

Small Town Newspapers, the Vietnam War and the Campaign  
Against American Cities'.

John Robert Anderson

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## Abstract

There have been numerous contributions to the historiography of the Vietnam War. However, few have explored this within the parameters of small town America. This thesis will examine how small town newspaper editors from the 1950s until the 1970s used their newspapers to wage a campaign against American cities. In a departure from existing studies on the city and suburb, during this period, this thesis outlines the rivalry between the city and suburb also occurred between the city and small town. It will look at the use of imagery in the created myth of small town America as a tool of influence to propose that the American town was a long lost origin. The thesis will also explore how editors of small town newspapers connected the message of war to their wider conflict against the cities.

By using a range of newspapers from the city and the town alongside research conducted around town life and documents of federal policy, the study positions itself to answer key questions. The study includes four case study towns found in a variety of locales throughout the United States, chosen in order to produce a greater sample size with increased diversity. Key conclusions for the thesis are also found within the sources from these towns. They highlight how animosity towards the city increased in the 1950s and how two distinctly competing rhetorics emerged. Conclusions can also be drawn on how the editors of these towns attempted to protect their idea of the American heartland embedding it with key ideals such as moral correctness, family values and strong principles of law and order. By attempting to create monolithic communities, these editors expanded the debate of town vs city across two decades encapsulating the Vietnam War, civil rights and patriotism into their rhetoric.

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

## Introduction

The small town is vividly remembered through nostalgic connotations, one of white picket fences and safe streets. This image has not existed forever and had taken small town editors and their supporters time to create. The opportunity presented itself to these supporters from the 1950s to the 1970s to invest in and produce this grand narrative; small town newspapers invested in reiterating that their communities had become perfect utopias and needed to be protected. In a range of towns across America this image became their beacon to the rest of the United States reminding them that in the midst of suburbanisation and city decline the perfect America could still be found; communities such as Casa Grande, Arizona, presented in their newspaper perfect visions of a life they claimed every American aspired to have:

A town of 4,700 people, surrounded by rich farmlands. There were the healthy children, the pleasant safe streets where 'a crime wave is when the police chief catches a kid at a dance with a can of beer.' It was the city-trapped citizens idea of paradise.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis argues how the longstanding conflict of town vs city was deepened as a result of the way editors and supporters in towns across America responded to the escalation and continuation of the Vietnam War. The thesis charts how four small towns across America responded at first to the notions of a divide in the 1950s and the possibility of its decline. Secondly, this thesis considers how the trigger of war in Vietnam re-ignited the debate in small town newspapers, whether influenced by grassroots opinion, growing conservative populism or their own ideas to market the war as a chance to win the overarching debate of town vs city.

This thesis will examine how early divisions between American towns and cities, that before the Vietnam War had existed more as points of contention became notions of divide between the two by the time the war had ended. By looking at four distinct key themes of race relations, economics, patriotism and conservatism the thesis will explore town and city divide, exploring these themes within this growing notion of divide. In addition, the thesis will also detail how this divide came to have broader political consequences when supporters of small towns latched onto the

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<sup>1</sup>. Cynthia Lowry, "A Heartwarming Story about a Small Town," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Mar 29, 1972, 16.

war in order to attempt to shift public opinion in a variety of different ways, from home town patriotic pride to support for Richard Nixon's brand of conservatism. For many editors, newspaper owners, reporters and ordinary townsfolk in some small towns the war represented a chance that had to be taken to prove to the rest of America that their towns still had a place in the identity of the American heartland.

When these communities appeared to be under threat by increasing suburbanisation, civil rights and declining economic opportunities, supporters of all the towns in this study sought out rhetoric which supported their cause. By the summer of 1968, congressional criticism of the war was rising, and the peace movement had begun strengthening after the violence between protesters and police at the Democratic Convention of 1968 in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> 1968/1969 saw a shift in support beginning with the media disaster of the Tet Offensive and ending with harsh criticism after the emergence of reports detailing explicit US troop involvement in the My Lai Massacre the year before. These politically damaging actions had provoked the renewal of the anti-war movement in October and November of 1969, with moratoriums to end the war in Vietnam held. These landmarks in the anti-war movement elucidate that there was a strong anti-war presence that had emerged to dominate the debate on the Vietnam War. However, small town newspaper editors suggested a different picture in rural and small town America; when newspaper editors heard populist conservative rhetoric from politicians such as Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon announcing small towns as the "Forgotten Americans"<sup>3</sup>, many took it as the trigger to invest in the war. By the time the war became americanised in the mid-1960s the notion of a divide between town and city press was clearly evident. In the mill town of Pell City, Alabama, editors manipulated the dangers of a failing war effort, tying Vietnam to their own town interests, leading to a community fearful of losing the war which in turn supported a continued war effort propping up contracts for the local mill. Letters including the anonymous 'From Vietnam' were published in the 'Loom Chatter' the paper's local editorial on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1969 in an effort to continue this mission of linking Vietnam to the small town.

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<sup>2</sup>. George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 6<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 280.

<sup>3</sup>. Richard Nixon, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention" (speech, Miami, FL, August 8, 1968), *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968>.



My fellow Americans, it is you who cause me worry. It is you I doubt. One member of a team, probably the most important team the free world shall ever know, I am deeply troubled. My cheering section had turned against me, booing me and the cause I serve. Part of my bench has gone to the shower and the others are supporting my rivals. My booing followers are part of you, the American people. Who deserted me for the showers?<sup>4</sup>

The narrative proposed by these smaller papers, whether directed in grassroots letters or headline editorials, increasingly conveyed the message that the small town was at war with the ideas and lifestyle of the American city. Whilst the early 1950s highlighted a period of support and increased connections between these towns and cities, as the editorial above highlights, blame and mistrust began to set in. This thesis will not only outline this notion of divide, but examine through issues of race and patriotism how differences between larger cities and their rural counterparts were expressed in their newspapers. The thesis will examine how cities such as New York and Washington, including their media, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* were the primary targets of small town anger; therefore comparisons will be drawn throughout.

As a caveat to this notion of divide and what will be examined in the thesis a comparison of editorials between the mill paper of Pell City and the *New York Times* explores how this notion of divide became connected to the Vietnam War as the small town took the seemingly pro-war position and the large cities the anti-war one. What these two editorials do examine is how this war became very much a literary divide, with the small town press emphasising patriotism and military pride over objective fact-based news reporting. When we compare the letter 'From Vietnam' published in the *Avondale Sun* local editorial to an editorial piece a few days later in the *The New York Times* one can see a clear difference in opinion. Instead of focusing on how the American public had let US servicemen down in their withdrawal of support, the *Times* criticised American support in how it had led to grave abuses in the South Vietnamese regime 'shored up' by the Nixon administration.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>. "From Vietnam," Editorial letter, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jul 14, 1969, 12.

<sup>5</sup>. "Repression in Saigon," Editorial, *Times*, (New York) Jul 19, 1969, 24.

Without question the Thieu-Ky Government uses the words ‘communism,’ ‘neutralism,’ and ‘coalition’ to silence dissent and weaken political and religious opposition. Student peace movements, Buddhist plans for nonviolence and a third solution, and the freedom of the press have been systematically suppressed by an insecure government that relies more on police state tactics and American support than upon true representation and popular support.<sup>6</sup>

Earlier editorials further emphasised this difference in the newspaper on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 1969 demanding a standstill ceasefire and de facto partition of South Vietnam, with elections and meetings in Paris to ratify these.<sup>7</sup> These newspaper editorials elucidate a clear and distinct difference between editors in New York and Pell City, differences that the small town editors and supporters embraced. Their departure assisted them in the growth of their rhetoric; firstly by further fuelling their message to their readers that there was a clear difference between them and city folk; and secondly their departure from big city reporting was celebrated as they rose to challenge these national newspapers. To reassert their image these newspaper editors and those who had bought into their message realised they had to emphasise their differences and highlight the cities and their media’s failures. They were going to become the alternative, siding with conservative politicians such as Nixon they would hunt out the eastern media whom they charged as complainers.<sup>8</sup>

### Aims of the Thesis

This thesis examines the way small town editors and newspapers across the U.S. reported the Vietnam War in a way that manoeuvred America’s town populace against these urban metropolises. The small town was reimagined in the 1950s by those who sought to create a perfect utopia. The decline of the city, caused by white flight and by many rich Americans moving money out presented these towns with a unique opportunity for growth and redefinition; while they also feared the perceived threat in the growth of the suburbs. This work adds originality to this debate of city versus suburb as it differs from existing works such as *The New Suburban History*

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<sup>6</sup> “Repression in Saigon,” 24.

<sup>7</sup> Sanford Gottlieb, “Rule in South Vietnam,” *Times*, (New York) Jul 14, 1969, 34.

<sup>8</sup> “Congress impairs it’s own argument?,” Editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Aug 26, 1971, 15.

by Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue. Instead, it argues that this debate involved an almost one-sided attack by small town newspapers on their city counterparts and the cities they were produced in. It questions why town editors positioned the debate in this way, suggesting that supporters adopted a unique concept that imagined the small town as the American heartland. Throughout the mid-1950s until the early 1970s supporters of this American heartland narrative attempted through the use of local media to develop particular feelings about their small towns as the locations of the 'true America'. The Vietnam War only presented further opportunity for this; by the time the United States had entered the Vietnam War, town editorials had begun to find major benefits in the United States being at war. In some towns increased contracts to produce weapons and armour rejuvenated town economies, others experienced the expansion of existing military bases, thereby drawing money into the local economy.

In addition to these four key factors and the argument of how the longstanding conflict was deepened by the war; this study aims to develop more academic thinking around ideas present in the small town and attempt to demystify some of the past literary treatment. Currently, successful bestselling books have created a split between academic handling of the subject and the literary/popular fiction treatment. Whilst academics present a more realistic image of small town America it has often been overlooked in favour of a glorified version of small towns. A range of literacy books have popularised this image. In travel writing Bill Bryson searches for this perfect community: "One of the things I was looking for on this trip was the perfect town. I've always felt certain that somewhere out there in America it must exist".<sup>9</sup> Others too have searched for this utopia, the sports book *Friday Night Lights* by H.G. Bissinger also investigates this mythical town:

I went in search of the Friday night lights, to find a town where they brightly blazed that lay beyond the East Coast and the grip of the big cities, a place that people had to pull out an atlas to find and had seen better times, a real America.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>. Bill Bryson, *The Lost Continent: Travels in Small-Town America* (London: Black Swan, 2015), 57.

<sup>10</sup>. H. G. Bissinger, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, A Team, and a Dream*: (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2005), xi.

All that these works have done for small town America is further immortalise the constructed myth, serving to make many believe that small town America is the real heartland, more American and desirable than other locations. This study will readjust this showing the origins of this myth and how individuals have manipulated its content. The myth of the small town was re-imagined in the 1950s to one of exclusivity, discrimination and contradictions behind a façade, with writers like Joyce Dennys outlining the supposed greater connection that all small towns have with one another: “Living in a small town is like living in a large family of rather uncongenial relations. Sometimes it’s fun, and sometimes it’s perfectly awful, but it’s always good for you. People in large towns are like only-children”.<sup>11</sup> This façade will be examined and tested to question if small town America was anything more real than the cities they competed against. The thesis will ultimately judge and attempt to deconstruct this myth for what it was, a tool used by supporters of the small town to impose their ideas. By combining research on towns, political attitudes held within their media and the development of these towns across a 25 year cycle, this work aims to set out and dispute if this ‘real America’ existed.

Crucial to this study is the importance of what these aims and sources can deliver with the broader argument of small town America. One should consider that these newspapers do not represent the total views in these locations; even in a small town, it would be impossible to determine the entire population’s beliefs. Whilst these towns have all been chosen for key reasons that the methodology will expand upon, it is important to note that this study does not aim to package all of these towns as interchangeable small towns further influencing and creating their myth. Instead, while they all do possess similar qualities part of this study highlights that even within these four towns there is no uniform central message produced. The four communities of Casa Grande in Arizona, Belleville: Kansas, Pell City: Alabama, and Orange City: Iowa all represent vastly different towns; while their newspapers all presented rhetoric in support of the war and attempted to convince readers of their ideas, they all had different positions. For some towns, it was evident that political muscle was being exercised from the top-down in order to convince readers, whereas other towns press were swayed by their readership. In Pell City, for

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<sup>11</sup>. Joyce Dennys, *Henrietta Sees it Through: More News from the Home Front 1942-1945* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 124.

example, the Avondale Sun served as the main newspaper and with the majority of the town working for the mill<sup>12</sup> it successfully enshrined its versions of patriotism and self-sufficiency akin to the war as it connected town prosperity to its continued success. However, in other towns such as Orange City, a more divided jobs market and no company-owned paper allowed for a greater range of active voices presenting a disjointed town which by the late-1960s had rebelled against the notion of divide.

This overview provides two overarching questions that will be answered throughout the project. i) How did small town attitudes towards the war relate to domestic small town attitudes towards big cities? ii) How did editors and political actors attempt in the wake of the Vietnam War to trigger feelings about the small town and its importance to American society?

#### The Historiography of the War and Small Town.

When one begins to examine the academic literature based on small town America, its relation to the Vietnam war and to political shift in the 1960s and 1970s in these communities, one finds a large historiography but few explicit works that attempt to define the position that existed between rural and urban America. This makes this thesis, not just significant in developing the narrative, but a vital addition to existing works on how small towns were used to further the goals and ideas of others. The thesis also proves to be essential to this historiography as it develops chronologically how Americanisation of the Vietnam War intersected with attitudes towards civil rights, Richard Nixon's brand of conservatism and fears of the city, becoming a trigger for conservative/pro-war/pro-town agendas to be stressed to those living in small towns across America.

To develop this thesis, two key areas of existing historiography must be examined. Firstly, the narrative of this city, suburb and town divide that features as an important answer to why supporters of the town stressed this divide to their communities, persuading them that the cities and national press were inherently different to the small town. Secondly, how the four key areas of race relations, economics, populist conservative movements, and patriotism currently affect the debates on small town

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<sup>12</sup>. "31<sup>st</sup> Inspection-Pell City," Article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) May 5, 1952, 6.

America within the period of the Vietnam War, highlighting areas that this essay can expand upon.

The existing historiography on cities remains vital to this work. This study adds nuance to our existing understanding of the urban crisis and small town America's role in this debate. Sugrue and Kruse argue in *The New Suburban History* that their work explores; "the tensions that divided suburbs as they competed for business, development, and investment in the politically and socioeconomically fragmented metropolis".<sup>13</sup> Additionally, they state that this has intertwined the histories of cities and suburbs even though municipal boundaries kept them separate".<sup>14</sup> This interconnecting link, however, has a third strand that has received at this point far less attention; the small town is as much connected to the city and suburb in relation to the events of white flight and decline of the cities in 1950s America. This essay will argue how small town editors manipulated urban unrest and later the Vietnam War into developing fears of the black community and those who appeared different; it will show how editors reported upon ideals of patriotism and community cohesion to enshrine their communities in conservative anti-urbanite propaganda. The work of Lisa McGirr will also be further explored by this thesis developing her argument on grassroots suburban conservatism and the emerging fear that; "the world's first 'Christian Republic' was in danger";<sup>15</sup> That it was on a course, in the eyes of suburban conservatives, "of political, economic and moral decline, a course steered by the nation's liberals".<sup>16</sup> This thesis will argue that it was not just suburban conservatives who feared this change but those same citizens who lived in small town America, with the added fear that after the decline of American cities they would be next if nothing was done.

Running concurrently with these issues was the Civil Rights Movement and the divide between inner city black communities and white suburbia. Scholars have pinpointed the causes of urban black riots due to the de facto discrimination they faced in employment, housing and education, and the fact that stable jobs and

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<sup>13</sup>. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, ed. *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>14</sup>. Kruse and Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*, 6.

<sup>15</sup>. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>16</sup>. McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 4.

opportunities were beyond their reach.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Sugrue assesses that: “Residence in the inner city became a self-perpetuating stigma. Increasingly joblessness and the decaying infrastructure of inner-city neighbourhoods, reinforced white stereotypes of black people, families and communities”,<sup>18</sup> thus allowing editors and supporters in mainly white small towns to build upon existing fears. Many citizens within small town America began to associate black urban communities as trouble, this was accentuated by the events of the Watts Riots, ultimately leading to panic about the crisis in the nation’s cities, and the demands by neoconservatives to reduce investments because of the actions of the African American community.<sup>19</sup> Whilst this piece of work will outline these causes; it will also argue and develop the stigma Sugrue discusses and nuance the debate around its use by editors in small town America to link urban minorities to trouble and crime. Small town editors relied upon strategic racism similar to accounts cited in the work of Ian Haney-Lopez’s: *Dog Whistle Politics*. Hanley-Lopez hypothesised that race-baiting existed within the voting public of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Just as Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater and George Wallace used covert racism as “a strategic manipulation of racial ideals in pursuit of political power”,<sup>20</sup> So too did small town editors by; “adopting racism to protect their advantages and to pursue additional interests”,<sup>21</sup> an idea that will be reflected upon throughout the essay as town editors attempted to implement these ideas to enshrine either community cohesion or disapproval of urban areas. Editors such as those in the town of Belleville used covert racism in a number of ways, denouncing federal aid budgets that they stated solely benefited urban areas at a cost to them in taxes hampering their own chance of improvements.<sup>22</sup> Other threats, including the decline of traditional values and family conservatism, ignited local fears appearing evident in a number of towns that this study will focus upon directing attention to these manipulations. This study will also

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<sup>17</sup>. David Farber and Veth Bailey, *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 267.

<sup>18</sup>. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Post War Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>19</sup>. Greg Dickinson, *Suburban Dreams: Imaging and Building the Good Life* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2015), 33.

<sup>20</sup>. Ian Haney-Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals have Reinvented Racism & Wreaked the Middle Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 49.

<sup>21</sup>. Haney-Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 49.

<sup>22</sup>. “Billions For Benefits,” Editorial, *Telescope* (Belleville) Mar 10, 1966, 9.

provide further insight into the use of dog whistle politics<sup>23</sup> by smaller local actors in their attempts to stoke small town fears.

The limited works that account for small town America and its journey through the war such as Rick Perlstein's *Nixonland* currently do so through national events such as the Richard Nixon election campaign. They attest that these communities supported the war out of necessity as following President Nixon's Silent Majority gave them the chance to combat the rise of counterculture and put an end to disrespect against the flag.<sup>24</sup> They argue that along with small town America, suburbanites and the Republican business class were joined as one: "the White House had discovered the magic incantation to join them as one. Nixonities imagined no limit to the power of this new majority".<sup>25</sup> This thesis does not doubt that Nixon's Silent Majority campaign was a major factor but suggests that others things influenced town editors when they published pro-war stories. The thesis here moves away from Nixon courting small towns, switching focus to how the small town editors found favour with the identity of the Silent Majority. The dissertation defines that the relationship was more akin to town editors hearing speeches and statements from political, sporting, academic, cultural and business leaders and adapting their thoughts to the towns supposed cause. A number of ideas also appear to have attracted towns towards the pro-war movement and the broader connotations of the Silent Majority: these ranged from enhanced fears of limited social progression in the wake of increased social and economic mobility of African Americans, to attempting to establish small town America as the American heartland. Understanding the role of conservatism especially populist conservative rhetoric within this thesis is vital as for many supporters who deepened the longstanding conflict of town and city, these conservative notions were used to emphasise their difference within this divide.

The longstanding divide between town and city was often reflected throughout the period in economic arguments. While small town newspapers described their communities as self-sufficient and independent, a claim that propagated the notion

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<sup>23</sup>. Haney-Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup>. Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 499.

<sup>25</sup>. Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 499.



that these communities had withstood the test of time, works by Margaret Nelson and Joan Smith trouble this myth. By examining the development on an economic level of a county in Vermont, Nelson and Smith argue that wages were low at the start of 1960 for workers in the county who were earning only 64% of the average wage.<sup>26</sup> They then consider how this changed as companies looked for a less expensive workforce. Rural counties in Vermont, therefore, became prime areas for development and if a large company could be attracted, this produced enormous benefits.<sup>27</sup> However what is missing from this analysis is the observation in this work that as long as the war and heartland dream seemed an achievable goal in the mind-set of a town community, economic issues remained positive in local newspapers. This notion is supported by many of the towns in the study, Christian Appy in his book *Working-Class War* outlines: “those who fought and died in Vietnam were overwhelmingly drawn from the bottom half of the American social structure”.<sup>28</sup> Pell City in Alabama was one of these working class towns with 40% of families in the town living below \$3000 dollars a year.<sup>29</sup> When compared to the national median of \$5,600 dollars a year in 1960,<sup>30</sup> Pell City understandably faced major problems related to rural poverty. The war in Vietnam was positioned as the great deliverer of jobs and improved contracts for the town’s mill, manufacturing clothes for the troops gave Pell City’s editorial staff merit to their claim.<sup>31</sup> Only as the war became to be seen as a loss by the late 1960s did issues in the Rust Belt and Sun Belt seem to emerge in print. In the Sun Belt, the growth of industry brought more workers into skilled labour and thus gave more the ability to provide better lives for their children. Alternatively, in Rust Belt communities the growth of globalised markets eroded their economies; ‘Asian Tigers’ such as South Korea and Singapore created new competition for industrial towns and cities in the Rust Belt and could produce products at a fraction of the cost.<sup>32</sup> This coupled with the loss in the Vietnam War and the decline in prospects created, within some communities, a “unified message:

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<sup>26</sup>. Margaret K. Nelson and Joan Smith, *Working Hard and Making Do: Surviving in Small Town America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 22.

<sup>27</sup>. Nelson and Smith, *Working Hard and Making Do*, 22-23.

<sup>28</sup>. Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 12.

<sup>29</sup>. U.S Department of Commerce, Census of the Population: 1960 (Alabama) A61-9750, 1961, 117

<sup>30</sup>. U.S Department of Commerce, Consumer Income: 1960 Series P-60, No.36, 1961, 1

<sup>31</sup>. “An Industry at War,” Article, *Sun*, (Avondale) Nov 7, 1966, 3.

<sup>32</sup>. William M. Bowen, *The Road Through the Rust Belt: From Preeminence to Decline to Prosperity* (Kalamazoo: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2014), 11.

save yourself or face irrelevance”.<sup>33</sup> Economics throughout this thesis will have widespread implications forming early arguments between town and city and constantly being a factor in the notion of divide between the two. Where this study adds to these existing debates is that it highlights how individuals in a number of different towns allied economic advantages to expanding combat operations in Vietnam. These benefits of contracts and jobs became widespread in town reported media, furthering the notion of divide between town and city creating greater political consequences.

Finally regarding the four key factors and their impact on this notion of divide, patriotism in connection with community cohesion is the easiest to find within these four communities. Currently, most academic literature on the subject focuses on either those author James Schmidt who questioned the war in Vietnam, finding the image of an evil enemy hard to believe,<sup>34</sup> or those in larger pro-war groups such as Sandra Scanlon considers. Scanlon’s book *The Pro-War Movement* does give shape to many of the patriotic arguments developed in this thesis especially the notion of how conservatives: “succeeded in fostering a powerful political association between their continued support of the war and American patriotism”.<sup>35</sup> By exploring this debate within the elements of small towns this essay will account for the large support in the form of letters, poems and articles declaring the successes of the campaign in Vietnam. Unlike foreign wars such as Russia’s war in Chechnya when Russian mothers began to protest on discovery of the fate of their conscript sons,<sup>36</sup> the Vietnam War was unique for these towns. Sources such as ‘*From Vietnam*’ (the editorial letter at the start of the piece) outline that many townspeople had been convinced to gamble. The editors who had reported that the Vietnam War was vital to the opportunity of reasserting themselves in the political atmosphere intensified the conflict to such an extent that patriotism became vital to their arguments. The editors and communities built their men into heroes, and whilst never expressing their true intentions of what winning the war meant, they made it their mission to

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<sup>33</sup>. Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 18.

<sup>34</sup>. James Schmidt, *Victory Rests with the Lord: God in the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Westbow Press, 2012), 99.

<sup>35</sup>. Sandra Scanlon, *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>36</sup>. Anne Le Huerou et al, *Chechnya at War and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 65.

support the war in Vietnam; this ultimately led to a depression upon the realisation that they had gained relatively nothing from Vietnam, only broken communities. Few studies before have considered how these small towns in America dealt with the impact of loss and while this thesis will not fully explore this, it will seek to explain and examine in the epilogue, the impact of war upon these towns. However, whilst little work has been based around small town America and their losses, studies have been conducted on loss in Vietnam on a national scope. Arthur Neal's work on national trauma is particularly important; he stated that it was not the human suffering and deaths alone that made Vietnam a national trauma as over 50,000 troops were killed in Korea; the trauma developed because of how polarised the nation became with a significant number of Americans viewing the war as immoral.<sup>37</sup> Due to this, citizens of the nation began to view deaths in Vietnam as unnecessary and that the government wasted young lives. These attitudes would only fully emerge in the towns of this study once the collective community monolith of their newspaper editors had been broken, either by the early 1970s or for some towns at the end of the war.

The media has an expansive historiography in connection to the Vietnam War with key debates surrounding whether the media drove or was influenced by public opinion and the role of the media in the conflict. Historians have also considered the importance of Vietnam as the first televised war. Daniel Hallin in his book *The Uncensored War* was one of the first to outline the effect the media had on the conflict: "The Vietnam War was complicated by factors that had never before occurred in America's conduct of war. The American news media had come to dominate domestic opinion about its purpose and conduct".<sup>38</sup> This idea allies itself to Marshall McLuhan's hypothesis on the Vietnam War that the public became part of the war, and that the main actions of the war were fought in the American home.<sup>39</sup> With the introduction of television many Americans, for the first time, saw the graphic images of war and began to question if American ideals were being upheld. These debates on mass communication highlight the fact that the media, during the

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<sup>37</sup>. Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and the Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* (Armark: M.E Sharpe, 1998), 8.

<sup>38</sup>. Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>39</sup>. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 134.

Vietnam War, had the power to influence and to a degree alter public attitudes. However, scholars Diana Mutz and Paul Martin argue differently, that with mass communication “people selectively expose themselves to like-minded media content”.<sup>40</sup> One can argue that to an extent this happened, liberal oriented citizens were far more likely to read the *New York Times* as this became more opposed to the conflict over more pro-war media. This assessment of choice, however, falls short when compared to the small town newspaper. Often there was only one local paper dependent upon town support. It would be unlikely that the views of the township would not be reflected or twisted to reflect this stance over time. Sam Lebovic’s work is helpful in this respect as he claimed newspapers did not straightforwardly produce democratic public opinion choosing what information to include and what to omit.<sup>41</sup> This clearly accounts for the agenda that many small town editors in this study implemented in their papers. By adapting coverage an editor, in an attempt to create a collective concept, removed dissenting voices resulting in a polarisation of views, from a balanced position to an opinionated one.

It is important to look at small town newspapers in this study as a nuance to the already large media historiography; few historians have investigated how small town American papers reported on the conflict. There are relatively few works that do look at small town America in this period; one example is Kyle Longley’s *The Morenci Marines*. These works focus on the human stories of the conflict, with no direction to report the developing divide between national press and local newspapers on the conflict. In the debate of the media, this thesis will detail how editors and owners reporting on the conflict developed broader political consequences.

### Key Terms

The thesis will rely upon three recurring key terms that if unexplained could lead to confusion within the piece, defining them here will provide for greater engagement with the piece. These will include: the myth of the American heartland, the idea of manipulation and the sense of what was under threat in traditional values.

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<sup>40</sup>. Diana C. Mutz and Paul S. Martin, “Facilitating Communication across Lines of Political Difference: The Role of Mass Media,” *The American Political Science Review* 95 no.1 (2001):98, accessed Nov 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3117631>.

<sup>41</sup>. J. Russomanno, “Peer Reviewed Journal,” review of *Free Speech and Unfree News: The Paradox of Press Freedom In America*, by. Sam Lebovic, *Journalism and Mass Communication* 93.4 (2016): 1167.

Firstly the myth of the American heartland was the idea that small town America was a utopian position. This proposed that small towns should be seen through the lens of monomythic Eden, one in which author Charles L. Sanford stated that it has been “the most powerful and comprehensive organizing force in American Culture”.<sup>42</sup> This was often argued as being the end goal by its supporters in the study.

The idea of manipulation is one of great complexity within this debate, as even with the number of sources held on these towns it is virtually impossible to define if editors manipulated the populace or if grassroots support influenced their reporting. However, what can be stated is that these editors and owners had agendas that they continued to report on and thus when the trigger of the Vietnam War emerged many of these newspapers continued forceful attacks on issues they had stressed as declining the moral standard of the United States. For 15 years J. Craig Smith, editor/owner of the Avondale Sun, set out his agenda of small town/pro war rhetoric in an attempt to influence his readership. In the early 1960s he pronounced Eisenhower’s conservatism as the ‘basic national purpose’<sup>43</sup>; in the late 1960s he demanded that the United States should stop fighting a limited war in Vietnam and enter fully into the conflict,<sup>44</sup> and in the early 1970s he confronted vice president of the *New York Times* James Reston stating that all his newspaper does is: “try to undermine everything our President is trying to do. They don’t say what they would do if they had the responsibility”.<sup>45</sup> For historical actors like J. Craig Smith it is impossible to state he had no agenda against the city, liberals and large newspapers; what it is possible to state is if he had assumed these ideas himself or retained them from his readership, as is for many of the owners and editors in these towns.

The idea of American Traditional values was often positioned as the values threatened by urbanites. Here broadly conservative policies such as family values

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<sup>42</sup>. John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2002), 23.

<sup>43</sup>. “My Purpose,” Editorial, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jan 11, 1960, 2.

