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THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS: CIVILIAN RESPONSE AND EXPECTATIONS

Celeste Nunez

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THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS: CIVILIAN RESPONSE AND EXPECTATIONS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
History

by
Celeste L. Nunez
May 2022

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Approved by:

Diana Johnson, Committee Chair, History

Thomas Long, Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

On October 14, 1962, an American U-2 spy plane flying over the island of Cuba discovered Soviet missiles being constructed. This discovery led President John F. Kennedy, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, and Cuban Dictator Fidel Castro into a thirteen-day negotiation period to remove the nuclear missiles from Cuba. During this time, the world was the closest it had ever been to nuclear destruction, causing stress and anxiety to many around the world, especially the American populace who believed they were invincible in a home front attack. Throughout this thesis, I aim to examine the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear fallout through the lens of the average American, discovering that much of the anxieties and fear stemmed from media and political manipulation. These manipulations ultimately resulted in the construction of early cold war gender roles in the nuclear family as well as how we continue to remember the Cuban Missile Crisis years after its rise.

DEDICATION

To all my family and friends
who encouraged and supported me
throughout the duration of my
master's program.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 serves as a pivotal point in American history because it was the one incident that led closer to a nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union than any other. Just the sheer fact that this was an actual possibility greatly impacted the psyche of people in the USA and around the world. Also, because of this frightening realization that mutually assured destruction was a possibility, the impact on the culture and attitudes produced by the American people during this time was visible across county. While the Cuban Missile Crisis is more than often studied from a militaristic and political point of view, the average American's perspectives and responses are rarely examined. While the people's reactions are essential in understanding the 1960s in the age of nuclear warfare due to their impact on familial/social constructs and cold war popular culture, it is almost impossible to ignore the political and militaristic aspects that contributed to the thirteen days of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Cold War.

Historiography

One prominent theme observed in much of the literature, discusses the lack of preparedness that much of America faced in nuclear warfare during the Cuban Missile Crisis and how that lack of preparedness resulted from concealed and/or manipulated information about what was happening between the United States, Cuba, and Russia. Alice George's *Awaiting Armageddon: How*

Americans Faced the Cuban Missile Crisis details the lack of preparedness the United States faced. Throughout her book, George discusses the psychological and behavioral responses of Americans towards the inadequacy of civil defense, the role of the media, domestic life, and the long-term effects that the Cuban Missile Crisis played on Children. *Awaiting Armageddon* serves as a key source used in my research since there are not many studies on civilian response. One of the most prominent points that George discusses is how “plans to save the president and other officials were inadequate, and strategies to protect the public were even worse.”¹ Other authors, such as Kenneth Rose, have similar observations stating that Americans were ill-prepared for nuclear war because they believed that “civil defense was properly a government responsibility rather than a private one.”² While both George and Rose agree that Americans as a whole were not prepared for nuclear war, both authors had different explanations as to why. Rose claims that both the government and the civilians had a completely different perspective on whose responsibility it was, and, in turn, the government failed to provide public fallout shelters to a livable standard. George on the other hand states that many Americans had the mental picture that, as Americans, they were not vulnerable to nuclear attack and that it was not

¹ Alice L. George. *Awaiting Armageddon: How Americans Faced the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

² Kenneth D. Rose. *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture*. American History and Culture (New York University Press). New York: New York University Press, 2001. 18.

important for them to consider adequate safety precautions.³ George stated that even if a family wanted to construct a fallout shelter supplied with food and water, the cost of it would be thousands of dollars leading to the conclusion that only the rich and privileged would be able to “survive” nuclear war. This point is crucial in how we understand how the United States public saw the crisis because if they were not being prioritized as a nation, then their mentality of everyone for themselves would become more prominent.

Less than a generation prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, America had just united against the Axis powers in WWII and developed a strong unification as a nation and in this, a strong sense of identity. While there were certainly areas of disparity for reasons of ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, people overwhelmingly had a sense of being American, and, in this, they saw themselves as a part of the strongest nation in the world, which gave them a sense of security. Because of this mentality, Americans had a hard time discerning their vulnerability towards nuclear attacks. Government officials held back the truth of what was happening since they strongly believed that the situation would not escalate to war; however, once the severity of the crisis was revealed, Americans realized it was a “neighbor-versus-neighbor” situation.⁴ The neighbor-versus-neighbor mentality played a major role in the morality of people during the rise of fallout shelters because it played with the notion of selfishness

³ George, 19.

⁴ Ibid., 33.

and betrayal that would ultimately change the idea of unity to everyman for themselves. Another significant insight from *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture*, Kenneth D. Rose argues that President John F. Kennedy's speech on the Berlin Crisis in 1961 fueled the development of fallout shelters because he insisted, "the lives of those families which are not hit in a nuclear blast and fire can still be saved--if they can be warned to take shelter and if that shelter was available."⁵ While Rose touches on some aspects of the fallout shelter in American Culture, the majority of his research concentrates on how the psychology of Americans ultimately played a role in which the fallout shelter was overall viewed. Rose's analysis of morality takes on different perspectives ranging from the importance of the nuclear family as well as religious beliefs that steered many away from fallout shelters for the fear that they would have to gun down their neighbor to survive nuclear fallout.

While the scenario of "turning against your neighbor" posed questions about one's personal morality, the psychological thought process relied on the control of entry into a shelter. Many feared that capacity would over exceed the maximum holding amount leading to food shortages and less of a likelihood of survival as well as the thought of contaminated personal entering uncontrollably, endangering those already inside.⁶ Rose analyzed an article published in *Time* magazine in 1961 titled "Gun Thy Neighbor" which recalls the story of a man who

⁵ Rose, 2.

⁶ Ibid., 93.

stated he would not risk being unable to use the shelter he provided for his own family should nuclear war erupt and that he would not hesitate to keep neighbors out of his fallout shelter. Another account that Rose also discusses is an unnamed local resident of Hartford, Connecticut stating that he only had enough food and water for his immediate family and would be forced to shoot any neighbor seeking entry into his shelter.⁷ The oral and personal histories that Rose used throughout his book aids in the understanding of how people viewed the Cuban Missile Crisis or nuclear warfare in general while also elaborating on much of what Alice George argued in *Awaiting Armageddon*.

The take on gun-thy-neighbor as well as fallout shelters also went against many religious beliefs. Many Christian teachings aimed to help Americans understand the moral implications of fallout shelters. While the media promoted fallout shelters and owners expressed a willingness to shoot their neighbor, many religious groups including Reverend Hugh Saussy of Holy Innocents Episcopal Church in Atlanta stated that “if someone wants to use your shelter, then you should give it up to that person.”⁸ Another clerical leader, Edward L. R. Elson of the National Presbyterian Church, stated that “some very sturdy Christians would choose to live dangerously, ignore the preparations of shelters and die with dignity” meaning that many would choose to help their neighbor rather than live

⁷ Ibid., 94.

⁸ Ibid., 96.

with the mindset of gunning-down a fellow neighbor trying to enter their fallout shelter.⁹

While George and Rose both make excellent points on how many people took the threat of war seriously, the opposition created tension that ultimately divided up the nation. Rose also delves into the psychological perspectives of those who opposed fallout shelters claiming that those who hide are cowards and if they do hide and that they would be setting back the evolutionary clock by becoming “moles” and “rabbits.”¹⁰

This outlook is very much similar to today’s outlook when we analyze the COVID-19 pandemic. This psychological thought process could also stem from the fear that is being instilled by the media in some people’s heads as well as the overwhelming amount of the population still in the mindset of needing a fallout shelter to survive a nuclear attack. Psychology plays a key role in not only how we remember the Cuban Missile Crisis, but also how people during that period absorbed information that was relayed to the populace which will be continually discussed throughout the study. While I have yet to further examine media portrayal of the Cuban Missile Crisis in a social context towards civilians, books such as *Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba* by Keith Bolender and *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality* by Sheldon Stern, both look into the implications and the manipulations of

⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰ Ibid., 86-89.

not only corporate newspapers but also official white house recordings of cabinet meetings discussing the crisis.

Bolender's *Manufacturing the Enemy* provides an excellent example of media manipulation by analyzing the way in which they have been able to control the way we view Cuba, specifically, how the media is able to create "critical narratives that do not stand up to honest scrutiny."¹¹ Throughout the book, Bolender argues that corporate media has been able to coerce us into thinking negatively about Cuba and its revolution by distorting the way in which we view Cuban politics. This comes as no surprise when we think of the media since the same phenomenon still exists. While Bolender's book looks at how media manipulation negatively looks at the Cuban Revolution and its politics, we are still able to gauge how the media manipulates its readers. Bolender utilizes many sources and even quotes many major politicians and journalists as well as different propaganda columns written in order to explain how media is able to influence the way certain people, countries, and events are portrayed. One crucial point that Bolender points to is that journalists and editors make the *conscious* decision on who to interview and what facts to include in their spreads in order to shape the way in which a reader will absorb the information given.¹²

¹¹ Keith Bolender. *Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba*. Pluto Press, 2019.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

The manipulated headlines and articles written, specifically about the Cuban Missile Crisis, can be analyzed in Alice George's book *Awaiting Armageddon*.

George states that "a free press is never in greater danger than in times of war" claiming that "national interest may conflict or seem to conflict with the people's right to know." George also claims that although Kennedy came out a glorified hero at the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis, his administration posed great doubts among journalists about the government's willingness, to tell the truth.¹³ This same question is also asked and addressed in *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality* by Sheldon Stern.

Stern reveals many classified materials that give us a more detailed account of the Cuban Missile Crisis from the perspective of the Executive Committee; however, Stern aims to make it apparent that even official government records could easily be manipulated. The entirety of Stern's focuses on the ExComm recordings and how those files, along with other first-hand accounts from former ExComm members, cannot always be used as reputable sources because "the claim 'I was there' should, if anything, be regarded as a warning about historical inaccuracy rather than accepted as a special form of validation."¹⁴

¹³ George, 87.

