

## Sample Research Proposal 1

### Casual Living in Postwar America: The Importance of Abundance during the Cold War

During the 1950s and 1960s, Americans were consuming products at an all-time high. Citizens had access to mass-produced homes with luxury architecture, colorful kitchen appliances and beauty supplies; a casual life that had not yet been experienced. This new space-age time in America was crucial in fighting communism during the Cold War.

The indulgences of casual living of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States were crucial in showing other countries around the world, specifically the Soviet Union, the important effects of democracy and capitalism during the Cold War. There are many key questions that should be asked when researching this topic: How was the U.S. affected by abundance and the “Populuxe” time period after World War II? How did “casual living” show communist and socialist countries, specifically the Soviet Union, what democracy and capitalism can do for a nation? Was this on purpose (government)? Did the U.S. government facilitate (or “propaganda-ize”) the abundance within the country? How did new designs, architecture, and the Populuxe age reflect the time and goals, if any, of the government? What was a typical day like for the working husband? What was the typical day like for the housewife? What was a typical day like for a child? How did everyday lives of Americans during this time affect the way other countries saw the United States? These questions will help me to further understand the importance of casual living and life of abundance in fighting communism during the Cold War.

I will be using many sources to gain information and insight on this topic. Firstly, I will be using the book *Populuxe: The Look and Life of America in the '50s and '60s, from Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters* by Thomas Hine to gain the bulk of information on what life was like during that time. I will also be using the *New York Times* digital archive to find primary sources on the happenings of the 1950s and 1960s, along with advertisements to gain a deeper look into the everyday lives of citizens. Another sources that I may use (I say “may” as I am still figuring out how deep to go into this search) is *Fashion: Ads of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. I think this book could add another piece of the puzzle that fits into the greater picture of what life was like during this time. These are the main sources I plan on using to gain information for my essay.

The casual living and abundance of the '50s and '60s played a crucial role in fighting communism and showing other countries the importance of democracy and capitalism. The Cold War was at its peak during this time. The United States and the Soviet Union were at odds over democracy and communism, among other things, both using nuclear war to threaten the other. This created a war where no physical combat occurred, but the threat of the end of the world still loomed thanks to the nuclear weapons both countries threatened to bestow upon the other. The United States had just finished fighting communist nations in World War II, and for them to give up that fight wasn't an option. While they were not able to fight communism via "hot war," or combat, the United States was able to fight communism on other fronts within their own borders. This is where my research comes in. The abundance that lead to casual living in America showed the Soviet Union the importance of democracy and fought against the evils of communism, the goal of the Cold War.