

Conformity and compliance assignment

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The sass's are often labeled as an era of conformity and complacency. But how valid is this label? Could the same radical and rebellious Americans of the sass's be submissive and compliant just one decade earlier? The answer (for the most part) is yes. The subordination, consumerism/ materialism, second Red Scare, and "cult of domesticity; of the sass's exemplify this accepting and submissive attitude of Americans. However, there are some exceptions.

Women taking new jobs, the civil rights movement, and the popularity of the new type of music called rock and roll showed that not everybody was going to just sit back and conform. They were going to start making changes that would really manifest themselves in the following decade. The tremendous amount of subordination that occurred in the sass's shows some of the conformity of the time. Americans in all regions (if they were white) fled from cities to new suburbs.

Government policy even encouraged this momentous move. Federal Housing Authority (FAA) and Veterans' Administration (VA) home loan guarantees made it more economically attractive to own a home in the suburbs than to rent an apartment in the city. The conformity of these homogeneous societies is further seen in suburban towns like "Elevations";. Elevations revolutionized the techniques of home construction. They were created by builders who erected hundreds or even thousands of dwellings in a single project.

Specialized crews working for standardized plans laid foundations, while others raised factory-assembled framing modules, put on roofs, strung wires,

installed plumbing, and finished the walls. Because the homes were mass-produced they all looked the same. However, this didn't seem to bother eager homebuilders who moved into them by the billions. Conformity is further seen in the large amount of consumerism/materialism and affluence present in the 1950s society. Beginning about 1950 the American economy "surged into a dazzling plateau of sustained growth" that was to last virtually uninterrupted for the next two decades.

National income doubled in the 1950s. Americans (6 percent of the world's people) were enjoying about 40 percent of the planet's wealth. With all this prosperity Americans were determined to "get theirs while the getting was still good". There was a lusty demand for consumer goods as people tried to have everything that their peers or people in advertisements had. People who had once considered a chicken in every pot the standard of comfort and security now hungered for two cars in every garage, swimming pools in their backyards and vacation homes.

By the end of the 1950s the vast majority of American families owned their own car and washing machine, and nearly ninety percent owned a television set (an invention that was discovered in the 1920s but was virtually unknown until the late 1940s). This new consumerist lifestyle, however, had a negative attitude towards public good. One person who wrote on this idea (beginning with *The Affluent Society* (1958) and extending to *Economics and the Public Purpose*) was economist John Kenneth Galbraith. The postwar explosion of prosperity, Galbraith claimed, had produced "a troublesome combination of private opulence amid public squalor." Americans had televisions in their homes but garbage in their streets. They ate rich food but breathed foul air. Further

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complacency of the sass's can be seen when one looks at the second Red Scare, particularly McCarthy. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy first became famous in 1950 when he charged that Secretary of State Dean Acheson was knowingly employing 205 Communist members in the state department. Pressed to reveal names, McCarthy at first conceded that there were only 57 genuine communists and in the end failed to name even one.

McCarthy flourished in the Cold War atmosphere of fear and suspicion. From 1950 to 1954 he proved a master at manipulating the media and playing upon the anxieties of politicians and the public. The fact that opinion polls showed a majority of the American people approved of McCarthy shows their complacency towards politicians. The careers of countless officials, writers, actors, and others were ruined after Senator McCarthy had "named" them yet Americans took no stand against the ruthless senator. McCarthy finally went too far when he attacked the United States Army.

The military men fought back in 35 days of televised hearings in the spring of 1954. McCarthy publicly cut his own throat by "parading his essential meanness and irresponsibility". A few months later the Senate formally condemned him for "conduct unbecoming a member". One place in which you see both the conformity and non-conformity of sass's is in woman's roles. The "cult of domesticity" glorified the position of women at home providing a moral education for their children. After World War II women were encouraged to leave the factory and go back to traditional roles at home.

Many did and with it gave up any kind of dream of having a career. Their only “dream”+ became once again to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. However there were a good number of women who left factory work and instead took jobs in prospering urban offices and shops. In fact, the great majority of new jobs created in the postwar era went to women, as the service sector of the economy greatly outgrew the old industrial and manufacturing sectors.

Women accounted for nearly a quarter of the American work force at the end of World War II, and for nearly half the labor pool five decades later. The class between the demands of suburban housewifely and the realities of employment sparked a feminist revolt in the 1960s. Where you didn't see conformity in the 1960s is in the civil rights movement. The war had generated a new militancy and restlessness among members of the black community. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had for years pushed to end segregation and now enjoyed some success.

In 1954, NAACP chief counsel Thurgood Marshall wrung from the High Court a ruling that separate professional schools for blacks failed to meet the test of equality. But their Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. In a forceful opinion, the Justices ruled that segregation in the public schools was “inherently unequal”+ and thus unconstitutional. This reversed the courts' earlier declaration of 1896 that “separate but equal”+ facilities were allowable under the Constitution. The Border States generally made efforts

to comply with this ruling however this was not the case in the “ Deep South” +.

In 1957, president Eisenhower was forced to act when the governor of Arkansas, embroiled the National Guard to prevent nine black students from enrolling in Little Rock’s Central High School. Confronted with a direct challenge to federal authority, Eisenhower sent troops to escort the children to their classes. In the same year congress also passes the first Civil Rights Act since Reconstruction days. It set up a permanent Civil Rights Commission to investigate violations of civil sights and authorized federal injunctions to protect voting rights.

Blacks meanwhile continued to take the civil rights movement into their own hands. Martian Luther King, Jar. , formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (CLC) in 1957. It aimed to immobilize the vast power of black churches on behalf of black rights. This a very good strategy since churches were the largest and best-organized black intuitions that had been allowed to flourish in a segregated society. Another place where there wasn’t conformity/complacency was in music. Popular music was dramatically transformed in the fifties.

The chief revolutionary was Elvis Presley, a white singer from Mississippi. Fusing black rhythm and blues with white bluegrass and country styles, he created a new type of music known as rock and roll. Rock was “ crossover”+ music “ carrying its heavy beat and driving rhythms across the cultural divide”+ that separated black and white musical traditions. Despite Parsley’s enormous popularity among baby boomers, he repelled traditionalists. They

despised his music as and sexually suggestive movements. So, were the sass's an era of conformity and complacency?

The subordination, mesmerism/materialism, second Red Scare, and “cult of domesticity”+ of this decade tend to make people think so. However, women talking new Jobs, the civil rights movement, and the popularity of rock and roll show that it may not have been. Personally, I think that the sass's were an era of compliance (aside from the few exceptions mentioned) and that the acquiescent attitude of our president (Eisenhower) helped set this tone. In fact, I think that this conformist attitude during the sass's is what led so many Americans to rebel in the following decade.