¹⁴ Sheldon M. Stern. *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality*. Stanford Nuclear Age Series. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.

One book, which is also a first-person narrative account, that Stern criticizes is Robert F. Kennedy's *Thirteen Days*. Stern aims to expose the half-truths and lies of *Thirteen Days* by allowing the reader to not only compare and contrast the ways in which RFK's memoir and the ExComm minutes line up but also analyze how we cannot always trust what we hear and read on the ExComm files. One important point that Stern brings up is that up until the release of the ExComm tapes, RFK, along with many of the ExComm members, were able to promote their own unique take on the behind-the-scenes of the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁵ This point is crucial because while the public had very little information about what was happening, government officials, who they looked to and trusted, used this to their advantage to paint a heroic picture of John F. Kennedy and the American government.

Figures such as McGeorge Bundy, Robert s. McNamara, Dean Rusk, Llewellyn E. Thompson, and Vice President Lyndon B Johnson all have respective chapters covering their selective memories and unique agendas in which they would want to be remembered. Stern makes it clear that these particular narratives are detrimental to the way in which we remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. While these figures, and more, contributed to the outcome of the crisis and played a significant role in the ExComm, the way in which they are able to manipulate the truth and then claim it to be true because "I was there" goes to show how easily historical recollections can be misconstrued. This is also

¹⁵ Ibid., 39.

evident when looking at *Manufacturing the Enemy*, where big-name newspapers and media outlets were able to manipulate what the public reads and create a narrative that cannot be easily dissected with proper evidence.

Prior to analyzing any content of the Cuban Missile Crisis, I believed that there would be a high disregard and discrimination towards Cuban-Americans and Cubans as a whole. While newspapers and other means of media helped spread the slogan of “Better Dead Than Red,” many Cuban Americans were not necessarily treated any differently than the average American. In fact, in the article "Cold War Bedfellows: Cuban Exiles, US Conservatives, and Media Activism in the 1960s and 1970s" author Richard Mwakasege-Minaya stated “the image of Cubans in the US was strengthened by their representation as “good immigrants” by the Cuban Refugee Program and popular US media.”¹⁶

In Minaya’s article, he analyzes the Media activism of Cuban exiles with recruitment and collaboration with U.S. conservatives. Minaya also looks into how Cuban exiles were able to help with anti-Cuban state propaganda and the regulation and censorship of Cuban media seen as communist or pro-Cuban revolution. The author argues that the Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC) compelled anticommunist news media professionals, U.S. officials, and organization leaders to spread anti-Cuban state messages to broadcast audiences, the state, and organizations’ political networks. This is important to

¹⁶ Richard M, Mwakasege-Minaya. "Cold War Bedfellows: Cuban Exiles, US Conservatives, and Media Activism in the 1960s and 1970s." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 41, no. 1 (2021): 114-35.

note because while I believed many Cubans to be discriminated against, many Cuban-Americans and Cuban refugees, especially during the 1960s, were outspoken on their dislike of Castro's regime.

Although race was not nearly discussed as much as I thought it would in many of the books mentioned, many more questions have been raised such as the importance of the nuclear family, consumerism and economics, psychological and risky behavior, how we remember the Cuban Missile Crisis and the portrayal of media towards the U.S. civilians as well as the school curriculum taught to the children during the nuclear threat.

In order to fully comprehend the social reactions of Americans during the missile crisis, it is essential to understand the psychological behaviors and responses of Americans ranging from risky behaviors to how trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) contribute to how many Americans recalled the events of the thirteen days. With threats of nuclear warfare and the thought of a nuclear missile striking at any given moment, fear and stress drove the people, but how did this contribute to the culture of the 1960s? In the article "Reproductive Behaviour at the End of the World: The Effect of the Cuban Missile Crisis on U.S. Fertility," Paul A. Raschky and Liang Choon Wang analyze the behavior of U.S. people located near military installations, or high mortality risk zones, coming to the conclusion that they were more likely to engage risky behavior than those further away because they were centralized in zones that

would most likely experience catastrophe so they were not necessarily worried about the nuclear aftermath or consequences of their actions.¹⁷

This was not only limited to reproduction but also a rise in alcohol and cigarette consumption.¹⁸ Social response towards the crisis has a large psychological component and can help us get better insight into how people remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. Looking into sources that concentrate on the memory of traumatic events or how memory is perceived based on stressful situations can be greatly beneficial when we begin to understand how the Cuban Missile Crisis made people feel.

Referencing back to George, she discusses the children of the Cuban Missile Crisis and how their lives were ultimately impacted by fear and thoughts of “if I grow up.” Further analysis into the lives of children both at home and school would better enrich and add to the history of the role of children during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The article “What Are You Going to Be If You Grow Up’: Recalling the Cuban Missile Crisis” by John Tierney gives us some insight into childhood by recalling his own experience as a school-aged child living through the Cuban Missile Crisis. He claims that the running joke amongst school-aged children was “what are you going to be *if* you grow up.” While many adults faced

¹⁷ Paul A. Raschky, and Liang Choon Wang. "Reproductive Behaviour at the End of the World: The Effect of the Cuban Missile Crisis on U.S. Fertility." *Applied Economics* 49, no. 56 (2017): 5722-727.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5722-727.

many uncertainties, children also experienced the same fear of not being able to grow up, or what a life post-nuclear warfare looked like.¹⁹

When also looking at how children were affected during this time, it is important to look into the school curriculum and see what safety precautions were being taught and instilled into children's minds. Were these drills traumatizing in any way? Children during the 1960s played an essential role because although they believed they were going to die, their recollection of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the way in which it is remembered is carried out in the remainder of their lives.

Many books, including Michael Dobbs's *One Minute to Midnight*, place a high emphasis on the militaristic strategies taken in the white house during that time and the geopolitics behind the crisis. While these are important to analyze, it only provides us half of the narrative needed to obtain a rounded account of the Cuban Missile Crisis. For the purpose of my proposed paper, the militaristic components and politics behind the Cuban Missile Crisis would be great background information needed to understand how the United States got to the point of nuclear war. Other useful sources that Michael Dobbs, Kenneth Rose, Sheldon Stern, and Alice George all touch on are Robert Kennedy's *Thirteen Days* memoir and John F. Kennedy's speech on July 15th, 1961 discussing the Berlin Crisis. Both will be able to supply ample information in regards to how the

¹⁹ John Tierney. "What Are You Going to Be If You Grow Up': Recalling the Cuban Missile Crisis. *The Atlantic*. October 22, 2012.

government presented the Cuban Missile Crisis to the public and how it was carried out.

Since the majority of my research will revolve around the social responses of the people during the Cuban Missile Crisis, my primary sources will most likely consist of witness accounts, with careful consideration as to how the account is being remembered, as well as newspaper articles, television broadcasts, official speeches, and polls taken during the time asking for public opinion. Other possible sources include how specific media outlets tailored their message to specific audiences such as women, men, and children and how those messages ultimately aided in the constructing and constituting of the role that these members of society played during this time.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest the United States came to nuclear destruction and because of that, the culture of America during that time took a turn away from the unified culture that was established during World War II. While it is important to study the event as it unfolded within the white house and correlate it with the Kennedy administration, it is crucial to understand it from the perspective of the average American and see how their responses shaped and continue to shape its legacy.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EFFECTS OF MASS MEDIA IN THE EARLY COLD WAR

Media during the 1960s influenced much of the culture and the politics of the era. Print media and the radio continued to serve as a pivotal source of mass broadcasting; however, the development and popularization of television in 1955, sparked a new age of mass media broadcasting that would ultimately affect the lives of everyone worldwide.²⁰ While I am not discounting the use of radio and print media during the 1960s, specifically during the age of nuclear warfare and the Cuban Missile Crisis, television played a critical role in the scare tactics and psychological effects on the United States home front.

Films, television shows, and news broadcasts all highlighted and played on the social fears and anxieties that the U.S. population had and amplified them by depicting doomsday scenarios through a storyline or displaying surreal images of mushroom clouds produced by a nuclear explosion and its aftermath. Throughout this chapter, I aim to demonstrate how mass media impacted the ways in which the American populous viewed the Cuban Missile Crisis, not only in the aspect of political and foreign affairs but also in how they psychologically viewed the event and atomic warfare.

²⁰ Mitchell Stevens. "History of Television." Grolier Encyclopedia. <https://stephens.hosting.nyu.edu/>. While the earliest version of the television debuted in the 1920s, the television became a household item in the 1950s and hit its golden age between 1953 and 1955.

Television

Number of TV Households in America

Year	Number of TV Households	% of American Homes with TV	Year	Number of TV Households	% of American Homes with TV
1950	3,880,000	9.0	1964	51,600,000	92.3
1951	10,320,000	23.5	1965	52,700,000	92.6
1952	15,300,000	34.2	1966	53,850,000	93.0
1953	20,400,000	44.7	1967	55,130,000	93.6
1954	26,000,000	55.7	1968	56,670,000	94.6
1955	30,700,000	64.5	1969	58,250,000	95.0
1956	34,900,000	71.8	1970	59,550,000	95.2
1957	38,900,000	78.6	1971	60,900,000	95.5
1958	41,920,000	83.2	1972	62,350,000	95.8
1959	43,950,000	85.9	1973	65,600,000	96.0
1960	45,750,000	87.1	1974	66,800,000	97.0
1961	47,200,000	88.8	1975	68,500,000	97.0
1962	48,855,000	90.0	1976	69,600,000	97.0
1963	50,300,000	91.3	1977	71,200,000	97.0
			1978	72,900,000	98.0

Figure 1. TV History. "Number of TV Households in America: 1950-1978." Accessed November 15, 2014.

http://www.tvhistory.tv/Annual_TV_Households_50-78.JPG , "Number of TV Households in America 1950-1978," The American Century, <https://americancentury.omeka.wlu.edu>

With a near eight-hundred percent increase in ownership between 1950-1960 the television provided American families with instant news coverage and safety procedures that other media outlets struggled to provide. The rise in television ownership after World War II also created a new means of entertainment that was said to "relax the tired breadwinner, soothe the harried housewife, [and] keep the kids out of their hair."²¹ While the television served as a much needed form of escape and break for the average American any day of the year, in the weeks leading up to and the week of the Cuban Missile Crisis,

²¹ George, 94.

the television brought instant up-to-date news coverage of the event into the comfort of the American home.