<sup>44</sup>. “We Are Entitled To Know Why We Don’t Win The War In Vietnam,” Editorial, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jul 31, 1967, 2.

<sup>45</sup>. “What Would They Do,” Editorial, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jun 29, 1970, 2.

and policies that were tough on crime were argued to be under threat; if nothing was done, then these ideas would collapse in on themselves.

### Methodology

The sources in this study primarily revolve around small town newspapers, consisting of articles from 1950-1980 explaining the journey of how the city vs town debate changed over time and came to have broader political consequences.

This treatment allows for something different and new to be considered in the debate of how small town America was impacted upon by fear, influence, opportunity and conflict. It is important to focus on throughout the study that these towns were certainly not monolithic, despite editors and supporters seeking to present it as such. Editors declared themselves in this way as it was vital to their end goals as this enabled them to show a more united front of opposition to their fears of ethnic minorities and the city but also attempt to expound that their communities were hawkish utopias. Attempting to create these utopias ultimately needed the perception of a collective mindset for them to succeed. Political scholar David L. Martin argues that because sociologists have often treated these towns as overly simplistic structures, it has allowed for them to be seen as more homogeneous structures.<sup>46</sup> The group of newspaper sources is therefore of importance as they collectively deliver new insight into this monolithic relationship. They outline how editors from different small towns used their newspapers to develop and maintain divides within their communities against what they sought to be potential threats. It is vital to remember that these newspapers, whilst claiming they spoke for a town, often were fewer than ten individuals working to the demands of their editor or owner.

To answer the questions of this study, archival data from the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University will be used alongside local newspaper archives from the selected case study towns. Together with oral history interviews, state department census data and federal government data these sources will allow for a greater development of town ideas. Furthermore, they allow for a broader discussion on how the influencing of events in the war such as the Tet offensive were conducted

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<sup>46</sup> David L. Martin, *Running City Hall: Municipal Administration* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1990), 50.

by editors and how this affected the great consensus. By comparing this to the attitudes of the major papers such as *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Post* comparisons can be made not against the city as a whole but on the two competing narratives that developed. Comparing the notion of a rural/urban divide between newspapers over time and how the trigger of the Vietnam War held political consequences on both patriotism and economics.

While this diverse source base allows for the study of numerous themes within these towns, some of these, for instance, entertainment and sport have to be omitted in order for a clearer argument to be presented on race relations, economics, patriotism and conservative agenda. However, nationally and locally; these four themes are central to the wider debate of town vs city and their examination allows this thesis to truly define how reporting of this notion of divide affected national politics.

One may question what relevance examining small town America adds to the historiography of the Vietnam War; many works have explored the issues of class in the war and issues of race, and others have explored ideas based upon urban centres where the majority of protests took place. Whilst there are many journal articles<sup>47</sup> and books arguing the effect of protest on urban cities there is little on how urban communities like their small town counterparts were affected by these competing rhetorics. It is important to look at these towns because historians and scholars have largely focused upon other avenues.<sup>48</sup> The impact that the Vietnam War had upon rural communities was an extension of the mission of the conflict that ultimately failed in re-defining a new American heartland. This study examines the way the Vietnam War can be viewed not just as a conflict that divided America, but as a conflict that had lasting social and economic impacts on small town America. The effect of the Vietnam War had a major influence on American society and this study aims to nuance scholars' works in urban and suburban history connecting rural attitudes within their studies to a wider source base. The study also depicts how important the role of the Vietnam War became to these editors/owners as the

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<sup>47</sup>. Philip E. Catton, "Refighting Vietnam in the History Books: The Historiography of the War," *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (2004): 7-11.

<sup>48</sup>. George W. Hopkins, "Historians and the Vietnam War: The Conflict Over Interpretations Continues," *Studies in Popular Culture* 23, no. 2 (2000): 99-108.

war became a trigger to their reporting, seeming to bring the small town/ big city debate into the forefront of American society.

One possibility as to why small town America has not been focused upon in relation to the conflict might be because of the lack of readily available source material, many local town archives have only been digitised within the past five years and still today many more are not. Another limitation is in outlining the town in a social and political environment; the existence of oral interviews and town reports vary from town to town, ultimately making it difficult for one to understand the town outside of the local paper. This can be overcome by assessing other sources, which this study has done; however, many towns simply have failed to keep records of social situations that developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, many veterans who fought in the conflict and returned to these towns wished to forget the conflict, many have refused interviews with oral history reviewers<sup>49</sup> and even local researchers.<sup>50</sup> Unlike the veterans of world war two, the veterans of Vietnam faced varying response to their service; few Vietnam veterans from these towns have chosen to discuss their experiences even in relation to college protests or town actions towards the war.

This study will focus on four case study towns all representing different states, demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds. In this study no town will have a population of above twenty six thousand people, this is to limit the study to smaller communities that all had at least one local paper. This study also recognises that at times these towns can blur together, this often serves to highlight how these towns could present similar language-based arguments on why they were quintessentially American. The study notes that whilst these towns do possess similarities that draw comparisons, within the towns themselves, they were all motivated by a range of influences when they produced their town centric rhetoric. Case study towns are important to this project, as examining them through the course of the war will explore how editors attempted to continue to subscribe to their created myth and in turn fuel racist and negative attitudes to those they perceived as different or a threat. The chosen towns are Casa Grande in Arizona, Belleville: Kansas, Pell City:

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<sup>49</sup>. V.H. Markle, *Forgotten People, Forgotten Times* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2014), 129.

<sup>50</sup>. Deb Hadachek, email message to the author, April 28, 2016.



Alabama and Orange City: Iowa. The study will assess these towns from a period of 1950 to 1980 exploring their attempts to create a utopia.

### Case Study Towns

For this study to be understood it is first important to contemplate what small town America is and how a town in the Arizona desert has common interests with a town in Agricultural Iowa. Their shared experiences, in fact, connect these towns during the 1950s to 1980s; they were all affected by the way their town newspaper editor and their supporters attempted to influence their communities into believing that they were somewhat more American than elsewhere.

Casa Grande, a town of 8311 residents by 1960,<sup>51</sup> was chosen for this study as it represents a town that very much supported the war due to political bias. During the early years of the conflict the town presented, in its local paper *The Casa Grande Dispatch*, a united front and on behalf of the town demanded answers on why the United States entered the war. It was owned by a local media family, the Kramer's, who had purchased the paper in 1962 and evolved it from a fortnightly paper to a weekly one.<sup>52</sup> *The Dispatch* was deeply Republican and the first of the papers to praise the election of President Nixon and argued that he would bring change to the conflict; by the mid-1970s, they continued to purport his viewpoint. They are important to the study as in many ways Casa Grande was a town that subscribed to the mission of the American heartland. Editor Donovan Kramer fuelled fears by printing cartoons of students being controlled by new leftists and their violent ways;<sup>53</sup> his grassroots opinion polls discussed the idea of the detached American who existed in New York unwilling to rescue a woman in need.<sup>54</sup> All the while his manipulations pushed the need for the Silent Majority to reaffirm American beliefs.

Belleville highlights many of the working class socioeconomic issues of a Rust Belt community and their difficulty in maintaining relevance in a growing America. The town in the 1960s and 1970s was trying to find its position in the United States, its 2,940 residents<sup>55</sup> incorporated many others from the surrounding area into the town,

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<sup>51</sup>. U.S Department of Commerce, Census of the Population: 1960 (Arizona) A61-9750, 1961, 52.

<sup>52</sup>. Dawn Snell, *Casa Grande* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 70.

<sup>53</sup>. "Being Walked by His Dog," Cartoon, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) May 31, 1967, 4.

<sup>54</sup>. "Grassroots Opinion," Editorial, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jul 20, 1970, 4.

<sup>55</sup>. U.S Department of Commerce, Census of the Population: 1960 (Kansas) A61-9750, 1961, 35.

becoming a beacon for trade between locals and farmers. Unlike Casa Grande, Belleville's relation to the war and the Silent Majority consensus was not just a political one; for them, victory in Vietnam was argued as the chance to reaffirm that the age of traditional values was the best version of America. Their editor Merle M. Miller had been editor of the newspaper from the mid-1950s,<sup>56</sup> until the mid-1980s,<sup>57</sup> this span had given Miller time to impose his views upon the town of Belleville. He also stoked fears with editorials containing statements such as "socialists and communists, have taken many of the freedoms from Europeans. We, too, have lost some of our freedoms".<sup>58</sup>

The majority of the town worked for Avondale Mill in Pell City and strongly supported the conflict due to the mill manufacturing a number of garments and holding a number of government contracts throughout the war. For many in Pell City initially, the war was welcomed as it provided the mill with more work from the armed forces. However, as more and more locals were drafted, instead of dissenting about the war as many national papers decided to, the community actually increased their support for the conflict. J. Craig Smith, president and associate editor of the mill and newspaper who held all the power within the paper, published a consistent view of the conflict as an international struggle against communism. His anti-communist editorials argued, on a return trip from China, that communism only wanted to destroy America: "People of the World, Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors".<sup>59</sup> These editorials proved to be popular, with circulation growing from 10,000 in 1956 to 15,000 by 1968.<sup>60</sup>

Being an agricultural community, the Vietnam War brought generational divide to Orange City. In a town of 2,707,<sup>61</sup> with the adjoining town of Sioux Center and its population of 2,275,<sup>62</sup> this area represents within the study one of the largest agricultural locales. For this location in North-Western Iowa, the war in Vietnam seemed very distant, early reports focused primarily on the few individuals who had

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<sup>56</sup>. "Legals," Column, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Oct 10, 1957, 15.

<sup>57</sup>. Representative Asks Questionnaire be published," Letters to the Editor, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Jan 28, 1982, 10.

<sup>58</sup>. "Must Keep Our Freedom," Editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) May 16, 1968, 9.

<sup>59</sup>. "A Visit to Communist Headquarters in Hong Kong," Editorial, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Aug 10, 1970, 2.

<sup>60</sup>. "Avondale Sun," Information, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Oct 21, 1968, 2.

<sup>61</sup>. U.S Department of Commerce, Census of the Population: 1960 (Iowa) A61-9750, 1961, 26.

<sup>62</sup>. U.S Department of Commerce, Census of the Population: 1960 (Iowa) A61-9750, 1961, 27.

been sent there and often key events in the conflict were not discussed. The war brought change to this community; while one of these changes was the decline in young people staying in small town America, for Orange City generational divide developed into a battle between the young and old. Fundamentally, the old supported the war, while the young tried to halt it. For many older citizens, they now saw the loss of their young to the big city or college as the end of their ideals and values, for them these liberal colleges were responsible for all the problems in the United States and the decline in patriotism which was weakening America. By reasserting traditional ideas and their imagined utopia the newspapers of both towns attempted to re-assert their identities.

These sources will show that vast swathes of these small towns supported the war in Vietnam or were influenced into supporting it or alternatively silenced. Populist concepts such as Nixon's Silent Majority were viewed as the chance to maintain their relevance in an ever expanding America. This thesis will highlight the complexity of these populist factions of support; these four towns all had different reasons for supporting the conflict but they all arrived at the same position when the conflict began.

### Chapter Outline

Chapter one demonstrates the existing dispute between town and city and how various sections of society continued this dispute during the 1950s. This chapter also provides vital evidence allowing the reader to understand how important the war would become a trigger to the debate, as without it the dispute could have disappeared. Chapter two focuses on the years 1964-1967, revealing the ways commentators based in small towns sought to define urban communities as the source of American ills. It highlights how the initial Americanisation of the war revitalised their claims and allowed a shift in the debate to outline the benefits of war to both the towns and the wider debate. Chapter three focuses on an initial period of success under Nixon and perceived victory of the small town heartland dream, to the time when the war became seen as a failure (1970-1972). During this time the notion of failure began to change the mindset of some communities as they began to believe that the war and monolithic sense of community was damaging their town. Editors in other towns counteracted this by moving further towards conservative

rhetoric as they sought political champions. Finally, the epilogue concludes with what the ultimate political consequences were for these towns and the struggles that the mission to create the American heartland had delivered.

The chapters each go through a devised chronological structure in order to show the progression of the notion of divide between town and city over the course of time and pre-war/post-war impacts and effects. This structure proves the most successful at developing the connotations of how the reporting of these newspapers lead to a deepening divide. This approach also allows for deeper examinations of how issues involving race relations were reported to towns over an extended period of time; this finally drives the narrative towards the latter chapters of how the four factors affected broader political outlooks and then extended the divide during the Nixon era of conservative consensus.

The Vietnam War has a large and expansive historiography with a range of different interpretations and arguments on the conflict. The war “remains the most significant political experience for an entire American generation”,<sup>63</sup> and this possibly is the reason so many works have been produced. This study aims to develop the debate on how supporters of the small town influenced the war in Vietnam into a national mission that would lead to their survival. It also aims to account for the development of a rural versus city rhetoric that would expand from the 1950s until the end of the war and the development of small town shame after the outcome of the conflict.

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<sup>63</sup>. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 167.

## **Chapter 1: Cooking of Ideas: Bitterness between Small Towns and Cities**

If there was just some way to get out of this hole, sighed Ben. How I'd love to get away from Bigtown and settle down in Smalltown – for the rest of my life.<sup>64</sup>

Between 1950 and 1973 America found itself at war, not just on the battlefields of Korea, Lebanon and Vietnam, but at home too. This period signalled the journey of conflict between both town and city and their respective supporters. Small town supporters challenged national cities to re-impose the notion that their version of Americana was the heartland Americans longed for. The above statement is one of many written by small town editors and journalists of the time portraying the unhappiness, dread and despair felt by their big city cousins.

These communities were persuaded to believe that modernisation had gone too far in the cities, with family values being abandoned in favour of gross evils and corruptions that represented city life. Editors and their allies, therefore, began to position their towns as the opposite declaring only the small town with truth and honesty can combat these ills.<sup>65</sup> Some communities feared the growth in the Civil Rights Movement would bring an end to their upward social mobility and any political agenda they sought, eventually bringing crime related problems from the city to their communities. This notion of divide between city and town was furthered by the idealisation of small town America envisioned in Main Street, which symbolised a nostalgic retreat from the decadence of the noir city.<sup>66</sup> Contrasting the modern cosmopolitan bright lights of New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, small town America proposed a counterview, which will be examined within this chapter.

This chapter will explore some of the origins of this dispute between towns and cities and how the divide became more prominent in the 1950s. To distinguish how this divide began to take effect on these towns four factors will be examined: of race relations, economics, patriotism/family values and conservatism. These themes will detail how supporters increased the divide in order to create a nostalgic traditional

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<sup>64</sup>. Charles P. Welkel, "Life In a Small Town," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Dec 13, 1967, 4.

<sup>65</sup>. "Rev, Elias Jones Gives Report On General Assembly In New York," Article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jun 5, 1952, 8.

<sup>66</sup>. Eric Avlia, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 113.

mythical view of the small town. By also examining how these newspapers connected these themes to problems for their community in how civil rights became associated with city problems and how community pride was represented as a stalwart of the small town. The chapter will fundamentally demonstrate how this long standing dispute became a divide. Finally, the chapter will outline how without the Americanisation of the Vietnam War acting as a catalyst, the dispute could have withered.

Whilst it should be noted that these towns do not think as one monolithic machine in their disdain towards the big city, they all present a clear rivalry against major cities. They claim the cities do not represent or understand them and most importantly have forgotten them. However, as this and subsequent chapters will highlight, they had not been forgotten, one example being that certain large newspapers, such as the *Chicago Tribune*, did in fact support small town rhetoric. The *Tribune* considered the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa as its territory and had been selling a substantial number of papers in these states since 1922.<sup>67</sup> This linked the paper to a wider readership sharing similar discontentment against the larger cities to the east and west, and by the 1950s, was proclaiming the many benefits of living in a small town. Benefits ranged from being only a mile away from lower priced fresh local produce to the number of days off for leisure one gets in these towns, to the lush rolling hills and wide open spaces perfect for children.<sup>68</sup> This enabled these communities in the period between 1950 to just before the Vietnam War in 1964, with the assistance of certain actors, to fuel this rhetoric. In effect creating a nostalgia trap and a national myth of community, family values and warmth. The work of Stephanie Coontz describes how this nostalgia of the 1950s perfect family clouds judgments.<sup>69</sup> This chapter will show how these images became central to rhetoric produced against the cities.

### The Origin of Divide

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<sup>67</sup>. Katherine Solomonson, *The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition: Skyscraper Design and Cultural Change in the 1920s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 14.

<sup>68</sup>. Donald Yabush, "Outdoor Living Spurs Families to move to South Suburban Communities," *Tribune*, (Chicago) Aug 28, 1958, S1.

<sup>69</sup>. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), xiv.

Historians have widely debated the origin of this divide between small towns and cities. Scholars in the 1950s also shared disagreement on this similar to their modern counterparts. The sociologist Daniel Bell argued that: “at the turn of the century the cleavage developed between the big city and the small-town conscience”.<sup>70</sup> Indeed other historians support this, favouring the idea that the rift was created in order for small town America to convince the American public that these towns consisted of beautiful rolling hills and lush valleys, thereby presenting a perfect marketing opportunity. By the early twentieth century, the vision of unspoiled rural small town life was marketed in the form of postcards to holidaymakers. Small towns used their natural landscapes as a canvas to paint the picture that this life was relaxing, charming and an adventure for all the family. This rose-tinted construction aimed to combat urbanisation and modernism presented by the cities.<sup>71</sup>

Early divide can also be seen in this period from the Country Life Movement who consisted primarily of urbanites such as bankers, the Department of Agriculture, retail merchants and transportation companies who recognised the connection between their prosperity and rural farmers.<sup>72</sup> Historian Merwin Swanson argued they aimed to apply a rational program of rural community development.<sup>73</sup> The goal of the reformers, which was stressed continually, was one of efficient agriculture which would adequately supply the increasingly larger urban society.<sup>74</sup> This, however, pitted the progressive urbanites against those they were trying to assist, instead of rural reform, this appeared like imposition, increasing hostilities between the two. Agricultural Historian William L. Bowers highlighted how their attempt failed and enraged rural communities: “Making farmers into businessmen necessarily destroyed values and ideals cherished by those who wanted to preserve traditional aspects of rural living”.<sup>75</sup> The origin of bitterness is further substantiated by the fight

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<sup>70</sup>. Daniel Bell, “Crime as an American Way of Life,” *The Antioch Review* 13, no. 2 (1953): 132.

<sup>71</sup>. Daniel Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, inc Publishers, 2013), 10.

<sup>72</sup>. William L. Bowers, “Country-Life Reform 1900-1920: A Negative Aspect of Progressive Era History,” *Agricultural History* 45, no. 3 (1971): 212.

<sup>73</sup>. Merwin Swanson, “The Country Life Movement and the American Churches,” *Church History* 46, no. 3 (1977): 373.

<sup>74</sup>. David B. Danbom, “Rural Education Reform and the Country Life Movement,” *Agricultural History* 53, no. 2 (1979): 465.

<sup>75</sup>. Bowers, “Country-Life Reform,” 221.

back presented by rural support. In 1913 magazines such as the *Atlantic Monthly* gave excellent reviews of small town America stating that a range of people and social organisations were to be found in these localities and their size was beneficial so one would not submerge into the 'general mass'.<sup>76</sup> Prominent economist Thorstein Veblen in 1927 surmised that: "the country town is one of the great American institutions: perhaps the greatest, in the sense that it has had and continues to have a greater part than any other in shaping public sentiment and giving character to American culture".<sup>77</sup> This outlines the clear aim of rural supporters in this period to formalise that these towns were the American heartland endorsing them as something that shaped every American. Although these early debates never quite presented the nostalgia trap and enhanced myths that their 1950s counterparts did, they set the divide between small town and big city in motion.

By the 1950s the hostility between town and city had evolved into a more widespread argument, their distinctly competing ideas became more commonplace within academic and popular debate. The historian Daniel Immerwahr argues that: "it is remarkable how many of the images of small-town life that are now stock elements of U.S. culture were generated during the middle of the twentieth century".<sup>78</sup> The answer seems to be, that although the ideas may originate in the early 1900s, their importance within this divide expanded in prominence during the competing rhetoric of the 1950s. The myth created in this era by small towns relied upon being seen, as Immerwahr cites, as "an always-longed-for point of origin, the small town in the United States was an 'invented tradition,' and a tradition that was invented particularly to express a growing discomfort with industrial society".<sup>79</sup> This supports the concept that these ideas already existed, to an extent, but this invented tradition was fuelled in the 1950s and early 1960s by those who sought to create a grand narrative that small town America was, and had been throughout, the American heartland.

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<sup>76</sup>. Randolph Bourne, "The Social Order of an American Town," *Atlantic Monthly*, vol 111, Feb, 1913, 227.

<sup>77</sup>. Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Time: The Case of America* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, inc, 1923), 142.

<sup>78</sup>. Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 17.

<sup>79</sup>. Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 17.



Academic debates of the era substantiate this evidence. A number of scholars such as the urban historian Lewis Mumford, the literary scholar, Ima Honaker Herron and the sociologist Daniel Bell in the 1950s all promoted an image of declining cities, and favoured suburbs and small towns as the ideal living for all Americans. Ima Honaker Herron attempts to extend the notion that the small American town was a long awaited point in American history. The idea was not just a political construct but in fact: “the American Small Place has been imagined in so much variety and in relation to so many cogent ideas fundamental in our culture”.<sup>80</sup> This claim alongside others from Lewis Mumford that: “metropolitan centers were doomed to failure and merely would add to the costly congestion and complexities of life within them”.<sup>81</sup> Mumford promoted small communities which would retain identity and character surrounded by permanent green belt.<sup>82</sup> These works were clear attempts by scholars to create a desirable attraction to small communities arguing that big cities were an unfavourable place to live. Daniel Bell’s statement that: “For the young criminal, hunting in the asphalt jungle of the crowded city, it was not the businessman with his wily manipulation of numbers but the ‘man with the gun’ who was the American hero”.<sup>83</sup> In the 1950s these academic debates thrust the small American town back into the media, nationally receiving positive reviews. Newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and its reporter Drew Pearson proclaimed these small towns were the ‘backbone of America’.<sup>84</sup> He stated that: “If we ever lose our small town independence and the community spirit that goes with it, then we might really be in danger of going the way of Russia”.<sup>85</sup> This established small town America as the antithesis of Russia something that few in a time of communist ‘Red Scare’ would oppose, placing these communities as wholesomely American.

However, a number of scholars disagreed with these propositions arguing there had never been a tradition linking Americanism to small towns and that cities in the 1950s and early 1960s were still the ideal places to live due to the problems existing

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<sup>80</sup>. Ima Honaker Herron, “Changing Images of the American Small Town: Fair Verra to Peyton Place,” *The English Journal* 47, no. 9 (1958): 538.

<sup>81</sup>. Social Service Review, “The Small-Town Future,” *Social Service Review* 24, no. 3 (1950): 400.

<sup>82</sup>. Social Service Review, “The Small-Town Future,” 400.

<sup>83</sup>. Bell, “Crime as an American Way of Life,” 133.

<sup>84</sup>. Drew Pearson, “Home Town Rites Stir Memories,” *Post*, (Washington) Jan 22, 1951, B11.

<sup>85</sup>. Pearson, “Home Town”, B11.

in both suburbia and small town America. The rural historian Glenn Fuguitt argued that: “many of these places are in trouble economically, and face difficulties in providing today’s social services to a small population”.<sup>86</sup> Anselm Strauss supported this in his extensive publications on urban imagery and the city of Chicago. He particularly acted as a counter to suburbanisation, but in many ways reflected on small towns too, he stated that many who moved to these communities expected a level of community that was offered by proponents of the myth. Instead, they often found ‘false friendliness’ that represented mock neighbourliness in an undemocratic atmosphere.<sup>87</sup> This early division in academia reflects how the notion of divide would develop between town and city. Over the course of this thesis, a war of words would envelope small town newspapers as they began to thrust this divide upon their readers.

### Initial Support

An important area in the early debate is that the majority of national American newspapers supported small town America, prior to white flight and the perception that the Civil Rights Movement would wipe out white privilege. Large city papers such as the *Atlanta Daily World* highlighted in their articles how small towns cared for those in their community. One such story involved the destruction of a black resident’s nativity scene; the paper reported that once news spread of the vandalism hundreds of calls were received and black and white residents came together to rebuild it.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the paper stated that the black residents had declared it was a wonderful, heart-warming experience and they enjoyed the warmest of race relations.<sup>89</sup> Newspapers of smaller cities such as *The San Bernardino Sun* found similar positive reflections, in 1950 they declared the: “age of big city over; Day of small community ahead”.<sup>90</sup> In agreement with Lewis Mumford, they stated these smaller communities produced a far more enriched lifestyle one that was varied

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<sup>86</sup>. Glenn V. Fuguitt, “The Growth and Decline of Small Towns as a Probability,” *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 3 (1965): 411.

<sup>87</sup>. Anselm Strauss, “The Changing Imagery of American City and Suburb,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1960): 19.

<sup>88</sup>. “Yule Spirt Enters Small Town Miss. Town,” article, *Daily World*, (Atlanta) Dec 31, 1952, 4.

<sup>89</sup>. “Yule Spirt Enters Small Town,” 4.

<sup>90</sup>. “Age of the Big City over; Day of Small Community Ahead,” article, *Sun*, (San Bernardino) May 14, 1950, 2.

enough to surpass even that of the cities.<sup>91</sup> The larger national newspapers likewise printed positive reviews of small communities, as mentioned *The Post* previously proclaimed these towns as the American backbone.<sup>92</sup> *The New York Times* advised tourists that these towns were all uniquely different and worth a stop. They may have the oldest grave in the state or the world's largest desk drawer factory and unless you stop as a tourist, you would never find out.<sup>93</sup> Whilst this does not maintain that every town had something amazing in it; it encouraged readers to visit as they may find something unique. By 1954 when increased hostility from many small town printing presses emerged many of these larger newspapers would be encouraged to focus on the negative aspects of the small town.

The conservative *Chicago Tribune* supported small town communities, unlike the newspapers discussed earlier who switched focus. The *Tribune* was far more connected to the larger Midwest than *The Times* was to New York State or *The Post* to either Maryland or Virginia and as previously stated it had committed itself to five other states. Midwestern historians stressed the intrinsic connection Chicago had to the state of Illinois and the greater Midwest, arguing: "that without the rest of Illinois, there would be no Chicago".<sup>94</sup> One can posit that *The Tribune* had interests in small towns as it naturally had many readers there, it also viewed these locales as a political opportunity. If it could promote them as the American heartland they could use them in anti-communist rhetoric too. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, many grassroots anti-communists had turned to conservative newspapers such as the *Tribune* looking for support.<sup>95</sup> Increasingly foreign affair editorials by George Morgenstern became uniformly anti-New Deal, anti-Soviet, and anti-communist.<sup>96</sup> Originally, conservatives within the paper possibly highlighted the small American town to support this notion as a proponent of the success of capitalism. Fear of communism in rural regions had already been articulated in academia by the sociologist Julie Meyer: "the resentment has been strengthened by the memory of

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<sup>91</sup>. "Age of the Big City over," 2.

<sup>92</sup>. Pearson, "Home Town", B11.

<sup>93</sup>. "Topics of the Times," article, *Times*, (New York) Sep 3, 1951, 12.

<sup>94</sup>. Andrew Cayton, Richard Sisson and Chris Zacher, *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopaedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>95</sup>. Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right made Political History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 27.

<sup>96</sup>. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 27.

revolutionary periods when the masses from the city descended upon the countryside".<sup>97</sup> This and the larger readership strengthened the argument for why the *Tribune* held rural towns in high regard. By the early 1950s the *Tribune* created a Midwestern news page and soon the newspaper started to run an editorial section entitled 'Home Town Crier' which featured headlines of the week from other small Midwestern newspapers. These included details from how peaceful it was to sit in the town square and listen to the bullfrogs' croak,<sup>98</sup> to how too many people worried about having to deal with things that their grandfathers never had to think about (ie the introduction of new technologies).<sup>99</sup> This support of rural towns, unlike other big city newspapers, would not dampen despite the growth of racial divide, city decline and loss of white Americans to the suburbs.

### White Flight and Growing Fears

Academic arguments and invested points of origin in the myth of small towns formed much of the early bitterness between city and town, the issues of white flight and civil rights, however, amplified this divide. Recently historians have pondered on how the issues of white flight, civil rights and the perceived end of white social mobility all impacted upon this divide. Landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board* highlighted many of the fears these smaller communities had about losing out in the 'social pecking order' to these newly enfranchised and politicised groups. The Civil Rights Movement played an important role in these tensions. In southern states, citizens councils were formed with the intention to prevent the implementation of desegregation.<sup>100</sup> Although ultimately unsuccessful they staved off desegregation for years further driving a divide between white and black communities. These citizens groups held influence,<sup>101</sup> and by manipulating locals swelled the fear of black communities.

Stephanie Coontz presents the ideals that small town American editors and their supporters embraced: "the seeming placidity and prosperity of the 1950s,

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<sup>97</sup>. Julie Meyer, "The Stranger and The City," *American Journal of Sociology* 56, no. 5 (1951): 481.

<sup>98</sup>. Don C. Haynes, "Home Town Crier," *Tribune*, (Chicago) Apr 8, 1951, C15.

<sup>99</sup>. Don C. Haynes, "Home Town Crier," *Tribune*, (Chicago) May 20, 1951, C12.

<sup>100</sup>. James H. Adams and Natalie Adams, "Implementing The 'Law of the Land': White Superintendents in Mississippi," in *School Desegregation: Oral Histories toward understanding the Effects of White Domination*, ed. George W. Noblit (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015), 179.

