large and on television may have seemed organic and unplanned, but conscious policy decisions by officials from both private and public sectors shaped the contours of the consumer economy and television's role within it.

### Commercial Television and Economic Change

Government policies during and after World War II shaped the basic contours of home television as an advertising medium. Government-sponsored research and development during the war perfected the technology of home television while federal tax policies solidified its economic base. The government allowed corporations to deduct the cost of advertising from their taxable incomes during the war, despite the fact that rationing and defense production left business with few products to market. Consequently, manufacturers kept the names of their products before the public while lowering their tax obligations on high wartime profits. Their advertising expenditures supplied radio networks and advertising agencies with the capital reserves and business infrastructure that enabled them to dominate the television industry in the postwar era. After the war, federal antitrust action against the motion picture studios broke up the "network" system in movies, while the FCC sanctioned the network system in television. In addition, FCC decisions to allocate stations on the narrow VHF band, to grant the networks ownership and operation rights over stations in prime markets, and to place a freeze on the licensing of new stations during the important years between 1948 and 1952 all combined to guarantee that advertising-oriented programming based on the model of radio would triumph over theater TV, educational TV, or any other form (Boddy 1985; Allen 1983). Government decisions, not market forces, established the dominance of commercial television, but these decisions reflected a view of the American economy and its needs which had become so well accepted at the top levels of business and government that it had virtually become the official state economic policy.

Fearing both renewed depression and awakened militancy among workers, influential corporate and business leaders considered increases in consumer spending—increases of 30% to 50%—to be necessary to perpetuate prosperity in the postwar era (Lipsitz 1981:46, 120–121). Defense spending for the Cold War and Korean Conflict had complemented an aggressive trade policy to improve the state of the economy, but it appeared that the key to an expanding economy rested in increased consumer spending fueled by an expansion of credit (Moore and Klein 1967; Jezer 1982). Here too, government policies led the way, especially with regard to stimulating credit purchases of homes and automobiles. During World War II, the marginal tax rate for most wage earners jumped from 4% to 25%, making the home ownership deduction more desirable. Federal housing loan policies favored construction of new single family detached suburban housing over renovation or construction of central city multifamily units. Debt-encumbered home ownership in accord with these policies stimulated construction of 30 million new housing units in just twenty years, bringing the percentage of home-owning Americans from below 40% in 1940 to more than 60% by 1960. Mortgage policies encouraging long term debt and low down payments freed capital for other consumer purchases, while government highway building policies undermined mass transit systems and contributed to increased demand for automobiles (Hartman 1982:165–168). Partly as a result of these policies, consumer spending

on private cars averaged \$7.5 billion per year in the 1930s and 1940s, but grew to \$22 billion per year in 1950 and almost \$30 billion by 1955 (Mollenkopf 1983:111).

For the first time in U.S. history, middle-class and working-class families could routinely expect to own homes or buy new cars every few years. Between 1946 and 1965 residential mortgage debt rose three times as fast as the gross national product and disposable income. Mortgage debt accounted for just under 18% of disposable income in 1946, but it grew to almost 55% by 1965 (Stone 1983:122). In order to insure eventual payment of current debts, the economy had to generate tremendous expansion and growth, further stimulating the need to increase consumer spending. Manufacturers had to find new ways of motivating consumers to buy ever increasing amounts of commodities, and television provided an important means of accomplishing that end.

Television advertised individual products, but it also provided a relentless flow of information and persuasion that placed acts of consumption at the core of everyday life. The physical fragmentation of suburban growth and declines in motion picture attendance created an audience more likely to stay at home and receive entertainment there than ever before. But television also provided a locus redefining American ethnic, class, and family identities into consumer identities. In order to accomplish this task effectively, television programs had to address some of the psychic, moral, and political obstacles to consumption among the public at large.

The television and advertising industries knew that they had to overcome these obstacles. Marketing expert and motivational specialist Ernest Dichter stated that "one of the basic problems of this prosperity is to give people that sanction and justification to enjoy it and to demonstrate that the hedonistic approach to life is a moral one, not an immoral one" (Jezer 1982:127). Dichter went on to note the many barriers that inhibited consumer acceptance of unrestrained hedonism, and he called on advertisers "to train the average citizen to accept growth of his country and its economy as *his* growth rather than as a strange and frightening event" (Dichter 1960:210). One method of encouraging that acceptance, according to Dichter, consisted of identifying new products and styles of consumption with traditional, historically sanctioned practices and behavior. He noted that such an approach held particular relevance in addressing consumers who had only recently acquired the means to spend freely and who might harbor a lingering conservatism based on their previous experiences (Dichter 1960:209).

Insecurities and anxieties among consumers compelled network television to address the complex legacies of the 1930s and 1940s in order to promote consumption in the 1950s. In the middle of its appeals to change the world in the present through purchase of the appropriate commodities, commercial network television in its early years also presented programs rooted in the historical experiences and aspirations of diverse working-class traditions. From the evocations of the depression era that permeated the world of *The Honeymooners*, to the recycled minstrel show stereotypes of *Amos 'n Andy*, from the textured layers of immigrant experience underpinning the drama and charm of *The Goldbergs* and



*Mama*, to the reenactment of immigration in contemporaneous circumstances in *Life of Riley*, *Life with Luigi*, and *Hey Jeannie*, the medium of the infinitely renewable present turned to past traditions and practices in order to explain and legitimate fundamentally new social relations in the present.

### Family Formation and the Economy—The Television View

Advertisers incorporated their messages into urban ethnic working-class comedies through indirect and direct means. Tensions developed in the programs often found indirect resolution in commercials. Thus Jeannie MacClennan's search for an American sweetheart in one episode of *Hey Jeannie* set up commercials proclaiming the abilities of Drene shampoo to keep one prepared to accept last minute dates and of Crest toothpaste to produce an attractive smile (*Hey Jeannie*: "The Rock and Roll Kid"). Conversations about shopping for new furniture in an episode of *The Goldbergs* directed viewers' attention to furnishings in the Goldberg home provided for the show by Macy's department store in exchange for a commercial acknowledgment (*The Goldbergs*: "The In-laws").

But the content of the shows themselves offered even more direct emphasis on consumer spending. In one episode of *The Goldbergs*, Molly expresses disapproval of her future daughter-in-law's plan to buy a washing machine on the installment plan. "I know Papa and me never bought anything unless we had the money to pay for it," she intones with logic familiar to a generation with memories of the Great Depression. Her son, Sammy, confronts this "deviance" by saying, "Listen, Ma, almost everybody in this country lives above their means—and everybody enjoys it." Doubtful at first, Molly eventually learns from her children and announces her conversion to the legitimacy of installment buying by proposing that the family buy two cars so as to "live above our means—the American way" (*The Goldbergs*: "The In-laws"). In a subsequent episode, Molly's daughter, Rosalie, assumes the role of ideological tutor to her mother. When planning a move out of their Bronx apartment to a new house in the suburbs, Molly ruminates about where to place her furniture in the new home. "You don't mean we're going to take all this junk with us into a brand new house?" asks an exasperated Rosalie. With traditionalist sentiment Molly answers, "Junk? My furniture's junk? My furniture that I lived with and loved for twenty years is junk?" But in the end she accepts Rosalie's argument—even selling off all her old furniture to help meet the down payment on the new house, and deciding to buy new furniture on the installment plan (*The Goldbergs*: "Moving Day").

Chester A. Riley confronts similar choices about family and commodities in *The Life of Riley*. His wife complains that he only takes her out to the neighborhood bowling alley and restaurant, not to "interesting places." Riley searches for ways to impress her and discovers from a friend that a waiter at the fancy Club Morambo will let them eat first and pay later, at a dollar a week plus ten percent interest. "Ain't that dishonest?" asks Riley. "No, it's usury," his friend replies. Riley does not borrow the money, but he impresses his wife anyway by taking the family out to dinner on the proceeds of a prize that he received for being the one-

thousandth customer in a local flower shop. Though we eventually learn that Peg Riley only wanted attention, not an expensive meal, the happy ending of the episode hinges totally on Riley's prestige, restored when he demonstrates his ability to provide a luxury outing for the family (*Life of Riley*: R228).

