The end of WWII was an occasion for celebration, but returning veterans and their new families quickly turned the existing housing shortage into a housing crisis. After several failed attempts by the government to remedy the housing problem, it was William Levitt (who had been a Seabee in the war) that came up with a solution. He applied what he had learned from setting up Navy bases and the assembly line techniques of Henry Ford to the housing industry. Soon Levittown and other developments like it grew up outside urban areas and federal monies were allocated to build highways so that the new suburban home owner could commute to work easier.

Almost as quickly as the first Levittown was completed, criticism of the rows of almost identical houses on standardized lawn-covered lots arose from all corners. Soon, these communities became one of the clearest physical manifestations of conformity in the era. Moreover, the suburbs changed the shape of the U.S. family. The relative isolation of the suburbs meant that young mothers and fathers were farther away from their immediate family than ever before. Women living in one-car households often had no choice but to stay at home with only other mothers and their children for company. However, it was not just women who were negatively affected by suburban living and the gender
roles and norms that went along with it. Men also had to adjust
and walk a fine line to stay within the rigid new definition of
masculinity.

Magazines such as *American Home* and *Parents*, TV shows
including *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and *Father Knows
Best*, and specialists like Dr. Benjamin Spock were telling the
new suburban father that being a good breadwinner was no lon-
ger enough. Fathers had to take an active role in childrearing, be
good team players in the new bureaucratic work force, and enjoy
the postwar consumer culture without letting it feminize them.
Therefore, as noted in the introduction, what made the discussion
of (white) masculinity so dynamic in the fifties was the conflict
between the residual or “assumed norm of masculinity” and the
emerging new norm of the team player (Gilbert 3). These shifting
ideologies placed the very definition of femininity and masculinity
in a constant state of flux.

Still, the discussion, examination, and concerns surrounding
the “feminization” of the 1950s male did not apply to all men
equally. It mainly, and not surprisingly, focused on white middle-
class men and many were more than happy with their new sub-
urban lifestyle. After all, the unearned benefits of white male
privilege allowed white men of the decade to take full advantage
of the postwar affluence in ways that men of color and all women
often could not. Despite the clear advantages of being a white
man in the fifties, many specialists, public figures, and the media
were preoccupied with the latest U.S. “crisis of masculinity.”
Hollywood genre films, including science fiction and especially
take-over or alien possession invasion films, were another site
where cultural anxieties about masculinity and suburban develop-
ment were played out.

Of all the science fiction films made in the fifties, the most
ambiguous and chilling are the take-over or alien possession films.
As Sobchack notes, “What is so visually devastating and disturb-
ing about SF films’ ‘taken over’ humans is the small, and therefore
terrible, incongruence between the ordinariness of their form and
the final extraordinariness of their behavior, however hard they try
to remain undetected and ‘normal’” (121). In addition, as noted
in the introduction, they engage both contemporary topics and
also long-held fears and taboos. For example, take-over films have
been interpreted as representing the “idea of communism which