<sup>101</sup>. Adams and Adams, "Implementing The Law of the Land," 178.

associated in many people's minds with the relative stability of marriage, gender roles and family life".<sup>102</sup> This was seen as key to continuing success within many communities, citing the period as: "a time of innocence and consensus: Gang warfare among youth did not lead to drive-by shootings; the crack epidemic had not yet hit; discipline problems in the schools were minor".<sup>103</sup> Life seemed to be perfect and in small town America, some believed that civil rights would bring an end to the prosperity experienced by many white middle class families. Others feared the 'so called' sexual threat African-Americans and ethnic minorities posed to their communities,<sup>104</sup> and the death of Emmet Till a fourteen year old boy who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 for allegedly saying 'bye, baby' to a white woman on leaving a store highlighted this.<sup>105</sup> Other white communities and especially those in the Jim Crow South feared that their way of life was under threat of being wiped out.<sup>106</sup> The *Avondale Sun* encapsulated this in the late 1940s, in an article that claimed white southern culture would be snuffed out in order to make way for civil rights.<sup>107</sup> The paper supported segregationist Governor Strom Thurmond declaring he would stand up for states' rights.<sup>108</sup> They also stated that they must stand together "for a proud, Dixie-singing, Confederate-flag-waving South that will stand up for all that's best on its own".<sup>109</sup> This example was one of the opportunities that the newspaper took to attempt to spark fear among their readership. Whilst in this early format it was not overtly connected to the notions of the city it does illustrate how the *Avondale Sun* began to shape outlooks that the South needed to be strong in order to retain their identity within America. With an end to social mobility for whites projected and attention moving away the paper began to foster resentment.

In this battle for social mobility, historian Daniel Rodgers argues that one of the significant reasons for this battle was that: "the driving force of racial oppression was the effort of white workers to buffer themselves against downward wage pressures

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<sup>102</sup>. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 23.

<sup>103</sup>. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 23.

<sup>104</sup>. Alexandra M. Lord, *Condom Nation: The U.S Government's Sex Education Campaign from World War I to the Internet* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 102.

<sup>105</sup>. Reggie Finlayson, *We Shall Overcome: The History of the American Civil Rights Movement* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 2003), 22.

<sup>106</sup>. Kevin M. Kruse, *White Fight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>107</sup>. John Temple Graves, "In Dixie land, I'll take my stand," *Sun*, (Pell City) Aug 2, 1948, 3

<sup>108</sup>. Graves, "in Dixie land", 3.

<sup>109</sup>. Graves, "in Dixie land", 3.

by maintaining a dual, racialized labour market".<sup>110</sup> These views that the white working man would lose status and economic standing were reproduced across the country. The columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak argued in 1963 that:

The white construction worker sees lowering the color bar in his Jim Crow union as a threat to his job. The lower middle class suburbanite, who has invested much of his savings in his home, sees the Negro who wants to live next door to him as a financial threat.<sup>111</sup>

This only served to increase hostilities between town and city as whites in this era were given the message of 'get out before you become affected'. Approximately sixty thousand whites left Atlanta in the 1960s,<sup>112</sup> and in total the whites in suburbs, as a percent of all whites in urban areas, increased from 32.1 in 1950 to 50.9 by 1970.<sup>113</sup> Communities had already been divided in the 1950s as small towns had raised concerns that the crime wave associated with the cities would follow the mass exodus of white Americans. Newspapers in Belleville and Casa Grande began scaremongering. First by stating: "It has been known for years that crime and immorality have been protected in the great cities".<sup>114</sup> With the *Casa Grande Dispatch* citing the entrepreneur Roger Babson who declared that: "some banks and insurance companies are less willing to take loans on business property in such cities. Some investors are selling out their stocks".<sup>115</sup> These examples of city decline led to fearmongering that these problems had arrived in rural locales. "Now that a crime wave and moral breakdown has spread to the rural areas of the country, reaching into our schools and colleges, the citizens have been aroused to the dangers and are holding public meetings".<sup>116</sup> These issues were further exacerbated by other small town papers who rushed to declare that larger cities had failed. *The Sioux County Capital* in the early 1950s began reporting that community living far exceeded that of the big city, the friendliness exhibited in a small town of 2,000

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<sup>110</sup>. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 122.

<sup>111</sup>. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Future White Man's Party," *Times*, (St. Petersburg) Jun 25, 1963, 9A

<sup>112</sup>. Kruse, *White Flight*, 2.

<sup>113</sup>. Charles T. Clotfelter, "The Detroit Decision and White Flight," *The Journal of Legal Studies* 5, no. 1 (1976): 101.

<sup>114</sup>. A. Q. Miller, "Crime Wave and Moral Break-down," *Telescope*, (Belleville) May 11, 1950, 7.

<sup>115</sup>. Roger W. Babson, "Babson Disuses Our Cities," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Oct 19, 1950, 4.

<sup>116</sup>. Miller, "Crime Wave", 7.

meant that everyone knew each other and genuinely cared.<sup>117</sup> Compared with a regional city such as Sioux City the paper argued one could be: “deathly sick and the people next door will know nothing of it and probably do not even know you or recognize you”.<sup>118</sup> In the early 1950s, large city newspapers still supported the idea rural communities presented a wholesome American lifestyle, whilst these smaller communities began to ultimately distance themselves from their big city counterparts.

This distancing had two critical impacts which in turn drew more white Americans away from the city and, by the latter stages of the 1950s, had firmly cemented the divide. As evidenced by historians Ian Haney-Lopez and Thomas Sugrue one can see how this notion of divide rapidly developed into a belief of an actual dissimilarity between the town and city. Thomas Sugrue presents the argument that places like Detroit were overwhelmed by the economic restructuring and the impact white flight had amongst the community.<sup>119</sup> For the critical eyes of small town America and suburbanites: “residence in the inner city became a self-perpetuating stigma, increasing joblessness, and the decaying infrastructure of inner-city neighbourhoods, reinforced white stereotypes of black people, families, and communities”.<sup>120</sup> The notion of ‘The City’ in some small town newspapers became synonymous with crime, poverty and racial issues. *The Avondale Sun* in Pell City were the first to claim that juvenile delinquency was a product of large cities and not the small town.<sup>121</sup> However, it also claimed that it was not an issue that blighted small towns due to the role the parent played:

The parent in the small towns and on the farm, give more attention to the moral and spiritual needs of their children and carrying out their duties as teachers and educators of their children in the home with greater diligence than their counterparts in the city.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>. “Community Planning,” article, *Capital*, (Sioux County) Apr 27, 1950, 2.

<sup>118</sup>. “Community Planning,” 2.

<sup>119</sup>. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Post War Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 5-6.

<sup>120</sup>. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 8.

<sup>121</sup>. Frank B. Embry, “Pell-City Address At P.-T. A.,” *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) March 13, 1950, 8.

<sup>122</sup>. Embry, “Pell City Address”,7.

This, alongside claims in other small town press, stressed the importance of family life that: “if we want a strong citizenship in the future, the home, as the natural abode of the family, must become the first arena of learning”.<sup>123</sup> It is clear that by the mid-1950s small town America had begun not only to distance itself but argued that they were a different America with greater family structures and better morals. Ian Haney Lopez postulates on the effects this distancing had upon cities: “public dollars that had once paid for everything from good schools to swimming pools dwindled once voters came to perceive minorities as the beneficiaries”.<sup>124</sup> This, in turn, led to many more whites (those who could afford to) leaving the city, furthering the disunity and increasing hostility as small towns developed more intense stereotypes of these communities in an effort to isolate and rebrand themselves.

### Perfect Community: The Myth of Small Town America

In order for the rebranding of their communities editors in the four towns had to emphasise the invented myth of nostalgic small town America. By basing their claims on the idea of a wholesome, friendly, caring community they could attempt to challenge the city not on the arguments of economics but on principles of family and moral values. This nostalgia trap worked for a number of reasons. Although these towns were not monolithic entities and not every factor of the myth would apply to them, this did not matter. Supporters created a broad church of central ideas which they then added town specific values that applied to their communities. In Casa Grande, a Sun Belt community finding new wealth as a commuter town for Phoenix and Tucson, they focused on those they had attracted from larger cities. People such as Dr. Carl Tomkinson their local dentist who had been class valedictorian at Baylor dental college and had rejected cities such as Dallas and Salt Lake City in favour of small town America,<sup>125</sup> as he “likes a small town where people know you and you can say hello to them”.<sup>126</sup> In this early debate, many editors of these towns were encouraged by people like Dr. Tomkinson who had moved to their towns and provided skills and services to their local economy, this further encouraged these towns to invest in the myth of small town America in an effort to

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<sup>123</sup>. “Delinquency Still Growing,” editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Oct 21, 1954, 7.

<sup>124</sup>. Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals have Reinvented Racism & Wreaked the Middle Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 173.

<sup>125</sup>. Paul Modlin, “Familiar Faces,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Dec 27, 1961, 6.

<sup>126</sup>. Modlin, “Familiar Faces”, 6.



continue these trends. Editor Donovan Kramer in Casa Grande seized an opportunity when actor/singer Pat Boone arrived in town to fulfil a business role. When interviewed by the newspaper Pat Boone made many comments on the benefits of small town living which only served to advance Kramer's ambitions for the town. Statements from Boone such as: he would rather have his children grow up in a small town such as the aforementioned Casa Grande,<sup>127</sup> and that in this town: "his children would find more normal, wholesome associations".<sup>128</sup> When coupled with his distaste for the frivolous behaviour of the cities: "In the Beverly Hills area where kids are brought to school in Rolls-Royces, given trips to Europe and where a birthday party is a catered affair".<sup>129</sup> He professed that all one needed was "ice cream and cake with children's games".<sup>130</sup> Although these were hollow statements as he made no attempt to move or implement any of these changes, the newspaper sought this as a win. To Donovan Kramer, it probably also cemented the importance of the divide itself, as it allowed these towns to attempt to espouse the appearance of wholesome community living that so many white Americans moving from the city were looking for. In other towns such as Belleville, Kansas, town pride was important to their myth of community. This was used by the local newspaper on a number of occasions to manipulate town votes, one being to build a new high school: "If you are proud of Belleville as a community, if you are proud of our students and our school in its scholastic, music, agriculture and athletic ability-you will then know that you must vote yes".<sup>131</sup> Ultimately highlighting that to different communities the myth and nostalgia trap meant very different things but they universally focused upon strong community, family values and to an extent, by the end of the Vietnam War, patriotism. This development of a broad myth would allow these local newspapers to attempt to influence their readership through fear that this myth, which to some had become what actual small town life represented, would be destroyed.

Groups such as the West Side Mutual Development Committee in Atlanta began to rise up. They: "used community integrity as a 'yardstick' – white residents tried to

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<sup>127</sup>. Mary Metzger, "Pat Boone Like CG, Vivid Colors 'n Beetles," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Oct 19, 1964, 2.

<sup>128</sup>. Metzger, "Pat Boone Like CG", 2.

<sup>129</sup>. Metzger, "Pat Boone Like CG", 2.

<sup>130</sup>. Metzger, "Pat Boone Like CG", 2.

<sup>131</sup>. "How Can We Do Better?," front page article, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Sep 8, 1960, 1.

measure up. – If they could demonstrate their sense of community their neighbourhood – they believed might be saved”.<sup>132</sup> Kevin M. Kruse cites that mutual development committees in the suburbs gave white residents the ability to halt an increase in ethnic citizens in their community. Kruse later detailed: “whites in borderline neighbourhoods began stressing their common ties, their common rights, and their common goals”.<sup>133</sup> This was also true of small towns and their effort to halt the perceived threat they faced from the cities. Many towns began highlighting their common links, not as a challenge to deter ethnic minorities from entering the town, but instead emphasising that they were attractive places for those looking for a new life outside of the city. This emerging identity challenged city rhetoric promoting small towns as the true American heartland in the hope of retaining their relevance. As long as towns could maintain this sustained attention they had a hope of remaining economically viable and remembered as nostalgic populaces. Towns stressed that their collective community cohesion was the cornerstone of their friendly inclusive solidity. In contradiction many towns distrusted outsiders, fearing the influence intellectuals had upon the United States and their professed links to communism, with one town paper stating that intellectuals find that: “Communism is the path to power”.<sup>134</sup> They cited that these men were often from the cities fuelling further notions of divide. Numerous towns relied on outsiders though so often welcomed a gradual influx that kept the status quo. The power of the myth became so real to many newcomers that often as the historian Michael Harrington argues poverty was successfully hidden in even the poorest regions: “beauty and myths are perennial masks of poverty. The traveller comes to the Appalachians in the lovely season. He sees hills, the streams, the foliage – but not the poor”.<sup>135</sup>

Many towns embellished their sense of community so that its citizens and new arrivals would continue the myth and collection of town’s ideas that had been depicted as wholesome. This resulted in the continuation of the nostalgia trap and presenting a place that crime and fears had not yet reached. Newspapers stressed these views to their readers, for Wayne Stewart the new owner of *Sioux County Capital* this romanticised sense of community meant everything. When asked why

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<sup>132</sup>. Kruse, *White Flight*, 62.

<sup>133</sup>. Kruse, *White Flight*, 62.

<sup>134</sup>. O. Kendrick, “Communism and the Path to Power,” *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jan 11, 1954, 2.

<sup>135</sup>. Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty In the United States* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 3.

in 1961 he had decided to purchase the paper he claimed that the shared sense of working together had driven his decision: “we believe it is a community that looks to the future welfare of the entire area – in the realms of the spirit, the mind and body”.<sup>136</sup> Other small town newspapers also stated that their central philosophy was one of shared community. *The Casa Grande Dispatch* focused on this, often with biased debates printed within its columns as to why small town life was better. They stated that it was: “blessed peace and quiet, the no frenzied hurry, the ever ready parking space, the know everybody, everybody smile”.<sup>137</sup> Dissenting voices were often not published as many towns wanted to give the impression they were utopias of fellowship. However, as sociologist William Whyte stated this only served to create: “a hell of a different shade – not of social isolation but of oppressive community”.<sup>138</sup> They became “imprisoned brotherhoods”,<sup>139</sup> this is evident in many communities when an individual or group went against the view of the community. In the case of one local newspaper editor and owner in Texas, this resulted in alienation from the community and verbal attacks such as ‘nigger-lover’ towards his daughter due to the content of his outspoken editorials.<sup>140</sup> These events had been escalating since 1961 when her father Ben Ezzell had exposed his readers to the pitfalls of the John Birch Society telling his readers not to join: “if you place any value on your own freedom”.<sup>141</sup> The resulting rock thrown through his daughter’s window showed the town’s displeasure. Being outspoken held many consequences when pitted against the town’s majority standing. This proved that many small town communities were not the paradise they purported to be, as these towns isolated those who voice differing views and therefore creating a bizarre paradox.

The *Chicago Tribune* involved itself within the debate of myth and community weighing in on the side of the small town. The *Tribune* proclaimed that kind, thoughtful, wholesome communities were best found in small town America. They published news accounts of small town life through the eyes of teenagers, emphasizing picturesque viewpoints, the beautiful main street with its maple and

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<sup>136</sup>. Wayne Stewart, “like a Homecoming,” *Capital*, (Sioux County) Jun 28, 1962, 2.

<sup>137</sup>. Guy Acuff, “Off the Cuff,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Oct 20, 1955, 13.

<sup>138</sup>. William H. Whyte, Jr, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 365.

<sup>139</sup>. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, 365.

<sup>140</sup>. Judy Muller, *Emus Loose in Egnar: Big Stories from Small Town’s* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 32.

<sup>141</sup>. Miller, *Emus Loose in Egnar*, 31.

elm trees and the joy of when the fair came to town giving them lasting memories, recounted by many as being typical of small town life.<sup>142</sup> The paper went one step further in its ambitions citing that every American has a connection to this tradition: “there are many who have cherished home towns of their own. A return visit is recommended, not so much for what you will see as for the memories you will recall”.<sup>143</sup> The *Tribune* not only implanted strong ideas of community but created the sentiment that for many the best days of their lives were the ones spent in these communities. The constant argument between small town America and their city counterparts, as the historian Becky Nicolaides recalled, locked these two ideologies in discursive opposition.<sup>144</sup> This led to both sets of ideas looking to strike the critical blow.

### Economics: City Revival VS the Self Made Family.

By the mid to late 1950s with more people leaving the cities, city newspapers became more boastful of the benefits city life offered and increasingly hostile towards small communities. They feared the effect white flight might have upon their populations and they began to move away from their support of presenting small towns as a nostalgic traditional Americanism. Instead, they focused upon the many problems experienced by these towns, from lack of ability to provide modern services to economic decline whilst also maintaining that the American city was in a period of revival. All but the *Chicago Tribune* supported this rhetoric. The newspaper continued to view small towns as a perfect American community in which everyone should aspire to live. By the 1960s when many cities were on the defensive the *Tribune* disagreed and as such their activities during that period will be addressed in later paragraphs of how these false utopian communities were invested in. This section will focus upon how the division ruptured into the realms of economics as both the small towns and cities wanted to prove that they could dispel claims made against them and prove that they were both economically viable. Firstly, the study will examine how the case for urban revival was made and then contrast how small town editors attempted to refute these claims.

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<sup>142</sup>. Sandra Jo Bailey, “My Home Town,” *Tribune*, (Chicago) Jun 6, 1965, IND2.

<sup>143</sup>. Hal Foust, “Visits Old Home Town - and Recommends It!,” *Tribune*, (Chicago) Aug 1, 1957, C7.

<sup>144</sup>. Becky Nicolaides, “How Hell Moved from the City to the Suburbs,” in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse, and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 80.

The urban writer Anselm Strauss declared in 1960 that although the big cities were on the defensive, there was a swing back to them. He stated that the highest grade of tenant, generally aged 45 and upward, who had raised his children and reached the peak of his earning power was annoyed by long commutes and over-populated suburbs and would instead move back to the city.<sup>145</sup> The cities capitalised on this possibility, stressing that since early 1955 they had undergone extensive urban renewal and people had indeed been moving back. In New York, the *Times* stated: “many who once fled the city now are pioneers blazing the trail back”.<sup>146</sup> They were filled with: ‘The tales of woe! The chronicles of disappointment’ that rural/suburban life had brought them.<sup>147</sup> Lewis Mumford further examined this, already a strong supporter of the urban locale he concluded in *The City in History*: “each member of suburbia becomes imprisoned by the very separation that he has prized; he is fed through a narrow opening: a telephone line, a radio band, a television circuit”,<sup>148</sup> ultimately that we have sacrificed human development to mechanical processing.<sup>149</sup> Papers flocked to promulgate the message of the benefits of city life. The *Times* stated: “My daughter sees more grass in central park than in the suburbs. And my wife and I have a greater pool of friends”.<sup>150</sup> Other papers also rushed to support big city living, in Atlanta the *Daily World* proclaimed a new urban revolution would henceforth be delivered. For those who promoted suburbanisation and small town living the paper had a message:

For it is the centres of our cities and towns that provide the commercial and cultural nerve centres of our communities. It is here that people meet- to shop, do business in their offices or over lunch, to learn together, and to share the finest cultural opportunities offered by their community.<sup>151</sup>

The newspaper argued that America needed to protect and preserve these cities as they afforded more opportunity and variety to American citizens than any other standard of living. City newspapers did not simply promote the importance and

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<sup>145</sup> Strauss, “The Changing Imagery of American City,” 17.

<sup>146</sup> Herbert Mitgang, “From the Suburbs back to the City,” *Times*, (New York) May 15, 1955, 17.

<sup>147</sup> Mitgang, “From the Suburbs”, 17.

<sup>148</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City In History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 512-513.

<sup>149</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 512-513.

<sup>150</sup> Mitgang, “From the Suburbs”, 37.

<sup>151</sup> Robert C. Weaver, “Weaver Sees Urban Revolution,” *Daily World*, (Atlanta) Sep 30, 1961, 1.

benefits gained from living in a city but emphasised considerable disadvantages to living in a small community. Supported by a continuing array of works from urban scholars newspapers began, in the late 1950s early 1960s, to target small towns as cultural backwashes, economic cesspools and decaying environments, language as strong as this varied from reporter to reporter but all were keen to encapsulate the despair in these towns in order to combat the mythical traditional heartland image small towns aimed to promote. Newspapers focused on the very evident decline of small towns in the Rust Belt and the Northeast. The *Times* examined issues of poverty small towns in Minnesota and Michigan had been facing. The effect of mine closures had meant that one in every four men lacked a job,<sup>152</sup> coupled with a housing crash many found their homes worthless. One husband and wife stated the only way they could sell their house was to give it away.<sup>153</sup> However, the newspapers could do little to tarnish the growth of small town communities in the Sun Belt region, as here the population had almost doubled and in the 1950s California accounted for one-fifth of the entire national growth in population.<sup>154</sup> Therefore city newspapers targeted declining small towns in the Frost Belt and Rust Belt regions which had begun to feel like poor cousins in the American economy.<sup>155</sup> The *Washington Post* too was highly critical of these communities. They aimed to dissuade readers from moving to small towns by arguing that many of these towns were failing, by overlooking the prosperous Sun Belt communities, they broadcasted a uniformed message of failure. Reporter Julins Duscha investigated in 1962 the exodus from many rural communities leaving them ghost towns; the article summarised that most of the best young people leave these counties for the cities, due to lack of work. For many in these rural locations, the city became their only hope of a life away from a countryside that is a drag on the nation's economy.<sup>156</sup> Duscha concluded that: "the pull of the city seems to be irresistible to most Americans and it will take more than the nostalgia for the rural life of a half a century ago to keep Americans in the small towns".<sup>157</sup> City Newspapers used this evidence of decline to advance their hyperbole that the city was still number one. Promoting

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<sup>152</sup>. Homer Bigart, "Poverty Blights Iron Ore Region," *Times*, (New York) Jan 13, 1964, 1.

<sup>153</sup>. Bigart, "Poverty Blights Iron Ore Region", 22.

<sup>154</sup>. Klaus P. Fischer, *America in White, Black and Gray: The Stormy 1960s* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 58.

<sup>155</sup>. Fischer, *American in White, Black and Gray*, 58.

<sup>156</sup>. Julins Duscha, "Steady Exodus Leaves Rural Ghost Towns," *Post*, (Washington) Dec 16, 1962, E5.

<sup>157</sup>. Duscha, "Steady Exodus", E5.

to their readers that a better life would not be found away from the metropolises as both the suburbs and small towns had failed.

The editorial families of these small town papers such as the Stewarts of the *Sioux County Capital*, the Millers of the *Belleville Telescope* and the Kramers of Casa Grande understood the importance of implementing a strong economic argument for their towns in their reporting. Without a viable economic structure that ensured these communities could survive on their own, it was all worthless. These towns needed to enforce and prove their rhetoric that these locales were the American heartland, not that they were just survivable but that jobs and prosperity were there in abundance. To become attractive places for people from cities or larger towns to move to, they had to be self-sufficient. Stephanie Coontz highlights that this was what they attempted to either become or to maintain: “self-reliance is one of the most cherished American values”,<sup>158</sup> and small towns in the 1950s and 1960s wanted to perpetuate this illusion that: “they never asked for handouts”.<sup>159</sup> Towns like Orange City constantly referred to their strong economic performance making frequent references to the attraction it had as a banking centre and a place of strong local business. They argued that this made the town self-reliant further adding to its drawing powers, leaving it 37<sup>th</sup> of 93 in Iowa’s ‘Shopindex’.<sup>160</sup> The community and paper also argued that the American dream could be achieved within their town and that local people had experienced this. The newspaper praised J.T. Groten, a local man who started a company in his house manufacturing log-burners and through his own initiative brought success to the community and transformed his life and that of many residents in Orange City. The newspaper reported: “these past 37 years show what can be done, even in a very small way, in a small community, by one man with an idea”,<sup>161</sup> later adding that the Silent Sioux Corporation today gives steady employment to many residents in this and neighbouring towns.<sup>162</sup> Orange City was not the only community to profess its economic independence, other towns such as Belleville stated that they were profitable communities and were, in fact,

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<sup>158</sup>. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 85.

<sup>159</sup>. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 83.

<sup>160</sup>. A. E. Hobbs, “Capital and Orange City rate high in ‘Shopindex’ study of retailing,” *Capital*, (Sioux County) Apr 4, 1957, 16.

<sup>161</sup>. “Silent Sioux Corporation shows benefit of small industries in economics of town,” article, *Capital*, (Sioux County) Feb 13, 1958, 1.

<sup>162</sup>. “Silent Sioux Corporation,” 1.

doing better than many other towns, beating towns in Nebraska and Kansas.<sup>163</sup> In many respects in the economics and self-reliance debate, towns to an extent, could not form a coherent organised resistance against claims from larger cities that they were economic backwaters because they were competing with each other. Towns aimed to become hubs for industries such as car sales, factory equipment and farm banking. Belleville's success came from the fact that more franchised brands of automobiles were sold in the town than in any other in the surrounding area.<sup>164</sup> This in turn attracted industries such as grain storage facilities further drawing business to the town, the *Belleville Telescope* made grandiose claims that they stored more grain here than anywhere else in Kansas.<sup>165</sup> However, not every small town was as lucky; many were majorly affected by poverty, historian James Patterson highlights that in 1960 45% of poverty was found in small towns and on farms.<sup>166</sup> The myth of self-reliance was very much on a town to town basis.

Large city newspapers continued to encourage divide as many surely believed it was an argument they were winning, whilst they could not present picturesque landscapes they could continue to find issues with town economies. For Newspapers like the *Washington Post*, failing towns became easy to find so much so that they reported on a town each week with a variety of issues from towns merging to solve financial issues,<sup>167</sup> to towns becoming 'old man towns' and losing relevance in the world: "we are sending our brains away and just keeping the pots and the old ones who can't do anything".<sup>168</sup> Without prospects, many of these became ghost towns or near enough to. Many attempted to re-attract industry but the majority failed in this quest, becoming even more forgotten. Due to this, reports from city newspapers which could be found in abundance in the 1950s, on the city and the economic benefits it maintained, largely stopped as they had little to prove against these locales.

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<sup>163</sup>. Merle M. Miller, "What is the Reason," *Telescope*, (Belleville) Mar 8, 1962, 9.

<sup>164</sup>. Miller, "What is the Reason," 9.

<sup>165</sup>. Miller, "What is the Reason," 9.

<sup>166</sup>. James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 78.

<sup>167</sup>. Everard Munsey, "Once Bustling Town Annexed Off the Map," *Post*, (Washington) May 31, 1961, 3.

<sup>168</sup>. James R. Polk, "Old Man's Town' Seeks Place in Today's World," *Post*, (Washington) Feb 28, 1966, B4.



Decisions taken by certain companies at the cusp of the Americanisation of the Vietnam War would re-spark the argument that the city had to continue to prove itself. A new threat had emerged, cities now worried that companies were moving from the city to specially located areas, generally on the outskirts of small communities. In 1964, the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) moved from Madison Avenue in Manhattan to the tiny town of Armonk; many cities now worried this would become a trend. The *Times* highlighted that as a small town it was unequipped to deal with problems that IBM now posed. They questioned the town's ability to build all the things needed in time, such as a new airport.<sup>169</sup> Concerns were raised that the addition of IBM to the town could weaken other business, as there was a plan to move route 22 by-passing the main part to town where all the bars, shops and vendors were and there were plans to build a shopping centre on the site of the old airport.<sup>170</sup> The *Times* finally stated that tax estimates had risen from \$90 to \$1,000, 'big-city worries' were now plaguing Armonk claimed the newspaper and its old feel may be lost forever.<sup>171</sup> The paper had a right to fear this as the 'Malling of America' was underway by the 1960s,<sup>172</sup> posing a new challenge to many traditional central business districts, where the economic hub would have originally been situated, and once stores moved so would industry. Small towns vied to offer cheap land, cheap rates and cheap labour,<sup>173</sup> to encourage more companies to follow in the path of IBM thereby furthering the divide between city and small towns.

#### Rise of the Suburbs: How the Divide could have Disappeared.

The divide between town and city no doubt suffered a severe halt between 1958 and 1962. Although small town editorials continued to produce rhetoric in favour of their side of the divide, the argument became stale. The rise of the suburbs as a threat to the debate had moved attention away from this argument and repositioned it as a divide between the city and the suburb. In conjunction, many town

<sup>169</sup>. Merrill Folsom, "Big-City Worries Plaguing Armonk," *Times*, (New York) Jul 29, 1964, 67.

<sup>170</sup>. Folsom, "Big-City Worries Plaguing Armonk," 67.

<sup>171</sup>. Folsom, "Big-City Worries Plaguing Armonk," 35.

<sup>172</sup>. Tim Hall and Heather Barrett, *Urban Geography*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 89.

<sup>173</sup>. Margaret K. Nelson and Joan Smith, *Working Hard and Making Do: Surviving in Small Town America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 22.

communities had become disinterested by the feud and others had rejected it from the outset. In reality, all the four towns had little to fear from suburbanisation as their rural locations meant they were miles from the cities, many suburbs played to a similar rhetoric that these towns had been creating. This section will outline how these two issues without the emergence of the Vietnam War could have ended this debate.

The hijacking of small town rhetoric is plain to see in suburban advertising of the time; companies such as the American Community Builders who developed Park Forest a suburban village in Chicago targeted similar nostalgic feelings that small town editors had used to encourage and promote their towns. One advert for Park Forest stated:

*'YOU BELONG IN PARK FOREST!'*

*'The moment you came to our town you know:*

*'You're Welcome*

*'You're part of the big group*

*'You can live in a friendly small town*

*'Instead of a lonely big city*

*'You can have friends who want you-*

*'And enjoy being with them.<sup>174</sup>*

Another promotional video advert for the suburban village of West Clay outside of Indianapolis presented a similar image. The advert opened with a black and white picture of the neighbourhood and a voiceover stating: "There was once a time when a mother could send her children to the corner store on a simple errand".<sup>175</sup> Suddenly the video switched to colour with new cars and new clothes with the voiceover now stating: "Times have changed, the pace of our lives has quickened. But the yearning for safe, lively neighbourhoods, filled with the good things in life, has not. Welcome to the village of West Clay, a new neighbourhood founded on

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<sup>174</sup>. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 209.

