The Ideal Woman: The Changing Female Labor Force and the Image of Femininity in American Society in the 1940s and 1950s

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Contents

ABSTRACT

SEIGAL, CARLIE The Ideal Woman: The Changing Female Labor Force and the Image of Femininity in American Society in the 1940s and 1950s

In 1943 the image of Rosie the Riveter personified what the ideal American woman was supposed to be. Rosie supported the war effort and did her patriotic duty for her country, earned a high wage, enjoyed her newfound independence, and showed America that she could do a man's job, and do it well. However, Rosie and the many American women that she represented never dreamt that when the American servicemen came home two short years later, they would be forced out of their jobs and back into their homes to devote themselves to household chores and their families. In 1957 the image of June Cleaver embodied the time and represented the perfect American woman. A contented housewife, June spent every day at home cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry, all with the help of her new state-of-the-art "All-American" household appliances that made these chores easier than ever. The images of Rosie and June are almost polar opposites even though they symbolized consecutive eras in American history.

This thesis identifies and interprets messages conveyed about women's roles at home and in the labor force during World War II and the subsequent Cold War period prior to the beginning of Second Wave Feminism. Rather than focusing exclusively on women's magazines of the time, as many other historians have done, this study examines a general audience magazine and newspaper to explore how white women were represented. Analysis of consumer product advertisements marketed towards and feature articles pertaining to women in *Life* and "Help-Wanted – Female" advertisements in the classified section of the *New York Times* demonstrates changes and continuities in how American women were represented and expected to behave, and identifies the paid employment positions that were available to them at the time. On the one hand, both publications convey the ideal of what an American woman during World

War II and the Cold War should be and do, and yet they also suggest that fulfilling that ideal was not entirely rewarding or realistic by the mid-1950s.

When American men enlisted in the armed forces to fight overseas in 1942, women aided the war effort from the home front. Advertisements and articles in *Life* urged women to do their part for the war effort by purchasing specific products and war bonds. Within months after *Life* depicted strong but still feminine "Rosies" to encourage women to take a wartime defense jobs, employment ads for these wartime positions appeared in the *New York Times'* "Help-Wanted – Female" columns. Once the war ended and the servicemen came home, life changed dramatically for American women. The American government believed that the strongest defense against Communism was a tight-knit nuclear family; as a result, Cold War ideology encouraged women to remain at home and take care of their families full-time. Advertisements in *Life* featured women using various new household appliances and grocery items, which further emphasized the importance of women as housewives. Furthermore, when women did seek employment outside the home, the only positions available were in stereotypically feminine fields such as clerical, retail, and domestic service work that reinforced feminine traits or tasks associated with women. Between 1946 and 1962, attention to physical appearance became increasingly prominent in both consumer and employment ads, which restricted women to traditional, feminine, gender roles and expectations within the home and workplace until Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 signaled the dissatisfaction that women across the country felt with these ideals and Title VII in 1967 ended sex-segregated employment ads.

By examining these publications, this thesis reveals how American women were expected to look and behave if they wanted to embody the ideal woman, and how there were both dramatic changes and significant continuities within these expectations between 1942 and 1962.

Chapter One: Introduction

It is 1943 and the image of Rosie the Riveter personified what any ideal American woman was supposed to be. Rosie goes off to work every day to support the war effort and do her patriotic duty for her country. Rosie enjoys her newfound independence and the high wage that she is earning. She has finally shown America that she can do a man's job, and do it well to help her country win the war. Rosie never dreams that in two short years when the American troops come home, that she will be forced out of her job and back into the home to raise her children and take care of the household chores. It is 1957 and the image of June Cleaver from the popular television sitcom "Leave it to Beaver" embodies the time and represents the perfect American woman. June is the ultra feminine happy homemaker who takes care of her children, maintains a picture perfect clean home, and always has dinner on the table for her husband when he gets home from work. Rosie and June were represented as the ideals for American women, but these ideals hardly reflected the reality that many American women faced.

In the early 1940s, approximately 6.5 million women joined the labor force, but by February 1946, 4.6 million of those women had left the labor market.[1] In the years following World War II, the jobs available for women changed from factory workers to secretaries, waitresses, and teachers, as the latter were viewed as appropriate for women who needed to support themselves. The media shifted from depicting women as strong and encouraging them to work outside the home, to highlighting femininity and being the perfect housewife. The image and concept of the ideal woman changed dramatically from the 1940s to the 1950s as a result of the paid jobs available to women at the time, and the evolving media portrayal of

[1] Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 123-124.

femininity. Often, however, the media portrayal of the ideal woman did not adequately portray the reality for many American women during the 1940s and 1950s.