The same episode of *The Life of Riley* reveals another consumerist element common to this subgenre. When Riley protests that he lacks the money needed to fulfill Peg's desires, she answers that he would have plenty if he didn't spend so much on "needless gadgets." His shortage of cash becomes a personal failing caused by incompetent behavior as a consumer. Nowhere do we hear about the size of his paycheck, relations between his union and his employer, or, for that matter, the relationship between the value of his labor and the wages paid to him by the Stevenson Aircraft Company. Like Uncle David in *The Goldbergs*—who buys a statue of Hamlet shaking hands with Shakespeare and an elk's tooth with the Gettysburg address carved on it—Riley's comic character stems in part from a flaw which in theory could be attributed to the entire consumer economy: a preoccupation with "needless gadgets." By contrast, Peg Riley's desire for an evening out is portrayed as reasonable and modest—as reparation due her for the inevitable tedium of housework. The solution to her unhappiness, of course, comes from an evening out rather than from a change in her own work circumstances. Even within the home, television elevates consumption over production; production is assumed to be a constant—only consumption can be varied. But more than enjoyment is at stake: unless Riley can provide her with the desired night on the town, he will fail in his obligations as a husband (*Life of Riley*: R228; *The Goldbergs*: "Bad Companions").

A similar theme provides the crisis in an episode of *Mama*. Dagmar, the youngest child, "innocently" expresses envy of a friend whose father received a promotion and consequently put up new wallpaper in his house. "Why doesn't Papa get promoted?" Dagmar chirps, "Everyone else does." When Mama explains that a carpenter makes less money than other fathers, Dagmar asks if it wouldn't be smarter for Papa to work in a bank. Overhearing this dialogue, Papa decides to accept his boss' offer to promote him to foreman, even though he knows it will ruin his friendships with the other workers. The logic of the episode instructs us that fathers will lose their standing if they disappoint their families' desires for new commodities (*Mama*: "Mama and the Carpenter"). Shows exploring tensions between family obligations and commodity purchases routinely assert that money cannot *buy* love, but they seem less clear about whether one can trade material wealth for affection. Even the usually self-absorbed Kingfish on *Amos 'n Andy* gives in to his nephew Stanley's wish for "a birthday party with lots of expensive presents," while Jeannie MacClennan's search for romance suffers a setback when a prospective suitor sees her shabby apartment with its antiquated furniture (*Amos 'n Andy*: "Andy the Godfather"; *Hey Jeannie*: "The Rock and Roll Kid"). On *The Goldbergs*, a young woman is forbidden to marry the man she loves because, her mother says, "I didn't raise my daughter to be a butcher's wife" (*The Goldbergs*: "Die Fledermaus"); and Alice Kramden in *The Honeymooners* can always gain the upper hand in arguments with her husband by

pointing to his inadequacies as a provider. In each of these programs, consumer choices close the ruptures in personal relations, enabling the episode to reach narrative and ideological closure.

One episode of *Mama* typifies the confusion between consumer purchases and family happiness pervading urban ethnic working-class situation comedies in early network television. "Mama's Birthday," broadcast in 1954, delineated the tensions between family loyalty and consumer desire endemic to modern capitalist society. The show begins with Mama teaching Katrin to make Norwegian potato balls, the kind she used long ago to "catch" Papa. Unimpressed by this accomplishment, Katrin changes the subject and asks Mama what she wants for her upcoming birthday. In an answer that locates Mama within the gender roles of the 1950s she replies, "Well, I think a fine new job for your Papa. You and Dagmar to marry nice young men and have a lot of wonderful children—just like I have. And Nels, well, Nels to become president of the United States" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). In one sentence Mama has summed up the dominant culture's version of legitimate female expectations: success at work for her husband, marriage and childrearing for her daughters, the presidency for her son—and nothing for herself.

But we learn that Mama does have some needs, although we do not hear it from her lips. Her sister, Jenny, asks Mama to attend a fashion show, but Mama cannot leave the house because she has to cook a roast for a guest whom Papa has invited to dinner. Jenny comments that Mama never seems to get out of the kitchen, adding that "it's a disgrace when a woman can't call her soul her own," and "it's a shame that a married woman can't have some time to herself." The complaint is a valid one, and we can imagine how it might have resonated for women in the 1950s. The increased availability of household appliances and the use of synthetic fibers and commercially processed food should have decreased the amount of time women spent in housework, but surveys showed that homemakers spent the same number of hours per week (51 to 56) doing housework as they had done in the 1920s. Advertising and marketing strategies undermined the potential of technological changes by upgrading standards for cleanliness in the home and expanding desires for more varied wardrobes and menus for the average family (Hartmann 1982: 168). In that context, Aunt Jenny would have been justified in launching into a tirade about the division of labor within the Hansen household or about the possibilities for cooperative housework, but network television specializes in a less social and more commodified dialogue about problems like housework: Aunt Jenny suggests that her sister's family buy her a "fireless cooker"—a cast iron stove—for her birthday. "They're wonderful," she tells them in language borrowed from the rhetoric of advertising. "You just put your dinner inside them, close 'em up, and go where you please. When you come back your dinner is all cooked" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). Papa protests that Mama likes to cook on her woodburning stove, but Jenny dismisses that objection with an insinuation about his motive, when she replies, "Well, I suppose it *would* cost a little more than you could afford, Hansen" (Meehan and Ropes 1954).

By identifying a commodity as the solution to Mama's problem, Aunt Jenny unites the inner voice of Mama with the outer voice of the sponsors of television

programs. Mama's utility as an icon of maternal selflessness would be compromised if she asked for the stove herself, but Aunt Jenny's role in suggesting the gift removes that taint of selfishness while adding the authority of an outside expert. Aunt Jenny's suggestion of hypocrisy in Papa's reluctance to buy the stove encourages the audience to resent him for not making enough money and even to see his poverty as a form of selfishness—denying his wife the comforts due her. In reality, we know that Aunt Jenny's advice probably contains the usual distortions of advertising claims, that even if the fireless cooker enabled Mama to go where she pleased while dinner cooked, it would bring with it different kinds of tasks and escalating demands. But in the fantasy world of television, such considerations do not intervene. Prodded by their aunt, the Hansen children go shopping and purchase the fireless cooker from a storekeeper who calls the product "the new Emancipation Proclamation—setting housewives free from their old kitchen range" (Meehan and Ropes 1954). Our exposure to advertising hyperbole should not lead us to miss the analogy here: housework is compared to slavery, and the commercial product takes on the aura of Abraham Lincoln. The shopkeeper's appeal convinces the children to pool their resources and buy the stove for Mama. But we soon learn that Papa plans to make a fireless cooker for Mama with his tools. When Mama discovers Papa's intentions she persuades the children to buy her another gift. Even Papa admits that his stove will not be as efficient as the one made in a factory, but Mama nobly affirms that she will like his better because he made it himself. The children use their money to buy dishes for Mama, and Katrin remembers the episode as Mama's happiest birthday ever (Meehan and Ropes 1954).

The stated resolution of "Mama's Birthday" favors traditional values. Mama prefers to protect Papa's feelings rather than having a better stove, and the product built by a family member has more value than one sold as a commodity. Yet the entire development of the plot leads in the opposite direction. The "fireless cooker" is the star of the episode, setting in motion all the other characters, and it has unquestioned value even in the face of Jenny's meddlesome brashness, Papa's insensitivity, and Mama's old-fashioned ideals. Buying a product is unchallenged as the true means of changing the unpleasant realities or low status of women's work in the home.

This resolution of the conflict between consumer desires and family roles reflected television's social role as mediator between the family and the economy. Surveys of set ownership showed no pronounced stratification by class, but a clear correlation between family size and television purchases: households with three to five people were most likely to own television sets, while those with only one person were least likely to own them. (Swanson and Jones 1951). The television industry recognized and promoted its privileged place within families in advertisements like the one in the *New York Times* in 1950 that proclaimed, "Youngsters today need television for their morale as much as they need fresh air and sunshine for their health" (Wolfenstein 1951). Like previous communications media, television sets occupied honored places in family living rooms, and helped structure family time; unlike other previous communications media, they dis-

played available commodities in a way that transformed all their entertainment into a glorified shopping catalogue.