Entertainment Television

While the genre of science fiction began in the late 19th century, the advancement of technology, development of the atomic bomb and nuclear energy, as well as space exploration caused the genre to explode in popularity in the 1950s. The depiction of both a futuristic utopia and its alternate dystopia allowed the mind of the average American to be open to the endless technological possibilities that lay in their future; however, this also allowed space for anxieties and fears that lay way to the unknown. Atomic warfare stood as a primary fear for many Americans and the fear of not knowing when a bomb would be detonated and where created many anxieties which many television and media programing fed off of.

Nuclear attack scenarios would often play on TV with narrators making statements like “do you know exactly what your family would do if an attack came? Say 10 o’clock tomorrow morning. It’s a good question, isn’t it?”²² While these statements served to bring awareness to the seriousness of atomic warfare, they also contributed to the rising the fear and stress that came along with nuclear threat. The fears and anxieties surrounding nuclear warfare became

²² Jayne Loader; Kevin Rafferty; Pierce Rafferty. *The Atomic Cafe*. The Archives Project, 1982. 1:00:00. *Atomic Cafe* is a documentary based solely on news reels, films, television shows, and civil defense films that display what was broadcasted in the 1950s-1960s.

more prominent and acknowledged enough that even disclaimers would need to be inserted into TV dramas to not create chaos and psychological distress to their viewers. Rod Sterling's *The Twilight Zone* provides a quintessential example of a mid-episode disclaimer as well as how entertainment TV contributed to Cold War anxieties.

On September 29, 1961, Rod Sterling's *The Twilight Zone* aired its sixty-eighth episode titled "The Shelter." The episode opens with the main family Dr. Bill Stockton (Larry Gates), his wife Grace Stockton (Peggy Stewart), and son Paul Stockton (Michael Burns) preparing for a dinner party. As the episode progresses, it is revealed that Dr. Stockton had built and stocked a bomb shelter for his family in the basement should the event of a nuclear attack occur. In the middle of the dinner party an announcement came over the radio:

"Four minutes ago, the president of the United States made the following announcement: 'Our distant early warning line and ballistics early warning line reported evidence of unidentified flying objects flying due southeast...for the time being and in the interest of national safety we are declaring a state of yellow alert. The civil defense authorities have requested that if you have a shelter already prepared, go there immediately.'"²³

²³ Lamont Johnson, dir. Rod Sterling, writer. *The Twilight Zone's: The Shelter*. September 29, 1961; CBS, 1961. 03:39.

The announcement caused a commotion amongst the dinner guests as they all ran from the Stockton's home in an attempt to get to safety. Immediately following the chaos that ensued from the radio announcement in the storyline, a disruption from the narrator followed:

“What you are about to watch is a nightmare. It is not meant to be prophetic, it need not happen. It is the fervent and urgent (prayer) of all men of goodwill and it never shall happen. But in this place, at this moment, it does happen. This is the Twilight Zone.”²⁴

The disclaimer placed in the middle of the episode served as a way for the viewers to have a sense of security and ease while they continued to watch the episode, but it also can act as a warning to the “nightmare” that is about to unfold should the procedures be acted upon in a crisis.

²⁴ Ibid., 04:46.



Figure 2. Still frame from "The Shelter," Episode 3 of Rod Sterling's 'The Twilight Zone.' Aired September 29, 1961.

"The Shelter" clearly played on the stress and paranoia of Cold War tensions knowing that without warning, a nuclear bomb would fall and obliterate everything in its path. This episode of the *Twilight Zone* also sparked the concept of "shelter morality" which aimed to examine if fallout shelters were ethically moral for American lifestyle. "Shelter morality" sparked intense debates, primarily in the religious community where the idea of helping your neighbor was challenged with the idea of "gun thy neighbor."²⁵ The idea that fallout shelters would evidently lead to neighbors turning against each other and ultimately challenging civilized values.²⁶

²⁵ Rose, 94.

²⁶ Melvin E. Matthews. *Duck, and Cover: Civil Defense Images in Film and Television from the Cold War to 9/11*. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012. Pp. 127.

Many Christian teachings aimed to help Americans understand the moral implications of fallout shelters. While the media promoted fallout shelters and owners expressed a willingness to shoot their neighbor, many religious groups opposed of this mindset and emphasized that if someone wants to use [your] shelter, then [you] should give it up to that person.²⁷ While some religious people who were in support of fallout shelters took heart to that ideal, others “would choose to live dangerously, ignore the preparations of shelters and die with dignity” meaning that many would choose to help their neighbor rather than live with the mindset of gunning-down a fellow neighbor trying to enter their fallout shelter.²⁸ Ultimately, while fallout shelters became a symbol of control and providing safety for the family it was constructed for, it was up to that family unit to control who can and cannot enter the shelter. Oftentimes when asked, fallout owners stated they would not hesitate to shoot their neighbor should they attempt to enter the shelter and risk the survival of their family.²⁹

While the fallout shelter provided some safety reassurance in terms of surviving nuclear fallout, the mentality that it also encouraged Cold War anxieties that many civilians carried daily. Civil Defense programs helped alleviate the stress that Cold War tensions brought by teaching its viewers how to survive a

²⁷ Rose, 96.

²⁸ Ibid., 97.

²⁹ Charles Davis. “Gun Thy Neighbor.” *Time Magazine*. 18 August, 1961, p.60.

nuclear attack. Though the strategies taught would not hold to be effective, the familiarity of safety drills in general allowed for a slight comfort.³⁰

Civil Defense Programs

Before America entered WWII, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) which would oversee the training of air-raid wardens and first-aid workers. It was not until 1949 when Russia successfully tested their first nuclear weapon when the United States faced the “unthinkable possibility” that they could be subject to an air-raid attack just like Germany and Japan.³¹ In May of 1961 at the Conference of Governors convened in Washington, the pressure of President Kennedy to adopt a civil defense program became apparent. With the help of Nelson Rockefeller, the development of the twenty-billion-dollar fallout shelter came to life.³² The logistics of the program proved to be troublesome leading to the uncertainties of whose responsibility it was to build the shelters, and how to supply them with enough food to last for the entire quarantine and the number of occupants within the shelter. With the growing acknowledgment of American vulnerability, civil defense films became more publicized and were shown in schools in order to help children learn how to “survive” an air-raid or a nuclear blast.

³⁰ Matthews, 13.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

³² Ibid., 112, 113.

Civil defense films such as *Duck and Cover* were shown to school-aged children in order to prepare them for the event of *when* the atomic bomb would drop.³³ The film stars a cartoon turtle that goes by the name of Bert that demonstrates to children that in order to “survive” an atomic bomb drop, they need to “drop to the floor, duck, and cover.”³⁴ Having characters such as Bert the Turtle and displaying the film regularly created this common idea that the threat of atomic bombs was just as common as an earthquake or a fire.³⁵ While during the 1950s and the 1960s the threat of warfare may have been this common, the thought of being abolished at any given moment is a huge stress inducer. Since this film was mainly shown to school-age children during their classes, this created the fear of a nuclear bomb dropping while they were at school and creating this separation from their parents.³⁶ On top of the civil defense films shown to school-age children to prepare them for *when* the atomic bomb falls, they also participated in school drills that would occur at random, sometimes with warning and others without.

³³ Anthony Rizzo, dir. *Duck and Cover*. 1951; Archer Productions, 1951.

³⁴ Rizzo, *Duck and Cover*.

³⁵ Matthews, 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

Print Media and Radio

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, President John F. Kennedy served as a key influencer in most media outlets and had a hold on what information could be shared and what information was to be kept private. Even the recordings taken from the Executive Committee (ExComm) minutes could be manipulated with the flip of a switch from President Kennedy.³⁷ Kennedy's hold on the media and his quietness of official government business made it nearly impossible for news outlets to have a solid and accurate depiction of what was really happening off the coast of Florida.

On October 14, 1962, an American U-2 spy plane discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba prompting President Kennedy to meet with his advisors in secret over a series of days that ultimately resulted in a naval blockade, or "quarantine," around Cuba. These secret meetings held two purposes: one, not allowing Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro to know that the United States knew about the missiles, and two, to discuss the problem in accordance to the presidential image and how to keep the situation at bay with the midterm elections of 1962 taking place.³⁸

³⁷ Sheldon M. Stern. *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality*. Stanford Nuclear Age Series. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.

³⁸ The midterm elections of 1962 ultimately took a brief pause because of the Cuban Missile Crisis; however, the crisis served as an important factor in the elections because it had the power to influence votes and dictate the scores of the Democratic congressional candidates. In result of the de-escalation of the crisis, while Democrats lost four House seats, they gained a handful of seats in

Presidential and Political Manipulation

Journalism, unlike television and radio, served the political agenda of the Kennedy Administration and was easily manipulated for the purpose of bettering the image of the president. From the moment the missiles were discovered in Cuba, the press became quick to develop a story on them; however, Kennedy was quick to halt the news release in the fear that his administration would be embarrassed if the real crisis was taking place in Berlin instead of Cuba.³⁹ In July of 1961, President Kennedy spoke about the Berlin Crisis on both radio and television emphasizing how close to war the United States was with the USSR on Germany's home front.⁴⁰ Throughout his speech, President Kennedy made it a point that while the government will do all they can to help prevent the "grim warnings" that Krushchev stated, the citizens of the United States would need to "sacrifice" in order for them to complete the third part of their plan to prevent war.⁴¹ During his speech, President Kennedy stated that the goal of the speech is not for propaganda purposes, but for preparation; however, Kennedy and his

the Senate – far from the usual loss of the president's party in a normal midterm election. Rhodes Cook. "Midterm Election of '62: A Real 'October Surprise.'" September 30, 2010.