The 1940s and 1950s in American society were two decades of extremely different social ideals, but must be considered in the context of a country that had only recently experienced an economic crisis that had already affected traditional gender roles to some extent. When the American stock market crashed in October 1929, society drastically changed in order to cope with the plunging economy. Unemployment rates skyrocketed and families did whatever they could to make ends meet. At first employers were reluctant to hire women, but as the depression continued, women were able to find jobs to help support their struggling families. Historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder emphasized, "the nature of the 1930s economy, then, presented millions of U.S. families with the reality, however repugnant, that female members of the household could find work when male members could not."[2] Many men even admired women that were independent and able to support themselves.[3] As the American troops entered World War II on the allied side after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the American economy finally began to turn around. Coming out of the Great Depression and with the start of World War II, women's roles in American society slowly began to evolve. They were able to work outside of the home for pay while still maintaining their role as a wife and a mother. When the United States was drawn into World War II in December of 1941 another drastic shift for American women took place.

[2] Blackwelder, 99.
[3] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 55.

The American entrance into World War II had a dramatic affect on the whole of American society. When the United States entered World War II, the entire country mobilized.[4] With the country at war, many men were drafted into military service, which left the women to take care of the home. As a result, many American women took jobs in factories and shipyards, jobs that had traditionally been considered "men's work," and by 1945 the number of employed women had increased by sixty percent.[5] The term "Rosie the Riveter" was first coined during the early stages of World War II.[6] Rosie the Riveter represented a strong American woman who worked in a factory during the war. Most Rosies were working in factories that specifically produced munitions and other war supplies. Rosie the Riveter posters and campaigns urged women to take paying jobs in fields that had historically been considered "man's work." Some historians, like Maureen Honey, assert that the propaganda campaigns on the home front were "framed by the inaccurate belief that housewives without work experience would make up the bulk of new workers and naturally leave their jobs once things returned to normal."[7] However, this was often not the case for many American women.

Some historians, like Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons, assert that the campaigns for women workers were part of a larger effort to emphasize the importance of the home-front efforts and to keep Americans connected to a war that was happening an ocean away.[8] Various campaigns produced by the Office of War Information, targeted middle class women that they believed were taking these jobs temporarily and only until the war ended.[9]

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[4] Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Home-Front War: World War II and American Society* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995), 4.
[5] May, 59.
[6] Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 34-35.
[7] Honey, 28.
[8] O'Brien and Parsons, 84.
[9] O'Brien and Parsons, 87.

These images and themes were presented in both middle and working class women's magazines in order to gain support.[10] The most common media portrayal of a female war worker was a young, middle-class, white woman who entered the work force to fulfill her patriotic duty and left immediately after the war to resume her life as a homemaker.[11]

This portrayal, however, was far from accurate. Most female war workers were of working class backgrounds; they had been in the workforce for many years and were eager to continue working in high-paying factory jobs long after the troops came home.[12] Even though these Rosies weren't the middle class women that they were portrayed to be, by taking these jobs women were able to prove to themselves and to the rest of the country that they could do men's work and they could do it well. Working women were portrayed more positively in the media than ever before, and it appeared as though Rosie had provided white women with the final push they needed to enter the workforce.[13] Even though working class women had been in the workforce for decades, the notion of middle class working women was completely novel, and as a result, many historians, like Maureen Honey, argue that the war was a major turning point for women's equality in the work place. As history shows, however, these changes were not permanent. After the war ended, the media no longer portrayed women as strong and independent, and rather portrayed them as the ultimate feminine housewife, and the changes made during the war were seen as temporary. As a result of this shift in the media after the war ended, the advancements that women made during the war did not stick. With the end of World War II also came the end of Rosie campaign and the end of the image of middle class working women being portrayed in the media.

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[10] Honey, 9.
[11] Honey, 19.
[12] Honey, 19.
[13] Honey, 183.

When American troops began to return in the summer and fall of 1945, American life took another drastic turn. Propaganda posters and advertisements suddenly shifted from encouraging women to working outside of the home, to urging them to remain as homemakers. The notion of a tight-knit family became iconic and the nuclear family was portrayed as a way to prevent the spread of Communism during the Cold War.[14] Historians see "the 1950s as a time when the stay-at-home wife was the cultural ideal and gender roles stood firm."[15] While some women did maintain their factory jobs, many left their jobs, it was believed, in order to free up positions for the returning soldiers and to care for their husbands and children. Many women who did choose to continue working were forced back into more "feminine" jobs in clerical work, retail, or domestic service.[16]

The American media applied pressure on women to embrace these changes in their employment.[17] On television, a relatively new form of media, and in print, women were criticized for working outside of the home because it was believed that they could not possibly have a full time job and take care of their family at the same time. Millions of people moved from cities into the suburbs and the "suburban ideal" that represented the American dream became the desired goal for many young Americans.[18] Every major institution in America emphasized the home and the family. Historian Wini Breines emphasizes that, "one sign of this was the family focus that proliferated in advertising: 'family-size carton, family room, family car, family film, family restaurant, family vacation'."[19] The media portrayed the ideal feminine

[14] May, 21.
[15] Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 134.
[16] Petigny, 173.
[17] Petigny, 173.
[18] Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 51.
[19] Breines, 52.

woman as one who took care of their family and a great deal of consumer products were targeted at women to help them better care for their family. The 1950s were a time when the possibilities for women were masked by rigid gender roles that emphasized femininity.