<sup>175</sup>. David R. Coon, *Look Closer: Suburban Narratives and American Values in Film and Television* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 30.

traditional values".<sup>176</sup> The developers of these communities of West Clay and Park Forrest played on similar notions to the ones small town editors had invoked in support of the benefits of the small town. Sociologist Fred Davis outlined how this collective nostalgia linked suburban developments to traditional family values; he stated that when symbolic objects such as suburban neighbourhoods became highly public and widely recognised they were able to trigger 'wave upon wave' of nostalgic feelings in millions of people at the same time.<sup>177</sup> Increasingly, as the late 1950s became the 1960s: marketers of neotraditional communities used this to manipulate positive interpretations of the past to sell homes.<sup>178</sup>

In communities where editors had promoted to its readers that their small town brand was unique, these new suburban developments worried them, these developers had co-opted their nostalgic myth message and were now reproducing it for their own benefits. In Sioux County, editors questioned why the suburbs were attempting to copy the small town when the small town still existed: "why abandon a host of positive economic and social values simply to rebuild them again in the suburbs of the large cities?"<sup>179</sup> A connection was then drawn between the city and the suburb as the paper attempted to connect both to this divide: "Why feed the cities wave after wave of new population when many cities find their present problems practically insoluble now".<sup>180</sup> This connection was common in many of the four towns in the study, for Donovan Kramer in Casa Grande he had relied upon his reporters, writing staff and his own editorials to increase divide further and enhance the small town myth. Kramer had used the myth to generate investment for the town and encourage people to move there, for him the hijacking of this by suburbs represented a significant challenge. In response articles from people visiting and citing the benefits of the community to attacks against suburban living and the damages it was having upon raising good, wholesome children<sup>181</sup> began to flood the newspaper. One such report praising the town came from a travelling Italian student:

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<sup>176</sup>. Coon, *Look Closer*, 30.

<sup>177</sup>. Fred Davis, *Yearning and Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (London: Free Press, 1979), 122.

<sup>178</sup>. Coon, *Look Closer*, 40.

<sup>179</sup>. "Main Street is in Trouble," editorial, *News*, (Sioux Center) Sep 7, 1961, 11.

<sup>180</sup>. "Main Street," 11.

<sup>181</sup>. Joseph Stocker, "Nursery School Important Step In Child's Early Development," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Mar 25, 1964, 14.

“Life in America Is Different But Exciting”,<sup>182</sup> proclaimed the *Dispatch*, it also cited the abundance of opportunities she had gained from watching local sports to her becoming treasurer for the Pan American Society.<sup>183</sup> With Casa Grande desperate to convince the populace of Arizona that it was a commuter town, only an hour from both Tucson and Phoenix, it meant it was the most threatened from these developers. At this time Kramer therefore attempted to overproduce the myth, that it was not just Americans who wanted to move to Casa Grande but anybody who visited. Kramer was also facing rebellion from within, some in the community had been angered by his stricter calls for juvenile offenders. In a letter to the editor, we find that a number of citizens became angered at how the paper had attempted to influence town thinking, when referencing these attempts the letter states: “Such things cause dissention in a small town, and a small town newspaper should discourage not engender, neighbourhood squabbles”.<sup>184</sup> Finally, the letter states that being tough on crime does not work and the writer suggests prevention, not punishment. Their concluding message to Kramer demands an end to squabbles and propaganda.<sup>185</sup> For Kramer and the *Dispatch*, the need for full community re-engagement with the town versus city divide was needed as an answer to these dissident townsfolk, as without it the town could never present a monolithic small town idyll.

For other communities, a strong argument can be made that this self-belief of small town America as the true America simply hadn’t taken off before the Americanisation of the Vietnam War. Literary scholar John H. Sullivan noted this in his findings when he revisited Clyde, Ohio home of early small town novelist Sherwood Anderson. In 1960 he commented that many townsfolk had worked actively to remove his image and nostalgia from the town: “Clyde has largely forgotten Sherwood Anderson”.<sup>186</sup> Sullivan further added: “few townspeople know who Anderson was, and even fewer care. Seemingly oblivious of the fact that a noted writer sprang up from their town

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<sup>182</sup>. Mary Mettger, “Life In America Is Different But Exciting to Italian Girl,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Oct 20, 1960, 9.

<sup>183</sup>. Mettger, “Life In America Is Different But Exciting,” 9.

<sup>184</sup>. Mark Acuff, “Crime Prevention, Not Punishment, Needed To Solve Juvenile Problem,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Mar 26, 1959, 4.

<sup>185</sup>. Acuff, “Crime Prevention, Not Punishment,” 4.

<sup>186</sup>. John H. Sullivan, “Winesburg Revisited,” *The Antioch Review* 20, no. 20 (1960): 214.

and immortalized it".<sup>187</sup> The message presented by Sullivan in his work highlights the rejection of the nostalgic image by the community of Clyde that other towns such as Casa Grande had relied heavily upon. However, these apathetic notions were not only felt in Clyde, in Belleville during this period anger towards the city vs small town divide had begun to thaw. The inclusion of town pride arguments and distaste towards the cities had constantly been the focus of articles and editorials for the last three years without any real, tangible rivalry the argument waned. The idea that cities were on the brink of economic and social collapse, echoed by the supposed evidence of white flight that the Belleville believed, weakened when the cities did not collapse and these fears of urban inner city criminals did not materialise; many began to wonder the point of a myth or notion of a divide. A noted change can be seen within the *Telescope* as by the early 1960s it began acknowledging that all newspapers across the country had a right to exist.<sup>188</sup> The newspaper defended tonight show host Jack Parr and an unnamed large liberal newspaper for questioning US soldiers in Berlin stating: "We don't agree with either Parr or the other newspaper-but both have the right to their opinion".<sup>189</sup> Later they welcomed business line connections with large cities across the state and in the east as encouraging progress for the town and had been a needed connection for years.<sup>190</sup> The threat to the myth was clear. In this period some communities had their visions hijacked while others simply never bought into it, for all four towns through the years 1964-1967 would bring great change to this notion of divide.

The stage was set all it needed was a spark, the Vietnam War would be that ember. When reflecting on the 1950s in relation to these notions of divide two patterns emerge. Firstly, that in the early 1950s these town newspaper editors saw the opportunity such myths about the small town and divide against the city presented to them. There was no one unified reason but many of the communities used elements of fear of inner city ethnic minorities, economic benefits and small town community imagery as reasons for why the divide should be maintained, as big city newspapers rose to meet this challenge the divide was further expanded. The

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<sup>187</sup>. Sullivan, "Winesburg Revisited," 214.

<sup>188</sup>. "Truth In the Press," editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Oct 12, 1961, 7.

<sup>189</sup>. "Truth In The Press," 7.

<sup>190</sup>. "Long Distance Telephone Was Anticipated," article, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Jul 18, 1963, 17.

chapter also highlights the effects of this divide and that after a few years of intensive debate the notion of divide began to weaken as editors and supporters could no longer continue to keep emphasis on the issue. However, with American involvement in the War in Vietnam growing as the 1960s continued this renewed editorial arguments and reset the debate in motion. With early protest attracting students and occurring in the city of New York<sup>191</sup> this allowed newspapers seeking to reignite the divide the chance to question their readership what alternative they wanted: the chaotic city or the heartland of America complete with Friday night lights, family values and safe streets. Only one would become king, the other forgotten.

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<sup>191</sup>. Charles DeBenedeti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 114.

## Chapter 2: A Divided Society 1964-1967.

We're not going to get the Negro vote as a bloc in 1964 and 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are.<sup>192</sup>

-Barry Goldwater 1961

Already a Republican senator for Arizona when articulating these words in 1961, Barry Goldwater began to outline the shift that had taken place in 1960s conservatism; instead of attempting to appeal to ethnic minorities as the 'party of Lincoln'. Ultimately drawing on the principles of liberal Republicans who had been major supporters of the Civil Rights Movement in post-war America.<sup>193</sup> The 1956 Republican platform offered strong support to the decision in *Brown v Board* (1954): "we concur in the conclusion of the Supreme Court that its decision directing school desegregation should be accomplished with all deliberate speed".<sup>194</sup> Further to this, in 1957 President Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to uphold the rights protected by the Supreme Court ruling. Alternatively, Goldwater focused his attention on the emerging disillusioned white voters, scorning, in the process, progressive republicanism of the 1950s. Beginning in the early 1960s, Goldwater and other Republicans in the South began to identify the emerging divide caused by democratic segregationists such as Senator Strom Thurmond; his 24 hour filibuster against the 1957 Civil Rights Act and clash with Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson signalled a dramatic switch,<sup>195</sup> as many southern segregationists no longer agreed with their Democrat Party. With a new ally presented in the Republican Party in Goldwater, the Grand Old Party looked to appeal to new voters; by distancing itself from its brand of moderate conservatism and dropping any appeals to ethnic voters in an attempt to appeal to whites, especially those in both the north and south angered by civil rights and the effects of bussing.<sup>196</sup> These new ducks were, to an extent, already racially motivated, strongly ideological, and feeling increasingly

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<sup>192</sup>. Larry M. Bartels, "Where the Ducks Are: Voting Power in a Party System," in *Politicians and Party Politics*, ed. John Gray Geer (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 43.

<sup>193</sup>. Joseph A. Aistrup, *The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 7.

<sup>194</sup>. Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 37.

<sup>195</sup>. Nadine Cohodas, *Strom Thurmond & The Politics of Southern Change* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1994), 299.

<sup>196</sup>. The act of transporting pupils from one area to another in order to address residential segregation.

forgotten. State rights, anger over civil rights and fear of the unknown were all branded into the new Republican southern strategy that would expand and grow Republican conservatism in the south and the wider US.<sup>197</sup>

This chapter focuses on how the Americanisation of the Vietnam War was used by editors and supporters to alter the divide between town and city examined in the first chapter. The chapter will start by examining how academics of the period responded to the reignited divide by 1964 and how it had begun to affect their outlook on the debate. This chapter will then examine how the town newspapers, investigated in the study, used the Americanisation of the war as an opportunity to connect the small town value arguments they had cited in the 1950s, as differences between them and the city, to connect them to the wider conflict in Vietnam. Consequently, allowing their readers to think the Vietnam war was central to the divide between town and city. Although one cannot simply state that the editor of each of these newspapers was the sole manufacturer of this attempted connection of divide and war, it can be stated that the newspapers as a whole did attempt to either influence or maintain these links. The argument here is not necessarily just centred on who conducted this influencing but how this divide and later connection to the war created a deeper division that came to have political consequences as a result of the feelings that had been nurtured. Additionally, it will examine how the four themes of race relations, economics, patriotism and conservatism underpinned the manipulation attempts by newspapers to stress the importance of this 'small town way of life' or, as in the case of race relations, as attempts to create feelings of anger and resent. Finally, the chapter will explore how these newspapers combined early conservative rhetoric alongside scapegoats for their arguments in an attempt to build a powerful right-thinking congregation.

### The Divide Continued

Between 1964-1967 the debate between small town and big cities in academic spheres evolved. If the debates of the 1950s concentrated upon establishing a divide between the town and city, those of the mid-1960s expanded to ignore the town and focus on problems faced by the large cities. Civil rights also played an important role within this debate alongside the Vietnam War, as many white

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<sup>197</sup>. Aistrup, *The Southern Strategy*, 5.



communities feared the effects of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, with increased demonstrations in the south to abolish segregation. Towns such as Casa Grande linked these demonstrations to communist activists and declared these demonstrations were now plaguing the nation,<sup>198</sup> stating that although demonstrations at the moment had failed: “the commies will try to ram-rod this same tactic in other cities in the coming months”.<sup>199</sup> These fears of the end of white working class privilege by some town editors across America fuelled their support for conservative politicians.

By the mid-1960s the previous debates on which lifestyle, city or the town, afforded one with the most advantageous living standards had largely declined. In the academic debates of the small town, rhetoric shifted to issues of civil rights, economic self-sufficiency and patriotism. In the city, arguments still raged over their growing problems. Supporters of small towns who had always lived in the city and still held influence,<sup>200</sup> for example Glenn V. Fuguitt, highlighted the increasing range of issues that cities faced. Fuguitt argued that decentralisation of the cities only enriched small towns giving citizens the chance to move away from these ‘problematic metropolises’.<sup>201</sup> Academics such as Richard K. Kerckhoff and Robert E. Mason attacked the cities over a number of issues including inadequate housing and poor education, suggesting newcomers to the city often experienced more pressures than opportunities. Mason argued that newcomers faced many housing problems which often led to them living in poorly maintained homes;<sup>202</sup> he also outlined the many pressures cities such as New York faced, declaring that: “the big-city schools find difficulty maintaining minimal services, let alone exercising creative leadership in renewal of urban life”.<sup>203</sup> By using the work of Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, one can find that cities during this period faced major problems. Suburbs enticed industry and commerce resulting in their taxes failing to pay for critical

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<sup>198</sup>. Johnny Johnson, “Reds Advertise Stall-in Support,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) May 6, 1964, 4.

<sup>199</sup>. Johnson, “Reds Advertise,” 4.

<sup>200</sup>. Charles Press and Charles R. Adrian, “Why our State Governments are Sick,” *The Antioch Review* 34, no. 2 (1964): 150.

<sup>201</sup>. Glenn V. Fuguitt, “County Seat Status As a Factor in Small Town Growth and Decline,” *Social Forces* 44, no. 2 (1965): 246.

<sup>202</sup>. Robert E. Mason, “Decline and Crisis in Big-City Education,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 48, no. 7 (1967): 308.

<sup>203</sup>. Mason, “Decline and Crisis,” 308.

services;<sup>204</sup> evidenced in New York City, as by the autumn of 1962 there was a shortfall of 400 teachers due to the fact that many were unwilling to serve in poverty stricken schools.<sup>205</sup> Kerckhoff reiterates this by arguing that poverty is central to all major US cities: “all of America’s great cities have large pockets of poverty at their core, creating communities of socially and economically disadvantaged people”.<sup>206</sup> Their argument came to fruition when the mayor of New York John Lindsay called for help from the federal government to fix these issues.<sup>207</sup> City newspapers also became concerned by this with the *New York Times* beginning to run stories featuring the ‘urban collapse’ they now faced. Reporter and civil rights activist Whitney Young stated: “American cities are now becoming blacker and poorer with political and economic consequences for every American”.<sup>208</sup> He demanded that whites assist with the problem of the ghettos or they too would face problems: “The swelling ghettos are destructive to the people who live in them and threaten the welfare of every major city with strangulation, dry rot and bankruptcy”.<sup>209</sup> The city seemingly faced many problems; some small towns would later attest to diversity being one of them, arguing that this further perpetuated poverty and riots. Overall the city was still widely targeted by scholars as a locale with major issues; this was because the collapse of New York City or Atlanta would yield far greater headlines than the fall of a coal mining town in Ohio. With the subsiding of the negative reporting on small towns, these reports provided further ammunition to their press who by 1965 began to target the city as a place of dissension and unwholesome Americana.

Arguments on the greatness of living in small town America had largely subsided by 1964. Scholars still referred to some key issues that small town America had in the mid-1960s. For prominent political philosopher Robert Dahl, previous nostalgic rhetoric that the 1950s small town (or small towns before that time) were somewhat more wholesome than the rest of America was foolhardy; he argued that everyone

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<sup>204</sup>. Thomas J. Sugrue and Kevin M. Kruse, *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 9.

<sup>205</sup>. Mason, “Decline and Crisis,” 309.

<sup>206</sup>. Richard K. Kerckhoff, “The Problem of the City School,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 26, no. 4 (1964): 435.

<sup>207</sup>. The Phi Delta Kappan, “The City is the Frontier,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 48, no. 7 (1967): 305.

<sup>208</sup>. Whitney M. Young, “Housing Can Rebuild Slums and Lives,” *Times*, (New York) Nov 19, 1967, 217.

<sup>209</sup>. Young, “Housing Can Rebuild Slums,” 217.

seemed to be searching for something that fostered belonging, unity, solid community and inclusiveness, but actually it had never really existed.<sup>210</sup> He insisted that the village; “is less likely to be filled with harmony and solidarity than with the oppressive weight of repressed deviation and dissent which, when they appear, erupt explosively and leave a lasting burden of antagonism”.<sup>211</sup> Dahl highlighted that these perfect iterations formed by supporters of the small town about their communities created a lie to the American people. Other scholars also argued that this way of thinking was damaging to American minds. Charles Press and Charles Adrian evaluated how these ideals had affected the modernisation process of state governments. They claimed that because of the ‘supposed benefits’ of small town living many in state legislatures had ignored modernisation in favour of localised town planning: “The ideology to which decision makers are beholden is not appropriate as a yardstick against which to judge proposed public policies for today because it is appropriate for a rural small town”.<sup>212</sup> They went on to state that policies implemented using this nostalgic ideology were vastly outdated: “it is outmoded because many of its assumptions are based on folk beliefs rather than on the scientific study of psychology, psychiatry, economics, engineering, and other fields that have advanced rapidly in recent decades”.<sup>213</sup> The main criticism of the small town in general in the mid-1960s was one of lack of change or challenges to the nostalgic viewpoints of their community. However, once the Vietnam War began the major battle of the 1950s between town and city, over which offered the average American the best lifestyle, petered out. What emerged was an altered debate used by the small town newspapers to pit the Vietnam War as the hopeful saviour of these communities; they would show (to anyone who was watching) that they were the supposed true American patriots, and that the cities only created trouble.

### 1964 Americanisation and Entrance into the Vietnam War

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred where the USS Maddox engaged with three North Vietnamese torpedo boats, this resulted in US ground troops entering into the war on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1965. This is significant in the debate

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<sup>210</sup>. Robert A. Dahl, “The City in the Future of Democracy,” *The American Political Science Review* 61, no. 4 (1967): 960.

<sup>211</sup>. Dahl, “The City in the Future,” 961.

<sup>212</sup>. Press and Adrian, “Why our State Governments are Sick,” 150.

<sup>213</sup>. Press and Adrian, “Why our State Governments are Sick,” 150.

of the divide between town and city as it gave many of these communities a cause to rally behind, and the chance to prove that they were somewhat more patriotic than their city cousins. Initial coverage of this event from both small town papers and the national media was generally neutral or even positive. The United States experienced the national unity that affects most countries when they enter into a war seen as 'just' (in this case to prevent communism). The German historian Thomas Nipperdey claimed similar events had affected the German people in 1914: "national unity was a primal experience in a moment of threat and crisis".<sup>214</sup> Lyn Gorman and David McLean have also explored this very brief national unity, stating that up until 1967 many journalists voluntarily cooperated with the US military in Vietnam,<sup>215</sup> resulting in President Johnson being able to manage the news media very effectively.<sup>216</sup> Whilst I suspect that the break down in national unity came before 1967 this neutral-to-positive reporting on the Vietnam conflict can be found in major city newspapers. The *Times* praised Johnson's handling of the situation stating; "President Johnson's response to the North Vietnamese attack on the destroyer Maddox contained the right mixture of fairness and restraint".<sup>217</sup> Other newspapers too voiced their support, the *Washington Post* detailed to its readers the optimism US troops were providing in South Vietnam: "moving into near battle or into skirmishes with American troops produces an exhilarating belief that the war can be won here".<sup>218</sup> Contrary to what the rest of their history suggests some of the most negative support came from a small town newspaper. Conservative newspaper, the *Casa Grande Dispatch* reported on the incident in a critical exposé style. They envisaged that the US aimed to use the 'crisis' as a springboard in which to set up: "a sea and air quarantine of North Vietnam to keep new forces and arms out of South Vietnam".<sup>219</sup> They argued that the whole event had been staged and planned in order to give President Johnson more control over the region. The article ended on the sombre note that: "the end result is that the US will probably lose another

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<sup>214</sup>. Roger Chickering, "War Enthusiasm: Public Opinion and the Outbreak of War in 1914," in *The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914*, ed. Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 200.

<sup>215</sup>. Lyn Gorman and David McLean, *Media and Society into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Historical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 213.

<sup>216</sup>. Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 9.

<sup>217</sup>. "Warning to Hanoi," article, *Times*, (New York) Aug 4, 1964, 28.

<sup>218</sup>. Jack Foisie, "US Troops' Eagerness Causes Viet Optimism," *Post*, (Washington) Aug 15, 1965, 22.

<sup>219</sup>. Johnny Johnson, "Was Viet Nam Crisis Planned By U.S Govt?," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Aug 10, 1964, 4.

round in the battle of freedom vs slavery. It's a dismal picture".<sup>220</sup> This last note, a nod to the American Civil War, highlights the newspapers burgeoning ambitions by alluding to the feeling that their white American community had already lost the battle for civil rights, the paper wanted to provoke a reaction from their readers that they should not lose in Vietnam: "only the American people can keep history from repeating itself".<sup>221</sup>

By the mid-1960s after this initial period of support ended, the supporters of the small town myth saw an opportunity to continue to keep the myth alive by connecting the war to their struggles and small town family values. These editors knew that if no attempt was made to present the town versus city divide as interconnected to the war in Vietnam, the debate would be lost to the growing discussion around the war, firstly they had to continue their myth. According to American sociologist Robert Wuthnow the consequence of this was as stated by those who noted how many small town communities presented an almost storybook existence with people waving to those they meet almost like a scene from a 1950s television program.<sup>222</sup> This storybook existence was further promoted and, in turn, when liberal newspapers questioned the motives of the war, this allowed editors to attempt to connect the war to their values.

When the inevitable happened and liberal national newspapers began to differ in their stance, this only intensified the dynamic between town and city as they seemingly now had two very different marketable positions in their viewpoints of the war. Liberal newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* began to run counter stories with the *Post* exploring the various early protest marches which happened in Washington; the newspaper outlined how these marches were often orderly and peaceful. Police captains at a march in November 1965 were quoted as saying that "the demonstrators were of high calibre",<sup>223</sup> and only eight arrests out of the twenty thousand demonstrators were made.<sup>224</sup> These newspapers gave a platform to groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society, showing

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<sup>220</sup>. Johnson, "Was Viet Nam Crisis Planned," 4.

<sup>221</sup>. Johnson, "Was Viet Nam Crisis Planned," 4.

<sup>222</sup>. Robert Wuthnow, *Small Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 101.

<sup>223</sup>. "Throng of 20,000 Marches in Protest of Vietnam War," front page article, *Post*, (Washington) Nov 28, 1965, 1.

<sup>224</sup>. "Throng of "20,000 Marches," 1.

early anti-war debate in articles explaining the development of campus protests such as events at Oregon University where without this it would have been assumed that little in the way of anti-war protest existed.<sup>225</sup> The paper described the protest debates as a success for mixing students who would not normally debate together. Teach-ins and their process as a general educational forum were proclaimed as “catalysts for not only the conversion of ideas but, what is more significant, the dispersion of ideas”.<sup>226</sup>

Throughout 1966 the paper also began suggesting that many citizens had become sceptical of the war. They argued that many were finding it hard to believe administration statements,<sup>227</sup> especially after the 1966 bombing of Hanoi when the administration had denied targeting locations within the city, only for these claims to be found as untruthful when “Communist news agencies reported that U.S planes that day had bombed residential areas”.<sup>228</sup> The *Times* also heavily criticised the federal government declaring that American intervention in Vietnam was a ‘cheer for imperialist action’.<sup>229</sup> Reporter Henry Fairlie stated that every American affirms that imperialism is not in their blood but to everyone on the outside looking in the fact that America is an empire is the most obvious fact of all.<sup>230</sup>

This anti-war view became the catalyst small town editors were seeking as it enabled them to take issue with a range of ideas publicising the increased discussion of anti-war policy in large newspapers as a threat to their ‘happy communities’. Instead of trying to convince Americans to come and live in their towns as they had done in the 1950s and early 1960s, the focus repositioned to the protection of the communities they had created. Some small newspapers worried that rhetoric produced by these larger newspapers may begin to overshadow their arguments, in particular, The *Casa Grande Dispatch* argued that large national newspapers were misinterpreting the news. They maintained that because the American public was still not ready to ‘give up’ on South Vietnam, the large media institutions were going to endanger this situation. The paper stated “consider, for

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<sup>225</sup>. Mitchel Levitas, “Vietnam Comes to Oregon U,” *Times*, (New York) May 9, 1965, 25.

<sup>226</sup>. Levitas, “Vietnam Comes to Oregon U,” 91.

<sup>227</sup>. Nicholas Von Hoffman, “7,000 Rally to Protest Vietnam War,” *Post*, (Washington) May 16, 1966, 16.

<sup>228</sup>. Chalmers M. Roberts, “Hanoi Bombings Hit U.S Credibility,” *Post*, (Washington) Dec 17, 1966, 6.

<sup>229</sup>. Henry Fairlie, “A Cheer for Imperialism,” *Times*, (New York) July 11, 1965, 7.

<sup>230</sup>. Fairlie, “A Cheer for Imperialism,” 7.

example, the large daily newspaper that ran a banner headline reading: ‘Soviets want peace’. The propaganda mileage that little jewel reaped for our enemy is immeasurable”.<sup>231</sup> They further added that the same large liberal newspapers were making US troops look like capitalist warmongers, printing images of a mother and child climbing out of bomb shelter after US troops had entered the village looking for Viet-Cong, playing exactly into the communist arguments.<sup>232</sup> They finally questioned these newspapers asking: “who protests the loss of our people”?<sup>233</sup> This question placed the editor of the *Casa Grande Dispatch* in that very position of being the last bastion of the American soldier. However, this was highly dramatised by the newspaper as they were not the only ones who supported the war, as previously stated, the *Chicago Tribune* a large national newspaper also presented a pro-war agenda.

With their newspapers, other towns also stressed the importance of this divide against national newspapers as they attempted to connect the importance of local unity. The newspaper of Orange City in Sioux County celebrated the importance of local papers arguing that they were the heart of the community and nothing could replace them: “while the huge metropolitan dailies dominate the newspapers field, the backbone of the industry is the hometown paper”.<sup>234</sup> It is likely that many of these small town papers simply used this early Americanisation divide as a defence against the growth of TV ownership, which had increased from nine percent to eighty seven percent by the end of the fifties.<sup>235</sup> Therefore they sought to fend off other media by making a case for their importance. However, the communication professor Gerald J. Baldasty outlined that these newspapers still held immense power within their communities, especially with them being the most public forum in the community and the chief source of information beyond word of mouth.<sup>236</sup> The agenda they set challenged the national press not only about issues within their towns but acted as a voice against the issues of civil rights in an attempt to weaken

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<sup>231</sup>. Johnny Johnson, “Reflections on Tonkin Incidents Anniversary,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Aug 16, 1965, 4.

<sup>232</sup>. Johnson, “Reflections on Tonkin,” 4.

<sup>233</sup>. Johnson, “Reflections on Tonkin,” 4.

<sup>234</sup>. Bert Mills, “Main Street, USA,” *Capital*, (Sioux County) Oct 15, 1964, 11.

<sup>235</sup>. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 154.

<sup>236</sup>. Gerald J. Baldasty, *Vigilante Newspapers: Tales of Sex, Religion, and Murder in the Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 33.

the hold of other media formats. In Pell City they linked the national television media to the problems caused across America, they argued that television exacerbated America's social problems. One letter describing the 1967 Newark Riots ignored the causes of the riots in police racial profiling and blamed television for inspiring trouble: "Frankly as one American I am getting real sick of watching TV as people tear a town apart as they pose and laugh for a TV camera".<sup>237</sup> They demanded good news be broadcast because bad news only stimulated America's enemies: "Everyone knows that the news reels are being sent to North Vietnam and are being used against our sons and husbands because they are giving North Vietnam all the courage they need to keep the attacks up".<sup>238</sup> In Pell City, the newspaper used the idea that bad news was killing their loved ones to reiterate the notion that the large media had been against their way of life in the 1950s and was now against them in the 1960s.

These newspapers attempted to prove to their readers that the national media were not to be trusted because the diversity of ideas they were endorsing was damaging to American interests in Vietnam and creating unpatriotic dissidents at home. In turn newspapers such as the *Casa Grande Dispatch* aimed to remove any influence these national newspapers held over their town by printing stories such as 'Interpreting News', an editorial in 1966 that claimed the national media were publishing sensationalised news stories that were harmful to America's reputation. According to the paper, many foreigners were now convinced by reports that issues of racial divide and protest had supposedly engulfed America.<sup>239</sup> Many towns within this study had now reached breaking point. They believed that the diversity of ideas promoted by the large city newspapers only fostered dissent and gave a platform to the anti-war movement. Whilst there undoubtedly would have been those within small towns who were against the war, their newspapers generally did not acknowledge this by presenting a united front. Journalism scholar Sally Foreman Griffith argued that by centralising a newspaper around a selected town, these small town papers simultaneously celebrated and fostered a feeling of community, based

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<sup>237</sup>. Martha B. Gonyea, "A New Urban Renewal," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Aug 14, 1967, 11.

<sup>238</sup>. Gonyea, "A New Urban Renewal," 11.

<sup>239</sup>. "Interpreting News," editorial, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Mar 30, 1966, 4.



on the assumption that the whole town shared their boosted beliefs.<sup>240</sup> By presenting a homogeneous community, towns looked for ideals that would bolster their claims against the city and further connect the pro war movement to their notions of divide. These came in the form of jobs generated by the war and the creation of conservative populism as this allowed for the marginalisation of students, intellectuals and ethnic minorities, which were the three groups they were fearful of. If the trouble caused to the American populace by these groups could be highlighted they felt they would be repositioned within American society thus reasserting their presence.