<https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/frc2010093001>

³⁹ Kelcie E. Fay. *Rewriting History: The Impact of the Cuban Missile Crisis on American Journalism*. Department of History, University of Kansas, 2018. Pp. 2.

⁴⁰ John F. Kennedy. "Report to the Nation - Berlin Crisis." July 25, 1961. CBS. JFK Presidential Library. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/TNC/TNC-258/TNC-258>

⁴¹ Ibid. 1:30

administration created an air of speculation as to how truthful they actually were about the potential war with Russia.⁴²

While President Kennedy's speech in 1961 aimed to inform and prepare citizens of the United States for a potential war with Russia, his national address of October 22, 1962, gave a heavy inclination that war would shortly take place. In October of 1962, President Kennedy readdressed the nation on the situation happening between the Russia and the United States. In his speech, he discusses the discovery of the ballistic missiles on the island of Cuba and how destructive they could prove to be to the western hemisphere. Throughout the speech, President Kennedy aims to make apparent that Russian statements regarding the ballistic missiles in Cuba were "deceptive" and that the United States will not stand for it. The speech also suggests that the United States and Russia could be at war in any given time.⁴³ American citizens and media outlets relied on President Kennedy's word to develop a full story as to what was going on with Cuba and Russia; however, because Kennedy needed to maintain a strong figurehead role to both his country and to foreign leaders, information regarding the crisis was limited to only what Kennedy wanted others to see.

Coverage of the Cuban Missile Crisis overall had many different sources, some highly manipulated to display only what the Kennedy Administration

⁴² Ibid, 09:23.

⁴³ John F. Kennedy. "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Soviet Arms Build-up in Cuba." October 22, 1962. <http://www.ifklibrary.org>

wanted the US population to see. Even in the private sector, the cabinet meetings between Kennedy and his administration to discuss the crisis could be manipulated so if the recordings were ever looked back upon, they would only give half of the truth behind the story.⁴⁴ In many of the sources that we use today to analyze the Cuban Missile Crisis and all that took place in the white house, have been misshapen in order to fit a narrative in which higher government officials wants us to see. A good example of this can be seen in Bobby Kennedy's memoir *Thirteen Days*, where we see misalignments between the story portrayed in *Thirteen Days* and the ExEcomm minutes.⁴⁵

Media Manipulation

President Kennedy had a strong hold on what the media was able to release to the public and the media still contributed to the fear by publishing articles and pictures that targeted the fears that the American public had on nuclear fallout as well as releasing information that could not be entirely accredited for. Many newspapers and media outlets portrayed the Cuban Missile Crisis as an "us versus them" scenario where Americans would receive one-sided news that would pose challenges for understanding what was happening in the Soviet Union as well as Cuba.⁴⁶ Newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, had difficulty reporting on the events happening since, in some cases, there were

⁴⁴ Stern; viii, 39.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34, 35.

⁴⁶ George, 97.

no available reporters abroad due to limitations regarding journalists and news reporters.

The difficulty to receive news information from the Soviet and Cuban side of the situation posed many challenges pertaining to the level of security and freedom of press in those specific countries, for example, the restrictions on journalist on the island of Cuba made it difficult for Americans to receive updates from a Cuban perspective since there were no American reporters on the island.⁴⁷ Historians such as Keith Bolender aim to analyze the way in which the media is able to create “critical narratives that do not stand up to honest scrutiny.”⁴⁸ Bolender argues that corporate media has been able to coerce us into thinking negatively about Cuba and its revolution by distorting the way in which we view Cuban politics.

With the lack of information given by the government, newspapers continued to go about their usual “mix of recipes, sports scores, and department store ads;” however, these ads also played on the fear that many families would exhibit.⁴⁹ Lack of information held a common denominator in much of print

⁴⁷ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁸ Keith Bolender. *Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba*. Pluto Press, 2009.

⁴⁹ George, 71. This issue also arose in my research when I would look for newspaper headlines of dramatizing the Cuban Missile Crisis. Many of the articles and newspapers I found did not give much information on the Cuban Missile Crisis, in fact, most newspapers did not even touch on the crisis in general. More on this will be touched on the chapter focusing on family life.

media's contents. However, this factor combined with images of mushroom clouds, explosions, war, fallout, and fallout shelters, created psychological warfare that could be experienced from anywhere in the US at different levels of intensity.

The psychological damage produced by written articles and media images caused a divide amongst Americans that would ultimately lead to a panic. This would not only pit Americans against each other but would affect the nuclear family and the home. This divide was often displayed in different aspects of American life, such as television and the airing of *The Twilight Zone's* "The Shelter," and continued through other forms of media.

Life Magazine

Fallout shelters were oftentimes made out to be the primary chance of survival during the Cold War and could be seen portrayed as cozy and the symbol of security of the family unit. The pictures oftentimes would display an abundance of food and a smiling family enjoying the necessities of shelter life; however, fallout shelters would have a variety of issues that would ultimately determine the fate of its inhabitants.

In the image below, we can see a family gathered in what appears to be a steel underground shelter ears raised to a radio waiting for any updates on a nuclear explosion. For the most part, nuclear shelters provided families with the comfort and security needed to believe they would survive a nuclear blast. With their shelters stocked with supplies to last weeks and the comfort of being with

their family in a time of crisis, they also posed issues of mortality that would lead many to debate whether they were willing to go through the extremes of owning a bomb shelter.



Figure 3. A Long Island family sits in a 'Kidde Kokoon,' an underground bomb shelter manufactured by Walter Kidde Nuclear Laboratories, Garden City, New York, c. 1955. (Credit: Underwood Archives/Getty Images).

In August of 1961, *Life Magazine* published an article titled "Gun Thy Neighbor" which illustrated fallout shelter mentality and contributed to Cold War anxieties. This came after President Kennedy's "Special Message to Congress on Urgent National Needs" and his call for Americans to build fallout shelters to protect them from nuclear attack.⁵⁰ Kennedy's speech launched the

⁵⁰ John F. Kennedy. "Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs." May 25, 1961. Delivered in person before a joint session in Congress.

popularization of the fallout shelter by putting the image of the American home on the front lines of the Cold War.⁵¹ Not only did this image push many Americans to consider developing bomb shelters in their basements, but it also threatened the American idea that war would not infiltrate American soil.

The price of fallout shelters proved to be costly for many Americans implying that only the wealthy would survive in the event of a nuclear attack. Livable shelters would run upwards of a \$1,000-and-up price tags, which, according to *Newsweek* magazine, most homeowners considered too steep.⁵² The price tag of the shelter alone did not account for the costs of supplying the shelter to make it livable for a family of four for up to two weeks which ultimately put a larger price tag on an overall fallout shelter.⁵³ The hefty price tags that shelters posed to Americans as well as the threat of having to defend their living supplies, their overall shelter, and their family swayed many to abandon the idea of a private shelter and advocate for public shelters. However, the federal government put little to no effort into making such shelters sustainable.⁵⁴ This

Transcript. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-congress-special-message-19610525>

⁵¹ Rose, 4.

⁵²“ Survival: Are Shelters the Answer?” *Newsweek*, 6 Nov. 1961, 19.

⁵³“ Nuclear Disaster: How Prepared Are We?” *K-1 Project*. Columbia University, 2 Nov. 2018. <https://k1project.columbia.edu/content/nuclear-disaster-how-prepared-are-we>

⁵⁴ Rose, 18.

also contributed to the psychological idea that in order to survive a nuclear fallout it was “every man for himself.”



Figure 4. Image of a mushroom cloud near Christmas Island; June 9, 1962. By Dominic Truckee. (Credit: Los Alamos National Library).

Life magazine along with newspapers and other forms of print media displayed a multitude of images containing mushroom clouds, bomb shelters, heroic pictures of Kennedy, and other propagandist images that can play on the psychological parts of American society. Even though Kennedy made it a point to state that his speech on the Berlin Crisis was meant to be as a preparation to what is to come as compared to a propagandist agenda, the images, the advertisements, the news headlines, targeted the American public in a call to action.

The mushroom clouds that were displayed on newspaper headlines and seen on television, while meaning to show technological advancements, gave off impressions of destruction and a nuclear holocaust that mirrored the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The fear that these images imposed on Americans made it difficult on their psyche bringing a sense of doom of the inevitable “endgame” to life as they knew it was approaching.⁵⁵



Figure 5. Anti-Communist Picket in Times Square, New York, April 17, 1965 (Credit: Bettmann/ Contributor).

Many of the articles and images that media and news outlets released not only caused their audience to anticipate the destruction of nuclear warfare and

⁵⁵ Steven Heller. “The Ministry of Fear.” *Social Research* 71, no. 4 (Winter, 2004): 849-862.

their future but aided in the propaganda efforts to fight communism.⁵⁶ Because of the lack of news information from Cuba and the Soviet Union, the one sided viewpoint that the media would portray would present an “us versus them” mentality leading many to believe that the real threat came from other countries. Slogans such as “Better Dead than Red” could be seen on the face of newspapers subduing any domestic sympathy towards the enemies while making the United States and President Kennedy’s image heroic.⁵⁷ While the “Red Scare” appeared on the face on every media source it also made its way into schools, which will be further discussed in chapter 2, and served to unite the patrons of America by drawing a shared view of socialist countries and redefining a national identity on the basis of American patriotism.

Media served as a prime source of information regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis and any nuclear warfare-related material. However; because of the lack of information provided, many Americans were fed information that was half true or no information at all leaving many confused and unaware about what was going on. While there were a lot of civil defense aids being provided, the preparation behind them would not be enough to save the US populace if a bomb were to fall at any given time. Even while this information was still being

⁵⁶ Alexander Safford. “The Role of Media During the Cold War.” Queens University at Belfast, March, 2013.