Historians have examined the overall change in the female labor force throughout American history. Alice Kessler-Harris, for example examined the history of the female labor force throughout American history, but also specifically examined the 1940s and 1950s. She recognized the massive amount of women that worked for wages in factories during World War II and then addressed the return to the home in the 1950s and taking part in the un-paid labor of being a mother and housewife.[20] Similarly, historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder in her book *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995,* discussed the history of women's work. She highlighted the change that took place for women in the labor market after World War II and described how many women were forced out of the labor force and back into their homes following the war.[21] Blackwelder even asserted that in 1944, as the war was ending, women's magazines and prominent women like Eleanor Roosevelt, urged women to settle down at home and look after their families.[22] While these historians do examine the female labor force in both the 1940s and 1950s, they fail to describe this dramatic change in terms of the media and how it was visually depicting women.

Furthermore, historians like Susan Strasser and Jacqueline Jones have specifically examined the history of housework. Susan Strasser discussed the history of American housework in the nineteenth and twentieth century in her book *Never Done*. Within her discussion of the history of housework, Strasser discussed the role that housewives played in

[20] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 274, 300.
[21] Blackwelder, 123-124.
[22] Blackwelder, 134.

consumerism and controlling the family budget because she was often times considered the purchasing agent for her family.[23] Furthermore, Strasser discussed the new wave of appliances, frozen foods, and baking mixes that made a housewife's work quicker and easier because it eliminated all of the guesswork.[24] In addition, Strasser asserted, "the manufacturers designed their convenience foods for profit, not for the housewife's convenient; she could follow the package directions or concoct elaborate treats with them, so long as she bought them."[25] Jacqueline Jones approached the history of housework in a very different way than Strasser. Jones focused exclusively on African American women and the struggles that they have faced in the workforce since the time of slavery, including domestic service work. She emphasized that during World War II, African American women were encouraged to do their part to help the war effort by taking jobs that white women had abandoned to work in wartime defense jobs, such as laundry, cafeteria, and domestic service work.[26] Jones also highlighted that, "by 1944 black women constituted 60 percent of all private household workers, reflecting white women's hasty flight from service as soon as the Great Depression ended."[27] Even though Strasser and Jones examined very different aspects of the history of household work, they both detail about the complexities of housework in the United States.

While most historians acknowledge the differences between the 1940s and 1950s very few actually examine them side-by-side. Alan Petigny is one of the few historians to encompass both World War II and the post-war period of the 1950s in one book. Petigny used the historical context of the 1940s to explain the permissive 1950s. He stated that the 1950s are viewed as a

[23] Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1982), 247.
[24] Strasser, 277.
[25] Strasser, 277.
[26] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 237.
[27] Jones, 237.

very conservative time, and emphasized, "we see images of June Cleaver performing housework in pearls, nuclear families inhabiting long rows of nearly identical tract housing, and glib ad men espousing the benefits of a tailfin on every car and a television in every home."[28] Petigny however, examined American society as a whole, rather than focusing solely on women. He examines the overall euphoria of the 1950s as Americans moved to the suburbs, bought cars, televisions, and refrigerators. Petigny, while he discussed the role of women in the 1940s and 1950s, focuses on society as a whole.

Many historians have chosen to examine both the 1940s and the 1950s in American society. Traditionally, most have chosen to focus on either the 1940s or the 1950s rather than examining the two vastly different decades together. Historians Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons examined World War II and its overall affect on American society in their book *The Home-Front War: World War II and American Society*. Their book is a compilation of essays by various historians that address the various societal changes that took place during the war, such as how the country was united across race, class, gender and ethnicity during the war. In their book, O'Brien and Parsons examined the American home front as a whole during World War II, rather than focusing on the role of women specifically.

Many historians have examined the role of the American home front during World War II. They have addressed the role of women in the workforce and how gender roles drastically changed almost overnight. Additionally, many historians have specifically examined how the propaganda campaigns that were launched during World War II affected the female labor force. For example, historian Maureen Honey examined the propaganda that was targeted at both middle and working class women and how these images were not always a true representation of the female labor force during the war in her book *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and*

[28] Petigny, 1.