Publicity about television programs stressed the interconnections between family and economy as well. Viewers took the portrayals of motherhood on these shows so seriously that when Peggy Wood of *Mama* appeared on the *Garry Moore Show* and asked for questions from the audience, women asked for advice about raising their families, as if she were actually Mama, rather than an actress playing that role (*TV Guide* 1954:11). The *Ladies Home Journal* printed an article containing "Mama's Recipes," featuring photographs of Peggy Wood, while Gertrude Berg wrote an article as Molly Goldberg for *TV Guide* that contained her recipes for borscht and blintzes. "Your meal should suit the mood of your husband," Berg explained. "If he's nervous give him a heavy meal. If he's happy a salad will do" (*Ladies Home Journal* 1956:130–131; *TV Guide* 1953A:7). Actors on the shows also ignored the contradictions between their on-stage and off-stage roles. Actress Marjorie Reynolds told *TV Guide* that she enjoyed playing Mrs. Chester A. Riley, because "I've done just about everything in films from westerns to no-voice musicals, and now with the Riley show, I'm back in the kitchen. Where every wife belongs" (*TV Guide* 1953B:17).

The focus on the family in early network television situation comedies involved a special emphasis on mothers. Images of long-suffering but loving mothers pervaded these programs and publicity about them. Ostensibly representations of "tradition," these images actually spoke to a radical rupture with the past: the establishment of the isolated nuclear family of the 1950s with its attendant changes in family gender roles. The wartime economic mobilization that ended the depression stimulated an extraordinary period of family formation that was in sharp contrast to the experience of preceding decades. Americans married more frequently, formed families at a younger age, and had more children in the 1940s than they had in the 1920s and 1930s (Hartmann 1982:164–165). The combination of permissive recommendations for childrearing and social changes attendant to increases in consumer spending isolated mothers as never before. Work previously shared with extended kinship and neighbor networks now had to be done by machines, at home in isolation. Childrearing took up more time and responsibility, but inflation and expanded consumer desires encouraged women to work outside the home for pay. When the conflicting demands of permissivism created guilt and feelings of inadequacy, outside authorities—from child psychologists to television programs—stood ready to provide "therapeutic" images of desired maternal behavior.

While placing special burdens on women, changes in family identity in the postwar era transformed the roles of all family members. As psychoanalyst Joel Kovel demonstrates, the decomposition of extended kinship networks made the nuclear family the center of the personal world, "a location of desire and intimacy not previously conceptualized" (Kovel 1978:13–14). Kovel argues that participation in civil society can keep individuals from sliding back into total narcissism, but that separation of family from society in modern capitalism blocks access to the public realm. The family becomes the locus of all social demands, lauded all

the more in theory as its traditional social function disappears in practice. The family appears to be private and voluntary, yet its isolation from neighborhood and class networks leave it subject to extraordinary regulation and manipulation by outside authorities like psychologists and advertisers. The family appears to be the repository of mutuality and affection, but commodity society has truncated its traditional functions into the egoism of possession. The family appears to maintain the privileges and authority of patriarchy, but "like a house nibbled by termites," the outwardly strong appearance of patriarchy masks a collapsing infrastructure no longer capable of wielding authority in an increasingly administered and institutionalized society. According to Kovel, the demise of the traditional family creates a need for authority that becomes filled by the "administrative mode"—the structure of domination that offers commodities as the key to solving personal problems (Kovel 1978:13–14). Sociologist Nancy Chodorow draws a similar formulation in her observation that "the decline of the oedipal father creates an orientation to external authority and behavioral obedience" (Chodorow 1978:189). Chodorow also points out that the idealization of masculinity inherent in the "distant father" role in the nuclear family gives ideological priority to men, while channeling rebellion and resentment against the power wielded by the accessible and proximate mother. Kovel and Chodorow both stress that these patterns are neither natural nor inevitable: they emerge in concrete social circumstances where the nuclear family serves as the main base of support for consumer society (Chodorow 1978:181; Kovel 1978:19).

Commercial network television emerged as the primary discursive medium in American society at the precise historical moment that the isolated nuclear family and its concerns eclipsed previous ethnic, class, and political forces as the crucible of personal identity. Television programs both reflected and shaped that translation, defining the good life in family-centric, asocial, and commodity-oriented ways. As Todd Gitlin argues, "What is hegemonic in consumer capitalist ideology is precisely the notion that happiness, or liberty, or equality, or fraternity can be affirmed through existing private commodity forms, under the benign protective eye of the national security state" (Newcomb 1978). Yet the denigration of public issues and the resulting overemphasis on the home contained contradictions of their own. If the harmonious and mutually supportive family of the past granted moral legitimacy to the consumer dilemmas of urban, ethnic working-class families, the tensions of the modern nuclear household revealed the emerging nuclear family to be a contested terrain of competing needs and desires.

The structural tensions basic to the "father absent-mother present" gender roles of the nuclear family identified by Chodorow pervaded television portrayals of urban ethnic working-class life in the 1950s. Peg Riley, Alice Kramden, and Sapphire Stevens heroically endure their husbands' failures to deliver on promises of wealth and upward mobility, and they earn the sympathy of the audience by compensating for the incompetent social performance of their spouses. Yet their nagging insistence on practical reason also marks them as "shrews," out to undercut male authority. Male insensitivity to female needs forms the focal point of humor and sardonic commentary—as in the episode of *The Life of Riley* where

Riley can't understand Peg's complaints about staying home all the time. "I can't figure her out," he tells his son. "She's got a home to clean, meals to cook, dishes to wash, you two kids to look after, floors to scrub—what more does she want?" (*Life of Riley*: R228). Few shows displayed hostility between husbands and wives as openly as *The Honeymooners*. (Even the title functioned as bitter irony.) When Alice employs sarcasm in response to Ralph's "get rich quick" schemes and his neglect of her needs, Ralph invariably clenches his fist and says, "one of these days, Alice, one of these days, pow! right in the kisser!" Coupled with his threats to send her "to the moon," the intimation of wife-beating remains a recurring "comic" premise in the show. Jackie Gleason told one interviewer that he thought many husbands felt the way Ralph did about their wives. And an article in *TV Guide* quoted an unnamed "famous" psychiatrist who contended that the program's popularity rested on male perceptions that women had too much power, and on female perceptions that male immaturity demonstrated the superiority of women (*TV Guide* 1955:14). *The Honeymooners* might end with a humbled Ralph Kramden telling Alice, "Baby, you're the greatest," but the show clearly "worked" because tensions between men and women spoke to the experiences and fears of the audience (see Table 2).

Structural tensions within families, women betrayed by irresponsible and incompetent husbands, and men chafing under the domination of their wives: hardly an ideal portrait of family life. These depictions reflected the fissures in a fundamentally new form of family, a form which increasingly dominated the world of television viewers. One might expect commercial television programs to ignore the problems of the nuclear family, but the industry's imperial ambition—the desire to have all households watching at all times—encouraged exploitation of the real problems confronting viewers. Censorship ruled out treatment of many subjects, but family tensions offered legitimate and fertile ground for television programs. Individuals cut off from previous forms of self-definition and assaulted by media images encouraging narcissistic anxieties had insatiable needs to survey the terrain of family problems, to seek relief from current tensions and assurance of the legitimacy of current social relations. In order to create subjects receptive to the appeals of advertisers and to achieve ideological and narrative closure for their own stories, the creators of television programs had to touch on real issues, albeit in truncated and idealized form. While they unflinchingly offered only individual and codified solutions to those problems, the mere act of exposing the contradictions of the nuclear family created the structural potential for oppositional readings. Representation of generational and gender tensions undercut the legitimating authority of the televised traditional working-class family by demonstrating the chasm between memories of yesterday and the realities of today. If the programs remained true to the past, they lost their relevance to current tensions. Yet when they successfully addressed contemporary problems, they forfeited the legitimacy offered by the past and made it easier for their viewers to escape the pull of parochialism and paternal authority embedded in the traditional family form. This clash between the legitimizing promise of urban ethnic working-class shows and their propensity for exposing the shortcomings of both past and present social

relations went beyond their treatment of family issues and extended as well to matters of work, class, and ethnicity.