⁵⁷ Safford.

provided, some Americans did not feel like there was any real protection from a nuclear attack and chose to live about their normal routines.

Americans varied greatly in terms of the range of psychological effects due to the information being fed to them by the media. This range also became prominent in the family unit and the information media, ads, and psychological expectations targeted each member differently. The following chapter aims to examine how each member of the nuclear family was expected to uphold themselves throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear warfare as a whole.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

The Family Unit

Family during the 1950s through the 1960s proved to be a pivotal aspect of American culture. Post-World War II and the unveiling of the atomic bomb created uncertainty amongst Americans resulting in the home and family life becoming key symbols of security.⁵⁸ In 1959, *Life* magazine featured a young married couple embarking on their “sheltered honeymoon” along with a photograph displaying their “wedding gifts” of food supplies and other consumer goods to serve them well in their fallout shelter.

⁵⁸ Elaine Tyler May. “Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era.” Basic Books, New York, 2008.



Figure 6. "The Sheltered Honeymoon" Life Magazine. August 10, 1959.

According to the University of Minnesota's American Studies and History professor, Elaine Tyler May, this image, and article serves as a powerful statement that the nuclear family embodied the image of "isolation, sexually charged, cushioned by abundance, and protected against impending doom by the wonders of modern technology."⁵⁹ After World War II, marriage rates increased and the age in which a couple married decreased more so than anytime during the twentieth century. By the 1960s, roughly 67.4% of Americans 14 years and over obtained marital status as compared to 66.6% in the 1950s and 59.6% in the 1940s.⁶⁰ In conjunction with the marriage boom, the want and need of young Americans to establish a family initiated the "baby boom" (1946-1964) that can be likely be attributed to the connotation that family life signified peace and prosperity.⁶¹

Advertisements and television programs, as well as magazine articles published leading up to and during the cold war targeted men and women portraying the types of behavior expected of them. These post-war gender roles aided in the establishment of domesticity where each prospective member of a family unit was expected to uphold a familial role to create structure and security

⁵⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁶⁰ "1960s Census: Supplementary Reports: Marital Status of the Population of the United States, by States: 1960s." United States Census Bureau, 11 Sep. 1961, revised 8 Oct. 2021.
<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1961/dec/pc-s1-12.html>

⁶¹ May, 4.

within the nuclear family. The image of masculinity prompted and encouraged many men to be the leader, protector and the supplier of the household, it also encouraged men to become present and active fathers and husbands. On the other hand, the feminine image encouraged women to take on the role of a nurturing housewife. Advertisements guided women in taking care of their family in the event of a nuclear attack while television programs portrayed the image of the “perfect housewife.”

Children, on the other hand, faced many uncertainties and relied on their parents to protect and care for them. Compared to their adult counterparts, children grappled with the uncertainty of family separation and the possibility of not being able to make it into adulthood. Air raid drills, comic books and educational programs discussing the dangers and possibly of nuclear war filled and shaped many childhoods. Nuclear energy took away the innocent nature of childhood.

The Masculine Role

In the pre-war era, masculinity was looked at as a trait that was needed for a family to survive financially and structurally. During and prior to WWII, men were expected to uphold a strong masculine characteristic whose purpose was to protect and serve not only their family, but also their country. After the war, masculinity shifted from men needing to be “the strong-willed, able-bodied

prepared to fight the Axis threats” of WWII, to a more emotionally stable “supportive and present husband and father” needed in post war times.⁶²

Shortly after the end of World War I, the United States Army published a marketing lithograph titled “The United States Army Builds Men. Apply Nearest Recruiting Office.”⁶³ This lithograph ultimately established the role of the masculine figure to be “a military man” who could uphold the characteristics of a strong character, the hard worker and capabilities of a craftsmen, and the military grade standard of a strong and healthy physique. While these traits still upheld an important role in American manhood, a new trait of masculinity shifted from an individualistic outlook, into a more family orientated perspective. This shift in the idea of manhood led many men to question their masculinity.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., an influential intellectual, academic, writer and Kennedy confidant, in the 1950s, claimed that this was because “the pre-democratic world was characteristically a world of status in which people were provided with ready-made identities...in a modern western society – free, equalitarian, democratic – swept away all the old niches in which many people found refuge.”⁶⁴ During the early cold war, while men were encouraged to be the

⁶² Remy Malcolm Willocks. *Masculinity on Every Channel: The Development and Demonstration of American Masculinity of the Post War Period via 1960s Television*. Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. 2019.

⁶³ Herbert Paus, “The United States Army Builds Men. Apply Nearest Recruiting Office,” in the *Niagara Lithogram Co.* (Buffalo, NY: 1919).

⁶⁴ Arthur Schelsinger Jr., “The Crisis of American Masculinity,” *Esquire*, Nov. 1958, 63-65.

supportive and present husband and father, they also had the ability to exhibit their “pre-established” role of being the protector and man of the household since their wives and children look to them for direction in decision making.

Television depictions of masculinity ranged widely in terms of what manhood entailed and what a lack of manhood could potentially lead to. Shows like *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) used the genre of horror to visually represent the doom and chaos that a lack of manhood caused; however, other television programs such as *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961-1966) used comedy and satire to reestablish the role of the man as a head of the household figure and portray the present and supportive husband and father.⁶⁵

The *Twilight Zone* played on the fears surrounding masculinity using horror and science fiction to depict what could go wrong in the event a man could not uphold his masculinity. While it is hard to pinpoint a common scenario where masculinity is challenged in a household setting, one commonality between episodes is that the male protagonist does not fit the typical masculine image. Each protagonist is essentially challenged in their respective conflict, however, because they do not fit the typical masculine figure, they serve as tragic models that display the damaging consequences of not upholding a traditional masculine paradigm.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Willlocks, 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 49-56.

In the *Twilight Zone* Episode “Time Enough at Last,” the protagonist, Henry Bemis (Burgess Meredith), is an avid book reader and bank teller. During his shift, he becomes so engrossed in the novel he is reading that all he could talk about with his client is the characters. This causes not only his boss, Carsville (Vaughn Taylor), and his wife, Helen Bemis (Jacqueline deWit), to both complain to him that he wastes far too much time reading. At home his wife destroys his books and continues to cause Bemis much dismay after she refuses to let him read a newspaper, magazine, or even the labels on the condiments all because she wants the courtesy of conversation with her husband. As the episode progresses, he reads a newspaper headline that reads “H-Bomb Capable of Total Destruction” and moments later he finds himself the only survivor of the blast with can food to last him a lifetime. However, he succumbs to despair of being the only survivor. As he is preparing to commit suicide, he discovers the ruins of a public library, and his despair is gone once he sees the endless supply of books still intact for him to read. As he bends down to pick up the first book, he stumbles, and his glasses fall off and shatter leaving him virtually blind surrounded by books he could never read.⁶⁷

This episode highlights the consequences of not upholding a masculine paradigm by displaying how Bemis’s hobby ultimately led to his despair and loneliness after failing to “be the man” that his job and wife needed him to be.

⁶⁷ John Brahm, dir. Rod Sterling, Lynn Venable, writers. *The Twilight Zone*, “Time Enough at Last,” Season 1 Episode 8. Produced by Cayuga Productions and CBS Television Network Nov. 20, 1959.

Bemis is painted throughout the program as someone who is not mindful of his wife or serious about his job and while he may have been prosperous in surviving a nuclear blast, he paid the price of losing everything he knew and loved prior, including his obsession with reading. While “Time Enough to Last” subtly touches on the topic of family and career life of a man, the *Dick Van Dyke Show* takes on a different area of being a man in a post war family setting.

In the *Dick Van Dyke Show*, Dick Van Dyke’s character, Rob Petrie, exemplified what it looked like to reassert masculinity in the household while still being able to be a supportive husband and fatherly figure needed during the uncertainties of the early cold war. While most episodes of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* contained the main character, Rob Petrie, handling work-related issues as a comedy writer in order to be the “bread-winner” of the family, he also detangles his family from situations around the house, reestablishing the masculine role of the household.

In the episode “Father of the Week” (aired February 21, 1962), Rob confronts the issue of his son Richie (Larry Mathews) being ashamed of his white-collar occupation and does not want him to come to school in fear of being made fun of. Further on in the episode, Rob faces the issue of being compared to other father figures who have presented their blue-collar occupations. Being told from the teacher Mrs. Given (Isabel Randolph) that she hopes that he is “just as

interesting as [the other dads].”⁶⁸ Throughout the episode, Rob deals with the internal struggle of what he believes masculinity entails while also dealing with the external struggle of being compared to other masculine figures. These conflicting struggles mirrored the struggles many men faced during the immediate post-war and early cold war era prompting men to question their own masculinity both outside and within the family unit.

The developing role of being a present and supportive fatherly figure and husband created internal anxieties within men that caused them to question their own identities. While these struggles effected the male psyche, they also helped with the development of domesticity. In the article “The Crisis of American Masculinity,” Schlesinger wrote that “identity consists of not only self-realization, but smooth absorption into a group.”⁶⁹ During a time of nuclear crisis, domesticity and the emphasis on the nuclear family helped men realize that while they needed to shift their ideology to be a present husband/father, their masculinity was needed in order to hold the family together both mentally and physically. One post-war husband explained cold war domesticity by claiming that his family gave him “a sense of responsibility, a feeling of being a member of a group that

⁶⁸ *Dick Van Dyke Show*, “Father of the Week,” Season 1 Episode 22. Directed by John Rich. Written by Arnold and Louis Peyser. Produced by CBS Feb. 21, 1962.