Propaganda During World War II. She emphasized that contrary to popular belief, most of the women in the labor force during World War II were working class women that had already been employed prior to the American entrance into the war.[29] There is also a chapter in O'Brien and Parson's book written by Maureen Honey that discussed the role of Rosie the Riveter and the images of her that were depicted in the media. Written and published later than her book, the chapter addresses the image of Rosie the Riveter, and Honey further discussed the realities behind the Rosie propoganda campaign.[30] World War II was a time of great political and social advancement for women, as they were able to take on traditionally male jobs and break away from the rigid gender norms.

Other historians, like Susan Hartmann, have examined how the home front during World War II affected American women rather than examining class differences in the workforce as Honey did. In her book *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, Hartmann highlighted that changes in gender roles and power in society typically occur extremely gradually. She stated that the 1940s were different, and that the developments that occurred rapidly altered American society's gender expectations.[31] She highlighted that women's employment grew in almost every field, and women enjoyed higher incomes as a result.[32] She also discussed the public discourse on social change for women during this time and asserted that there were "conditions" that were established to limit the social change. These conditions, as Hartmann discussed, assured the public that women were only filling these jobs temporarily. They pledged that women were still feminine even though they were employed in factories, and

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[29] Honey, 19.
[30] Maureen Honey, "Remembering Rosie: Advertising Images of Women in World War II," in *The Home-Front War: World War II and American Society,* ed. Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995), 84-5.
[31] Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), ix.
[32] Hartmann, 21.

that women were working simply to fulfill their patriotic duty.[33] Hartmann, like other historians, concluded that regardless of media depictions and what was "expected" of women after the war, that World War II had a drastic impact on gender roles in American society.

Historian Judith McArthur also provided a striking addition to the history of Rosie the Riveter. In her article "From Rosie the Riveter to the Feminine Mystique: An Historiographical Survey of American Women and World War II" McArthur discussed the popular perception of women's roles during World War II and the reality of life during that time. McArthur detailed that, "Rosie herself was ultimately a casualty of war – victory made her obsolete."[34] She emphasized that women's war work was not for themselves, but rather for their husbands and sons fighting the war, which explains why they did not make lasting changes to gender roles in American society.[35] She asserted, "that the old ideals of 'women's place' were not dislodged by the wartime emergency."[36] McArthur even boldly stated that the war reinforced gender stereotypes because women were portrayed in the media as innocent and vulnerable during the war. Unlike many other historians, Judith McArthur emphasized that the advancements that women made during World War II were not monumental, but rather that they simply reinforced the traditional gender roles that defined the post war period.

Historian Melissa McEuen examined women and World War II in a very different way than historians like Honey and Hartmann. She examined how femininity was portrayed in propaganda and advertisements during the war. McEuen highlighted how advertisements and

[33] Hartmann, 23.
[34] Judith McArthur, "From Rosie the Riveter to the Feminine Mystique: An Historiographical Survey of American Women and World War II," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 44 (January 1987): 10.
[35] McArthur, 12.
[36] McArthur, 13.

women's magazines emphasized women's appearance after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.[37] She asserted, "the 'faces' used to recruit women into military service recalled Western ideas of feminine beauty linking whiteness and purity."[38] Women's appearance was incredibly important during World War II. Advertisements and women's magazines support that while women were encouraged to fulfill their patriotic duty by working in the factories, they were still expected to maintain their femininity.

Additionally, historians have chosen to study America in the 1950s and women's roles in society. These historians address the fact that the 1950s were vastly different from the decade that preceded it. Americans embraced rigid gender roles and emphasized family as the ideal. Women were portrayed as ultra-feminine and were urged to remain as homemakers rather than seek employment outside of the home. Historians such as Stephanie Coontz examined American families during the 1950s. She asserted that reality was far different than what was perceived in the media and that the 1950s was a time of much more complexity than just the nuclear family.[39] Coontz also highlighted that the notion of the nuclear family was an invention of the 1950s. She also boldly declared that, "women's retreat to housewifery, for example, was in many cases not freely chosen."[40] Coontz described that around ninety-five percent of newly employed women expected to quit their factory jobs after World War II ended, but by 1945 an astonishing majority did not wish to give up their new found independence and income.[41] Coontz emphasized that

[37] Melissa McEuen, *Making War Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 9.
[38] McEuen, 37.
[39] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 24-25.
[40] Coontz, 31.
[41] Coontz, 31.

women were persuaded to return to the life of a happy housewife, because a "normal" family was seen as the best line of defense against communism.[42]