### Work, Class, and Ethnicity

In addition to consumer issues, the changing nature of working-class identity also influenced the collective memory of viewers of ethnic urban working-class situation comedies in the 1950s. The decade of the 1940s not only witnessed an unprecedented transformation in the nature of the American family, but it also saw an extraordinary social upheaval among workers, which labor historian Stanley Aronowitz has characterized as “incipient class formation” (Aronowitz 1983). War mobilization reindustrialized the sagging U.S. economy, but also reconstituted the working class. Migrations to defense production centers and breakthroughs by women and blacks in securing industrial employment changed the composition of the work force. Traditional parochial loyalties waned as mass production and full employment created new work groups on the shop floor and new working-class communities outside the factory gates. Mass strikes and demonstrations united workers from diverse backgrounds into a polity capable of sustained collective action. Of course, racism and sexism remained pervasive on both institutional and grass roots levels, but the mass activity of the postwar era represented the stirrings of a class consciousness previously unknown in a proletariat deeply divided by ethnicity, race, and gender. By the 1950s, expanded consumer opportunities, suburbanization, and access to education offered positive inducements away from that class consciousness, while anti-Communism, purges, and restrictions on rank and file activism acted negatively to undercut trade unions as crucibles of class consciousness. Yet retentions of the incipient class formation of the 1940s percolated throughout the urban ethnic working-class situation comedies of the 1950s.

Jeannie Carson, the star of *Hey Jeannie*, began her career in show business by singing to Welsh miners as they came out of the pits. Appropriately enough, her U.S. television series adopted a working class locale—the home of Al Murray, a Brooklyn cab driver, and his sister Liz (*TV Guide* 1956:17). The setting imposed certain structural directions on the program’s humor—directions that gave voice to sharp class resentments. One episode concerns Al Murray’s efforts to hide his cab in a neighbor’s garage so that he can take the day off from work to see his beloved Dodgers play baseball at Ebbetts Field. Sensing Murray’s dereliction of duty, the cab company president delivers a self-righteous harangue about the evils of such behavior to his secretary. Pontificating about the social responsibilities of a taxicab company, “a public utility,” he asks his secretary if she knows what happens when one of his cabs is not operating. “No, what?” she inquires. “It cuts into my profits,” he responds. (*Hey Jeannie*: “Jeannie The Cabdriver”). Humor based on such hypocrisy by employers has a long history in working-class culture, but it is rarely the subject of mass media comedy. As the episode continues, the boss’ secretary (in an act of solidarity) calls Liz and Jeannie to warn them that the boss is out on the streets looking for Al’s cab. Jeannie takes



the taxi out of the garage to prevent Al's boss from finding it there, but accustomed to driving in her native Scotland, she drives on the left side of the street and gets stopped by a police officer. The policeman discovers that she is an immigrant and lets her off with a warning, remembering his own days as a newly arrived immigrant from Ireland. The resolution of the show finds Jeannie getting to the ballpark in time to get Al back to the cab where his boss finds him and apologizes for even suspecting his employee of misconduct. The episode vibrates with class consciousness, from the many acts of solidarity that get Al off the hook to the final victory over the boss—a victory gained by turning work time into play time, and getting away with it. That kind of collective activity in pursuit of common goals appears frequently in the urban ethnic working-class situation comedies of the 1950s, in incidents ranging from a rent strike by tenants in *The Goldbergs* to community protest against destruction of a favorite neighborhood tree in *Life With Luigi* (*The Goldbergs*: "The Rent Strike"; *Life with Luigi*: "The Power Line").

Even though the workplace rarely appears in television comedies about working-class life, when it does provide a focus for comic or dramatic tensions, it also seethes with class resentments. On one episode of *Mama*, Lars Hansen tells another worker that he prefers working for Mr. Jenkins to working for Mr. Kingsley because "Mr. Jenkins doesn't lose his temper so much." Mr. Kingsley also demands speed-ups from the men and tries to pressure Papa into making the other workers produce at a faster pace (*Mama*: "Mama and the Carpenter"). In this episode, the workplace appears as a place where workers with common interests experience fragmentation. Even after Jake Goldberg graduates from his job as a tailor to become owner of a small dressmaking firm, work prevents him from enjoying life. Business pressures take him away from his family and prevent him from developing recreational interests. When Molly's Uncle David starts playing pool, Jake confides that he never learned to play because "pool is a game that requires leisure." However, his business sense causes him to lean over the table, touch it, and murmur with admiration, "nice quality felt, though" (*The Goldbergs*: "Bad Companions"). Jake's work brings in a bigger financial reward than Al Murray's cab driving or Lars Hansen's carpentry, but it still compels him to trade the precious minutes and hours of his life for commodities that he hardly has time to enjoy. Work as a noble end in itself is almost entirely absent from these shows. No work ethic or pride in labor motivates these workers. In fact, Ed Norton's pride in his job as a sewer worker provides a recurrent comic premise in *The Honeymooners*. The object of work in these programs consists of material reward to enhance one's family status or to obtain some leisure time commodity.

Work not only appears infrequently in 1950s comedies about working-class life, but blue-collar labor often appears as a stigma—a condition that retards the acquisition of desired goods. But even demeaning portrayals of working-class people contain contradictions, allowing for negotiated or oppositional readings. Advertisers and network officials pointed to Chester A. Riley's "magnificent stupidity" as the key to the big ratings garnered by *The Life of Riley*, but that "stupidity" sometimes masked other qualities. At a fancy dinner where the Rileys are

clearly out of place, they meet a blue blood named Cecil Spencer Kendrick III. "You mean there's two more of you inside?" Riley asks. The audience laughter at his gaffe comes in part from resentment against the antidemocratic pretensions of Kendrick and his associates (*Life of Riley*: R228). Similarly, when Riley's neighbor, Jim Gillis, tries to impress him with tales about the fancy food at an expensive restaurant, Riley gets Gillis to admit that crepes suzette are nothing more than "pancakes soaked in kerosene and then set on fire" (*Life of Riley*: R228). That sense of the unintentional insight also propels the malaprop-laden humor of Molly Goldberg. Who could dispute her self-sacrificing virtue when Molly vows to save money by getting old furniture: "I don't care how old, even antique furniture would be fine"? She complains that her cousin has been gone for two weeks and that she hasn't seen "hide nor seek of him," and she warns her uncle that she will give him only one word of advice, and that word is "be sure" (*The Goldbergs*: "Is There a Doctor in the House?"; *The Goldbergs*: "Boogie Comes Home"). When Molly says that "patience is a vulture," or that "it never rains until it pours," her misstatements carry wisdom (*The Goldbergs*: "Moving Day"; *The Goldbergs*: "Is There a Doctor in the House?").

Resentments about work, refusals to acknowledge the legitimacy of the upper classes, and creative word play abound in these programs, transmitting the texture of decades of working-class experience. Similarly, comedy about fraternal orders and ethnic lodges appear in television shows of the 1950s as a reflection of real historical experience. In history, fraternal orders and mutual aid societies comprised essential resources for working-class immigrants, often providing insurance, burial expenses, recreational facilities, and adult education at a time when the state accepted none of those responsibilities. In the urban ethnic working-class situation comedies of the early 1950s, the fraternal lodge appears as an archaic and anachronistic institution, a remnant of the past at odds with the needs of the family. Lars Hansen brings home officials of the Sons of Norway for dinner, thereby creating more work for Mama.<sup>5</sup> Chester A. Riley wastes his time and money on the Brooklyn Patriots of Los Angeles, an organization set up to revere the world he left behind when he moved his family west. The Mystic Knights of the Sea provide Kingfish with a theater of operations for bilking his "brothers" out of their money, and for indulging his inflated sense of self-importance. The Royal Order of Raccoons keep Ralph Kramden from spending time with Alice, and they divert his paycheck away from the family budget toward lodge dues. In one show Alice asks Ralph what benefit she derives from his lodge activities. He proudly informs her that his membership entitles both of them to free burial in the Raccoon National Cemetery in Bismark, North Dakota. With appropriate sarcasm, Alice replies that the prospect of burial in North Dakota makes her wonder why she should go on living (*The Honeymooners*: "The Loud Speaker").