⁶⁹ Schlesinger, “The Crisis of Masculinity” 63-65.

in spite of many disagreements internally always will face its external enemies together.”⁷⁰

While men grappled with the anxieties of upholding the traditional masculine qualities established prior to WWII with the new expectations that they were given post-war, women also evolved within the household. Women not only ensured that the house and the family were taken care of they were also responsible for stocking the family with all essential supplies for survival in the event that a nuclear attack came underway and called for an immediate family evacuation.

The Feminine Role

After WWII, many young women found themselves getting married younger and starting families sooner. The image of femininity rested along the lines of a happy housewife and the need to provide nurturing care for both her children and her husband. However, this image was instilled by many media outlets (ads, television programs, etc.) as well as government officials from a male perspective.⁷¹

Feminist writer, Betty Friedan, claims that many of these women continued into unhappy marriages and put themselves into a lifestyle that made them unhappy because the image of what it meant to be feminine created an

⁷⁰ *The Kelly Longitudinal Study*, 1935-1955 data set (made accessible in 1979, raw and machine-readable data files) in Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War*, 88.

⁷¹ Betty Friedan. *Feminine Mystique*. W.W. Norton, Feb. 19, 1963.

identity amongst women that they feared to lose. As Friedan argued, 'The suburban housewife – she was the dream image of the young American woman...she had found true feminine fulfillment...As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamt of.'⁷² This quote aligns with the “kitchen debate” that Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev held in 1959 where Nixon argued that American superiority rested on the ideal suburban home.

In the Kitchen Debate, Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev discussed many topics regarding the home life of their respective countries. This debate touched on not only consumerism and the superiority of the American home, but also the roles and sexuality of the women who make the home. The debate was held at The American National Exhibition, a showcase of American consumer goods and leisure-time equipment. The main attraction consisted of a full-scale “model” six-room ranch-style home. Throughout this particular exhibit contained many labor-saving devices ranging from washing machines to lemon squeezers, The overall point of the debate was to show the superiority of free enterprise over communism; however, came to a debate the comfortability of the American housewife.⁷³ The home is where a

⁷² Ibid, 18.

⁷³ May, 21.

woman was expected to fulfill her role as a mother and wife, Friedman argues that this is accredited to magazines [and later on television programs] “crammed with food, clothing, cosmetics, furniture, and the physical bodies of young women” and that “women do no work except house work and work to keep their bodies beautiful and to get and keep a man.”⁷⁴ Many television programs and advertisements painted the image of the feminine beauty standards as well as the ideal house wife and how she manages the home.

In many media outlets, primarily television sitcoms such as “I Love Lucy” and “Leave it to Beaver,” actresses exemplified what the ideal embodiment of the perfect housewife should be. While the housewives in these shows embodied their own image and served as an equal counterpart to their husbands, they also came as a secondary character and can be seen, at times, being scolded by their husbands. “I Love Lucy” is a perfect example of this where Lucy (Lucille Ball) exercises her freedom as a housewife and her husband Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz) scolds her for going against his final word.

In “Lucy Gets Chummy with the Neighbors” (aired Feb. 18, 1957), Ricky allows Lucy the freedom to spend \$500 on new furniture to renovate their new home; however, Lucy goes over her allotted allowance and purchases furniture worth over \$3,000.⁷⁵ When Ricky finds out the amount of money Lucy spends on

⁷⁴ Friedman, 27.

⁷⁵ *I Love Lucy*, “Lucy Gets Chummy with the Neighbors,” Season 6 Episode 17. Directed by William Asher. Written by Madelyn Davis, Bob Carroll Jr., and Bob Schiller. Produced by CBS February 18, 1957.

furniture, he goes into a shouting rage saying everything must be returned at once. While Lucy depicts the image of the happy housewife, her actions are still noted and commented on by her husband who reasserts himself as the masculine head of the household.

Just like this episode of *I Love Lucy*, many housewives were targeted in advertisements for household appliances since women were the homemakers. Friedman states that this may be attributed to corporations and companies manipulating the identity, purpose, creativity, self-realization, and even the lack of sexual joy a housewife that drove them to be the chief customers of American businesses.⁷⁶ The identity of a women, specifically a housewife, rested on the purchases made to make home-making creative; however, corporations and manufacturers would use these tactics to build conformity amongst women. This continued into the early cold war era where civil defense became “feminized” linking the home to fallout shelters and domestic responsibilities to civil defense preparedness.⁷⁷

In 1955, “Grandma’s Pantry” was established, serving as a civil defense campaign, it targeted women specifically for the domestic responsibility of making sure the family is stocked up on food and water in the event of nuclear war. Membership cards were distributed indicating how much of each nutritional item would need to be purchased per family member.

⁷⁶ Friedman, 243-47.

⁷⁷ Rose, 141.



Figure 7. An unsigned membership card in "Grandma's Pantry," a civil defense program that encouraged people to store items that might be needed in a disaster or national emergency. "Grandma's Pantry Civil Defense Card, Cir. 1956" Civil Defense pamphlets and sign.

In addition to being the homemaker and the supportive wife, the role of the mother served to provide safety and security for their children. Children would be unable to escape the reality of the nuclear threat at hand since they would hear about the possibility of nuclear annihilation both at home and at school, a mother's job was to ensure their children felt safe by a "mother's love."⁷⁸ A mother's love is an important factor in a child's life, especially during a time of uncertainty, the active imaginations of children can prove to cause greater stress and create an over dramatized image of the events around them; however, with the security from a motherly figure, the stress subsides and they feel safer.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ George, 144.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 144-145

Children of Nuclear War

Children growing up during the atomic age faced a multitude of uncertainty regarding their futures and if they were going to be alive to see the future. The running joke amongst school aged children was “what are you going to be *if* you grow up.” The psychological impact that nuclear threat had on children, primarily young children, is displayed more prominently and can be linked to the overactive imaginations they have compared to older children.⁸⁰ In *Awaiting Armageddon*, author Alice George claims that parents and teachers began to notice a new theme in children’s’ drawings consisting of mushroom clouds, explosions, and even one child illustrating her own death.⁸¹

The cartoons, comics, school safety drills, the accessibility of the television, and even conversations from parents made it incredibly easy for children to absorb, comprehend, and imagine the possible dangers of nuclear annihilation. Former professor of American Government at Boston College and contributing writing for *The Atlantic* magazine, vividly recalls his experience as a young child living in Denver, Colorado during the Cuban Missile Crisis stating that after watching President Kennedy’s address to the nation on the night of the

⁸⁰ Ibid, 144.

⁸¹ Ibid, 145.

22nd, he went to school the next day “afraid that missiles might blow us up in the following days.”⁸²

While the television served as an important medium of receiving news updates and coverage of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the role it played in the lives of children ultimately took a part of the innocence that they once had in their protective homes.⁸³ Even cartoons became more political and aimed at children in an effort to promote an anti-communist agenda and create a fascination in nuclear energy to eliminate the instilled fear that nuclear weapons already imposed on children.

Comic strips and books served as propagandic tools in order to persuade children’s thoughts on American patriotism as well as help ease their worry towards nuclear energy. In comics such as the “Amazing Spider-Man” and the “Incredible Hulk,” the power of nuclear energy transformed two ordinary individuals to the superheroes that children look up to. In these comics, with the bite of a radioactive spider or exposure to gamma radiation, exposure to nuclear energy created heroes that would save their cities from danger.⁸⁴ While these comics allowed children to grapple with the idea that nuclear energy could be used and utilized in different aspects, other comics such as “Two Faces of

⁸² Tierney. “‘What Are You Going to Be If You Grow Up’: Recalling the Cuban Missile Crisis.

⁸³ George, 139.

⁸⁴ Stan Lee. *The Amazing Spider-Man: Amazing Fantasy #15*. August 1962. Stan Lee. *The Incredible Hulk Vol. 1*. May 1962.

Communism” and “This Godless Communism” provided other perspectives in relation to nuclear war and anti-communist agendas.

Both comics discuss the negative impact of communism and accompany its anti-communist agenda with pictures that are eye-catching to a child’s eye. “This Godless Communism” was a comic in the “Treasure Chest of Fun & Fact” where after a television broadcast states, “The United States no longer exists, it is now the Union of Soviet States of America, long live the U.S.S.A” a family must figure out a way to defeat communism in order to restore their country as it once was.⁸⁵ “Two Faces of Communism” essentially covered the same anti-communist rhetoric; however, this particular comic displayed both faces that the communist party put up and exposing the negative realities behind the communist movement. The comic displays a family sitting in front of the TV watching Khrushchev go on about the greatness of communism. The kids joke about how funny the program was and can’t comprehend how anyone “believes what he says.” The father, stepping into his role as the present husband and father figure, explains in detail why communism is bad, stating to his children that while communist parties paint a picture of “paradise,” there are underlying facts being hidden.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *Treasure Chest of Fun & Fact* “This Godless Communism.” Vol. 17 no. 2. George Pflaum, 1961.

⁸⁶ *Comics with Problems* “Two Faces of Communism.” No. 27. Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, 1961.

While comic books displayed both the negative and positive effects of nuclear energy as well as explaining and emphasizing an anti-communist agenda to children, other sources filled children's childhoods making the nuclear bomb and communist movements inescapable. In their classrooms, educational programs would be shown on a regular basis in order to prepare students for the possible destruction that awaited them should the tensions between the United States, Russia, and Cuba escalated.

Educational programs such as "A is for Atom" served as a way for school aged children to understand how nuclear energy is made and distill any negative mindset and preconceived ideas of the power of nuclear energy. Throughout the program, children would learn what exactly an atom was and how elements could be artificially changed by scientists to create "miracles of science" that could be utilized by many people around the world to advance the field of science.⁸⁷ By dissecting what an atom is and how man was able to manipulate atoms to aid in a multitude of scientific advancements, children had the ability to understand the elements of an atomic weapon and its capabilities.