### Reaction to the 1964 Civil Rights Act

After the unsuccessful attempts in 1957, 1960 and 1962 due to filibusters or the threat from southern conservatives,<sup>241</sup> on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed, outlawing discrimination based on colour, race, religion or sex and banning racial segregation in schools, employment and public places.<sup>242</sup> The law also granted black citizens the right to vote without any state literacy tests which they had been subjected to in the South with the implementation of the Jim Crow laws. In states such as Mississippi, this had led to only two percent of the adult black population being registered to vote in 1960.<sup>243</sup> Stories such as that of Bell Turnbow illustrate the civil rights abuses these laws perpetuated. Turnbow, a black man who had tried to register to vote in 1963, but instead faced a four day wait to get into the clerk's office only to face such a test. Punishment for his attempt to register to vote was meted out when soon after, a group of white men called the night riders firebombed his house.<sup>244</sup> In some communities these gross injustices were overlooked; they favoured the view that the Civil Rights Act did not bring equal liberties to their fellow man but a removal of southern culture and lifestyle. In small town communities such as Pell City, Alabama a number of claims were made against the Civil Rights Movement by local people. Letters such as the 'tired

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<sup>240</sup>. Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 184.

<sup>241</sup>. Robert D. Lovey, *The Civil Rights Act of 1964: The Passage of the Law That Ended Racial Segregation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 167.

<sup>242</sup>. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, 88th Cong. (1964).

<sup>243</sup>. Brain Ward, *The 1960s: A Documentary Reader* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 80.

<sup>244</sup>. Sue Sojourner and Cheryl Retian, *Thunder of Freedom: Black Leadership and the Transformation of 1960s Mississippi* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 18.

American' began to circulate: "I am a tired American-who has lost all patience with the civil rights group which is showing propaganda movies on college campuses from coast to coast. Movies denouncing the United States. Movies made in Communist China".<sup>245</sup> The growth of ethnic rights further generated turmoil around issues of race as the newspaper sought to encourage fearful doubts within its readership only serving to encourage divide. If they could present these movements as linked to communism, an already feared national enemy and the existing threat in Vietnam they would only aid their agenda. The presenting of the Civil Rights Movement as being supported by communists certainly assisted the segregationist southern whites in their dismissal of it. Historian Joseph Fry highlights early southern support for the war outlining how southern congressmen played a key role alongside southern newspapers in suppressing congressional and public debate; he then argues that many white southerners presented a far more hawkish attitude towards the war than elsewhere in the United States.<sup>246</sup> The war presented false hope to these communities of re-establishing their traditional power bases and cementing the idea that they were 'true Americans' unlike the civil rights activists harming the US with their lack of support.

Academics in the period such as Dennis Altman, Herbert Blumer and Philip Altbach argued that the issue of civil rights needed to be addressed in order to halt the creation of a second class citizen. These academics attempted to counter-balance the civil rights debate by expressing the view that these changes in American society had to be made. Altman argued that: "the American Negro has always grown up in a society all of whose standards are white-defined, in which from childhood on hundreds of minor instances came together to stress his inferiority".<sup>247</sup> The Civil Rights Movement only wanted equality, not black supremacy or an end to white culture. Philip Altbach addressed this further stating that whilst there undoubtedly would be some within the movements who wanted to see this; the majority, however, were focused on achieving fairness within the political, social and economic spheres.<sup>248</sup> Blumer thought that even more needed to be done in order to ensure

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<sup>245</sup>. "The Tired American," article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Feb 14, 1966, 9.

<sup>246</sup>. Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 194.

<sup>247</sup>. Dennis P. Altman, "Whiter Civil Rights?," *The Australian Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1967): 78.

<sup>248</sup>. Philip G. Altbach, "Black Power and the US Civil Rights Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly* 1, no. 6 (1966): 234.

that ethnic minorities maintained acceptance within these circles in order to ensure that the Civil Rights Act could not be ignored.<sup>249</sup> These academic arguments possibly expanded the distance between town and city as the majority of small town Americans would have had little access to these debates, anything they may have seen or heard was likely to have trickled down from television, radio and newspapers. David Horowitz declared that such intellectuals were often linked to communism, as indicated earlier in the study in the 1950s, or other foreign ideas advocating modernisation. Small town inhabitants were therefore suspicious of these ideas which were prevalent in the cities whilst fearing the impact they might impose,<sup>250</sup> town newspapers like the *Sioux Center News* advocated that intelligence was found in the home. The paper claimed that: “educators are generally agreed that the development of intellectual power does not begin in college, or in high school. It begins in kindergarten, and even before, in the home, with the earliest educational experiences”.<sup>251</sup> These newspapers built on the connection that children developed into successful adults through the home and traditional values rather than in the big city colleges. As the war progressed the Civil Rights Act and its connection to colleges and academics added another layer of divide. Small town citizens were persuaded into believing that they were being told how to think and act by their big city intellectual cousins.

### Rise of the Super Patriot

I will not scream or cry,  
 I will not plead for mercy;  
 I will not fall on bended knee  
 And beg they let me go  
 For I am not ashamed I'm here.  
 Our cause is just, I know  
 I will not say I'm sorry  
 And ask them to forgive,  
 I'll never let these vultures

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<sup>249</sup>. Herbert Blumer, “The Future of the Color Line,” in *The South in Continuity and Change*, ed. John C. McKinney and Edgar T. Thompson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), 350.

<sup>250</sup>. David A. Horowitz, *America's Political Class Under Fire: The Twentieth Century's Great Culture War* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6-7.

<sup>251</sup>. “Reading Program Helpful,” editorial, *Center News*, (Sioux County) Jun 24, 1965, 3.

know  
 I even want to live,  
 But I'll tell them, if they ask.  
 The price of freedom's high,  
 But we Americans love it so  
 For it we'll gladly die.<sup>252</sup>

- S/Sgt. George W. Landley's Vietnam Poem 1966

S/Sgt George W. Landley's war poem was circulated in the *Avondale Sun* the mill newspaper for the town of Pell City employing approximately eight hundred people,<sup>253</sup> therefore the paper held major influence in the town. The poem signals the rise of the super patriot within many of these small communities. Editors and supporters also began to understand the impact of patriotism upon their arguments; they understood that their readership had developed strong links to serving troops as both sets of media fashioned into anti and pro-war camps patriotism began to become key to the small town argument. Cities were positioned as unpatriotic and anti-family values, leading to towns to look for patriots. During the mid-twentieth century, the super patriot began to be used by many academics to describe the devotion some American citizens adopted towards America. It was described by James McEvoy, Mark Chester and Richard Schmuck as:

The most significant phenomena of the mid-twentieth America- super patriotism. Various called extreme conservatism, right-wing extremism, and radical rightism, super patriotism is a manifestation of the ideologies and energies of persons who reject aspects of contemporary American social and political life.<sup>254</sup>

Michael Parenti, author of *Superpatriotism*, further added that they hold ideological abstraction over emotive objects such as the flag,<sup>255</sup> and that these people have fostered faith like devotion to a version of America they viewed as the perfect utopia. It should be noted that not everyone in a small town held these views, the works of

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<sup>252</sup>. S/Sgt. George W. Landley, "An American In Viet Nam," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) July 1, 1966, 7.

<sup>253</sup>. "31<sup>st</sup> Inspection-Pell City," article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) May 5, 1952, 6.

<sup>254</sup>. James McEvoy, Mark Chester and Richard Schmuck, "Content Analysis of a Super Patriot Protest," *Social Problems* 14, no. 4 (1967): 455.

<sup>255</sup>. Michael Parenti, *Superpatriotism* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), 9.

Robert E Lane provide a key example of this, where a man in a Maine town responded to a question asking what the ideal patriot was, with the answer: “well you’ve got me a little buffaloed on that”,<sup>256</sup> a typical response for half of those questioned.<sup>257</sup> Lane showed that many were, in fact, casual patriots and that it was easy to be loyal to your country when going about your daily work.<sup>258</sup> However, it is more likely that these people did little to resist super patriotism and due to other factors gave de facto support for the super patriots within their communities. Unlike the cities which were not as closely knit it created an appearance of total support for the war within their towns.

In the wake of the refreshed fears of civil rights and their scene of privilege being dismantled (especially in the south) many whites feared becoming the forgotten people in Congress and also with the wider population of the United States becoming less interested in their plight by the mid-1960s due to interests in other issues. Many communities re-asserted themselves as the true American patriots where their ‘loud and proud’ support for the conflict would attempt to redefine their relevance, unlike the cities, they portrayed that they would not desert America in its ‘hour of need’. In Sioux County, Iowa, local reporters stressed the importance of Vietnam and why American allies had to be defended; “To pull out now would only create a much worse situation, and certainly serve as an encouragement for further communist aggression”.<sup>259</sup> Now they had their cause they could begin to place blame upon those they saw as unpatriotic.

In our opinion, the arguments of the ‘dove’ elements of our society today are serving no purpose other than to make the situation a bit tougher for the men we have fighting there. If the ‘doves’ can make North Vietnam and the Chinese think we are sick of the struggle, and will, before long, pull out, it serves only to encourage them.<sup>260</sup>

Other newspapers also attacked those they saw as unpatriotic. These attacks were often not of the refined nature that they would become in the later 1960s and early

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<sup>256</sup>. Robert E. Lane, “The Tense Citizen and the Causal Patriot Role Confusion in American Politics,” *The Journal of Politics* 27, no. 4 (1965): 752-753.

<sup>257</sup>. Lane, “The Tense Citizen,” 752-753.

<sup>258</sup>. Lane, “The Tense Citizen,” 754.

<sup>259</sup>. “No Easy End to War,” editorial, *News*, (Sioux Center) Nov 9, 1967, 2.

<sup>260</sup>. “No Easy End,” 2.

1970s towards students and ethnic minorities but were against anyone who spoke ill of their town, country or morals. In Belleville, the town's disgust towards the unpatriotic resulted in the alienation of one of their citizens. One Saturday night at the high school basketball game an ex high school student and a current state university student sat with his head in his hands whilst everyone else stood during the national anthem.<sup>261</sup> This refusal to stand led to the newspaper the *Telescope* producing a damning editorial on him declaring that whilst they respect an individual's right to a difference of opinion this should not be confused with an expression of disrespect and disloyalty.<sup>262</sup> Arguing further that: "we regret the pathetic plight of this individual who in his striving towards higher learning has failed to recognize such a simple principal".<sup>263</sup> The newspaper failed to realise the conundrum it had created, stating that free speech was acceptable only when they branded protest as such, anything they disliked (but was still free speech) was viewed as disloyalty. It seems especially fascinating when their editorial quote for the day was, "where all men think alike, no one thinks at all".<sup>264</sup> However the assault on this young 'traitor' did not end with the editorial, the *Telescope* was shipped to those men stationed away in Vietnam and Japan, they responded to the 'bench warmer' stating: "they would rather return to Vietnam than to go back to a country in which there are people who protest against the men who are making it possible for them to protest".<sup>265</sup> They stated that they only hoped these dissidents would see what others have given up for freedom.<sup>266</sup> The newspaper ultimately concluded that: "It seems a shame we can not substitute this 'unhappy bench warmer' for one of our 'regular players' who has given his life for the same Flag and the same National Anthem".<sup>267</sup> For newspapers like the *Belleville Telescope*, they began to see the emotive feelings that loyalty to the country displayed; the fact that the story of the 'bench warmer' was continually recounted highlights the reaction they achieved. It can be argued that this was one of the most successful attempts by any editor to link the war to the small town identity. For the town, this further cemented the rhetoric

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<sup>261</sup>. "Bench Warmer Patriotism," editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Feb 9, 1967, 9.

<sup>262</sup>. "Bench Warmer Patriotism," 9.

<sup>263</sup>. "Bench Warmer Patriotism," 9.

<sup>264</sup>. "Telescope Platform for 1967," editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Feb 9, 1967, 9.

<sup>265</sup>. Frank Shirley and Delmar Jeardoe, "Servicemens Reply," *Telescope*, (Belleville) Apr 20, 1967, 9.

<sup>266</sup>. Shirley and Jeardoe, "Servicemans Reply," 9.

<sup>267</sup>. "Bench Warmer Patriotism," 9.

that the divide against the city was linked to Vietnam, because as soon as this young person had gone to a big city college they had changed.

The Vietnam War provided for many of these small town communities the chance to reiterate their myth that these towns were: “wellsprings of faith, patriotism, and individualism as well as community spirit”.<sup>268</sup> Whilst the cities had been focusing on other issues; some small towns presented themselves as if they had not forgotten about America and would therefore defend it. Meanwhile, in the mid-1960s the *Chicago Tribune* continued to support the small town agenda by finding patriot’s from the towns and denouncing those who disagreed. They published articles from young students calling for their peers to support the government: “we have room in this country for but one flag-the Stars and Stripes. We have room for but one loyalty-loyalty to the United States”.<sup>269</sup> The Tribune even went as far as citing heroic veteran’s quotes from the Civil War whenever they heard patriotism being criticised. The quotes of Archbishop John Ireland were often used: “the safety of the Republic lies in the vigilant and active patriotism of the American people”.<sup>270</sup> For the *Tribune* they began increasingly to produce pro-war rhetoric akin to that of the small town.

### Vietnam = Jobs

One of the reasons support for the war in Vietnam was so forthcoming from small town America was because by the mid-1960s, many communities relied upon the American military industrial-complex for jobs and the survival of their town. Gretchen Heefner stated that “communities and regions across the country became tied to Pentagon funds, leading to what anthropologist Catherine Lutz has called the military normal”.<sup>271</sup> Patriotism for some communities became tied to the ‘man giving them the dollar’ other towns wanted to secure military contracts as they began to realise that security dollars made the difference between a prosperous town and a failing one.<sup>272</sup> This only encouraged these small town newspapers to further support the Vietnam War now their town’s status was at risk. The town of Pell City relied

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<sup>268</sup>. David H. Floz and P. Edward French, *Managing America’s Small Communities: People, Politics and Performance* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005), 1.

<sup>269</sup>. Glen Bower, “Patriotism,” *Tribune*, (Chicago) May 28, 1967, F4.

<sup>270</sup>. Lloyd M. Harmaon, “Patriotism,” *Tribune*, (Chicago) July 4, 1964, 8.

<sup>271</sup>. Gretchen Heefner, *The Missile Next Door: The Minutemen in the American Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 6.

<sup>272</sup>. Heefner, *The Missile Next Door*, 113.

upon the Avondale Mill for many local jobs, the war brought contracts and work to the mill so many people began to depend on the conflict for their livelihood which in turn produced 'paid patriots'. One should not assume that this was the only reason these types of towns supported the war, indeed other social issues discussed throughout the thesis highlight their existing fears but there is no doubt that these federal contracts motivated them. In Pell City, the links between the town and the military became substantial as letters celebrating the mill's efforts in developing synthetic cotton blends from US Mississippi Senator John Stennis show. "I want to extend my congratulations to you and your company for the contribution which you are making to assist the Department of Defence in obtaining the increased quality of material needed because of the Vietnam War".<sup>273</sup> These associations between the military and town continued to grow, the newspaper reported on how their textile industry was now an 'industry at war', the mill in particular, promoted the shared links between the town and the men fighting in Vietnam arguing that both were doing their best to halt the communists. The mill paper printed: "it's men and women, looms and dyeing ranges working day and night at breakneck speed to help clothe and equip tens of thousands of American fighting men now in Vietnam".<sup>274</sup> From gloves to socks to sergeant stripes to the "deeply felt obligation and single-minded drive to aid this nation against a ruthless enemy".<sup>275</sup> The town was propelled into being as much a part of the war in Vietnam as the soldiers fighting there, with the idea of a single-minded goal drilled into the town; that of the American war machine in the heartland.

Pell City was not the only town affected by these military relationships towns such as Rapid City, South Dakota and Fayetteville, North Carolina also experienced these attachments, the military industrial-complex had transformed these towns into large military service stops. In Rapid City, Gretchen Heefner outlined how the survival of Ellsworth Air Force Base was central to modernisation plans and since the 1950s it had doubled the town's population.<sup>276</sup> Ellsworth contributed \$55 million annually to the region's economy, so it is hardly surprising that Rapid City resident Alman 'Hoadley' Dean wrote to his senator suggesting that the base gain "some

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<sup>273</sup>. Senator John Stennis, letter to The Avondale Mill, May 19, 1966.

<sup>274</sup>. "An Industry at War," article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Nov 7, 1966, 3.

<sup>275</sup>. "An Industry at War," 3.

<sup>276</sup>. Heefner, *The Missile Next Door*, 115.



more missiles".<sup>277</sup> In Fayetteville, the enormous number of servicemen completing their basic training at Fort Bragg enabled stores in the town to make large profits off the back of these teenage kids. Catherine Lutz explored this in her work on how stores in the town made ample profit from the young eighteen and nineteen year olds. Many of them came from towns smaller than Fayetteville and had never had a real job before, for many this was their first real pay check.<sup>278</sup> Jewellery stores noted this and whilst giving enticing offers suggested to 'the lads' "hey, that girlfriend back home needs a little ring".<sup>279</sup> For some towns, certain residents promoted the war not because they were inspired by the plight of America but because of capitalism; more troops in Fort Bragg meant more customers; a more expansive war meant more missiles.

The war in Vietnam also allowed many small towns to begin to claim self-sufficient status, challenging the big cities by declaring that jobs were plentiful in their towns. Leonard Yaseen, a New York real-estate agent who specialised in relocating city factories and offices, preferably to small towns, but also suburbs, further bolstered these claims.<sup>280</sup> This affirmed that jobs in their communities were growing at a cost to the city. Given Yaseen's power base in the real-estate industry, he convinced many that the city was haemorrhaging jobs of every kind, and he disclosed that a third of his business came from companies looking to move white-collar work out of New York.<sup>281</sup> In the mid-1960s, he claimed that he was working for fourteen new companies looking to move 11,500 employees out of the city.<sup>282</sup> In many ways small towns across the country tried to replicate these effects, in Casa Grande they attempted to attract business away from Phoenix and were successful to an extent. In 1966 they encouraged Smith and Kelly Feed Co. to move their entire operation to the outskirts of the town which included their 10,000 cattle herd operation with plans to expand it into a 20,000 herd of cattle and employing as many local people as possible.<sup>283</sup> Later in the year, the Hexcel plant was built which according to the

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<sup>277</sup>. Heefner, *The Missile Next Door*, 115.

<sup>278</sup>. Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 134.

<sup>279</sup>. Lutz, *Homefront*, 134.

<sup>280</sup>. Greg LeRoy, *The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation* (San Francisco: Berrett-Kaehler Publishers inc, 2005), 76-77.

<sup>281</sup>. LeRoy, *The Great American Jobs Scam*, 78.

<sup>282</sup>. LeRoy, *The Great American Jobs Scam*, 78.

<sup>283</sup>. "Cattle Feeding Operation Moving to Maricopa Area," article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jan 26, 1966, 2.

local newspaper ensured town growth leading to a new Casa Grande boom.<sup>284</sup> Finally in 1967, the trucking firm City Transport Company with its \$500,000 dollar a year business moved its head office to the town leaving Phoenix.<sup>285</sup> With the town now entering into a golden age of prosperity, they argued that city living could not match what they had attained. The Civil Rights Movement was 'brushed aside' instead presenting conservative views on these matters that the cities' diversity of ideas had only failed them.

### Conservative Consensus: Standing Up for the Working Man

I think that if the politicians get in the way... a lot of them are going to get run over by this average man on the street, this man in the textile mill, this man in the steel mill, this barber, the beautician, the policeman on the beat, they're the ones-and the little businessman-I think those are the mass of people that are going to support change on the domestic scene in this country.<sup>286</sup>

- George C. Wallace 1967

This statement from George Wallace, Governor of Alabama and later First Gentlemen of Alabama, was another reason why support for the Vietnam War seemed stronger in these small town communities. Liberal politicians were seen to be hampering the status quo by bussing children miles across the state or assisting blacks in education and jobs, despite the fact that millions of whites benefited from federal assistance themselves.<sup>287</sup> George Wallace gained support by aligning himself with the populist fears surrounding bussing and the effects of the Civil Rights Movement. Similarly, Barry Goldwater used rhetoric in relation to big government, unchecked social programmes and high taxes to stir populist support.<sup>288</sup> Both men were out of place in Washington but they garnered support from small towns and working class people as classic cases of *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*. The historian Robert Goldberg described Goldwater as "out of place in Washington, a small town businessman in a lawyer's world".<sup>289</sup> Wallace was similar, declaring

<sup>284</sup>. "Industrial Progress," article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jan 12, 1966, 4.

<sup>285</sup>. Lee Bedillon, "City Transfer Co.," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) June 28, 1967, 22.

<sup>286</sup>. Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 222.

<sup>287</sup>. Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 223.

<sup>288</sup>. Robert Alan Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), x.

<sup>289</sup>. Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater*, 100.

himself as an outsider in the halls of Washington: “while foes in the House and Senate, backed by these outsiders, sat in their comfortable armchairs the people of Alabama sent me north and east and west to tell the story of Americanism and the south”.<sup>290</sup> The fear Wallace created of ethnic minorities and urban dominance encouraged voters to be whipped up into his: “rurally oriented, reactionary racist philosophy”.<sup>291</sup> This created a new populist consensus as many communities across America, fearful of losing their way of life embraced these ideas. In the community of Belleville, adverts were posted in local newspapers across the county claiming that the Civil Rights Bills were nothing more than power grabs by the liberal elite. Disguising the benefits of the bill in a ‘Dog Whistle Politics’ charade meant the bill was presented as negative along the lines of; “the American people are being set up for a blow that would destroy their right to determine for themselves how they will live”,<sup>292</sup> it “constitutes the greatest grasp for executive power”.<sup>293</sup> For the supporters of the advert, the Civil Rights Bills would not lead to better rights for blacks but weaken rights of all citizens. They began to look to those who would maintain their rights. Due to his stance on cities, Wallace won 10 percent of the votes from the citizens of Kansas in 1968,<sup>294</sup> against Richard Nixon, a candidate the town fiercely supported.

When Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* in 1963 questioned Wallace on *Meet the Press* as to why his state prevented blacks from voting he answered: “we don’t have any utopia in Alabama, Wallace acknowledged. But neither do you have one here in New York City where you can’t walk into Central Park at night without the fear of being raped, or mugged, or shot”.<sup>295</sup> He appealed to small town fears across the United States. The questions they had asked on diversity were answered, Wallace had successfully represented the city as a place of troubling morals. By the latter 1960s, small town anxiety propelled them into becoming the opposite of these cosmopolitan hubs. Towns sought him as their lifestyle saviour, bringing jobs to the

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<sup>290</sup>. Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 266.

<sup>291</sup>. Anne Permaloff and Carl Grafton, *Political Power in Alabama: The More Things Change* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 300.

<sup>292</sup>. “\$100 Billion Blackjack,” advertisement, *Journal*, (Scandia) Apr 23, 1964, 3.

<sup>293</sup>. “\$100 Billion Blackjack,” 3.

<sup>294</sup>. “1968 Presidential General Election Results-Kansas,” *uselectionatlas.org*, 2016, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?fips=20&year=1968&f=0&off=0&elect=0>.

<sup>295</sup>. Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 232.

small town, keeping the federal system in line with their morals and quashing those who would compete for their jobs, homes and family life.

These fears tied into the Vietnam War as they ultimately helped to build the populist consensus of the Silent Majority which would emerge in 1968 inspired by both Barry Goldwater and George Wallace. In their appeals to the white working class, both men from differing political parties had a profound impact on the small towns within this study. Appealing to white voters with his 'Silent American' rhetoric Barry Goldwater reached out to those who during all of the major social changes in the 1960s had been 'forgotten'. He stated he was for those Americans:

Who quietly go about the business of paying and praying, working and saving. They mind their own business and meet their responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. They are the group who, for too long, have had their voices drowned out by the clamour of pressure groups.<sup>296</sup>

For towns all across America this was what they had been calling for; a politician who seemed to stand up for their rights and American morals. In Belleville, the papers political page seemingly favoured this stance on good morals that Goldwater supported and failed to place an advert for Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1964 election despite having ample room for local Democrats.<sup>297</sup> The decision was put to the people of Belleville that in order to stop President Johnson remaking America as he imagined, according to his White House speech: "we are going to take all of the money that we think is unnecessarily being spent and take it from the 'haves' and give it to the 'have nots' that need it so much".<sup>298</sup> The choice was presented that only Goldwater would stop this redistribution to the city poor, as Goldwater had preached on ending this central city focus.

Although this was a form of political manipulation, there was very little backlash to these actions for the Republican Party. By preaching to the already fearful communities he positioned the city and town at different ends of the spectrum, the city as a place where the streets were jungles and bullies and marauders had

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<sup>296</sup>. Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater*, 150.

<sup>297</sup>. "How L.B.J Would Remake America," advertisement, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Oct 29, 1964, 23.

<sup>298</sup>. "How L.B.J Would Remake America," 23.

caused the 'Average Joe' to become fearful even in his home.<sup>299</sup> Local newspaper editors reinforced the small town image they purported in the letters that they published, an example of this is this letter published by Mr and Mrs Roy in appreciation of Orange City: "our sincere thanks, appreciation-and admiration for the entire community of Orange City, and the exceptional moral, Christian qualities".<sup>300</sup> With the collective output of supporters of this divide and editors of these small newspapers both creating literature in letters, articles or editorials together they intensified the debates around town and city. This further promoted their agendas and convinced their readers.

### Selecting Targets

Scapegoats are needed in every populist political movement which appeals to the ordinary man and the early Silent Majority would find three before the end of 1967. All would be used to a much more damning effect by the time the war had ended but in this initial period, they gave small town America someone to rail against as bringing products of city disunity, disloyalty and crime.

### Students

"These swarms of youths who are marching and demonstrating as they burn their draft cards and opposing the war are a disgrace".<sup>301</sup> This is how the *Casa Grande Dispatch* in 1967 described student's activities against the war, going as far as questioning "one wonders about the background of these young people who are swarming like locusts around draft headquarters".<sup>302</sup> They charged these protestors as 'The Ugly Sight' surmising that their backgrounds, similar to city lifestyle, had led them into disgraceful lives. Other small town newspapers argued that students were a problem, citing that their local students and young people would never be as disrespectful to America as these anti-war students had become. The *Avondale Sun* proclaimed it was proud of its own boys fighting for their country in Vietnam. In the case of Sgt. Bowen the mill turned him into a local sensation touring him around the factory and the town stating: "we have many adopted fighters overseas but, in the

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<sup>299</sup>. Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Barry Goldwater and the Remaking of the American Political Landscape* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013), 263.

<sup>300</sup>. Mr and Mrs. Roy, "Letters to the Editor," *Capital*, (Sioux County) June 9, 1966, 3.

<sup>301</sup>. "The Ugly Sight," editorial, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Nov 1, 1967, 4.

<sup>302</sup>. "The Ugly Sight," 4.

case of Sgt. Bowen, we proudly claim him as OUR VERY OWN with no adoption papers necessary".<sup>303</sup> In Sioux County, they published letters from teenage marines serving in the conflict denouncing their fellow peers.

I think it's time we learn respect for the policies of our country. I've been in the Marine Corps for five months. I joined to be an opposing force to the many teenagers against the war in Vietnam. I have yet to talk to a veteran of Vietnam who thinks we should get out. There are many other protests we teenage Marines no longer agree with.<sup>304</sup>

Similar to the article about Sgt. Bowen these small town men were promoted as something many of them were not. The reality was one that Marita Sturken describes through the use of accounts of American troops from small towns noting their backgrounds as "two years high school's about it, maybe if they're lucky a job waiting for em' back home in a factory, but most of em got nothing".<sup>305</sup> It is apparent that many towns discredited any negative issues with their young in order for them to be portrayed during the early years of the war as symbolic heroes, using the example that their boys were bright shining lights being 'hung out to dry' by their treacherous college counterparts who were inspiring the Viet-Cong to victory.

### Ethnic minorities

Ethnic minorities also became scapegoats for this early 'Silent Majority' and like students and intellectuals, they were easy to characterise as villains of society within small town press. In the South, many whites were still angry and fearful over the decline of the Jim Crow South and what it meant to their lifestyle and in other rural small towns the concern about big city crime and inner city riots had become associated with black communities. Editors played on these fears within citizens' minds and communities that had never encountered any black crime, making them scared that the reported issues were so prevalent in the cities and would emerge in their town. In Kansas, the prospect of black citizens moving into twenty three of the

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<sup>303</sup>. "Master Sergeant William L. Bowen," article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jan 2, 1967, 6.

<sup>304</sup>. Wayne A. Sandbulte, "letters to the Editor," *News*, (Sioux Center) Jun 8, 1967, 11.

<sup>305</sup>. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memoires: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 102.

state's counties that had no African Americans,<sup>306</sup> was enough for their newspapers to continue to link city problems, black citizens and crime together. In Belleville, the newspaper published a letter stating the benefits of living in their small town citing that it was a good place to bring up children, had friendly neighbours and good morals. Interestingly, however, the letter argued how Belleville was much better than Chicago because of its fewer crime and racial issues.<sup>307</sup> Despite many within the town having never experienced crime perpetrated by black people, the reality was that town press exacerbated these issues across the United States in an effort to promote their communities as utopias, hoping to attract people, investment and to save themselves from decline.