In organic popular memory, lodges retained legitimacy as sources of mutuality and friendship. But in an age when suburban tract housing replaced the ethnic neighborhood, when the state took on welfare functions previously carried out by voluntary associations, and when the home sphere became increasingly isolated from the community around it, the lodge hall became a premise for comic

ridicule. In television programs, the interests of the family took precedence over those of the fraternal lodge, and a binary opposition between the two seemed inevitable. Yet the very inclusion of lodges in these programs demonstrates the power of the past in the discourse of the present. Television programs validated the atomized nuclear family at the expense of the extended kinship and class relations manifested in the fraternal order. When successful, these shows undercut the ability of the past to provide legitimacy for contemporary social relations. When unsuccessful, these shows called attention to the possibility of other forms of community and culture than those that dominated the present.

Cultural specificity about working-class life provided credibility for early network television programs, but at the same time created problems for advertisers. Erik Barnouw points out that sponsors hardly relished the prospect of shows situated in lower-class environments—like the enormously successful teleplay, *Marty*—because “Sponsors were meanwhile trying to ‘upgrade’ the consumer and persuade him to ‘move up to a Chrysler,’ and ‘live better electrically’ in a suburban home, with help from ‘a friend at Chase Manhattan.’ The sponsors preferred beautiful people in mouth-watering decor to convey what it meant to climb the socioeconomic ladder. The commercials looked out of place in Bronx settings” (Barnouw 1979:106). When advertisers coasted on the borrowed legitimacy of working-class history to lend sincerity and authenticity to their appeals to buy coffee and soap, they also ran the risk of exposing contradictions between the past and present. Author Kathryn Forbes, who wrote the book on which *Mama* was based, complained that the television Hansen family had too much wealth to present accurately the circumstances she had written about. Forbes’s book portrays the Hansen family with four children in a house shared with relatives and boarders; on television they have three children in a house to themselves. In the Forbes book, *Mama* represents a traditional mother raising independent daughters—using her traditional cooking skills to make social connections that allow Katrin to pursue an untraditional career as a writer. On television, tradition reigns as *Mama* instructs Katrin about cooking to help her land a husband, and Katrin becomes a secretary rather than a writer. Other shows made similar adaptations to the ideological norms of the 1950s. On radio and for most of their years on television, the Goldbergs lived in a multifamily Bronx dwelling where neighbors and relatives blended together to form an extended community. By the time the television show reached its last year of production in 1955-56, the Goldbergs moved to a suburban house in a Long Island subdivision where physical and emotional distances constituted the norm. The radio version of *Amos 'n Andy* began to neglect the solid family man and independent businessman Amos as early as the 1940s; but the television show which began in 1951 pushed Amos even farther into the background in order to zero in on the marital problems and home life of the shiftless and irresponsible Kingfish. In each of these shows, television versions tended to accentuate the dilemmas of atomized nuclear families and to downplay the dramas emanating from extended class and ethnic associations.

The working class depicted in urban ethnic working-class situation comedies of the 1950s bore only a superficial resemblance to the historical American work-

ing class. Stripped of essential elements of ethnic and class identity, interpreted through perspectives most relevant to a consumer middle class, and pictured in isolation from the social connections that gave purpose and meaning to working-class lives, the televised working-class family summoned up only the vaguest contours of its historical counterpart. Even in comparison to depictions of class in other forms of communication, like folklore, theater, music, literature, or radio, television presented a dessicated and eviscerated version of working-class life. Yet the legitimizing functions served by locating programs in working-class environments caused some attempts at authenticity that brought sedimented class tensions to the surface. While the producers of these television shows hardly intended to direct viewers' attentions toward real ethnic and class conflicts, the social location of the writers and actors most knowledgeable about working-class life served to make some of these programs focal points for social issues. When producers took on working-class settings as a form of local color, they burdened themselves with the contradictions of the communities that provided the color, as evidenced by public controversies over *The Goldbergs* and *Amos 'n Andy*.

Part of the convincing authenticity of *The Goldbergs* came from actors and writers who developed their skills within the Yiddish theater and the culture that supported it. An organic part of that culture included political activists, including Communists, socialists, and antifascists whose concerns found expression in a variety of community activities including theater. Philip Loeb, who played Jake Goldberg, became the center of controversy when an anti-Communist right-wing publication accused him of subversive connections arising from his appearance at antifascist rallies and his having signed a petition calling for the admission of Negroes into professional baseball. Nervous sponsors and advertising representatives, afraid of threatened boycotts by the anti-Communists, dropped their support of the show and demanded that its producer and star, Gertrude Berg, fire Loeb. At first she refused, pointing out that Loeb had never been a Communist, but ultimately Berg gave in to the pressure and fired her co-star in order to keep her show on the air. Sponsors resumed their support after Loeb left the program in 1952, and *The Goldbergs* ran for four more years. Loeb received a \$45,000 settlement in exchange for dropping any legal actions against the show, but he never worked again as an actor because producers viewed him as "controversial." In 1956, Loeb committed suicide (Barnouw 1982:126; Jezer 1982:193–194; Kanfer 1973:154; *New Republic* 1952A:8, 1952B:22). Similarly, Mady Christians played Mama in the Broadway play *I Remember Mama*, but could not play that role on television; anti-Communist pressure groups questioned her loyalty because she had worked on behalf of refugees from fascism in the 1930s and 1940s with individuals accused of subversion. Blacklisted from her profession, Christians sank into a severe depression that friends felt sapped her strength and made her unable to overcome health problems that led to her death in 1951. Loeb and Christians dismayed advertisers, not because of their political views, but because their presence provoked political controversy and interfered with the illusions created by their programs of a world without politics. Like the real Goldbergs and Hansens in American history, Philip Loeb and Mady Christians lived in a world where

ethnicity connected them to complicated political issues. The controversy over their views and the public attention directed toward them threatened to unmask the world of *Mama* and *The Goldbergs* as a created artifact—depriving it of legitimating power.

*Amos 'n Andy* contained similar, but more culturally explosive, connections. Stereotyped and demeaning portrayals of black people have long constituted an obsessive theme in American theater, and for that matter, in American life. Historian Nathan Irvin Huggins points out that the minstrel show stereotypes enabled white society at the turn of the 20th century to attribute to black people the characteristics that it feared most in itself. At a time when industrialization demanded a revolutionary transformation in behavior that compelled Americans to accept Victorian standards about thrift, sobriety, abstinence, and restraint, the minstrel show emerged to present laziness, greed, gluttony, and licentiousness as traits singularly associated with black people. These images worked to legitimate the emerging Victorian code by associating opposition to the dominant ideology with the despised culture of Afro-Americans. The minstrel show “Negro” presented white society with a representation of the natural self at odds with the normative self of industrial culture. Uninhibited behavior could be savored by the ego during the minstrel performance, but overruled afterwards by the superego. The viewer could release tension by pointing to the minstrel show “darkie” and saying “It’s him, not me.” But the viewer came back, again and again. The desire to subjugate and degrade black people had political and economic imperatives of its own, but emotional and psychic reinforcement for that exploitation came from the ways in which racist stereotypes enabled whites to accept the suppression of their natural selves.

The centrality of racist images to white culture presented peculiar problems for Afro-Americans. Entry into white society meant entry into its values, and those values included hatred of blacks. In order to participate in the white world, blacks had to make concessions to white America’s fantasy images. As Huggins notes, black people found it dangerous to step out of character, either on or off stage. The great black vaudeville entertainer Bert Williams demonstrated the absurd contradictions of this process; he donned blackface makeup to perform on stage—a black man imitating white men imitating black men. Williams’s artistic genius and stubborn self-respect led him to inject subtle elements of social criticism into his act, but for most spectators, he merely reinforced their a priori conclusions about the stage Negro (Huggins 1978).

The black cast of *Amos 'n Andy* came out of the theatrical traditions that spawned Williams, and they perpetuated many of his contradictions. As a successful radio program, the all-black world of *Amos 'n Andy* had been performed mostly by its white creators (Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll). With the move to television, Gosden and Correll hired an all-black cast, but they nonetheless faced protests from community groups. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and black actor James Edwards campaigned to have the program taken off the air because they felt that it made the only televised presentation of Afro-American life an insulting one. The NAACP complained in

federal court that black citizens routinely suffered abuse from whites addressing them as “Amos” or “Andy,” and that the program defamed black professionals by presenting them as liars and cheats. In response, black actors employed on the program and a few black intellectuals defended *Amos ’n Andy* as a harmless satire and an important vehicle for bringing much needed exposure to black actors (Cripps 1983; Macdonald 1983:27–28; *Newsweek* 1951:56).