Other educational programs such as the civil defense program of "Duck and Cover" helped children understand the importance of safety procedures in reference to nuclear warfare. Just as Dr. Atom served as the figurehead of nuclear energy education, Burt the Turtle served as a prime figurehead for civil defense safety and instructed children on how to survive a nuclear blast. The use

⁸⁷ Carl Urbano, dir. *A is for Atom*. 1953; John Sutherland Productions, 1953.

of cartoon figures ultimately served the purpose of easing children of their fear of nuclear weapons, the programs also hinted at underlying truths that contributed to childhood anxieties surrounding nuclear warfare.

In “Duck and Cover,” the narrator aims to reassure children stating that when a nuclear bomb is on its way, a warning will sound; however, the narrator also makes it known to viewers that there is a chance that a nuclear bomb can approach without any warning, and it is important to know how to be prepared in that circumstance.⁸⁸ Another point the narrator makes is that the bomb could go off at any time. As the video warned, “You may be in your schoolyard playing...you might be playing at home...if you are not close to home...go to the nearest safe cover.”⁸⁹ In addition to the possibility of not being able to grow up, the possibility of family separation served as an additional stressor on the lives of children.

Parents’ roles in the lives of their children were pivotal, especially during the threat of nuclear warfare because they provided their young ones with reassurance, protection, and security they needed in order to mentally push through the crisis at hand. The family unit was an important component of the early cold war culture. While there are many flaws that came about with domesticity and the struggle of upholding individualism and gender roles within the family itself, during this time, the family provided much needed security.

⁸⁸ Rizzo, dir. *Duck and Cover*.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS AND HOW WE CONTINUE TO REMEMBER IT

To understand how we remember the Cuban Missile Crisis and the early cold war era, it is important to break down not only the psychology of memory itself, but also the way in which stress and fear effect memory. In psychology, the term memory is defined as a process of encoding, storage, and retrieval and is divided into short-term and long-term. The process of “memory encoding” comes from a sensory input stemming from visuals (pictures), acoustics (sounds), and semantic (meaning).⁹⁰ After information is encoded into the brain, it is either sorted into long-term (LTM) or short-term memory (STM) dependent on if the encoding originated from visuals, acoustics, or semantic. Most times, visuals and acoustics are sorted into STM due to a person verbally or visually rehearsing the information. LTM is mostly associated with memories with a semantic value; however, that does not mean that visuals and audios are unable to contribute to LTM.⁹¹ The retrieval process of STM and LTM vary; while STM is retrieved in the same manner it is encoded (repeating of the information in the order it was rehearsed), LTM is retrieved by association.⁹²

⁹⁰ Saul McLeod. “Stages of memory - encoding storage and retrieval.” *Simply Psychology*. August 05, 2013. www.simplypsychology.org/memory.html

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will be looking at how the events that occurred from the early cold war up until the week of October 16th, 1962, contributed to the fear-induced memories and the last impact of the psychological warfare that took place. While the legacy of the Cuban Missile Crisis highlights the *heroic* efforts of the Kennedy administration, those who lived through the crisis recall their experiences through fear and how they felt during that time. On the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) conducted interviews with those who lived through the crisis, many of them describing the fear they had after hearing about the discovery of nuclear weapons in Cuba. One participant stated that after hearing about the missiles, a few days later she heard an explosion and immediately thought that the United States was being attacked. As she emphasized, "It was a very scary time."⁹³

The Psychology of Fear

Fear is described as a conscious state arising from exposure to real or imagined threats.⁹⁴ In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fear developed from the constant media exposure caused many to remember the stressful moments of the event. While fear is an essential part of keeping us safe, fear also impacts the ways in which we remember certain events. One of the lasting

⁹³ Jeannette Musser. "The Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: What's Your Story." *Interviews with the Nuclear Threat Initiative*, October 15, 2012.

⁹⁴ Cristiane R.G. Furini, Ivan Izquierdo, and Jacaine C. Myskiw. "Fear Memory" *Psychological Reviews*, Vol 96, issue 2. April 2016.

effects of fear and the way it impacts long-term memory involves post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In Lesley Ogden's article "How Extreme Fear Shapes What We Remember," a clinical psychologist, Margaret McKinnon, recalls her experience during traumatic air travel to display how PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) contributes to how we remember certain events. While this article concentrates on PTSD from an emergency plane landing due to fuel leakage, the overall argument of fear having an impact on memory serves in a similar way to that of the Cuban Missile Crisis. PTSD affects the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex of the brain, which is responsible for the memory disfunction in PTSD patients. This ultimately results in patients experiencing intrusive thoughts as well as avoidance of important aspects of the traumatic event. When the passengers of the flight were asked to recall their experience, (whether or not they developed PTSD from the event) they had "vivid and enhanced recollections of the incident, supporting the idea that fear changes how the brain stores memory."⁹⁵ In relation to the Cuban Missile Crisis, many recall their experience as "pieces of a puzzle" since information could not accurately be shared and drastic actions caused

⁹⁵ Lesley Evans, Ogden. "How Extreme Fear Shapes What We Remember." BBC: In Depth Psychology. February 15, 2015. Accessed: July 4, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20150205-how-extreme-fear-shapes-the-mind>

many to overextend their mental wellbeing for protection against nuclear annihilation.⁹⁶

PTSD and Historical Memory

Historians such as Mark Bloch aim to contextualize how historical memory and fear can also lead to an embroidery of details within an otherwise “trustworthy narrative.”⁹⁷ In his book, *The Historians Craft*, Bloch gives an example of the “airplane of Nuremberg” and how the media was able to play on the people’s fears, in the midst of the war, perpetuating the idea that a French “military plane” flew over the city the day before war was declared. There is no actual evidence for whether or not the plane was a military plane or rather just an ordinary commercial plane, but the embellishment of claiming a military plane flew over the city was enough to falsify the narrative. While there is no actual evidence for the plane being a military plane or rather just an ordinary commercial plane, the embellishment of claiming a military plane flew over the city was enough to falsify the narrative. At this point, we can consider how the media plays a role in historical narratives and how we must discern whether evidence brought before us is fabricated. The embellishments developed by the media and the Kennedy administration are very much like the embellishments Bloch describes. During the time this book was written, Bloch witnessed how rumor and propaganda drew

⁹⁶ “Cuban Missile Crisis: Memories of a Young Reporter.” *PBS News Hour*, PBS. October 22, 2012. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/cuban-missile-crisis>.

⁹⁷ Mark, Bloch. *The Historian's Craft*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

from the mentality of the time and impacted the society around him, creating a falsified narrative that would eventually lead to false evidence in the way the event is remembered.

While the United States was not undergoing direct warzone activity, the Cuban Missile Crisis greatly emulated wartime PTSD. Many associate wartime PTSD with combat veterans and those who served in the field; however, wartime PTSD also effects civilians living through the war just as much as soldiers. These stressors are caused with thoughts of life threats such as being bombed, losing a loved one or a family member, having restricted access to survival necessities (ie. food, water, etc.).⁹⁸ Without a doubt, most, if not all, of these stressors are prominent throughout the entirety of the Cuban Missile Crisis. While many adults and political leaders had their own recollections of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the early stages of the Cold War, children contributed to the legacy in which we continue to remember the crisis. A research study performed by Dr. Janette Habashi, an associate professor at the University of Oklahoma specializing in children agency, youth, and political socialization, investigates the notion that Palestinian children are the authors of the collective memory of Palestine society. Throughout her research, she aims to highlight how children's collective memory in warzones not only impacts the ways in which children remember the event, but

⁹⁸ Jessica Hamblen, Paula Schnurr. "Mental Health Aspects of Prolonged Combat Stress in Civilians." *PTSD: National Center for PTSD*, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/specific/combat_stress_civilian.asp

also helps them establish agency in a world where they have no control.⁹⁹ While this agency does not undermine or seek to eliminate the child's trauma, it does seek to understand how a child responds in "moments of 'freedom' and independency."¹⁰⁰

In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear warfare, children were in a position of helplessness and had to depend on their parents and other adults to inform them on the crisis next door. Robert R. Johnson of Houghton, Michigan, recalls his fourth-grade teacher announcing that the class will be listening to a minute-by-minute broadcast that he considered "graphic and very alarming."¹⁰¹ Referencing back to Alice George's *Awaiting Armageddon*, George stated that children, specifically young children, had an active imagination and fearing family separation. Johnson continues his recollection stating that during the broadcast, "one young girl cried out, 'I will never see my mother again!'"¹⁰² Another recollection of a then eight-year-old remembers his mom stocking up on canned

⁹⁹ Janette Habashi. "Palestinian Children: Authors of Collective Memory." *Children & Society* 27, no. 6 (2013): 421–33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2011.00417.x>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Robert R. Johnson. "The Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: What's Your Story." *Interviews with the Nuclear Threat Initiative*, October 15, 2012.

¹⁰² Ibid

goods and water and running home when his mother called, fearing that “Nikita was dropping a nuclear bomb right then.”¹⁰³

Discussed briefly in chapter two and in George’s book, children also displayed their fear through creative outlets such as drawings and art projects. This also proves Habashi’s point of children being the co-authors of collective memories by finding space to create their own narratives and accounts for the events happening around them. Fear played a crucial role in the way in which the average American will recall the event and how those memories will continue to be passed down to immediate family members; however, another aspect needed to be considered in how the Cuban Missile Crisis is remembered, is through public history and how historians recollect the information.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in Public History

Public history and the ways in which the general public is manipulated to remember a nation’s history for the sake of nationalism is a worldwide phenomenon. Scholar of Chinese history, Rana Mitter, discusses the role that public museums played in the recollection of wartime memories, how they were shaped by academic discourse, and how they developed in new directions from the mid-1980s to the turn of the millennium.¹⁰⁴ Mitter also states that “museums

¹⁰³ Mark, York. “The Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: What’s Your Story.” *Interviews with the Nuclear Threat Initiative*. October 15, 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Rana, Mitter, *China’s Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020) pp. 109.

have been one of the most obvious means by which the state has sought both to control public memory of the war and to reflect changing official views of history.”¹⁰⁵ This point is crucial in understanding how museums portray many historical events because they shape the public’s preconceived memories of an event and show what the state feels like the public should know.