### Intellectuals

Finally, someone had to be inciting college students and ethnic minorities to protest and likely candidates were found in their professors and academics, after all, according to towns, this group had for many years been aiming to implement communism into American society and this was their chance to do so by creating a new left. Timothy Maga author of *The 1960s*, argued that the intellectuals had pushed harder for civil rights than the public liked, and had begun to criticise operations in Vietnam. He argued the public had begun to wonder where these academics were leading their youth.<sup>308</sup> In Sioux County, they feared the effects of intellectuals and their links to communism around the world. The *Sioux Center News*, one of the newspapers in the county, declared that whilst it would be great to have an open mind and trust the ideas expressed by academics, being open minded led to dangerous outcomes.<sup>309</sup> "Let's not as sensible Iowans advocate steps that will deliberately oppose the policies of our national government and play into the hands of factions that would wipe out democracy".<sup>310</sup> Academics became easy targets for small towns with previous suspicions of communist activity. It was relatively easy to encourage the towns' populous that they were trying to use Vietnam and their newly

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<sup>306</sup>. Robert Wuthnow, *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America's Heartland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 231.

<sup>307</sup>. Mr and Mrs. DeCamp, "Chicagoans Opinion," *Telescope*, (Belleville) Jan 27. 1966, 9.

<sup>308</sup>. Timothy Maga, *The 1960s* (New York: Facts on File, inc, 2003), 196.

<sup>309</sup>. "Let's Not Soften our Attitude," editorial, *News*, (Sioux Center) Apr 23, 1964, 7.

<sup>310</sup>. "Let's Not Soften our Attitude," 7.

politicised student crop to re-assert their links to the left and communist ideology on American soil.

#### A Divided Society 1964-1967

Small town America would continue to target these three groups with increased animosity and, as the war entered 1968, the fear and distrust they held these groups with continued and hostilities peaked. These groups represented the cities and their diversity of ideas which appeared to threaten small towns because if readers waivered in support of small town editors, they would no longer be able to impose monolithic unity and maintain the myth of their communities being tranquil destinations. The Americanisation of the Vietnam War highlights an expanded progression of the debate of small town versus city; it ultimately shows how the notion of divide had evolved from a dispute over lifestyle choices to a fully developed divide sprawled across town newspapers. Editors and their supporters in small towns had linked the conflict in Vietnam to their agendas and in turn, created a much larger dynamic by connecting to the pro war movement; the result of the war would ultimately decide this debate.



### **Chapter 3 1968-1972: The Clash to Define America**

Our children are not growing up with a sense of thrill to salute the flag, and. To stand straight and tall as a free American. With all the demonstrations, flag and draftcard burning, slandering of our national leaders, disregard for our constitution, the outcry, of 'brutality. When law and order is sought to be persevered.<sup>311</sup>

The start of 1968 was marked with a monumental national event when 84,000 enemy combatants attacked over 100 cities including 39 of the 44 provincial capitals in the early morning of January 31<sup>st</sup>. This attack which coincided with the informal lunar holiday of Tet,<sup>312</sup> left the American press and public stunned. This became a problem for those editors who had marketed to their towns the pro-war/small town myth connection as a loss in the war would only shatter their arguments. President Lyndon B. Johnson had begun to be seen as a failure as his perceived control of the war spiralled. His administration had been attempting to deliver increased social programmes such as his 'War on Poverty' whilst the war in Vietnam was escalating. This led President Johnson to downplay the severity of the conflict, doing the minimum necessary in order to continue with increased spending on medical care, education, transportation and housing.<sup>313</sup> Although this worked in the short term for Johnson, in the long term, it only served to create a loss of public confidence in his administration. The president's lies to the American public about the war had manufactured a credibility gap, created by numerous attempts from both Johnson and the Secretary of State Dean Rusk to justify the war to an increasingly worried American public. Initially classed as a war in defence of Vietnamese freedom, then as a defence of the United States' interests, and finally a war in defence of the world from the 'yellow peril'.<sup>314</sup> These lies and changes of rhetoric by Johnson, coupled with his control over the information available to Congress, the media and the public, created his biggest problem, failing to win the war on his terms. Sam Lebovic argues that as the war continued Johnson generated a media that had become more cynical

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<sup>311</sup>. Rev. Wm. Vanden Berg, "It Isn't Silly," *Center News*, (Sioux) Oct 3, 1968, 2.

<sup>312</sup>. Jake Blood, *The Tet Effect: Intelligence and the Public Perception of War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 17.

<sup>313</sup>. Jeffrey W. Helsing, *Johnson's War/Johnson's Great Society The Guns and Butter Trap* (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 3.

<sup>314</sup>. Michael Lind, *Vietnam: The Necessary War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 33.

of his actions due to: “the state’s ability to manipulate the flow of information to the public without relying on formal censorship”.<sup>315</sup> By the end of his term in office, Johnson’s speechwriter Harry McPherson stated: “the President is simply not believed”.<sup>316</sup> This only increased articles from pro-war, pro-small town journalists such as Rev. Wm. Vanden Berg whose earlier statement suggested that the youth of small towns had been coerced against their patriotic communities, families and America. The newspaper’s fear was that the youth in small towns would damage the dynamic they had sought to create. When the images of the Tet Offensive were beamed into American homes, the manipulations of the last four years were displayed when well known CBS reporter Walter Cronkite stated “what the hell is going on? I thought we were winning this war”.<sup>317</sup> The perceived failure of the Tet Offensive and Johnson’s growing credibility gap had weakened the claims of small town editors and as Johnson began to fail, so too did the editors’ claims. The myth of greatness of small towns that editors had thrust upon their communities began to weaken. Communities saw that even America’s supposed greatest sons could not halt the enemy.

This chapter will follow a slightly different pattern from the first two, it will not ignore how the emotive issues of race relations and patriotism were used to extend the divide between town and city, instead it will use them later in the chapter as a focal point for how this divide was extended under conservative rhetoric. First, the chapter will examine how the Tet Offensive acted as a watershed moment for one of these communities and the implications the offensive had on others. It will highlight how the US media treatment of the offensive damaged the dynamic of the divide that these newspapers had worked to establish in previous years. Newspapers promoting the divide feared that their proposed connections to a failing war threatened the created notion, leading to it becoming a failed myth. Editors, therefore, expressed anger towards President Johnson whom many began to scapegoat as a way to remove him and maintain their investments in their shared

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<sup>315</sup>. Sam Lebovic, *Free Speech & Unfree News: The Paradox of Press Freedom in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 179.

<sup>316</sup>. Joseph A. Califano, *The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson: The White House Years* (New York: Touchstone, 2015), 169.

<sup>317</sup>. Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 168.

notion of divide. The chapter will then discuss how populist conservative arguments became further connected to the rhetoric of Richard Nixon's Silent Majority. Effectively at this point for a period these small town newspapers achieved their goal as politicians seemingly 'spoke to them' and they believed they finally had achieved their heartland politics. The chapter will finally examine how this ultimately ended in a clash of media and the connections to the pro-war argument weighing too much for these editors to shape lasting perceptions of the small town.

### The Tet Offensive and Rebellion against the Notion of Divide

Numerous historians have debated how the North Vietnamese and Viet-Cong Tet Offensive acted as one of the key turning points for the American war effort in Vietnam. International Studies scholar Don Oberdarfer highlighted; "the Tet Offensive shocked a citizenry which had been led to believe that success in Vietnam was just around the corner. Tet was the final blow to the sagging credibility of the Johnson Administration".<sup>318</sup> On the East Coast, the national media hounded the US Government and South Vietnamese administration due to the high fatality rate the US and South Vietnamese forces had suffered during the offensive. At home in the US they faced political failure as General Westmoreland's claims that the enemy was on its 'last legs' now seemed to be falsehoods. The *New York Times* reported that psychologically citizens of South Vietnam were alarmed at the swiftness of the attacks. They maintained that the United States had now been exposed as unable to protect the cities or countryside from attacks.<sup>319</sup> For the *Washington Post*, the offensive left the US in a 'maze of uncertainty'. They argued that numerous officials in both the US Army and Republic of South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) privately believed the war would be a failure.<sup>320</sup> The *Post* also questioned why, after scattered intelligence of an attack around or before Tet, the ARVN commanders would give as much as 50% of their troops holiday leave.<sup>321</sup> They declared that the ARVN had been "badly burnt by this one".<sup>322</sup> Ultimately with US fatalities rising, doubts began

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<sup>318</sup>. Don Oberdarfer, *Tet!: The Turning Point in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), xvi.

<sup>319</sup>. "After the Tet Offensive," article, *Times*, (New York) Feb 8, 1968, 42.

<sup>320</sup>. Murrey Marder and Chalmers M. Robert, "Reds Offensive Leaves U.S with Maze of Uncertainties," *Post*, (Washington) Feb 26, 1968, 1.

<sup>321</sup>. "S. Viets Got Leave Despite Raid Warning," article, *Post*, (Washington) Feb 10, 1968, 6.

<sup>322</sup>. "S. Viets Got Leave," 6.

to form for American citizens as they began questioning their allies' mentality and the lies of America winning the war, as such coherent protests emerged. The *Times* conceded that negotiations should now be considered more seriously as the war had begun to look unwinnable.<sup>323</sup>

For those editors who had used the war as a successful stepping stone in which to promote their pro-town notions, the Tet Offensive was disastrous as their own communities began to question them. In the towns of Sioux County, cracks began to appear in the monolithic pro-war argument they had sought to develop within the town. Editors in the town began, after the offensive, to lose influence and control as local high school students used their own school notice page to their advantage, questioning the US government involvement in this overseas conflict. The Tet offensive became a major event for the town as one of their residents was killed during it, this channelled support towards the students claims that withdrawal from Vietnam was a must. The guest editor of the *Sioux Center News* even supported the students in an outburst.

When the sad news came Friday morning that a young man of Sioux Center (Randy Schult, 19) had been killed on January 31 in fighting around Saigon, while on duty as an M-P, the Vietnam war took on a nightmarish quality-reaping utter agony from local people who felt the loss almost as painfully as his distressed parents and sister. What additional price remains to be paid before the struggle ends.<sup>324</sup>

The students' page was no longer a movement that could be brushed off within the town as children and teenagers causing trouble or copying student protests seen elsewhere. Their argument was strengthened when adults in prominent positions such as the guest editor began agreeing with them. In fact analysis from political scientist Christopher Gelpi shows that after the Tet Offensive, the impact casualties had on support of the war tripled in size.<sup>325</sup> This only increased numbers in the town who had become angered by the war.

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<sup>323</sup>. After the Tet Offensive," 42.

<sup>324</sup>. "Too Great A Price," editorial, *Center News*, (Sioux) Feb 8, 1968, 2.

<sup>325</sup>. Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 30.

The growth of television also allowed for a more connected and in touch teenage populace, the protest movement against the war and those for civil rights no longer seemed distant from small town America. This increased the fear for the older generation that the problems from the cities were surrounding them but for the young it gave them a collective purpose. After the events of April 26<sup>th</sup> 1968 when over a million high school and college students boycotted classes to show their disapproval of the war in South-East Asia,<sup>326</sup> the class of Maurice-Orange City Community school were no longer just a class but a movement of many teenagers across the US. Generational scholar Robert Wohl argues that actions such as the April boycott helped form generational consciousness, something that was beginning to happen in Sioux County.<sup>327</sup> John Hazlett develops this by stating that the model of identity offered by their elders became seen as oppressive, disguising them as a new, different generation further uniting them into a visible collective.<sup>328</sup> This collective was displayed when these students published on their page '*In whose Image we were created...*' it was a response not just to the events in town but those on the national stage. Examples of this range from their support for civil rights demonstrations: "it's about time we stop trying to judge people by race and color, or creed, and start recognising them as individuals wanting the same privileges and taking on the same responsibilities we are so careless with".<sup>329</sup> To when they declared the war in Vietnam one of the greatest man-made catastrophes,<sup>330</sup> in their Christmas edition.

The Prince of Peace came into the world not bearing a weapon. But a message, a message the United States has protected, but not utilized. The message of peace, a lasting peace, has failed. It has failed because man accepted the erroneous idea of war as a way to bring about peace.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>326</sup>. David L. Anderson and John Ernst, ed. *The War That Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 232.

<sup>327</sup>. John D. Hazlett, "Theory and Collective Autobiography," *American Literary History* 4, no. 1 (1992): 79.

<sup>328</sup>. Hazlett, "Theory and Collective Autobiography," 79.

<sup>329</sup>. Joyce Eason, "In whose Image we were created...," *County Capital*, (Sioux) Apr 3, 1969, 6.

<sup>330</sup>. Jim Spradling, "A Way of Peace," *County Capital*, (Sioux) Dec 25, 1970, 6.

<sup>331</sup>. Spradling, "A Way of Peace," 6.

The students asked citizens of the United States to ponder why the US could not embrace the true message of Christmas and love their enemy.<sup>332</sup> This marks the first time any of the newspapers encountered major resistance as a microcosm of competing arguments began to appear. What began to threaten those who supported the notion of divide was the loss of one of the town's young men. This legitimised these pupils' arguments highlighting the horrendous tragedy of war when Randall Karl Schutt of the 18<sup>th</sup> Military police 716<sup>th</sup> battalion died on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1968 during the Tet offensive attack on the US Embassy in Saigon in which his unit was tasked to protect.<sup>333</sup> The fact that he was a recent graduate from one of the local schools, was engaged to marry and was active and well known within the community only exacerbated anti-war sentiment.<sup>334</sup> For some in the class they would have feared that they themselves were not far from going to war and as one report by Scott Gartner, Gary Segura and Michael Wilkening in 1997 found that if: "the salience of recent casualties is likely to be higher; an individual is likely to weigh his or recent experiences more heavily in forming an evaluation".<sup>335</sup> For the local high school students possibly seeing the life of a twenty year old being cut short alongside other events spurred them to prevent others and themselves from facing the same fate.

These demonstrations and anti-war actions in the town presented a heightened threat towards their myth and as such resulted in these supporters actively looking to bolster their ranks and show that they still had community support. The *Sioux Center News* distanced itself from the students and other locals who had taken positions against its stance by writing a barrage of articles that were respectively on brand with its editor. Indeed articles from the local veteran's office stated that unless local people speak out against this vocal minority, then the majority will lose everything that is dear and meaningful to them.<sup>336</sup> By amplifying fears that they would lose out to these students it re-ignited some of the locals to further listen to

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<sup>332</sup>. Spradling, "A Way of Peace," 6.

<sup>333</sup>. "18<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade," *GlobalSecurity.org*, Aug 10, 2008 accessed Oct 16, 2017, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/18mp-bde.htm>.

<sup>334</sup>. "Sioux Center Soldier Dies in Vietnam," front page article, *Center Index*, (Hull) Feb 8, 1968, 1.

<sup>335</sup>. Scott Sigmund Gartner, Gary M. Segura and Michael Wilkening, "All Politics Are Local: Local Losses and Individual Attitudes toward the Vietnam War," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 5 (1997): 675.

<sup>336</sup>. "V.F.W. Post In Sioux Center Urges All Citizens Back U.S Effort in Vietnam," article, *Center News*, (Sioux) Oct 30, 1969, 12.

their arguments, community papers heard these calls and reinforced the county's papers. This led to community arguments of: "history has proven that appeasement only aids the aggressor who in the present war is North Vietnam",<sup>337</sup> they ultimately branded these marches as unfaithful stating "instead of staging peace marches and burning draft cards, thus giving the enemy comfort and encouragement, why not show some loyalty to our brave fighting men".<sup>338</sup> In an effort to further prove to the local high school students that they were alone in their crusade 'against America' (how their argument was positioned); the *Sioux Center News* polled the local Dordt College finding that whilst 27% wanted phased reduction of troops, 28% wanted to see an all-out military war, with a further 8% supporting the status quo Less than 5% wanted to see full withdrawal and over half of the 472 students polled wanted to see increased bombing of the North.<sup>339</sup> Although the community did respond positively to the continued outlook of their editors and pro-war supporters, the Tet Offensive had exposed irreparable divides within the community that would not disappear. Though the high school students were effectively ostracised by the town newspaper they had enough support to remain a presence until the end of the war unlike previous students from other communities who had been silenced. These events prove how fragile the notions of the divide were and how reliant they had become on a positive war outcome.

### Johnson's Failure

With tensions rising President Johnson's approval ratings of his handling of the war in Vietnam fell from 40% to 26% as many began to criticise the war.<sup>340</sup> For editors like Wayne Stewart in Sioux County self-preservation became key, other editors too would have faced pressure that the pro-war/pro-town stance had not yielded results and in fact appeared to be in decline. When the alternative in Richard Nixon arrived kicking off his campaign for president in New Hampshire by asking the Johnson administration: "what kind of leadership the president was providing when the United

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<sup>337</sup>. M.L.B, "It-Seems To Us," *Democrat*, (Alton) Mar 28, 1968, 2.

<sup>338</sup>. M.L.B, "It-Seems To Us," 2.

<sup>339</sup>. "A Recent Poll," article, *Center News*, (Sioux) Jun 6, 1968, 5.

<sup>340</sup>. Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopaedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2011), 945.

States could not defeat a fourth-rate military power".<sup>341</sup> Nixon suddenly presented himself as a viable alternative leaving editors of these communities a scapegoat for the failing of the war in Johnson and a chance to re-assert their influence with Nixon. These newspapers quickly began to distance themselves from Johnson believing he had failed them. Small town newspapers in the study, however, rarely printed criticism targeting President Johnson's handling of the war as to do so would put them in opposition to the stance of 'never talking negative' on Vietnam that many papers had stressed years before. Instead, they targeted Johnson's unpopular social policies which were viewed as preserving inner city crime and also perceived to be anti-American. Newspapers like the *Belleville Telescope* signalled to the town that they had been forgotten when they reiterated the words of Senator Bob Dole that: "the American farmer has been the outcast of the Great Society".<sup>342</sup> Additionally, Belleville journalists argued that: "the administration has emphasized urban problems and programs while the plight of the rural American has steadily gotten worse".<sup>343</sup> In the case of historical narratives, this in fact was untrue, because while initial programs did focus attention on urbanites as those in the city had designed such programs, historian Frank Stricker argues that a variety of programs were established to assist rural poverty. These ranged from groups such as the Child Development Group which provided head start programs to rural black children, to the Volunteers in Service to America who went into mining regions to assist with education and jobs.<sup>344</sup> President Johnson also attempted to expand the program and provide further investment, and by 1966 the *Chicago Tribune* had noted him going to Congress in an attempt to assist 4.4 million families, not just with jobs but good libraries, and strong police training to improve rural officers.<sup>345</sup> Ultimately many towns got what they wanted when President Johnson, in his March

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<sup>341</sup>. David F. Schmitz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War: The End of the American Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 26-27.

<sup>342</sup>. "Blocks Farm Income," article, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Dec 7, 1967, 7.

<sup>343</sup>. "Blocks Farm Income," 7.

<sup>344</sup>. Frank Stricker, *Why America Lost the War on Poverty-And How to Win it* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 249.

<sup>345</sup>. Robert Young, "Wider Poverty War Urged," *Tribune*, (Chicago) Jan 26, 1966, 12.



31<sup>st</sup> statement, outlined: “I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President”.<sup>346</sup>

Running concurrently to the Sioux County story were the events of late 1968 that alienated many supporters of the small town against The Democratic Party, believing that the party had become linked to the wider ‘hippy movement’ and anti-war troublemakers found in cities. The party convention in August of that year would further cement these views. The party conference became a ‘boiling pot’ of ideas following the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jnr and Robert Kennedy in the previous months. There was a distancing of small town American pro-war supporters from the Democratic Party under their prospective leader Herbert Humphrey, and the strong anti-war movement partly led by Eugene McCarthy, as they saw the party as a collection of anti-war doves. Once Johnson had departed it became far easier to these editors to market the Democrats as peace loving, city living hippies and the Republicans under Nixon a pro-war/pro small town heartland; the Democratic Convention of 1968 effectively allowed the shaping of these battle lines. Nearing the end of the convention there was police violence levelled at protestors who were described as a ‘motley crew’ in an attempt to legitimise the police’s actions by a later investigation into the police violence. They stated that protestors included: “communists, anarchists peace advocates, revolutionaries, new leftists, bizarre flower folk, draft resisters, radical minorities, professional agitators”.<sup>347</sup>

In small town America pro-war supporters held much resentment toward these groups whom they felt were not just harming the war effort, but damaging America’s reputation. This national event brought increased opportunities and fears to pro-war editors. When the violence broke out the newspapers in the four case study towns were quick to condemn both the police and the students. However, it was often the students and youth who faced the majority of their criticism. In Casa Grande the newspaper editor Donovan Kramer argued that the students had been the ones to

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<sup>346</sup>. Lyndon B. Johnson, “Remarks on Decision not to Seek Re-Election” (speech, Washington, DC, March 31, 1968), *Miller Center*, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-31-1968-remarks-decision-not-seek-re-election>.

<sup>347</sup>. Frank Kusch, *Battleground Chicago: The Police and the 1968 Democratic National Convention* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 2008), 69.

instigate the violence, portraying them in their cartoons as under the control of the devil.<sup>348</sup> They attempted to further demonise these college students by suggesting that the new left were the new threat; “their cries for revolution and their advocacy of guerrilla warfare evolve out of a pathological hatred for our way of life and a determination to destroy it”.<sup>349</sup> Worryingly a report conducted by Robert Smith suggested that a lot of America seemed to have accepted the pro-war manipulation of the image of the peace supporting students. The report suggested that over half of those polled disagreed that such protest should be allowed and 75% approved of police tactics which involved violent beatings and the use of tear gas.<sup>350</sup> The Democratic Convention sealed the scapegoating of Johnson and the Democrat Party that these town newspapers had shaped as such, by arguing that the Democrats were now solely focusing on peace in Vietnam, the social issues of urbanities and the ethnic minority poor these newspapers had further attempted to influence their readers. An even greater shift to the right now became vital in an attempt to maintain their voice within US politics.

#### Growing Conservatism: The Men who Attempted to Speak for Them

The worsening crisis in American cities in the late 1960s was capitalised upon by many supporters of the small town in their debates against cities. Riots in cities such as the Watts Riot in 1965, the Newark Riot in 1967 and in 1968 the assassination riots of Martin Luther King Jr in over 100 cities, profoundly affected thinking in regards to these metropolises. George Wallace already an advocate against cities from his previous interviews in the early 1960s, used this fear to shape the views of white citizens. A *New York Times* report in 1968 highlighted these fears when a Kansas City couple sent what little money they had to his campaign enclosing a letter stating: “Governor Wallace is the only one, outside of God, who can get us out of this mess and bring our glorious country back to where it was before”.<sup>351</sup> *The Times* suspected that Wallace was receiving anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000

<sup>348</sup>. “First I Goaded the Kids- Then the Cops And...,” cartoon, *Dispatch* (Casa Grande) Sep 11, 1968, 4.

<sup>349</sup>. J Edager Hoover, “FBI Chief Cites New Left Threat,” *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Sep 11, 1968, 4.

<sup>350</sup>. Robert B. Smith, “Rebellion and Repression and the Vietnam War,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 391, no. 1 (1970): 159.

<sup>351</sup>. Walter Rugaber, “Letter From ‘The Folks’ Tell Why They Vote For Wallace,” *Times*, (New York) Sep 30, 1968, 40.

dollars a day from people who had subscribed to his rhetoric.<sup>352</sup> The *Times* also argued that Wallace had attracted voters, with his strong city opposition talk, from groups who had largely been apathetic before. “I represent a small group of young families who have never taken an active part in politics, but recent events have prompted us to stand up for Governor Wallace”<sup>353</sup> read one letter of support from a North Dakotan family. In the plight of America’s cities, scholars, probably unintentionally, assisted Wallace’s, and increasingly Richard Nixon’s, ‘Law and Order’ rhetoric when they pinpointed racially different neighbourhoods. Sociologists Howard Schuman and Barry Gruenberg stated that because of de facto segregation in cities it created racially different neighbourhoods all with unique living experiences with differing access to services.<sup>354</sup> This in turn, led to cities such as Newark having high patterns of unemployment, illness, crime and poor housing in traditionally black neighbourhoods.<sup>355</sup> Instead of suggesting solutions aimed at targeting inner city poverty, Wallace, as he had done in 1964, took a more populist stance.

Historian Jody Carlson argues Wallace maintained that the Johnson Administration was directly at fault for this lawlessness in the cities of America. He charged that the Civil Rights Act had only encouraged riots and civil disobedience.<sup>356</sup> Wallace himself demonised blacks as criminals and stated that things needed to be fixed.

Well, it’s a sad day in the country when you can’t talk about law and order unless they want to call you a racist. I tell you that’s not true and I resent it and they gonna have to pay attention because all people in this country, in the great majority, the Supreme Court of our country has made it almost impossible to convict a criminal. And if you walk out of this building tonite, and someone knocks you in the head, the person who knocked you in the head will be out of jail if you don’t watch out.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>352</sup>. Rugaber, “Letter From ‘The Folks’,” 40.

<sup>353</sup>. Rugaber, “Letter From ‘The Folks’,” 40.

<sup>354</sup>. Howard Schuman and Barry Gruenberg, “The Impact of City on Racial Attitudes,” *American Journal of Sociology* 76, no. 2 (1970): 231.

<sup>355</sup>. Schuman and Gruenberg, “The Impact of City,” 213.

<sup>356</sup>. Jody Carlson, *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness: The Wallace Campaigns for the Presidency 1964-1976* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1981), 129.

<sup>357</sup>. Carlson, *George C. Wallace*, 129.

To the many small town communities consumed with fear of inner city crime, perpetuated by their local newspaper (although something most had never experienced) this was what they wanted to hear. They celebrated politicians like Wallace who represented continued living in their relative comfort without change. If winning in Vietnam was seen to be these towns national mission, restricting crime and poverty to solely the city became their local mission. Wallace's statement to become tougher on crime and to deal with the liberal white judges who he allegedly believed protected black criminals<sup>358</sup> was possibly a step too far for many citizens thereby allowing Richards Nixon's watered-down version of law and order to succeed in the 1968 presidential campaign. These supporters in towns were further convinced when they heard presidential hopeful Richard Nixon's acceptance speech for the Republican Party nomination and thought that he was speaking directly to them defending their causes:

It is the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans—the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators. They are not racists or sick; they are not guilty of the crime that plagues the land. They are black and they are white—they're native born and foreign born —they're young and they're old.

They work in America's factories.

They run America's businesses.

They serve in government.

They provide most of the soldiers who died to keep us free.

They give drive to the spirit of America.<sup>359</sup>

By expanding upon Lisa McGirr's assessments of grassroots conservatism that Nixon courted the 'forgotten man' "the productive American who resented his money

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<sup>358</sup>. William J. Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 236.

<sup>359</sup>. Rick Perlstein, ed. *Richard Nixon: Speeches, Writings and Documents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 146.

being wasted on excessive government programs for the lazy”.<sup>360</sup> This made Nixon widely appealing to both the 35% of Americans living in the suburbs and the 35% of rural America.<sup>361</sup> This gave editors and supporters a wide base in which either citizens thought he was speaking to them or that these newspapers could manipulate that thought.

Opposition towards these debates only magnified the divide as it generally came from within cities and from intellectuals. Observers of city behaviour such as the social scientist Luther Gulick and the economist and finance expert to the mayors of New York City, Dick Netzer disagreed with town rhetoric. In a joint journal article they suggested that issues of social unrest and poverty were just more visible in cities. Instead, they argued: “Thus poverty has become a major metropolitan problem not because there is a greater proportion of poverty in big central cities, but because social problems are more acute and visible when brought together in one place”.<sup>362</sup> Although they did cite that individually men can do less for themselves regarding removing themselves from poverty in these cities,<sup>363</sup> the argument offered an alternative that perhaps cities alone were not the cause of poverty, but that after the inner city issues of the late 1960s the American public’s attention was focused there. With white America now concentrated on these large cities, liberal journalist and opponent of Nixon, Max Lerner suggested that instead of simply arguing over the existing poverty in metropolitan districts something should be done to change the observer’s connotations of ‘black equals crime’. He argued that because of the psychological heritage of slavery it had led to these discriminatory beliefs taking root. These practices were especially prevalent in the city as existing inequalities had blighted the black community,<sup>364</sup> ultimately making them easy targets due to many observers connecting the black community not only to poverty and inequality but crime.

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<sup>360</sup>. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 214.

<sup>361</sup>. McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 215.

<sup>362</sup>. Luther Gulick and Dick Netzer, “The Plight of the Cities,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 28, no. 4 (1968): 4.

<sup>363</sup>. Gulick and Netzer, “The Plight of the Cities,” 4.

<sup>364</sup>. Max Lerner, “The Negro American and His City: Person in Place in Culture,” *The Conscience of the City* 97, no. 4 (1968): 1394-1395.

At this point within the dynamic of the divide, these editors and supporters were about to reach the peak of their power, with conservative rhetoric steadily growing pro-war/rural grassroots movements emerged and attempted to continue nostalgic connections to the past. Propelled by events in the cities, by 1968, the National Farmers Organisation (NFO) began to reassert themselves as a conservative, almost regressive organisation that sought to protect small town life. With no political philosophy or intentions to represent rural life in the legislature, they instead targeted rural America informing people they were the last organisation committed to protecting their way of life. They presented journals and pamphlets that were easily readable by the rural public that cited meat packers and foreign agricultural imports as the enemy of the small town banker and family farmer they sought to protect.<sup>365</sup> In depth analysis of the organisation by the journalist William Murray, uncovered that the NFO desired to create a rural utopia in order to combat the threatening industrial city which they saw as harming US culture. The NFO argued that: "Rural America is the backbone of the nation, the source of its conservative strength prevents the country from breaking up into chaos and anarchy".<sup>366</sup> These nostalgic views were also re-asserted by other sponsors, in fact, the cultural geographer Peirce F. Lewis wrote how: "American small towns are very special kinds of places".<sup>367</sup> When compared with the cities of America which he described as "neither beloved nor much admired",<sup>368</sup> he argued that the small town was superior, he supposedly had his argument confirmed when a 1966 Gallup poll cited that some twenty two million city dwellers thought they would prefer the small town.<sup>369</sup>

With the growth of conservatism, its connection to rural communities continued to be fostered by these small town editors and supporters, especially as they began to develop links between groups such as the NFO and Nixon's conservatism. In Sioux County, the NFO was well supported having a larger sway over people than academic studies. After the group's success in 1967 at raising milk prices,<sup>370</sup> the

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<sup>365</sup>. William Murray, "NFO: The Fight for Rural America," *The North American Review* 253, no. 2 (1968): 24.