Placed in historical context, *Amos ’n Andy* did for the values of the 1950s what the minstrel show accomplished for previous generations. Everything considered precious but contested in white society—like the family or the work ethic—became violated in the world of Kingfish. Ambition and upward mobility drew ridicule when pursued by blacks. In a society nurtured on Horatio Alger stories about rising from rags to riches, this lampooning of a black man’s aspirations could function to release tensions about the fear of failure. It could redirect hostility away from the elite toward those on the bottom of society. When Kingfish pretends to be educated and uses grandiose language, the audience can howl derisively at his pretensions, but the same audience could glow with warm recognition when Mama Hansen uses her broken English to express her dreams for her son to grow up to be president. Ambition viewed as worthy and realistic for the Hansens becomes a symbol of weak character on the part of the Kingfish.

Consistent with the values of the 1950s as mediated through popular culture, family responsibilities—or neglect of them—define Kingfish even more than does his work. The glorification of motherhood pervading psychological and popular literature of the 1950s becomes comedy in *Amos ’n Andy*. Wives named for precious stones (Ruby and Sapphire) appear anything but precious, and “Mama” in this show appears as a nagging harpy screaming at the cowering—and emasculated—black man. Kingfish shares Ralph Kramden’s dreams of overnight success, but his transgressions against bourgeois morality are more serious. Kingfish has no job, his late night revelries and lascivious grins hint at marital infidelity, and he resorts to criminal behavior to avoid what he calls “the horrors of employment.”<sup>6</sup> He betrays his family and cheats his lodge brothers (and by implication the “brothers” of his race) with no remorse. But his most serious flaws stem from his neglect of the proper roles of husband and father. In one episode, Kingfish’s late night excursions cause his wife, Sapphire, to leave home and live with her mother. Kingfish misses her and orders one of his lackeys to find out where she has gone. When the report comes back that Sapphire has been seen entering an obstetrician’s office, Kingfish assumes that he is about to become a father. In reality, Sapphire has simply taken a job as the doctor’s receptionist, but the misunderstanding leads Kingfish to tell Amos how much fun he plans to have as a father. When Amos warns him that fatherhood involves serious responsibilities, Kingfish replies, “What you mean serious? All you gotta do is keep ’em filled up wid milk an’ pablum and keep chuckin’ em under de chin” (*Amos ’n Andy*: “Kingfish Has a Baby”). Kingfish’s ignorance plays out the worst fears of people in a society with a burgeoning obsession with family. By representing the possibility of incompetent parenting, Kingfish provides the audience with a sense of superiority, but one that can be maintained only by embracing parental respon-

sibilities. Lest we miss the point of the show, when Kingfish and his friend Andy go to a clinic for prospective fathers, where they learn to bathe a baby by practicing with a doll, Kingfish lets his slip under the water and “drown” (*Amos ’n Andy*: “Kingfish Has a Baby”).

Black protest made *Amos ’n Andy* a much debated phenomenon, unmasking the calculation that went into its creation. In the context of the 1950s, when migration to industrial cities created greater concentrations of black political and economic power, these protests could not be dismissed casually by advertisers or the networks. Blatz Beer decided to drop its sponsorship of *Amos ’n Andy* in 1954, knocking the show off prime time schedules and into syndication until 1966, when another wave of protests made it untenable even in reruns. As the program most thoroughly grounded in ideologically charged historical material, *Amos ’n Andy* lent itself most easily to critical historical interpretation and action, a capacity at odds with the interests of advertisers. But like shows rooted in white working-class histories, structural contradictions in black working-class life also held open the possibility for oppositional readings of the program’s content. Black activist and author Julius Lester recalls his own formative experiences with *Amos ’n Andy* in his autobiography in a way that provides the quintessential act of reinterpreting hierarchically prepared and distributed mass culture. Ruminating on the seeming paradox of a home life that installed black pride into him but that also encouraged him to listen to the antics of the Kingfish, Lester recalls that

In the character of Kingfish, the creators of *Amos and Andy* may have thought they were ridiculing blacks as lazy, shiftless, scheming and conniving, but to us Kingfish was a paradigm of virtue, an alternative to the work ethic. Kingfish lived: Amos made a living. It did not matter that my parents lived by and indoctrinated me with the Puritan work ethic, Kingfish had a *joie de vivre* no white person could poison, and we knew that whites ridiculed us because they were incapable of such elan, I was proud to belong to the same race as Kingfish. [1976:14]

Whether through the careful decoding exemplified by Julius Lester, or through the politicization of *Amos ’n Andy* by mass protest, audience response to the program in some cases focused on the show’s artifice and distortions of history. As was the case with *The Goldbergs*, the traditions needed to provide legitimacy for advertising messages surrounding *Amos ’n Andy* contained sedimented contestation that undermined their effectiveness, and instead provoked negotiated or oppositional readings. Dominant ideology triumphed on television in the 1950s, just as it did in political life, but historically grounded opposition remained possible and necessary for at least part of the audience.

The realism that made urban ethnic working-class situation comedies convincing conduits for consumer ideology also compelled them to present alienations and aspirations subversive to the legitimacy of consumer capitalism. As Antonio Gramsci insists, ideological hegemony stems from the ability of those in power to make their own interests appear to be synonymous with the interests of society at large. But appeals for legitimacy always take place within concrete historical circumstances, in contested societies with competing interests. In a con-

sumer capitalist economy where unmet needs and individual isolation provide the impetus for commodity desires, legitimation is always incomplete. Even while establishing dominance, those in power must borrow from the ideas, actions, and experiences of the past, all of which contain a potential for informing a radical critique of the present.

### **Dialogue, Negotiation, and Legitimation: Method and Theory**

Recent scholarship in literary criticism, cultural studies, and sociology offers investigative methods and theoretical frameworks essential to understanding the historical dialogue about family, class, and ethnicity in early network television. The literary criticism of and "dialogic imagination" proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin demonstrates how all texts inherit part of the historical consciousness of their authors and audiences (Newcomb 1984:37-41). Cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall notes that commercial mass media seek legitimacy with the audiences by effectively representing diverse aspects of social life, including memories of past experiences, current contradictions, and potential sources of division and opposition (Hall 1979). Sociologist Jürgen Habermas observes that contemporary capitalist culture destroys the very motivations that it needs to function effectively, such as the work ethic or the willingness to defer gratification. Consequently, capitalist societies draw upon the borrowed legitimacy of cultural values and beliefs from the past, like religion or the patriarchal family, in order to provide the appearance of moral grounding for contemporary forces inimical to the interests of tradition (Habermas 1975). Taken collectively, these approaches to culture provide a useful context for understanding the persistence of seemingly outdated and dysfunctional elements in early network television.

Bakhtin's analysis of text construction argues that communication does not begin in the present with a speaker or story; but rather that both speech and narrative come from a social matrix that is, at least in part, historical. Each speaker enters a dialogue already in progress; every work of art contains within it past, present, and future struggles over culture and power. Terms and forms of communication from the past not only make current discourse comprehensible and legitimate, but they also imbed within the present a collective historical experience rich with contradictions. The producers of early network television worked in a new medium, but they addressed an audience acclimated to specific forms of comedy and drama that reflected, however indirectly, the real texture of past struggles and present hopes.<sup>7</sup>

Structural unities underlie the seemingly divergent stories of different ethnic, working-class situation comedies. Viewers rarely saw Ralph Kramden's bus or Jake Goldberg's dressmaking shop, but the cameras introduced them to every detail of furnishing in the Kramden and Goldberg households. Difficulties encountered in the aircraft factory assembly line by Chester A. Riley or at the construction site by Lars Hansen paled in significance in contrast to the dilemmas of consumption faced in the Riley and Hansen families. The texture and tone of *Life*



with *Luigi* and *Amos 'n Andy* came from the ethnic worlds they depicted, but the plots of those shows dealt with the aspirations of individuals as if ethnic rivalries and discrimination did not exist. Instead, ethnics attain a false unity through consumption of commodities: Jeannie MacClennan learns to “be an American” by dressing fashionably and wearing the right makeup; Luigi Basco hopes to prove himself a worthy candidate for citizenship by opening a checking account and purchasing an insurance policy; Molly Goldberg overcomes her fears of installment buying and vows to live above her means—which she describes as “the American way” (*Hey Jeannie*: “The Rock and Roll Kid”; *Life with Luigi*: “The Insurance Policy”; *The Goldbergs*: “The In-laws”). Comedies in this subgenre are clearly cases where, as Stuart Hall points out, the commercial mass media tend to direct popular consciousness toward consumption and away from production. They present social actions and experiences as atomized individual events in order to fragment groups into isolated consumers, and they resolve the tensions confronting their audiences by binding them together in false unities and collectivities defined for the convenience of capital accumulation (Hall 1979).