While there is no museum dedicated to the Cuban Missile Crisis specifically, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library serves as a primary location to learn about the events of the crisis. This poses the issue that Mitter examines in his book regarding the government regulation of historical contents to specific events. Throughout my research, the JFK Library served as a great resource in understanding the Cuban Missile Crisis; however, to gain a deeper insight into the crisis, a deeper dive into the literature and research other scholars have conducted have made it possible to stray away from the library as a key source. However, to the general populi, museums such as the JFK Library serve as their only insight to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In regard to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the JFK Library seems to primarily highlight the heroism of the president creating a bias perspective.

Without a doubt, President John F. Kennedy is recognized as a public hero for the ways in which he handled the Cuban Missile Crisis, and his presidency is remembered because of the situation. While the Cuban Missile crisis and the early cold war hold a strong foundation in United States political

¹⁰⁵ Ibid 109.

and military history, historians such as Sheldon M. Stern, aim to expose misconceptions of the Cuban missile crisis that many political figures shared with the American populace.

In Stern's *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality*, he argues that "the claim 'I was there' should, if anything, be regarded as a warning about historical inaccuracy rather than accepted as a special form of validation."¹⁰⁶ The entirety of Stern's book focuses on the ExComm recordings and how those files, along with other first-hand accounts from former ExComm members, cannot always be used as reputable sources. One important point that Stern brings up is that up until the release of the ExComm tapes, Robert F. Kennedy, along with many of the ExComm members, were able to promote their own unique take on the behind the scenes of the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁰⁷ This point is crucial because while the public had very little information about what was happening, government officials, who they looked to and trusted, used this to their advantage to paint a heroic picture of John F. Kennedy and the American government.

Big named newspapers, like the *New York Times*, could be easily manipulated by government officials and cause a psychological warfare amongst the American populace. Most members of the media played the role that

¹⁰⁶ Sheldon M. Stern. *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality*. Stanford Nuclear Age Series. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 39.

President Kennedy assigned to them with no complaint since they believed that Americans must set aside all questions and unite as a single face against the enemy.¹⁰⁸ However, this also comes with the dilemma of the media not being able to provide critical narratives that could undergo honest scrutiny.¹⁰⁹ This dilemma is discussed in Freelance journalist Keith Bolender's book *Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba* where Bolender makes the statement that journalists and editors make the *conscious* decision on who to interview and what facts to include in their spreads in order to shape the way in which a reader will absorb the information given.¹¹⁰

While most of the headlines of the *New York Times* and other newspaper companies would highlight the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the articles would contain language that would ultimately portray American Nationalism. The *New York Herald Tribune* provides a great example of this by stating, "the people must and will unite behind the president in the course in which Soviet aggression has been made inevitable."¹¹¹ While the promotion of patriotism is prominent in

¹⁰⁸ George, 93-94.

¹⁰⁹ Keith Bolender. *Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba*. Pluto Press, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹¹¹ "Must and Will Unite," editorial, *New York Herald Tribune*, reprinted in "Excerpts from Newspaper Editorials on Decision," *New York Times*, 24 Oct. 1962, 26.

many newspaper columns, fear highlighted the front pages often causing people to stray away from newspaper outlets.

The *New York Times* alone had nearly sixty-four columns alone, covering all areas of the crisis on October 24, 1962, alone.¹¹² The magazine *New Republic* reported that Kennedy “knocked an election off the front page in its final weeks” in order to make way for headlines covering the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹¹³ While highlighting fear on the front page of the newspapers might have refrained some from buying the newspapers, others constantly saw the fear on the headlines and found it nearly impossible to avoid. Articles such as, “MOSCOW REPLIES; It Warns Washington Action by Navy Risks Nuclear Conflict,” “US Alerts Bases in Turkey,” and, “VESSELS SPOTTED; McNamara Says Navy Will Make Contact Within 24 Hours” made war seem inevitable and causing stress due to the rising tension of US Foreign affairs.¹¹⁴ By putting peoples’ fears on the front cover newspaper outlets were able to control the ways in which people will see and hear about the situation in Cuba all the while people were anxiously waiting for situation to escalate.

The saying “history is written by the victors” holds truth in the recollection of the Cuban Missile Crisis and can be seen in many scholarships such as

¹¹² George, 96.

¹¹³ “T.R.B. from Washington,” *New Republic*, 3 Nov. 1962, 2.

¹¹⁴ *New York Times Archives*, October 24, 1962.
<https://www.nytimes.com/sitemap/1962/10/24/>

Robert Kennedy's *Thirteen Days*, Michael Dobbs *One Minute to Midnight*, and even in official government documentation. Historians such as Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, aim to confront the uncertainties of teaching history in a democratic education system by arguing that skepticism and relativism about truth, not only in science but also in history and politics, have grown out of the insistent democratization of Western society and offer modes of inquiry essential to redressing the wrongs of exclusion.¹¹⁵ Meaning that historical scholarship must strive for truth and not to make people feel good about themselves.¹¹⁶ This coincides with the way in which historical scholarship continues to highlight the *victory* of the Kennedy administration.

When it comes to remembering the Cuban Missile Crisis and early cold war events, museums such as the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and the National Museum of the United States Air Force demonstrate how the government/ state can control public memory and to reflect changing official views of history. While both museums articulate the political and militaristic aspect of the crisis, which it is ultimately remembered by, both museums, primarily the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, fail to provide any account for the people who lived through the Cuban Missile Crisis.

¹¹⁵ Appleby, Joyce, Lynn Avery. Hunt, and Margaret C. Jacob. *Telling the Truth about History*. New York: London, 1995.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

With a plethora of documentation emanating from President Kennedy, Nikita Khrushchev, and Castro, as well as recordings, and videos of the President giving presidential briefings on the situation, there lacks a subsection in the archives of life in the United States during the time and the acts in which President Kennedy served to help the people during this time. Most, if not all, of Kennedy's speeches aimed to address the public about the situation in Cuba and the advancements of negotiations.

While President Kennedy made the effort to urge Americans to construct fallout shelters in his speech on the Berlin Crisis stating that "[he] hopes to let every citizen know what steps he can take without delay, so he knows how to protect his family in case of an attack," his efforts fell short.¹¹⁷ Congress then voted to aid one-hundred and sixty-nine million dollars to construct, mark, and stock public fallout shelters in the aftermath of President Kennedy's speech. While the effort to aid Americans for nuclear survival seemed promising, the plans put forward towards the project were considered laughable due to the lack of preparedness and proper refuge to survive nuclear attack.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ John F. Kennedy. "Report to the Nation – Berlin Crisis," 25, July 1961. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/TNC/TNC-258/TNC-258>

¹¹⁸ George, 51, 61. Fallout shelters were not stocked enough to supply the full capacity of the shelter for more than two weeks. Plans that the government put in place were merely plans to save themselves and the president. Many of those plans did not allow for their families to evacuate with them, instead government officials were urged to say 'goodbye' to their families and evacuate.

CONCLUSION

The Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear fallout culture constitute a significant part of twentieth century United States history that will continue to be remembered for many years to come; however, not much is discussed when it comes to the people who lived through it. Historians such as Alice George and Kenneth Rose are making efforts to bring to light the civilian perspective on the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear warfare. The Cuban Missile Crisis is usually studied in a militaristic fashion and can be analyzed in a multitude of different academic lenses.

Throughout this thesis, I have looked at the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear warfare through media outlets and analyzed how with they are able to manipulate and influence the ways in which American citizens viewed the not only the crisis itself but also the ways in which they held themselves in public and the home setting. Propaganda campaigns like the “Red Scare” helped unite the nation in a time of uncertainty and in a time where it was “every man for himself.” Historians like Monica Rankin provide excellent insight into how propaganda effects nations and how it can ultimately aid in obtaining an overall well-rounded narrative of a nation and its efforts to define itself in a time of uncertainty.¹¹⁹

While school curriculum and civil defense films were used as a way to prepare the American people in the event of an attack, it proved to cause fears

¹¹⁹ Monica A Rankin. *¡México, La Patria!: Propaganda and Production during World War II*. Mexican Experience. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.

and anxieties amongst school-aged children. Educational programs like “A is for Atom,” while educational, also displayed language that would otherwise worry those watching of the possible fate of nuclear warfare. Children during this time have a huge impact in the ways we remember the Cuban Missile Crisis because they carry a role in continuing the legacy of the crisis by passing on their versions from generation to generation.

Family roles during this time also seemed to be influenced by the media as well. With shows like *I love Lucy* and *The Twilight Zone*, men and women were influenced into upholding a certain image that portrayed the ideal housewife and husband of the time. Men were expected to uphold not only the role of family protector, but also the role of the supportive and [resent husband. This was demonstrated in the *Dick Van Dyke Show* as well as the *Twilight Zone* where the consequences of failing to be a man are highlighted. As for women, magazine articles and ads would target them in order to influence them to create the “perfect home.” As mothers and wives, it was their responsibility to be the homemakers and establish the home life and family life. Children on the other hand were influenced by the media in other ways. Children’s shows, magazines, comics, and school activities all contained a form of nationalism to encourage children to uphold American ideals.

The way in which the Cuban Missile Crisis as well as nuclear warfare is remembered is also shaped through a media outlook since we are only given half of the full narrative of the days of crisis. Political manipulation played a major part

in the way in which we continue to remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. Museums and research usually paint the political and military history behind the crisis and highlight President Kennedy as the *hero* of the time. But it is also important to account for those who lived through the event and the stress and anxiety the crisis inflicted on them.

Research is still trying to unravel the complete narrative of the Cuban Missile Crisis and how we continue to remember it in public memory. While there is still much to be uncovered on the home front during the thirteen days, historians are slowly discovering more about the daily life in the United States. The research performed throughout this paper is only a small contribution to the remembrance and legacy of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the lives of those who lived through it.

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