Other historians, such as Elaine Tyler May chose to examine the effects of the Cold War on American society in her book *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. Like Coontz, May discussed the roles and expectations for women during the Cold War, but she went a step further and explained it as a Cold War ideology to contain women.[43] May discussed how experts warned women during the 1950s of the dangers of having an unsupervised home with two parents working.[44] Despite this, many women chose to remain in the workforce, which created a great deal of tension since the American government believed that the best way to win the Cold War was to produce strong offspring.[45] Elaine Tyler May highlighted that the Cold War was fought in every aspect of American life during the 1950s. Everything that every American citizen did was believed to affect the war. May addressed policies such as "sexual containment" but at the same time, the importance of motherhood during the Cold War.[46] According to May, the United States' success in the Cold War was directly reflected by the consumerist, suburban, nuclear family lifestyle that defined the American 1950s.

Other historians, such as Jessica Weiss, have specifically examined marriage during the 1950s. In her book *To Have and to Hold,* Weiss addressed how men and women got married at a younger age after World War II and the affect that had on American society.[47] She described that many of the postwar brides that worked did so to help their husbands get through college. She highlighted that, "working wives of college men were mockingly said to be earning their Ph.

[42] Coontz, 33.
[43] May, 26.
[44] May, 96.
[45] May, 96.
[46] May 112, 133.
[47] Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 23.

T.s, for 'putting hubby through,' along with their salaries."[48] Even when women were working for wages, they were mocked, which demonstrated that the advancements that women made during World War II had little lasting impact on American society.

Propaganda and advertisements both played a large role in shaping American society in both the 1940s and 1950s. Traditionally, historians have examined print media throughout American history and how it has changed and evolved over the course of many centuries. Some, such as, David Sumner and Carolyn Kitch chose to specifically examine the culture of magazines in American society. In his book *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900*, David Sumner detailed about the magazines that began printing in certain decades, and the impact that they had on society. Sumner pointed out that magazines such as, the *National Enquirer*, *TV Guide*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Mad*, and *Playboy* all began during the 1950s.[49] Sumner boldly asserted that American society was not as squeaky clean as it was depicted to be simply because Americans were reading provocative magazines: "June Cleaver might have been secretly reading the *National Enquirer*, while Wally and Beaver might have been upstairs looking at *Playboy* pictures and laughing at *Mad* cartoons."[50] He also addressed the role of television during the 1950s and the impact that had on the magazine culture. Sumner highlighted the impact that magazines could have on American society, and how important magazines are in telling the story of American history.

Other historians specifically examined the industry of women's magazines and how it has evolved over time. Historian Nancy Walker researched women's magazines and how they

[48] Weiss, 28.
[49] David Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 117.
[50] Sumner, 117.

shaped women's lives and impacted the image of femininity and the ideal woman.[51] Walker examined women's magazines during World War II and how advertisements were aimed at women to emphasize that the war was a domestic war, as well as a foreign war.[52] She also highlighted the types of things magazines featured as the war was ending. She asserted that magazines featured plans for postwar houses, articles about the homecoming servicemen, and depicted a happy domestic life that was unlike the last few decades.[53] Walker also examined women's magazines during the 1950s specifically. She emphasized that the women's magazines pushed a greater consumer culture on women and urged them to buy all the new household products to better their home.[54] Other historians focused on the history of domestic advice and the kitchen culture as another way of examining what products were being geared towards women and how that affected their lives.

Similarly to Walker, historian Tawnya J. Adkins Covert examined how both the war and the post-war were shaped by the advertisements in women's magazines. Adkins Covert described that, "during the war, women were exposed to new messages about their role in society."[55] She emphasized that when advertisements encouraged women to take wartime jobs during World War II, all of the advertisements focused on the woman doing her part for the men in their life that were overseas, or doing it for victory. She highlighted that money was not presented as a motivator for women to take these jobs, even though these positions offered women higher wages than had ever before.[56] Adkins Covert also discussed how women's

[51] Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mother's World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 19-20.
[52] Walker, 68.
[53] Walker, 94.
[54] Walker, 103.
[55] Tawnya J. Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images: World War II Mobilization of Women through Magazine Advertising* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), 124.
[56] Adkins Covert, 130-1.

magazines portrayed women and women's roles after the war ended. She stressed that, "advertising painted the postwar era as a consumer's utopia, filled with abundant quantities of new and improved products that would free women from household labor."[57] She declared that victory was painted with the promise of women returning to the home to cook and clean with their new appliances in their new dream suburban home.[58] Walker and Adkins Covert both examined how women's magazines specifically perpetuated the proper gender roles and expectations for women.