<sup>366</sup>. Murray, "NFO: The Fight for Rural America," 24.

<sup>367</sup>. Peirce F. Lewis, "Small Town In Pennsylvania," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 62, no. 2 (1972): 324.

<sup>368</sup>. Lewis, "Small Town In Pennsylvania," 327.

<sup>369</sup>. Lewis, "Small Town In Pennsylvania," 327.

<sup>370</sup>. Fredrick M. Scherer, *Industry Structure, Strategy and Public Policy* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996), 31.

organisation gained more support within the town's paper and by 1968 they had gained substantial press coverage from the Sioux County newspaper declaring that the: "NFO is looked on as the only hope for the American farmer".<sup>371</sup> With the group turning many farmers against the city it further emphasised the colossal divide between the town and city. The NFO stood for what many saw as an organisation that would protect their way of life, something small towns seemed to constantly live in fear of losing. In many ways, groups such as the NFO advanced Nixon's populist rhetoric as these groups continued the discussion of divide between grassroots citizens, this in turn allowed for the almost continual output of a traditional/pro-war/rural outlook presented in these communities.

### Nixonland: Creating a Consensus

On the morning of November 6<sup>th</sup> 1968 The United States of America had a new president, Richard Milhous Nixon, small town America was overjoyed. Fifty percent of the towns in the study had voted for him with the other two voting on more racially fearful lines. Pell City, Alabama had chosen George Wallace at an almost 7 to 1 ratio over Nixon,<sup>372</sup> and the racially motivated Casa Grande where Humphrey won as Wallace had split the vote.<sup>373</sup> Sociologists Doug McAdam and Karina Kloos argue this was something many Democratic supporters of Hubert Humphrey perceived to be their best chance of getting Humphrey and not Nixon into The White House.<sup>374</sup> Contrary to this idea, they argue that whilst Wallace and Nixon did split the south it was not enough, with Nixon capturing border states.<sup>375</sup> In the remaining towns Nixon won clear victories, in Sioux County 80% had voted for Nixon<sup>376</sup> and in Belleville he

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<sup>371</sup>. "10,000 Attend National NFO Meeting; Reelect Owen Staley," article, *Center News*, (Sioux) Dec 12, 1968, 9.

<sup>372</sup>. David Leip, "1968 Presidential General Election Data Graphs-Alabama-St Clair County," *uselectionatlas.org*, 2016, accessed Oct 20, 2017, <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/datagraph.php?year=1968&fips=1&f=0&off=0&elect=0>.

<sup>373</sup>. David Leip, "1968 Presidential General Election Data Graphs-Arizona-Pinal County," *uselectionatlas.org*, 2016, accessed Oct 20, 2017, <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/datagraph.php?year=1968&fips=4&f=0&off=0&elect=0>.

<sup>374</sup>. Doug McAdam and Karina Kloos, *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 112.

<sup>375</sup>. McAdam and Kloos, *Deeply Diced*, 112.

<sup>376</sup>. David Leip, "1968 Presidential General Election Data Graphs-Iowa-Sioux County," *uselectionatlas.org*, 2016, accessed Oct 20, 2017, <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/datagraph.php?year=1968&fips=19&f=0&off=0&elect=0>.

had won 66% of votes.<sup>377</sup> The headlines praised Nixon as their new saviour and barely mentioned the fact he had only narrowly won the election 43.4% to Hubert Humphrey's 42.7%.<sup>378</sup> In the mill paper the *Avondale Sun* they proclaimed to their readers that the incoming president would revitalise the forgotten people with his new silent majority: "Mr. Nixon says he is for the forgotten Americans",<sup>379</sup> "who want nothing but to live and let live in peace, and to be able to have just a small bit of happiness. We are the forgotten legions that have waited far too long already".<sup>380</sup> Support for Nixon was also garnered by other town papers, for instance in Sioux County where 80% of citizens had voted for him, (possibly as a reaction against the young high school students and their supposed leftist agenda for the town) the paper again attempted to rival these students with other high school students who supported the war. They printed articles from 'popular students', such as Karen Verneer in an attempt to influence other young people to support Nixon. She indicated to the town that she was with Nixon all the way because the Republicans will give the US more action and increase the bombing in Vietnam.<sup>381</sup> A year later this support remained as towns such as Belleville continued to print articles based on Nixon's good work; "immediately after President Richard Nixon was elected there was considerable criticism that the new administration wasn't doing anything about the problems facing the country, but by this time no knowledgeable person can any longer feel that way".<sup>382</sup> The election of Nixon and his subsequent early presidency marked the high point for these editors and supporters of the small town mythos and would be the closest they would come to winning the debate. It appeared to them that they finally had someone in the White House who would implement policy that would invoke their heartland status.

Nixon attracted voters based on a policy of traditional values, patriotism and concerns about crime; this gave him a ready-made consensus of support that garnered backing from 'Middle America', small towns, Republican voters and even

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<sup>377</sup>. David Leip, "1968 Presidential General Election Data Graphs-Kansas-Republic County," *uselectionatlas.org*, 2016, accessed Oct 20, 2017, <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/datagraph.php?year=1968&fips=20&f=0&off=0&elect=0>.

<sup>378</sup>. Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 166.

<sup>379</sup>. Martha B. Gonyea, "Happy New Year," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Jan 27, 1969, 7.

<sup>380</sup>. Gonyea, "Happy New Year," 7.

<sup>381</sup>. Janet Van Roekei, "Meet the Seniors," *Center News*, (Sioux) Nov 7, 1968, 4.

<sup>382</sup>. "Reduce Involvements," editorial, *Telescope* (Belleville) Feb 13, 1969, 9.



Wallace supporters. Thereby the Silent Majority became a relatively easily positioned construct to latch onto a broad church of Republican values. Nixon also embraced actors and stars who could further convey his message to different communities. American historians Steven Mintz, David Welky and Randy W. Roberts argue that the use of celebrities greatly influenced the development of the Silent Majority. Stars like John Wayne and the now Republican supporting Johnny Cash led voters, especially in the small towns, to feel that the old guard of Hollywood and country music had now re-embraced them and were prepared to stand with them in the wake of student and urban riots as the true heartland. Mintz, Welky and Roberts' main claim that:

Wayne's endorsement allowed the president to capitalize on the star's image as a masculine, unflinching Hollywood hero – in contrast to the brooding stars of the new Hollywood to unite a silent majority of older Americans around a shared rejection of the counterculture ethos.<sup>383</sup>

Small town America loved Wayne, to them he was everything an all American hero needed to be. The *Casa Grande Dispatch* was inspired, as he was already a product of the small town, they claimed he was the hero America deserved.<sup>384</sup> Under Nixon the return to American patriotism being seen as 'good' in creating a wholesome America and disapproval of counterculture allowed for Wayne's image not just to be embraced but iconised. The paper celebrated the public's rejection of evils such as "drugs hippies, and black revolutionaries",<sup>385</sup> favouring the capitalisation of returning to flags and tear-stained handkerchiefs. According to the paper, the young also supported this reshaping of conservative values, declaring "America wants John Wayne".<sup>386</sup>

Towns became encapsulated with a desire to return to the nostalgic vision that never was; one town paper cited it as all they wanted.

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<sup>383</sup>. Steven Mintz, David Welky and Randy W. Roberts, ed. *Hollywood's America: Understanding History Through Film*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 284.

<sup>384</sup>. Kevin P. Philips, "John Wayne: Still the Hero US returned to Flags, Tear-Stained Cheeks," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Feb 10, 1971, 12.

<sup>385</sup>. Philips, "John Wane: Still the Hero," 12.

<sup>386</sup>. Philips, "John Wane: Still the Hero," 12.

You're old enough to remember the real America if  
 you can remember when you never dreamed our  
 country could ever lose.  
 When you left the front door open.  
 When you went to church and found spiritual  
 consolation.  
 When people knew what the Fourth of July stood  
 for.<sup>387</sup>

The construct of the Silent Majority and the growth of conservatism in the late 1960s had convinced these newspapers that small town America was back at the forefront of American society. Due to many editors and newspapers embracing the Silent Majority as direct messages about their communities they joined this conservative consensus in the belief that they had now reached their goals.

### Extensions of the Divide

In order to continue their alleged reign back at the top of American politics editors aimed to continue to assert the benefits of supporting this conservative consensus and the fears of letting it slip. The conservative consensus, therefore, became co-opted alongside the war into this notion of divide deepening the resulting political conflict.

### Small Town Patriotism: Creating America's Golden Boys

Patriotism and the idealisation of small town youth became key to maintaining the conservative status quo, as the investment in pro-war arguments only increased alongside Nixon's presidency, editors began to use patriotism to invoke heartland notions and mitigate the effects of casualties. 'Fighting to keep America safe and free whilst making your home town proud was a lot better than believing your son had died in vain'. Letters such as those published in the *Belleville Telescope* from serving personal bolstered this grand narrative; "I hope people will understand that

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<sup>387</sup>. "Remember When?," editorial, *Dispatch* (Casa Grande) Aug 18, 1969, 4.

we have to fight and maybe die to help keep America free".<sup>388</sup> Emboldened by support from Nixon giving credibility to their claims that they had been the ones to provide the most soldiers who had died to keep America free,<sup>389</sup> all small town editors in this study began to create a golden generation. This conceptualisation of their sons played into the wider ambitions of aiming to convince America that they were the site of the American heartland with wonderful lawful towns and dutiful sons. In Sioux County the story of Bennis Jay Jans featured prominently within the town's newspaper headlines; "Warrant Officer Jans continued to lay down suppressive fire on their break even though it meant exposing himself to the antiaircraft fire. Through his courage and determination he contributed immeasurably to the defeat and neutralization of the antiaircraft position".<sup>390</sup> Similar messages were conveyed in other towns, for instance in Casa Grande their men were not just hailed as courageous and daring but they propelled them into heroes of the pro-war movement. When two mothers of fallen soldiers found that the names of their sons had been used to highlight the vainness of the war they set out to reclaim their son's names. They were determined to stop 'Vulturism',<sup>391</sup> by taking out court injunctions, the women's editorial stated that their sons had given everything they had to defend the freedom of Vietnam and they would not allow their boys to be used by a group of 'assorted peaceniks hippies and yippies' whose cause in life they would never have supported.<sup>392</sup> They additionally urged the community to write to their local congressmen advising them to pass legislation to terminate the use of their war dead in such tasteless protests.<sup>393</sup>

Nevertheless, the creation of golden heroes out of their men fighting in Vietnam raises important debates contradictory to historical accounts such as not all of their sons would have been exemplary soldiers. Historian David Cartwright argues that by 1969 the AWOL rate was 112.3 for every 1,000 men in the army,<sup>394</sup> and that these AWOL cases most often came not from the middle class boys but in fact the

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<sup>388</sup>. D. W. Hutchinson, "Hutchinson writes from Vietnam," *Telescope*, (Belleville) June 26, 1969, 7.

<sup>389</sup>. Perlstein, *Richard Nixon*, 146.

<sup>390</sup>. "Bennis Jans Awarded Air Medal," article, *Capital*, (Sioux County) Sep 7, 1972, 2.

<sup>391</sup>. Described as when the peace movement used the names of fallen soldiers to reiterate their arguments.

<sup>392</sup>. "Stop Vulturism," editorial, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Dec 31, 1969, 4.

<sup>393</sup>. "Stop Vulturism," 4.

<sup>394</sup>. David Cartwright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), 12.

working class: “In most cases, deserters and AWOLs are lower-class people who have joined the military believing the job benefit claims of recruiters, only to discover through rude experience the far different realities of military life”.<sup>395</sup> Editors like those of the *Casa Grande Dispatch* produced nostalgic editorials which implicated ethnic minority or middle class men unfit for the American army who had, in turn, caused desertion and trouble: “We have always had misguided minorities who demonstrate, but it is time someone told the spineless beatniks who gave them freedom”.<sup>396</sup> Counter arguments, however, suggest these editors were wrong in their sole argument that it was others who demonstrated, used drugs and took narcotics. American historian James Westheider argues that: “probably around half to two – thirds of enlisted men in Vietnam used marijuana, and 5 – 10 percent were, at least casual users of heroin.”<sup>397</sup> Therefore it is somewhat improbable that boys from small towns would not have been using drugs due to the sheer number of soldiers affected by these issues. Historian Jeremy Kuzmarov, author of *The Myth of the Addicted Army*, states that the use of strong drugs like heroin and drug use in general amongst troops in Vietnam massively varied, whilst also arguing that marijuana was easily obtainable. A US world report outlined, “the drug is everywhere. All a person has to do to get the drug in any village hamlet or town is say the word Khan Sa”.<sup>398</sup> The reality was that the narrative small town newspapers created of their golden patriotic sons, when compared to the historical narrative of scholars, was not robust. The fact was that various troops were affected by AWOL and drug use. Christian Appy states that possibly more men from rural, small town America were sent to and died in Vietnam,<sup>399</sup> indicating that due to the sheer numbers at least some had to have been affected by these troubles. Not all would have been the perfect soldiers the small towns so wanted to present. Articles such as the Alabama journals stated that; “almost every week, almost every day a soldier is awarded a medal for valor in Vietnam. The story of these men is the story of patriotic duty. Many times it is the

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<sup>395</sup>. Cartwright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 14.

<sup>396</sup>. “Objects to Baccalaureate Sermon,” article, *Dispatch* (Casa Grande) May 31, 1967, 4.

<sup>397</sup>. James E. Westeider, *Fighting In Vietnam: The Experiences of the U.S Soldier* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2011), 173.

<sup>398</sup>. Jeremy Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2009), 16.

<sup>399</sup>. Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 14.

story of superhuman effort or unsolicited self-sacrifice”.<sup>400</sup> These local journals continually reinforced these patriotic constructs which served the purpose of building pride in support of the war in order to continue the myth that these communities had developed.

### Economics

In Pell City, the growth of the military industrial complex brought major economic benefits encouraging their continued investment in pro-war rhetoric. The expanding war had led to the advancement of nearby Maxwell Airbase and although being an hour away from the town, the mill connections meant that their materials were often sent there and many citizens made the daily commute to their newly created jobs. Since 1918 the air base had been steadily growing and by 1968 its hospital alone had 687 staff.<sup>401</sup> The air base had also become a national training centre; one of the 16 major air command centres throughout the United States which trained young cadets.<sup>402</sup> Military historian William D. Hartung highlights that air bases became crucial as millions of tons of military equipment needed to be delivered to battlefields ten thousand miles away.<sup>403</sup> With that in mind, the air base received major funding for expansion as did many other air bases thereby making them major employers in the region. One reason for the expansion of the base was the airlifting of around 1,500 seriously injured Vietnam casualties a month to the base hospital for recovery.<sup>404</sup> This, alongside the contracts awarded to the mill in the mid-1960s, eventually increased dependency on the US armed forces expanding the war as more injured men equated to more employment and more flights meant more ground staff and a growing base. The Vietnam War, in towns connected to military installations, therefore fostered a continual sense of patriotism resulting from the towns' dependency on the war and the greater cold war. One of the many reasons why these small towns so adamantly supported the war was on the basis that they had no intention of 'biting the hand that fed them'. Towns such as Pell City

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<sup>400</sup>. Udo Volker Nowak, "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty," *Journal*, (Alabama) Feb 2, 1967, 28.

<sup>401</sup>. "Maxwell AFB Hospital Staff Grows From 20 Persons in 18' to 678 Now," article, *Armed Forces*, May 17, 1968, 34.

<sup>402</sup>. "Air University in 23<sup>rd</sup> Year," article, *Armed Forces*, May 17, 1968, 24.

<sup>403</sup>. William D. Hartung, *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the making of the Military-Industrial Complex* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 106.

<sup>404</sup>. "375<sup>th</sup> Aeromedical Wing Flies 1,500 Patients a Month," article, *Armed Forces*, May 17, 1968, 27.

encouraged support for the continuation of their airbases and connexion to the US military even within their own children. The local scout group were often reported visiting the region's airbases and on one such trip to Fort Benning, Georgia, the group were entertained by flight shows and airborne troops, ending the trip with a view inside a CH47B helicopter and seeing films of its role in Vietnam.<sup>405</sup> Producing young patriotic citizens was important to the town as it aided in gaining more contracts and more army services in the region. The military would be more likely to invest in a region that supported their actions than one that did not. The Cold War had transformed the south, southern American author William Faulkner had stated as early as 1956, that "our economy is the Federal Government, we no longer farm in Mississippi cotton-fields. We farm now in Washington corridors and congressional committee-rooms".<sup>406</sup>

### The Enemy: Minorities and Students

Perceived fear of the downfall of this conservative consensus also became crucial in order to continue to create negative feelings around the unanimity of cities, their press, minorities, intellectuals and students. In Casa Grande newspaper editor Donovan M. Kramer sustained his appeal to white flight citizens of the 1950s and 1960s in the publishing of guest editorials that reinforced city stereotypes. One in particular challenged the black city community to: "cease trotting out the same old excuses for black wrongdoings: broken homes, prejudice, inferior schools, joblessness".<sup>407</sup> They claimed, alternatively to the vast academic and city media opinion, that these social ills should no longer be tolerated as an excuse for crime even though little had been done in the era to fix them. The editorial further criticised the black community by suggesting that criminality was in their DNA, "except for a few voices, Negro citizens have given consent to robbery, mugging, assaults and murder by their silence. They have been intimidated by a curious twisting of the 'us blacks together philosophy which holds that complaining of black criminals is somehow betraying the race'.<sup>408</sup> This is a clear indication of how the newspaper

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<sup>405</sup>. "Eufaula Boy Scouts," article, *Avondale Sun* (Pell City) Feb 12, 1968, 15.

<sup>406</sup>. Thomas Borstelmann, "The Cold War and the American South," in *Local Consequences of the Global Cold War*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007), 77.

<sup>407</sup>. Roy Wilkins, "Black Law and Order," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Apr 26, 1972, 4.

<sup>408</sup>. Wilkins, "Black Law and Order," 4.

manipulated the identity of race to their readership fostering racist fears that black citizens created negative outcomes, by omitting social factors such as poverty, heavy policing and poor social funding in these communities Kramer could continue to present Casa Grande as a community free of these problems.

When these newspapers continued to stoke fears throughout the Nixon presidency they also did it with the view to create an enemy who was supposedly attempting to remove their 'winning' heartland status. By the late 1960s and early 1970s students also threatened the attempted creation of the small town monolith and challenged the war in Vietnam. Campus protests, as Kenneth J. Heineman outlines, were not just limited to the big liberal colleges of Berkeley, Columbia and Harvard but affected many state and smaller universities.<sup>409</sup> This, in turn, worried some case study newspapers as two of the towns had nearby universities and the Avondale Mill sponsored students at these colleges, rioting on 'their dime' was not approved. The newspaper, therefore, shifted the blame, it was not their boys and girls causing the trouble but those of middle-class suburban, city families who did not understand the enormous sacrifices small town citizens made. The *Sun* stated: "the young people who are trying to burn down our educational institutions have enrolled because their parents can easily afford to send them to college".<sup>410</sup> It positioned their students as "the young people I talk to have keen minds of their own and they, too, well understand the right of dissent. Their dissent does not include destroying the institution they attend or the Republic".<sup>411</sup> The paper concluded that some substitutions were in order.<sup>412</sup> By arguing that their children were more deserving as they understood the value of education they played to the quintessential component of the American dream, hard work.<sup>413</sup> Again this positioned their community at the heart of supposed American values and at the same time suggested middle-class Americans were the ones harming them. The Mill had also been putting pressure on local institutions such as Jacksonville State University since the end of 1969.

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<sup>409</sup>. Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 2-3.

<sup>410</sup>. J. Craig Smith, "Some Substitutions Need To Be Made In Our Colleges," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) May 18, 1970, 2.

<sup>411</sup>. Smith, "Some Substitutions", 2.

<sup>412</sup>. Smith, "Some Substitutions", 2.

<sup>413</sup>. Mark R. Rank, Thomas A. Hirschl and Kirk A. Foster, *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

This force instigated a change in the student paper from wanting to re-establish a connection with the broken down cities in order to rebuild and grow them.<sup>414</sup> By the start of the 1970s, their Support American Movement had consumed the student paper providing mini US flags for visitors and students to wear.<sup>415</sup>

In Casa Grande, the fear of the effects of student protests had spiralled out of control. After the Kent State University shootings, in which the paper had agreed with the force used by the national guardsmen, obscure letters began to be published. They feared the enemy was no longer just in Vietnam but at home too. The *Dispatch* published the views of one Kent State student, a local of Casa Grande who was angered by the way other media had flocked to the students' plight without considering both sides; "so many of the news media have been on the students' side, I think the National Guard did the best they could. I feel the National Guard was doing their best to protect us".<sup>416</sup> In the wake of the events of the Kent State tragedy, the *Casa Grande Dispatch* were reluctant to condemn the event as a troublesome time for American freedom whereas the national newspapers did. The *Washington Post* condemned the shootings stating: "the administration must listen, try to understand and sympathize with at least the right to dissent. It needs to display calmness and a sense of compassion, not hostility and fear towards those who disagree with its positions".<sup>417</sup> The *Dispatch* instead presented an unsympathetic fearful argument using the event as a warning towards any of their students going to college at the end of summer. As one father in the town wrote to his son; "Snap, I have seldom heard of a student being shot at his study desk. When he does in the open and contest the ground with the National Guard, he may very likely be shot-and very rightly".<sup>418</sup> The father further wrote "I feel nothing but sorrow that a beautiful young girl of great mental attainments be killed. Yet, Snap, if she had been studying-doing what her parents were paying for her to accomplish-would she have died".<sup>419</sup> As a final warning not just to his son but the town of Casa Grande as per the intention of the letter being published, he stated: "if you chose to try to change it by revolution,

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<sup>414</sup>. "Editor Traces Communications," article, *JSU Chanticleer* (Jacksonville) Oct 6, 1969, 7.

<sup>415</sup>. Ken Jones, "U.S. Flags Given Out; Assembly Cancelled," *JSU Chanticleer*, (Jacksonville) Nov 17, 1969, 1.

<sup>416</sup>. Mary Metzger, "Casa Grande Kent State Student Gives Campus Violence Views," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) June 17, 1970, 6.

<sup>417</sup>. "The Aftermath of Kent State," article, *Post* (Washington) May 6. 1970, 2.

<sup>418</sup>. Donovan M. Kramer, "The Editors Corner," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Aug 19, 1970, 4.

<sup>419</sup>. Kramer, "The Editors Corner", 4.



expect to get shot. Mother and I will grieve but we will gladly buy a dinner for the National guardsman who shot you".<sup>420</sup> In order to extend the divide as a means of continued belief in Nixon's Silent Majority prolonging editors perceived time on top of American politics the use of fear became vital. Through using the produced fear that minorities and students would strip away traditional values, patriotism and law and order, editors manufactured threats that convinced town citizens into further believing in the divide. With the Vietnam War becoming central to their later debates these newspapers attempted to create two very distinctive sides one of a nostalgic America that they supposedly lived in and another of city lawlessness.

### The Clash of Media

The cost of this continuing small town patriotic/conservative rhetoric was immense and the eastern media were quick to discover the true cost of this war on the small town. The *Washington Post* brought to national attention Beallsville, an Ohio Village that had a ratio of 1 combat death for every 240 citizens compared to 1 in 600 for the rest of the nation.<sup>421</sup> They highlighted the bewilderment and anger of the community as to why the nation was drafting poor farm boys to die in Vietnam.<sup>422</sup> The *New York Times* also argued that all across America small towns were waking up to the anti-war movement and becoming just as concerned as the young. In Kansas, the paper reported on a letter that a merchant had received from a student at Kansas University, someone he had known since the student was a boy. The merchant stated that: "if a young man has truly become so concerned about his country and has taken of his time to contact me in an orderly fashion",<sup>423</sup> then, he wrote, "it is time that I, a 48 year-old adult, be concerned about his concern".<sup>424</sup> The merchant then urged the US administration to rethink their attitude towards the war and to withdraw immediately. Seemingly more people in small towns across the United States had begun to turn against the war.

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<sup>420</sup>. Kramer, "The Editors Corner", 4.

<sup>421</sup>. Richard Dougherty, "Ohio Village Suffers Heavy War Toll: Vietnam Deaths Far Exceed U.S....," *Post*, (Washington) May 4, 1969, G1

<sup>422</sup>. Dougherty, "Ohio Village Suffers Heavy War Toll", G1.

<sup>423</sup>. David E Rosenbaum, "Congressional Mail Reflects Mood of Anguish in U.S.," *Times*, (New York) May 28, 1970, 25.

<sup>424</sup>. Rosenbaum, "Congressional Mail", 25.

This did, in part, serve to undermine the pro-war argument in towns as it highlighted to them and the wider U.S public the enormous cost they were encountering in supporting the conflict in Vietnam. Whilst they could portray that their men were the heroes of the war, it was increasingly difficult to argue that they were achieving anything, that maintaining the war was bringing freedom to South Vietnam or even that they were beating the North. Questions within their own communities would only continue to be raised as more men were killed. In response to what editors and journalists saw as a weakening hold on their communities, they began to target the eastern media both in television and the papers who they could easily position as anti-war. In Belleville, editor Merle Miller stated that: “the networks actively slanted their opinion coverage in favor of the black militants and against the white middle-class majority”.<sup>425</sup> In both Belleville and Casa Grande, eastern media publications became the enemy of the hypothesised true America. In Casa Grande, by 1970, the *Dispatch* was joyous at the re-establishment of conservatism under Richard Nixon and now sought to criticise those they viewed as harming American interests. The *Dispatch* continued to reinforce the argument that the eastern media, which many of these college students had been brought up on, only instigated protest whereas small town newspapers created a far more supportive non-troublesome environment. The argument in relation to college protests was that their sons and daughters on the ‘college campus’, as well as those in the military had been raised correctly; they cited the work of a small town doctor (seen as an expert) as evidence of this.

Very few students from rural America, or small towns, are found among the college agitators. Country boys and girls know that nothing in this world, not even a 4-H ribbon, comes without effort on the part of someone. Farm life breeds a sense of responsibility.<sup>426</sup>

Small towns such as Belleville emphasised the anger felt towards the big cities and in particular the eastern liberal media. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s the *Belleville Telescope* continually attacked the large liberal media, in November 1969 the paper professed that it was ‘*Re-examination Time*’. Within this editorial the

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<sup>425</sup>. “Bias In News Broadcasting,” editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Nov 4. 1971, 17.

<sup>426</sup>. “Intolerant Youth,” editorial, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Aug 10, 1970, 4.

newspaper declared that: “we must take direct actions against the media that continues to dignify such minority groups”.<sup>427</sup> They railed against the national media denouncing their press coverage stating they “have hardly devoted an inch of news coverage to anything but the hippy movement, the riots or the need for ‘walk out’ peace in Vietnam in the past year”.<sup>428</sup> They also blamed the large city media for inciting trouble and violence within the streets of America and giving the opportunity for a minority mob to rule.<sup>429</sup> The newspaper cried out for the silent majority to stand up and take action. Continuing the theme of the biased nature of big city media the *Telescope* additionally began, by the early 1970s, to further argue that small town citizens were entirely at odds with the large liberal newspapers. In 1971, the newspaper claimed that complaints now surrounding President Nixon’s price-wage squeeze were in fact fabrications by these other newspapers. The *Telescope* attested:

Unfortunately the news media seems to hunt out the complainers rather than those approving of the President’s action. We have not specifically polled local opinion on the subject but we have talked to perhaps a hundred persons on the subject and we find them completely united with the thought that ‘something had to be done’ and belts had to be tightened if we were going to protect the value of the American dollar.<sup>430</sup>

The paper continued to reinforce this divide between the two; that cities hounded and small towns supported. Although this seems like a constant preaching to the converted, one can suspect that by the early 1970s, with the war de-escalating and fears that the small town would once again be forgotten, unity against perceived enemies was key.

### The War of Rhetorics

Ultimately this chapter argues how the notion of a divide between town and city evolved during the latter part of the American involvement in Vietnam. The early months of 1968 could have destroyed the divide if the Tet Offensive had affected

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<sup>427</sup>. “Re-examination Time,” editorial, *Telescope*, (Belleville) Nov 20, 1969, 9.

<sup>428</sup>. “Re-examination,” 9.

<sup>429</sup>. “Re-examination,” 9.

<sup>430</sup>. “Congress Impairs Its Own Argument?,” editorial, *Telescope* (Belleville) Aug 26, 1971, 15.

more citizens within these communities thus giving them the ammunition to rival the message produced by their local newspapers. However, the offensive led to the scapegoating of President Johnson and the introduction of Richard Nixon with his populist conservative message taking centre stage in these newspapers. For a brief period, the argument that small towns had gained a far greater stake in American politics emerged, through both Nixon and the war a consensus developed that their heartland status was about to be cemented. With the use of hope tactics such as the production of jobs and the duty of patriotism to the fear of students and ethnic minorities destroying their dream, editors managed to extend this myth of small town America. Nevertheless, the cost of extending this myth through support of the war became far too great with more deaths and growing anger, citizens turned against Nixon and those who supported him. These editors did try to present to their communities that these were just lies produced by eastern media outlets but by this point, the utopian construct of the small town had weakened.