But Hall also shows that the imperial aspirations of the mass media, their imperative to attract as large an audience as possible, lead to a disclosure of contradictions that allows cultural consumers to fashion oppositional or negotiated readings of mass culture. In order to make their dramas compelling and their narrative resolutions dynamic, the media also reflect the plurality of consumer experiences. A system that seeks to enlist everyone in the role of consumer must appear to be addressing all possible circumstances: a system that proclaims consensus and unanimity must acknowledge and explain obvious differences within the polity, if for no other reason than to co-opt or trivialize potential opposition. Television and other forms of commercial electronic media so effectively recapitulate the ideology of the “historical bloc” in which they operate that they touch on all aspects of social life—even its antagonistic contradictions (Hall 1979). While the media serve to displace, fragment, and atomize real experiences, they also generate and circulate a critical dialogue as an unintended consequence of their efforts to expose the inventory of social practice.

Of course, mere disclosure of opposition does not guarantee emancipatory practice: ruling elites routinely call attention to “deviant” subcultures in order to draw a clear distinction between permitted and forbidden behavior. In urban ethnic working-class situation comedies in the 1950s, “deviant” traits—like Kingfish’s aversion to work in *Amos 'n Andy* and Lars Hansen’s lack of ambition in *Mama*—taught object lessons about the perils of unconventional behavior. Yet the operative premises and enduring tensions of each of these shows revolved around the “otherness” of the lead characters. The “old-world” attitudes of newly arrived immigrants in *Hey Jeannie* and *Life with Luigi* or the proletarian cultural innocence manifested in *The Life of Riley* or *The Honeymooners* led to comedic clashes that exposed the inadequacies and deficiencies of those on the margins of society. But at the same time, these clashes counterposed the conformity and materialism of the mainstream to the narratively privileged moral superiority of those with connections to the past. Traditional values and beliefs pre-

vented protagonists in these shows from achieving success and happiness as defined by society, but those values and beliefs also facilitated a critical distance from the false premises of the present. As Gertrude Berg noted in explaining the popularity of her character Molly Goldberg, Molly “lived in the world of today but kept many of the values of yesterday” (Berg 1961:167).

The narrative sequence that framed every episode of *Mama* demonstrates the centrality of this dialogue between the past and present in early network television programs. As soon as Katrin Hansen introduced the show with the words “I remember Mama,” a male narrator announced, “Yes, here’s Mama, brought to you by Maxwell House Coffee.” The camera then panned away from the photograph album to show Mama (played by Peggy Wood) making coffee for the Hansen family in their turn-of-the-century kitchen. The authority of the male narrator’s voice established a connection between the continuity of family experience and the sponsor’s product, between warm memories of the past and Mama in the kitchen making coffee. In this progression, the product becomes a member of the Hansen family, while tradition and emotional support become commodities to be secured through the purchase of Maxwell House coffee. The sponsor’s introduction announced ownership of the television show, but it also laid claim to the moral authority and warmth generated by the concept of motherhood itself.<sup>8</sup>

Katrin Hansen’s retrospective narrative and the pictures from the family album reassured viewers by depicting events that had already happened in the emotionally secure confines of the audience’s collective childhood. This false authenticity encouraged viewers to think of the program as the kind of history that might be created in their own homes. A CBS press release during the program’s first broadcast season proclaimed, “On ‘Mama’ we try to give the impression that nobody is acting,” and went on to claim success for that effort, quoting an unnamed viewer’s contention that the show depicted a real family because “nobody but members of a real family could talk like that” (Nelson 1949). Free from the real history of ethnic, class, and gender experience, the history presented on *Mama* located its action within the personal spheres of family and consumer choices. Within these areas, realism could be put to the service of commodity purchases, as when the narrator followed his opening introduction with a discourse about how Mama in her day “had none of the conveniences of today’s modern products” like Minute Rice, Jello, or instant coffee (*Mama*: “T. R.’s New Home”). Thus the morally sanctioned traditions of hearth and home could be put to the service of products that revolutionized those very traditions—all in keeping with Ernest Dichter’s advice to his fellow advertising executives: “Do not assert that the new product breaks with traditional values, but on the contrary, that it fulfills its traditional functions better than any of its predecessors” (Dichter 1960:209).

Every episode of *Mama* began and ended with Mama making coffee in the kitchen—but to very different effect. The opening sequence, with the announcer’s statement about Maxwell House coffee, validates commodities; the ending sequence, however, validates both moralities and commodities. There Katrin, in the kitchen or as a voice-over, summarizes the meaning of that week’s story for the

audience by relating the lesson that she learned from it. Invariably these lessons belonged to the sphere of old-fashioned values, elevating human creations over commodities and privileging commitment to others over concern with self. In these lessons, the audience discovered that the toys Papa made with his hands meant more to the children than the fancy ones they saw in stores, or that loyalty to family and friends brought more rewards than upward mobility. These resolutions often directly contradicted the narratives that preceded them: after twenty-five minutes of struggle for happiness through commodity acquisition, the characters engaged in a one-minute homily about the superiority of moral goals over material ones. Then, with the high moral ground established, a voice-over by the announcer reminded viewers of the wonderful products that the sponsor of *Mama* had to offer.

The complicated dialogue in the opening and closing segments of *Mama* illuminates the complex role played by historical referents in early network television. The past that brought credibility and reassurance to family dramas also contained the potential for undermining the commodified social relations of the present. The Hansen family interested advertisers because audiences identified their story as part of a precious collective memory resonating with the actual experiences and lessons of the past. The Hansens could not be credible representatives of that past if they appeared to live among the plethora of consumer goods that dominated the commercials, or if they appeared uncritical of the consumer world of the present that made such a sharp break with the values of the past. Yet the Hansen family had little value to advertisers unless their experiences sanctioned pursuit of commodities in the present. The creators of the program—like those engaged in production of the other urban ethnic working-class comedies on television—resolved this potential contradiction by putting the borrowed moral capital of the past at the service of the values of the present. They acknowledged the critique of materialism and upward mobility sedimented within the experiences of working-class families, but they demonstrated over and over again how wise choices enabled consumers to have both moral and material rewards. By positing the nuclear family as a transhistorical “natural” locus for the arbitration of consumer desires, television portrayed the value crises of the 1950s as eternal and recurrent. By collapsing the distinction between family as consumer unit and family as part of neighborhood, ethnic, and class networks, television programs in the early 1950s connected the most personal and intimate needs of individuals to commodity purchases. They implied that the past sanctioned rather than contradicted the ever-increasing orientation toward shopping as the cornerstone of social life, an orientation that characterized media discourse in the postwar era.

The reliance on the past to sanction controversial changes in present behavior forms the core of Jürgen Habermas’s analysis of contemporary capitalism’s “legitimation crisis.” According to Habermas, the consumer consciousness required by modern capitalism revolves around “civil and familial-vocational privatism”—a syndrome that elevates private consumer decisions over social relations and public responsibility (Habermas 1975:71–75). Individuals see families as centers of consumption and leisure, while they regard employment as primarily a

means of engaging in status competition. Instead of the rooted independence demanded by traditional family and community life, contemporary capitalist society encourages an atomized dependence on outside authorities—advertisers, self-help experts, and psychiatric, educational, and political authorities. Clearly useful for purposes of capital accumulation, this process undermines traditional motivations for work, patriotism, and personal relations, causing real crises in social relations. In addition, the infantile narcissism nurtured by this consumer consciousness encourages a search for validation from outside authorities—for communication which assures people that the impoverishment of work, family, and public life characteristic of late capitalism constitutes a legitimate and necessary part of progress toward a better life as defined by opportunities for more acquisition and more status.