Likewise, historians have studied consumerism and its patterns throughout history. Consumerism is enforced and perpetuated by various sources of media, including magazine advertisements. Historian Regina Blaszczyk examined American consumerism from 1865 to 2005 and specifically discussed the role that consumerism played in the Cold War. She asserted that the "kitchen debates" between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev and how Nixon used the suburban home outfitted with electric appliances to demonstrate American superiority.[59] She also highlighted how refrigerators, washing machines, and vacuum sales had increased by over fifty percent by 1960.[60] Likewise, historian Cynthia Henthorn discussed the role that kitchens played in both pre and post-war American consumerism. Henthorn emphasized how during World War II, the dream kitchen was advertised as something that Americans could look forward to after the war ended. These advertisements, she highlighted, encouraged Americans to purchase war bonds by tempting them with this image of the future.[61] She claimed that, "war

[57] Adkins Covert, 145.
[58] Adkins Covert, 145.
[59] Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2009), 204.
[60] Blaszczyk, 205.
[61] Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939-1959* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 129.

bonds were typically illustrated as metaphorical transport into a future middle-class status."[62] Henthorn also discussed the kitchen's role in post-war consumerism, and asserted that at the time, people believed that with the proper kitchen design "the imperfect housewife is not merely improved but molded to flawless perfection through advanced kitchen automation and extreme streamlined design."[63] Consumerism represented American prosperity during the Cold War era and advertisements for many consumer goods, such as household appliances enforced traditional gender roles and expectations for women.

It is evident that both World War II and the 1950s have been examined by historians in great detail. Additionally, many historians have examined the history of the female labor force over the course of American history. Historians have also examined the mass media and how that has affected American society, and consumer culture. Building off of previous literature, this study will examine the changing representation of women in the mass media and their representation in the work force and will attempt to explain the reasons for this drastic change and regression for women. This study will investigate the media's portrayal of the ideal woman and her role in consumerism, compared to the realities that American women experienced.

In order to examine the changing status of women in American society, the twenty-year period between 1942 and 1962 will be examined. Since the United States did not enter World War II until after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, this study begin its examination of American wartime with 1942. The period that will be considered the 1940s and thus American wartime will be the years of 1942 through the end of 1945. The "long decade of the 50s" will be used to examine American life and society during the post-war 1950s era. The 1950s will be defined as starting in 1946 when World War II ended, and will continue through

[62] Henthorn,129.
[63] Henthorn,185.

the end of 1962. Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963 so while some historians believe the long decade of the 50s to include 1963, this study will only examine up until 1962, before the first breaths of a re-invigorated feminist movement began to arise.

To examine the changing roles of women in the labor force and the changing images of these two decades, *The New York Times* and *Life* Magazine will be examined. Traditionally many historians have examined women's magazines to explore how women were perceived and represented during the 1940s and 1950s, but this study will take a different approach by examining a general audience magazine and newspaper. Both publications were published out of New York City and had a very large, general audience. Specifically, this study will examine help wanted ads in the *New York Times* and advertisements in *Life Magazine*. During the 1940s and 1950s, help wanted ads were separated by gender. Examining "Help-Wanted – Female" advertisements will show how the job options and availabilities changed over the course of these twenty years. Rather than relying solely on statistics of the labor force during the time, help wanted ads provide a representation of the job availabilities and in turn detail the qualifications each woman needs to have. They also represent how women were perceived in society. Help wanted ads provide a detailed story of the changing female labor force in addition to representing the reality that many American women experienced and how often times it differed from the perception of ideal that was depicted in consumer product advertisements. On the other hand, the help wanted advertisements also portray which types of jobs were deemed appropriate for women throughout both World War II and the subsequent Cold War periods. This study will also examine advertisements in *Life Magazine*. Advertisements are especially useful because they not only provide a representative image of the ideal woman in society, but they also detail about how to become ideal based on the types of products and behaviors that are being targeted

towards women. While many women returned to housewifery during the 1950s, this by no means suggests that they were no longer working on a daily basis. The act of being a housewife and raising children is in itself a job; it is just an unpaid position. These advertisements detail to women in the 1940s how to perform their patriotic duty in the paid labor force and how to be the best patriotic woman they can be. Similarly, the advertisements in the 1950s detailed to women how to be the perfect homemaker; therefore, how to perform the best in their job, even though they do not receive a paycheck for their work. These advertisements alone demonstrate how society's view about women changed and show the changing representations of women and their roles both inside and outside of the home.