### Epilogue: Broken Sons, Broken Bones

**Stan:** How does it feel to be shot?

**Michael:** Don't, don't hurt. That's what you want to know. And how's it been, doing OK?

**Stan:** Yeah, same old thing, you know. Nothin's changed. I'm gettin' more ass than a toilet seat and Axel here, he's gettin' fatter than ever.<sup>431</sup>

*The Deer Hunter*, a 1978 film detailing the impact of the Vietnam War on a trio of steel workers living in small town Pennsylvania, mirrors many of the same consequences that the divide between town and city brought the communities in this study. For a brief period, these small town supporters had achieved their goal, they had Richard Nixon in the White House who in their own words had reasserted conservative family, traditional, beliefs. The lasting reality, however, was very different, the strength of the divide had become so reliant on Vietnam that when the war began to capitulate many of the arguments became muted, and as such editors began to lose their influence. The quote above epitomises another issue that many small town citizens could relate to, the men and women back home had experienced different realities compared to the veterans who had returned, communities and the people they had known for years felt worlds apart. These towns proved to be no different, the feelings that editors had attempted to infuse into their readership failed and a period of hopelessness emerged connecting these communities to *The Deer Hunter*. In the *Sioux Center News*' movie review of the film, the reviewer Wayne Dominawski accounts:

Although the characters, headed by Robert De Niro, center upon a small Pennsylvania steel town, it may as well be Sioux Center. The community is made up of Russian-Americans and like Sioux Center's Dutch descendents, they have traditions that make them one. They work, live and love together. It is a life they enjoy, and one of the characters sums up the others' feelings when he admits: This is where it's all at. This is home. It's everything.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>431</sup>. *The Deer Hunter*, directed by Michael Cimino (Universal Pictures, 1978), film.

<sup>432</sup>. Wayne Dominawski, "Deer Hunter: Haunting U.S.," *Center News*, (Sioux) May 9, 1979, 2.

For the small towns of this study *The Deer Hunter* reflected their Vietnam journey, communities had proudly sent their boys to defend America built on dreams that would bring political favour to them and an improved life. Editors, politicians and pro-war supporters promoted the Vietnam War as the war that would define small town America as the American heartland. Towns like Sioux Center had embraced the war as they had been led to believe in the benefits the war had created in the form of jobs and political capital. However, for many towns the collapse of the pro-war movement led to a collapse in the divide as the United States moved on. One reporter in the town noted:

Not once do we ask whether what we're seeing before us is true; rather, we cry inside that we know it is so and are helpless to do anything about it. Likewise, we don't ask whether Vietnam was right or wrong, we simply feel we were not prepared for what it threw at us.<sup>433</sup>

As previously discussed, small town's editors and politicians had built up the war, suggesting every effort should be given to this cause. They had persuaded towns to endorse bombings and attempted, within their communities, to drown out protest and question large newspapers that challenged them. Failure, to these editors and supporters was not an option, a message they reiterated to their communities. The constantly reassuring voice from writers and editors had presented to their communities a utopian vision that through the Vietnam War they had been winning the original divide. Many people from the small towns were therefore unable to deal with the harsh reality that the Vietnam War had achieved little for them.

Historians currently offer two interpretations of how men and women returning from the Vietnam War re-engaged back into society. The first seeks to argue along the lines of *The Deer Hunter*, that returning Vietnam veterans experienced disapproval towards themselves and the cause they had served. Works such as

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<sup>433</sup>. Dominawski, "Deer Hunter: Haunting U.S.," 2.

Mark Boulton's *Failing Our Veterans*<sup>434</sup> and John Wheeler's *Coming to Grips with Vietnam*<sup>435</sup> further expand on this narrative that society 'stabbed veterans in the back'. However other historians like Jerry Lembake have questioned this treatment of veterans disputing that actions such as spitting on returning veterans never occurred. He argues that the image of activists spitting on veterans is imprinted in the memory of many Americans, but in reality, he suggests there is scant evidence to suggest this ever happened. There was no photo evidence and very few reports in large newspapers.<sup>436</sup> Alternatively through viewing the conclusion of the Vietnam War in these case study towns, one can suggest that there appears to be evidence for both realities. In some towns, it can clearly be seen that anger towards the loss of the war allowed for veterans to be treated with malice, whereas in others they were welcomed back with open arms. This study actually highlights that although these towns might have attempted to present themselves as monolithic entities which they could do under the guise of their pro-small town rhetoric; when this collective message broke down at the end of the war, they all have very different consequences and conclusions.

This epilogue will conclude what the ultimate effects this longstanding divide came to have upon all four towns and how each town was affected and what lasting consequences there were for these communities. The epilogue will also explain how specific regional differences meant that some towns fared better than others post-Vietnam. By looking at town economics, returning veterans and the impact of the divide on the community the study will answer what the real political consequences were of towns subscribing to their newspaper's rhetoric. Finally, the section will conclude by answering the significant questions of this study around how and why the Vietnam War became a trigger for the expansion of the divide between the town and city and what did this divide highlight about these locales.

### Pell City, Alabama

Out of all the towns in the study, Pell City probably suffered the least consequences despite being the most centralised and having the strongest influencing newspaper.

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<sup>434</sup>. Mark Boulton, *Failing Our Veterans: The G.I. Bill and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 156.

<sup>435</sup>. John Wheeler, "Coming to Grips with Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs* 63, no. 4 (1985): 750.

<sup>436</sup>. Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 72-73.

With the editor J. Craig Smith of the *Avondale Sun* supplying 50% of the town's jobs,<sup>437</sup> owning many of the homes his workers lived in and controlling one of the town's only college scholarship programs<sup>438</sup> one might have expected that the town would have fared the worst post-Vietnam. While Smith continually emphasised the divide and built on feelings of fear and anger towards the cities the strong economic position of the mill allowed the town to suffer the least impact of his rhetoric. By the mid-1970s as jobs dispersed from other towns Pell City managed to stave off this decline. Rural scholars Richard Davies, Joseph Amato and David Pichaste argue that agriculture in the 1970s was in decline illustrating that the more rural a county was, the older its populace would be and the greater its decline.<sup>439</sup> Although Pell City was a rural community Davis, Amato and Pichaste discuss why some towns escaped economic downturn highlighting that certain towns with unique features such as a beautiful beach attracting holidaymakers or a town with a company hub would be less affected.<sup>440</sup> Pell City by the mid-1970s had become this anomaly, the Avondale Mill which employed many of the town still provided them with work, contracts for the military were lost, but others were gained. The mill's status also grew, by 1973 the president of the mill Donald Comer Jr. became president of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute. This brought contracts and recognition and the mill was able to switch focus to "the rapidly increasing demand for carpet yarn".<sup>441</sup> The mill employed many of Pell City's returning veterans, men like Greg Mullins and Doug Scott were welcomed back into the company and both received promotions shortly after returning.<sup>442</sup> This often mitigated many of the economic pressures veterans felt in other towns with dwindling opportunities.

The identity of the mill also proved to be vital to the town as it maintained community spirit after the promulgating of war rhetoric, like other editors who had used the war to develop negative feelings around the cities Pell City faced potential community identity collapse. For a decade pro-war arguments had been linked to

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<sup>437</sup>. Mayor Sam F. Burt, *Pell City The City With a Conscience* (Pell City: Pell City City Hall, The Alabama State Planning and Development Board, 1960), 1.

<sup>438</sup>. J. Craig Smith, "Some Substitutions Need To Be Made In Our Colleges," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) May 18, 1970, 2.

<sup>439</sup>. Richard O. Davis, Joseph A. Amato and David R. Pichaste, ed. *A Place Called Home: Writing on the Midwestern* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>440</sup>. Davis, Amato, Pichaste, *A Place Called Home*, 8-9.

<sup>441</sup>. "Avondale President Takes Over ATMI," front page article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Apr 9, 1973, 1.

<sup>442</sup>. "Promotions," article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Apr 23, 1973, 12.



family/community, parotic small town values and many towns even within this study failed to move past these notions when the war was eventually over. However in the case of Pell City the mill maintained stability for the town it continued to give a shared sense of community through economic downturn in the mid-1970s, high school graduates were welcomed into the mill and given ample opportunity to join its community.<sup>443</sup> The paper also regularly displayed how these workers truly loved their jobs and life; I have the greatest family in the world in Avondale one note prescribed.<sup>444</sup> The town also embraced Vietnamese refugees, one family the McCain's received praise for welcoming a refugee into their home and the community.<sup>445</sup> The sense of community support that the newspaper had fostered allowed for them also to keep expanding upon their family/conservative notions. This was represented when the newspaper produced an article entitled 'The Way of Life' here the paper set out the goals for the community; "the young generation must learn that putting God first in their lives will make their way much clearer".<sup>446</sup> These articles encouraged the town to focus its purpose and while this continued to allow for influence from the newspaper to an extent, it also allowed the town to maintain a collective that encouraged working together. Whilst in other towns, as the arguments surrounding division between small towns and cities collapsed, infighting started and communities stopped working together. Alternatively, Pell City continued to be able to maintain the notion that working for the community gave an essential value of self-worth.<sup>447</sup> Due in part to the stronger economic position, the community of Pell City emerged prosperous by the end of the Vietnam War as they were more able to adapt to a new purpose. For some communities, the consequences of subscribing to the divide caused infighting; Pell City proved different by being able to provide jobs which assisted the town to stave off rural deprivation which was happening throughout the USA.

### Casa Grande, Arizona

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<sup>443</sup>. Velma Thrash, "Graduates," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) June 17, 1974, 15.

<sup>444</sup>. Velma Thrash, "Win Or Lose," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) June 17, 1974, 15.

<sup>445</sup>. "McCains provide home for young Vietnamese refugee," article, *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) Dec 15, 1975, 7.

<sup>446</sup>. Dora Hart, "The Way of Life," *Avondale Sun*, (Pell City) June 17, 1974, 14.

<sup>447</sup>. Hart, "The Way of Life," 14.

Casa Grande as a town suffered the most due to the actions of its newspaper and their pro-divide supporters; the fact that so many of the town had bought into Donovan Kramer's traditional community/pro-war rhetoric led to division in the town. Letters to the editors highlighted this anger with one stating: "when our young men are fighting or in time of peace, we don't really need cowards, jellyfish, whiteflag wavers",<sup>448</sup> whereas other letters argued: "all the lives and money that was lost over there was for nothing".<sup>449</sup> The community was at a crossroads unsure of what to make of the war and how to move on. For Kramer the war had given him the chance to trigger these nostalgic community feelings for the small town, he was an advocate of his town first and a supporter of the pro-war movement a distant second. Kramer, however, in his attempts to influence his readers unlocked the most patriot support any of the towns in this study experienced, this continued even after the end of the war with the rise of influence the American Legion gained. The legion remained in the town spotlight receiving significant coverage from Kramer in the newspaper allowing them to publish articles directing the reader's attention toward the need for them in everyday life. The message of these articles represented how they would continue to serve America, the state and community, arguing that even though the war had ended there was still a need for American patriotism.<sup>450</sup> Due to this strong sense of patriotism many within the town remained angry that the war itself was over, they argued that the credibility of the US had been threatened as their destiny was to defend freedom.<sup>451</sup> Disapproving letters were also published in the newspaper on the announcement of the truce: "we should send more troops to Vietnam. We should build up to full strength. I consider this a slap in the face",<sup>452</sup> claimed veteran Larry Overocker others also argued that: "a truce like this could have been made in 1968".<sup>453</sup> In Casa Grande many felt that they had done everything for the US yet its politicians, city media and students had still failed them.

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<sup>448</sup>. Merrill A. Forsyth, "Comments on the Times," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) May 19, 1975, 4.

<sup>449</sup>. Denis Montgomery, "Families Touched by War Bitter Over Developments," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) April 8, 1975, 3.

<sup>450</sup>. "Legion Auxiliary Head Will Visit Home State," article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Apr 16, 1973, 5.

<sup>451</sup>. John D. Lofton, "Dems Covering Tracks on Their Roll in Vietnam," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jun 13, 1975, 4.

<sup>452</sup>. "Reaction Varied on Ceasefire," article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Oct 27, 1972, 3.

<sup>453</sup>. "Reaction Varied on Ceasefire," 3.

Even though Casa Grande continued to have strong patriotic links, the outcome of the war did change their outlook on Vietnam veterans. When servicemen and women returned home from Vietnam, many received criticism from various groups including one prominent group, the World War II veterans. The Vietnam historian Patrick Hagepian outlines the unwelcome nature typified in homecoming stories: “at an American Legion hall or Veterans of Foreign Wars post, World War II veterans asked Vietnam veterans, we won our war. How come you didn’t win yours?”<sup>454</sup> This lack of support and loss of pride can be found in numerous letters to parents on their son’s return to the US. One returning veteran recounted:

A stewardess asks me if I’m coming home from Vietnam, but she’s frowning, not the usual cookie cutter airline stewardess phony smile. I say yep, and she says something like I should be ashamed of myself! She spits on my tray and walks away. This is what I’m coming home to?<sup>455</sup>

In Casa Grande, the newspaper began to link economic and social problems with veterans increasingly. The most significant reason for this occurrence is the town wanted to find scapegoats, with the strong patriotic elements remaining in the town, Kramer and others sought to direct war anger towards veterans rather than have the vitriol directed at them. From 1974 onwards the *Dispatch* began presenting negative stories around the lives of veterans and the case of Daniel Gearhart was one of those. The *Casa Grande Dispatch* claimed that the; “34-year-old Vietnam veteran, left his wife, four children and a mounting stack of bills last February to fight for pro-Western forces in Angola”.<sup>456</sup> How could this man be a great hero when he had disrespected the value of family an ideal often preached within the myth of small town America? This dismissal of veterans by the town consequently led to the case of Don Dagenhart a young veteran wounded in service. Dagenhart was according to reports:

Broke- and jobless, Dagenhart faces eviction from his apartment. His telephone has been disconnected and even though his VA disability

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<sup>454</sup>. Patrick Hagepian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 65.

<sup>455</sup>. Don Bishop, *Letters Home: Vietnam 1968-1969* (Charleston: Createspace Publishing, 2009), 270.

<sup>456</sup>. “Gun For Hire: Mercenaries to Stand Trial,” article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) June 1, 1976, 2.

payments have been raised to \$77 a month he has been forced to sell furniture to get money to support his; wife Anne and their two year-old son Craig. 'We got \$10 for the baby's crib'.<sup>457</sup>

While this may be a story of welfare failure by the state to provide veteran care, it also highlights how the community also wanted to forget. Newspapers like the *Casa Grande Dispatch* declared that administrations had failed veterans with many languishing in prison cells and rehabilitation centres.<sup>458</sup> However, they seemed to ignore that they had made little effort themselves to aid these veterans within their community.

Economically the town had also begun to suffer and in January 1975 the County's largest mine announced that 500 jobs would be lost.<sup>459</sup> In March of that year, the council looked to make cuts to their staff, stating that: "it will be a real tough year".<sup>460</sup> Coming from a town that had boasted in the mid-1960s to be a town that could rival the city of Tucson, the outlook looked bleak. What this highlights is that economically the image they had promoted of self-sufficiency, was now beginning to unravel. The *Dispatch* instead of openly admitting that their town had begun to struggle after the Vietnam War began denigrating other failing towns. One town frequently reported on was Beallsville, Ohio. The major problem the town had experienced was a change in mindset, the sudden realisation that the war had been in vain left far-reaching emotional wounds throughout the town. Seven out of the towns 500 strong population had been killed and the father of one of them expressed: "Yes, I'm bitter. Anybody would be. I feel he lost his life for nothing. We turned around and gave it all back to them".<sup>461</sup> The local head of the American Legion summarised the town's mood, stating: "I just think a lot of people really want to forget about Vietnam. There are a lot of bitter people here... A lot of people were fed up".<sup>462</sup> With increasing

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<sup>457</sup>. "Viet Vet Wants Leg Amputated, May Go to Jail to Get Welfare," article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) May 20, 1974, 2.

<sup>458</sup>. Jack Anderson, "Vietnam Veterans Continue to get Short Changed," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jul 3, 1978, 4.

<sup>459</sup>. "Magma Will Lay Off 500 at San Manuel Mine," Article, *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jan 31, 1975, 1.

<sup>460</sup>. Doug Melvold, "CG Embarks on Rocky Budget-Making Road," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Mar 17, 1975, 1.

<sup>461</sup>. George Esper, "Memorial Day Helps Revive Emotional Wounds of Combat," *Dispatch*, (Casa Grande) Jun 1, 1976, 2.

<sup>462</sup>. Esper, "Memorial Day," 2.

economic and social problems, many towns began to implode due to the strain of the issues of dead sons, a declining job market and shame they felt due to losing the war. Over in Casa Grande, the *Dispatch* used these communities to move attention away from their own problems.

#### Orange City/Sioux County, Iowa

The community of Sioux County by having two local newspapers made it somewhat different from the other towns examined within this study. The town arrived late to the message of the rhetoric of war, instead choosing to focus on economic achievements of the small town communities and the lifestyle that members of their community had achieved. Naturally, this led to connections that the small town lifestyle and community aspect led to better living, an identity that was absorbed by the town's newspapers in making a case for Vietnam and anger towards cities. However unlike any of the other towns in this study Sioux County had a revelation, during the Tet Offensive when one of the town's young men was killed in the fighting, the youth of the community began to derail pro-war rhetoric. This led to a change in the newspaper's position by the end of the war to one that harboured deep regret towards the conflict and unlike the other town's openly expressed it:

A total of 45,933 Americans (at last count) paid the supreme sacrifice in this undeclared conflict. That in itself should tell us never again to become militarily involved in the disputes of other nations. The price is too great-much too great.<sup>463</sup>

Many communities including those of Sioux County were eager to wipe all existence of the war from memory, instead of heroic tales of Vietnam the *Sioux County Capital* printed: "Remember Viet Nam? I suspect many of us would like to eliminate the word 'Vietnam' from our vocabulary. Vietnam is a page of disgusting history to us with no victory or sense of accomplishment".<sup>464</sup> Many ardent supporters of the war, who previously had hailed Vietnam as the golden chance to prove small town America's worth disappeared, as the community began to turn inwards. The loss of two young men from the same 1966 graduating class profoundly affected the town as their

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<sup>463</sup>. "Vietnam costly to America, but teaches us something," editorial, *Centre News*, (Sioux) Feb 1, 1973, 2.

<sup>464</sup>. Rev. Stan Vander Weide, "Remember Viet Nam," *County Capital*, (Sioux) Feb 6, 1979, 3.

stories were frequently told with one member only having been in Vietnam nine weeks,<sup>465</sup> another only having forty nine days left of service.<sup>466</sup>

Other small communities showed similar experiences of death and loss. A year after the fall of Saigon, the *New York Times* investigated the small suburban community of Azusa in California where local Sally Munoz told her story about the impact the loss of her brother had upon herself and her family. She spoke about how after his first tour in Vietnam he had returned home different; “the thing about Joe was that he was a regular clown; always kidding around. But when he came home that time he was very quiet”.<sup>467</sup> This change highlights not only the physical loss that many experienced but also the loss of character many family members encountered. Munoz finally recollected that when he returned to active duty and was subsequently killed in action, it was still too painful six years later for her to hear the name of the place where he was killed.<sup>468</sup> While few works exist to explain how these communities experienced loss on mass scale, the work of George Mosse in *Fallen Soldiers* does provide a key insight that can be expanded upon. Mosse argues that the ‘myth of war experience’ was designed to mask and legitimise war experience.<sup>469</sup> He develops this by stating: “the death in war of a brother, husband or friend became a sacrifice; now at least in public, the gain was said to outweigh personal loss”.<sup>470</sup> This however mainly applies to conflicts such as the Second World War in which America had been the victor in defeating fascist regimes. On the other hand in Vietnam the balance had shifted, the war was a public humiliation and for small pro-war towns a major defeat to their constructed collective ideas. When the realisation emerged that their brother, husband or friend had in fact died for a cause, that by 1975 the nation wanted to forget, many in small towns began to believe they had lost family members for no grand crusade.

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<sup>465</sup>. “Sorrow rekindled, Two local servicemen among those not coming home,” article, *Centre News*, (Sioux) Feb 15, 1973, 14.

<sup>466</sup>. “Sorrow rekindled,” 14.

<sup>467</sup>. Jon Nordheimer, “Scars of Vietnam War Linger in Coast Suburb,” *Times*, (New York) May 16, 1976, 46.

<sup>468</sup>. Nordheimer, “Scars of Vietnam,” 1.

<sup>469</sup>. George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990), 7.

<sup>470</sup>. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 35.

Finally in Sioux County anger emerged when locals began to question why South Vietnamese refugees had been allowed into the United States with their supposed lack of skills: "A lot of the people who have come have tended to be in the military. There are not too many ways to use those skills directly".<sup>471</sup> This had been similar in other towns who questioned why they had been allowed to come. In Beallsville, Ohio locals stated: "I don't think they should have come",<sup>472</sup> as "there's not enough work now, let alone bringing them here".<sup>473</sup> Despite the fact that no refugees settled in Beallsville the nearest refugee being some 20 miles away.<sup>474</sup> These communities had become ashamed; they became angry over the lack of jobs and fearful of anyone attempting to take them. For the community of Sioux County, they feared what had happened across the Midwest as jobs moved abroad.

Ultimately in Sioux County isolationism set in, as historian Lloyd Gardner noted, small towns retreated within themselves.<sup>475</sup> In Sioux County, 1980, a New York couple came looking for the patriotic working class of Bruce Springsteen's America, they asked after having read the paper if the community was particularly patriotic,<sup>476</sup> and the reporter answered it was but the "Great War was to have been the war to end all wars".<sup>477</sup> Towns were still proud of their patriotism, but the cost of patriotism had been high when compared with what they had achieved.

### Belleville, Kansas

Since the 1950s Belleville had cultivated the existence of divide between town and city and with Belleville being the furthest of all the towns from a large city (Kansas City being the closest at 205 miles east), this led to a heightened feeling of difference, one which the *Telescope* marketed throughout the course of this study. By 1971 it was clear that their Vietnam argument had begun to fail and in order to keep the divide relevant, the newspaper began to change the argument; instead of

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<sup>471</sup>. "See Problems of Vietnamese as manyfold in the United States," article, *Centre News*, (Sioux) Oct 27, 1976, 3.

<sup>472</sup>. Esper, "Memorial Day," 2.

<sup>473</sup>. Esper, "Memorial Day," 2.

<sup>474</sup>. Esper, "Memorial Day," 2.

<sup>475</sup>. Gardner, "Did America Lose its nerve?," 363.

<sup>476</sup>. Wayne Dominawski, "Guess What Freedom Isn't Free," *Center News*, (Sioux) Feb 20, 1980, 3.

<sup>477</sup>. Dominawski, "Guess What Freedom Isn't Free," 3.

college students destroying New York, it became 'long haired, liberal, do-gooder intellectuals' who were halting the progress of the United States by blocking access to Alaskan oil reserves.<sup>478</sup> They connected this to town fears by arguing that it was becoming increasingly difficult for the average hardworking American to thrive in this environment and that they too were again in danger, they asked what will happen to us?

The independent American citizen, who was willing to stand on his own two feet- make his own way by hard work and ask no favor or hand outs from anyone- who could thumb his nose at a benevolent government, and if need be, volunteer to serve his country in time of emergencies, being forced out of existence? It seems that this sort of a person is getting scarce. It is becoming increasingly difficult for a person of these old fashioned beliefs to exist- let alone propagate and teach their age-old principle of our ancestors.<sup>479</sup>

Winter Forge the writer who kept the old hostilities towards cities, students, ethnic minorities and communists going, by continuing to outline how America's enemies had begun to muster again through 'the so-called Russian détente',<sup>480</sup> which Forge argued was "just another communist device to keep us quiet and sleepy".<sup>481</sup> By also reminding the town that they had been beaten by the 'godless hordes' of communism and effectively allowed a free enterprising government to fall on its knees<sup>482</sup> the *Telescope* continued to allow 'fires to be stoked'. Through this existing anger Forge also focused the town's interest on Democrats that were proclaimed as traitors, Forge targeted Senator George McGovern arguing that his trips to Cuba were a disgraceful retreat, with his political outlook of 'giving money to those who won't work a sure way for our defeat by communist enemies'.<sup>483</sup> In particular, the newspaper was looking for the next conservative candidate it could support. When examining Belleville, cycles emerge of periods with support for Republicans in Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard Nixon and finally Ronald Reagan. The newspaper turned to the next politician they believed would aid their plight, Ronald Reagan:

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<sup>478</sup>. Winter Forge, "Many Are Sorely Perplexed At US," *Telescope*, (Belleville) Jun 3, 1971, 15.

<sup>479</sup>. Forge, "Many Are Sorely Perplexed At US," 15.

<sup>480</sup>. Winter Forge, "Americans Should Remember Communist Threat," *Telescope*, (Belleville) May 29, 1975, 11.

<sup>481</sup>. Forge, "Americans Should Remember Communist Threat," 11.

<sup>482</sup>. Forge, "United States Defeat," 13.

<sup>483</sup>. Forge, "Americans Should Remember Communist Threat," 11.



“Reagan promises that he will try to assure the American public that a dollar will purchase a dollar’s worth of goods”<sup>484</sup> the paper proclaimed. The *Telescope* argued conservative family values would no longer be under threat, as Reagan had promised to deal with the crime ridden young and the pot smoking hippies.<sup>485</sup> Instead of the war being a lesson to the town they became swept up in another cycle of conservative populism.

### Conclusions of the Thesis

This thesis has shown how each of these four towns experienced, through their town newspapers, an attempt to influence their communities at first through a preconceived fear of city problems, such as crime, fear of ethnic minorities and the expansion of urban economic deterioration. These fears were presented to the populaces as issues where if nothing was done to protect the small town, then these issues would arrive on their doorstep. The divide between town and city, therefore, grew as more writers and editors embraced these fears for political gain and to sell newspapers. In the early 1960s a decline due to suburbanisation did appear, as suburbs co-opted much of the small town message as they eagerly appealed to white families moving away from urban areas. However, many editors realised that they could re-establish this divide through the trigger of war through appeals to their communities that the anti-war movement had been developed by ethnic minorities, students and intellectuals in these cities. For a period, these towns did effectively develop the construct of conservatism that they sought to achieve in the construction of Richard Nixon’s Silent Majority. Nevertheless, this had become so dependent on the success of the war in Vietnam that it inevitably collapsed, leaving a patchwork of towns.

Examining small town America from 1950 to 1980, provides new insight into the notion of the divide between small towns and their city counterparts and how it has evolved. It examines how the war was used to persuade citizens into fearing the unknown, by exploring how editors and supporters of these myths used 1950s nostalgia to create stock images of what the ‘so-called’ perfect Americana was. It is

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<sup>484</sup>. Winter Forge, “Country Wants Conservative Government But Votes for Liberals and their Promises,” *Telescope*, (Belleville) Jun 5, 1975, 1B.

<sup>485</sup>. Forge, “Country Wants Conservative Government,” 2B.

clear that each small town editor had used the opportunity the war provided as a chance to reinvent their towns outlook socially or economically but they all attempt to change or develop the way small town America was perceived in an attempt to create and maintain the idea that they were the 'true America'. This vision for what America should consist of was one of few minorities and fear towards city diversity as something to be avoided.

Through carefully assembled constructs these editors, supporters and writers have succeeded at developing a nostalgia tinged myth around the existence and lifestyle of small town America. In many ways, this study has countered these claims by highlighting how the existence of this myth was developed as a 1950s construct and how these newspapers channelled a fear of the unknown. This fear did connect conservative populist movements to these communities because as the war continued it generated turmoil around the terms of racism in American life, furthering exposure between those in support of the Civil Rights Act and those against. Racism may well have existed in these towns before the development of the divide aided by the trigger of war, but the war and the use of politics by these editors only exposed it to these communities on a more widespread basis.

Throughout the study four key issues of race relations, economics, patriotism and conservatism have been examined as factors for how these newspapers attempted to develop feelings of support towards this long-standing divide. These different editors all played on the benefits of winning this dispute and the effects that this would have on local economies and traditional values, but by allying themselves to an unwinnable war these arguments failed. Many newspapers initially attempted to use the war as a trigger for short term goals, either by fighting suburbanisation or seeking the benefits from military conflicts, however when they discovered they had uncovered political feelings they then played on these discoveries to attempt to win their longstanding arguments. Politicians then became invested, as they too sought the opportunity to further their influence by linking themselves to these thoughts through their rhetoric. This epilogue has shown how these town editors from a varied location of towns across the US co-opted similar language but how each town once this collective argument had been shattered experienced entirely different endings to the war.

This thesis has shown that negative grassroots feelings towards the large cities did exist, as the support in these towns was so forthcoming for editors declaring their distaste for the big cities, but that these editors knew about these existing fears and kept them relevant. Without editors connecting issues of the Vietnam War to this divide it would have likely diminished over time, these newspapers kept this anger at the forefront of citizens' minds, reminding them always about the positives of the small town and the negatives of the city. Tying their arguments to an unwinnable war, however, meant that success in their notions became dependent on the conflict.

## Abbreviations

ARVN-	Republic of South Vietnamese Army
GOP-	Grand Old Party
IBM-	International Business Machines Corporation
NFO-	National Farmers Organisation
PAVN-	People's Army of Vietnam
PTSD-	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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