For Habermas, the mass media play a crucial role in legitimation, but they do so imperfectly. The new forms of family and vocational consciousness cannot be justified on their own, but can be validated by invoking the moral authority of past forms of family and work identity. Thus the “work ethic” is summoned to justify a system based on commodified leisure, while mutual love and affection are called on to sanction families that exist primarily as consumer units. The social relations of the past are used to legitimate a system that in reality works to destroy the world that created those relations in the first place. Consequently, the invocation of the past in the service of the present is a precarious undertaking. Tradition used to legitimate untraditional behavior may instead call attention to the disparity between the past and the present; collective popular memory may see the manipulative use of tradition by advertisers as a conscious strategy, as an attempt to create artifacts that conflict with actual memory and experiences. As Habermas cautions, “traditions can retain legitimizing force only as long as they are not torn out of interpretive systems that guarantee continuity and identity” (Habermas 1975:71).

Habermas provides us with a framework capable of explaining both the presence of historical elements in early network television shows and their limitations. In conjunction with Bakhtin’s emphasis on dialogue and Hall’s delineation of negotiation, Habermas’s analysis explains how portrayals of traditional, ethnic, working-class families might have been essential for legitimizing social forces that undermined the very values that made those families respected icons in popular consciousness. At the same time, Habermas directs our attention to the fundamental instability of this legitimation process, to the ways in which audiences might come to see manipulative uses of the past as prepared and created artifacts at war with the lessons of history as preserved in collective popular memory.

After 1958, network television eliminated urban ethnic working-class programs from the schedule. Marc Daniels, who directed *The Goldbergs*, recalls that a changing society less tied to class and ethnicity demanded different kinds of entertainment, and certainly the emergence of ethnically neutral, middle-class situation comedies between 1958 and 1970 lends credence to that view (Daniels 1984). The entry of major film studios into television production in the mid 1950s also had an impact, since the working-class shows tended to be produced by small

companies like Hal Roach Studios. Major studio involvement in television production increased the proportion of action/adventure shows with production values ill-suited to the realism of urban ethnic working-class programs. In action and adventure shows, no embarrassing retentions of class consciousness compromised the sponsors' messages, and no social associations with ethnic life brought up disturbing issues that made them susceptible to protests and boycotts.

One might conclude that television and American society had no need for urban ethnic working-class programs after 1958 because tensions between consumerist pressures and historical memories had been resolved. But the reappearance of race, class, and ethnicity in the situation comedies of the 1970s like *All in the Family*, *Chico and the Man*, and *Sanford and Son* testifies to the ongoing relevance of such tensions as existed in the 1950s to subsequent mass media dialogue. The programs of the 1970s reprised both aspects of the 1950s shows—legitimation through representation of the texture of working-class life, and commodification of all human relationships, especially within families. Like their predecessors, urban ethnic working-class shows of the 1970s mixed their commercial and consumerist messages with visions of connection to others that transcended the limits of civil and familial vocational privatism. They held open possibilities for transcending the parochialisms of traditional ethnicity and for challenging the patriarchal assumptions of both extended and nuclear families. The same communications apparatus that presented consumerism as the heir to the moral legacy of the working-class past also legitimized aspirations for happiness and community too grand to be satisfied by the lame realities of the commodity-centered world.<sup>9</sup>

In the early 1950s, an advertising instrument under the control of powerful monopolists established itself as the central discursive medium in American culture. With its penetration of the family and its incessant propaganda for commodity purchases, television helped erode the social base for challenges to authority manifest in the mass political activity among American workers in the 1940s. Yet television did not so much insure the supremacy of new values as it transformed the terms of social contestation. As mass culture gained in importance as an instrument of legitimation, oppositional messages filtered into even hierarchically controlled media constructions like network television programs. The internal contradictions of capitalism fueled this process by generating anxieties in need of legitimation, and by turning for legitimation to the very beliefs and practices most threatened by emerging social relations. Thus every victory for the ideology of civil and familial vocational privatism can also constitute a defeat. Every search for legitimacy can end in the dilution of legitimacy by unmasking media messages as prepared and fabricated ideological artifices. Even successful legitimation fails to a degree because the new social relations destroy their own source of legitimacy.

This is not to assume that the final outcome of television's ideological imperatives must be emancipatory. Inculcation of narcissistic desire coupled with destruction of traditional sources of moral restraint might well suit the needs of capital and produce a population eager for fascist authority. But structural con-

ditions exist for an alternative future. As Joel Kovel argues, “The point is not that people desire the administrative mode, it is rather that administration protects them against the desires they can not stand, while it serves out, in the form of diluted rationalization, a hint of the desire and power lost to them” (Kovel 1978:19). The separation of individuals from political and community life, combined with the destruction of cultural traditions that previously gave direction and purpose to individuals, might make status competition and “possession” of a secure family role all that much more attractive. Certainly the neo-conservatism of the 1980s seems to hinge upon “protecting” the family from the increasing barbarism of society, and upon shifting the blame for the social disintegration caused by civil and familial vocational privatism onto the opposition movements formed to combat it.<sup>10</sup> But the sleight of hand inherent in the neo-conservative position allows for other possibilities. Reconnection to history and to motivational structures rooted within it is both desirable and possible. More than ever before, communication and criticism can help determine whether people accept the commodity-mediated desires that turn others into instruments and objects, or whether they build affirmative communities in dialogue with the needs and desires of others. By identifying the historical reality behind the construction of television texts in the early 1950s, we demystify their “organic” character and reveal their implications as created artifacts. We uncover sedimented critiques from the past and potential forms of opposition for the present.

The historical specificity of early network television programs led their creators into dangerous ideological terrain. By examining them as part of our own history, we learn about both the world we have lost and the one we have yet to gain. Fredric Jameson claims that “history is what hurts, what sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis” (Jameson 1981:102). But the unfinished dialogue of history can also be what helps, what takes us back into the past in order to break its hold on the present. By addressing the hurt, and finding out how it came to be, we begin to grasp ways of understanding the past, and ending the pain.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Ewen condemns these shows as hostile to immigrant life and imposing consumerism on it in his *Captains of Consciousness* (1976:208–210). Marty Jezer takes a more favorable view in *The Dark Ages* (1982:191–194).

<sup>2</sup>Of course, class, ethnicity, and race remained important, but their relationship to individual identity changed radically at this time. The bureaucratization of trade unions and xenophobic anti-Communism also contributed to declines in ethnic and class consciousness.

<sup>3</sup>See the discussion in this article of *Mama*, *The Goldbergs*, and *Amos 'n Andy*.

<sup>4</sup>Neilsen ratings demonstrate television's view of the family as separate market segments to be addressed independently. For an analysis of the industry's view of children as a special market, see Patricia J. Bence (1985), "Analysis and History of Typology and Forms of Children's Network Programming from 1950 to 1980."

<sup>5</sup>The *Mama* show relied on the Bay Ridge, Brooklyn chapter of the Sons of Norway for advice on authentic Norwegian folk customs and stories, according to Dick Van Patten and Ralph Nelson, in remarks made at the Museum of Broadcasting, New York City, on December 17, 1985.

<sup>6</sup>The depiction of Kingfish's refusal to work had especially vicious connotations in an era where the crisis in black unemployment reached unprecedented depths.

<sup>7</sup>For a discussion of the role of media borrowing from earlier forms see Daniel Czitrom (1983).

<sup>8</sup>This is not to single out *Mama* as an especially commercial program. In fact, its advertisers allowed the show to run with no middle commercial, using only the opening and closing commercial sequences. Yet other shows incorporated commercial messages into dramatic program-like segments, especially *The Goldbergs* and *Life with Luigi*.

<sup>9</sup>For an excellent discussion of 1970s television see the forthcoming book by Ella Taylor, *All in the Work-Family*.

<sup>10</sup>Protection of the family represents an old social theme for conservatives and a traditional device for creating dramatic tension. But never before have they been as thoroughly unified as dramatic and political themes and never before have they dominated conservative thought as they have in the last decade.

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