In order to make these twenty years of history manageable, this study will examine only the even-numbered years. This study will use three months out of every year, February, June, and October, as a representation of that year. *Life Magazine* is a monthly magazine, so for each even-numbered year, the issues of *Life* from February, June, and October will be examined. *The New York Times* is published daily, with its largest paper and thus largest classified section appearing on Sundays. The help wanted sections in the Sunday paper are consistent in length throughout each month; so only one Sunday per month will serve as a representation for that month. Therefore, one Sunday paper from February, June, and October will be examined from each even-numbered year. The analysis will be organized chronologically. Three chapters will be written to discuss the three different periods of time. The years of World War II, 1942 through the end of 1945, will constitute one chapter. The long decade of the fifties will be split up into two chapters. The immediate post-war years and the early 1950s, thus 1946 to 1954 will constitute another chapter. Finally, the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, 1956 through the end of 1962 will comprise the final content chapter.

Both the help wanted ads and the visual advertisements represent the way women were depicted in American society during both World War II and the long decade of the 1950s. They help to paint, not only an image of the labor force in particular, but also an image of the ideal woman in American society. This study will examine the changes that took place for American women between the years 1942 and 1962 and the changes in the labor force and how that impacted the image of the ideal American woman.

Chapter Two: American Women During World War II

It is 1942 and the United States of America has just entered World War II on the allied side. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, hundreds and thousands of men enlisted in the armed forces. Historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder asserted, "by July 1945, the size of the overwhelmingly male armed forces had reached 12.3 million persons, individuals who otherwise might have staffed the nation's offices, factories, and farms."[64] Women were left stateside to aid the war effort from the home front. Women not only had to take care of their families, but many women also took traditionally male jobs as their way of fighting towards victory. Throughout the war, women were portrayed as wives and mothers, but they were also portrayed as workers and a key piece in the allied victory. Traditional women's roles were not forgotten during wartime, but rather they were intertwined with this new of strong, independent, working women.

Although *Life Magazine* was a general audience magazine meant for both male and female readers of any marital status, there were a great many advertisements in this magazine that targeted products towards women specifically. Similarly, the *New York Times*, a general audience newspaper, featured an abundance of female help wanted advertisements alongside the male help wanted advertisements. Historian Tawnya J. Adkins Covert emphasized that throughout the war, advertisements described women as 'strong yet feminine'.[65] Furthermore, she asserted,

> During the war, women were exposed to new messages about their role in society. Women were asked to take jobs, volunteer, salvage, conserve, buy war bonds, avoid

[64] Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 123.
[65] Tawnya J. Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images: World War II Mobilization of Women through Magazine Advertising* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), 116.

> the black market, make do with what was available, produce their own foods in Victory Gardens, and cook meals that would 'fight for freedom'.[66]

As early as February 1942, just two short months after the United States had entered the war, women were already being depicted as a defensive line on the home front. Advertisements, such as the one for "Nucoa" margarine detailed about the products women could purchase, or the things they could do at home, to fulfill their part in the war effort. In the "Nucoa" advertisement a woman named Mrs. Miller was pictured with her husband and their four children. The advertisement even stated that Mrs. Miller's husband was a skilled worker who made "precision tools for Uncle Sam."[67] It also emphasized that because Mrs. Miller was feeding her family something nutritious, delicious, and affordable, she was doing her part for defense.[68] Additionally, at the bottom of the advertisement there was a picture of a woman named Margery Utz who was dressed in a nurse's uniform. She was quoted saying that "Mrs. Miller is in tune with the times. Appetizing Nucoa with added vitamin A fits into the national Nutrition for Defense program. It helps balance the diet and the budget, too."[69] Even though the war had only just begun for Americans, advertisements were already urging women to do their part in helping the war effort.

Similarly, an advertisement for MOR suggested that the consumption of their product also aided in the war effort. With an image of a mother and her two children, the advertisement emphasized that to aid in the war effort, all wives and mothers should serve MOR to their families.[70] The advertisement detailed that MOR was served to the United States Army, and

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[66] Adkins Covert, 124.
[67] "I'll Say Nucoa is a Food for Defense, Nucoa," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 54.
[68] "Nucoa," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 54.
[69] "Nucoa," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 54.
[70] "MOR," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 81.

featured an image of Uncle Sam saying that he approved this patriotic message.[71] Even after only two months at war, the women of the United States were urged to do their part for defense and for wartime conservation.

In addition, women's fashion reflected wartime. In the February 2, 1942 edition of *Life*, an entire article featured short haircuts for women, which it announced were coming back into style. The article, titled "Short Bobs for Wartime" detailed that women's service groups required that their members have neat hair arrangements, and as a result many women chose to cut their hair short.[72] The article also stated that factory workers, in addition to women's service group members were also "embracing the short bob as an efficient timesaver."[73] This feature inferred that there was already a great deal of women working in service groups and in factories doing war production work as early as February of 1942. The article argued that the female defense workers sparked the return of this trend from the 1920s.[74] This new hairstyle was emphasized as being universally attractive, and *Life* featured many different ways to style and shape your bob.[75] Just a short two months after the United States' entry into the war, women's styles and fashions changed dramatically, thus the image of the ideal American woman also evolved with the war.

In February 1942, only a few short months after the United States had entered the war, women were encouraged to do their part for defense and wartime conservation, but there were no opportunities for them to get involved in wartime production in February 1942, contrary to what *Life* depicted in their advertisements. The classified section of the *New York Times* listed many available jobs for women including stenographer, bookkeeper, typist, model, nurse, dental assistant, and kindergarten teacher, but nothing in defense work. There was an advertisement for

[71] "MOR," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 81.
[72] "Short Bobs for Wartime," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 50.
[73] "Short Bobs," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 50.
[74] "Short Bobs," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 50.
[75] "Short Bobs," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 50, 52.

classes for women on learning to be bench assemblers or inspectors for defense work, but this was merely training, rather than a job position.[76] Otherwise, the most widely available jobs for women in February 1942 were stenographers, bookkeepers, secretaries, or some form of household help such as a housekeeper. Many stenographer and bookkeeper positions explicitly stated that the applicants must be young and attractive, and one job advertisement for a bookkeeper even specified that the girl should look like a model and be a dress size 12.[77] Furthermore, almost all of the advertisements for household help were very specific about the type of girl they were looking for. Many specified an age range and a specific race or ethnicity that they were looking for.[78] At the start of the United States' involvement in World War II, women were expected to take part in wartime conservation, but they were not yet able to take jobs in factories and help to produce war materials despite *Life's* portrayal.

In June of 1942, advertisements in *Life* continued to encourage women to do their part for wartime conservation. An article from the June 1, 1942 edition of *Life*, made suggestions for what women could do around their homes to help with conservation. Historian D'Ann Campbell highlighted the difficulties that housewives faced in dealing with wartime rations and having to conserve as much as possible while still providing for their families.[79] The article encouraged women to use protective wax when cleaning their floors to ensure that the linoleum would last longer.[80] Additionally, it detailed about how to take better care of your car and household equipment to ensure that they last throughout the duration of the war, since those products were

[76] *New York Times*, February 1, 1942, RE 14.
[77] *New York Times*, February 1, 1942, RE 13.
[78] *New York Times*, February 1, 1942, RE 20.
[79] D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 163.
[80] "Care of 'Stradivarius' Points Up Lessons in Wartime Conservation," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 12-13.

not manufactured during wartime.[81] Product advertisements also emphasized women's roles in defense duties. An advertisement for Woodbury Facial Soap featured a woman named Vera Henderson that made bandages and kept her skin clean with Woodbury.[82] These advertisements and articles demonstrated how as early as June 1942, women were expected to take part in conservation and defensive duties on the home front.

As American women were instructed on how to aid in the wartime conservation, clothing advertisements also targeted women's patriotism. An advertisement for Enna Jettick shoes insisted that their shoes were perfect for busy women.[83] They used a tagline stating, "stand for freedom in every step you take,"[84] which insinuated that these shoes were the patriotic choice for American women and by purchasing these shoes they would be supporting the troops. Similarly, an advertisement for Red Cross Shoes detailed that their products were perfect for women, as many women were living a more active lifestyle.[85] These advertisements both suggested that women were living a much more active lives once the United States entered the war. Presumably, women were taking an active role in home front defensive efforts, in addition to being mothers, wives, and homemakers, and thus they were much more active in the community than in years prior.

Similarly, many advertisements featured Rosies using their product. An advertisement for a Sunbeam Toaster featured a Rosie using the toaster. The advertisement emphasized how convenient and efficient the toaster was to use and clean, perhaps targeting working women and their busy schedules.[86] Additionally, the advertisement stated that if the toaster was unavailable

[81] "Lessons in Wartime Conservation," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 13.
[82] "Deb Shines at Defense Duties, Woodbury Facial Soap," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 15.
[83] "Enna Jettick Shoes," *Life*, October 5, 1942, 58.
[84] "Enna Jettick Shoes," *Life*, October 5, 1942, 58.
[85] "Red Cross Shoe Demonstration Week," *Life*, October 5, 1942, 112.
[86] "Sunbeam Toaster," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 16.

at local stores that it was because of the war production programs at the Sunbeam factories, and they encouraged women to put the toaster on their "victory list."[87] This advertisement encouraged women to take part in the war effort and keep victory and the post-war in mind, even as early as 1942.

Ironically, even though many companies used Rosies in their advertisements in June of 1942, there were still relatively few jobs available for women in war production. Just as in February, the majority of the jobs available for women were positions as stenographers, bookkeepers, secretaries, and in household help. Again there were courses that women could take to train for work on the airlines or work in a war job, but there were very few opportunities for women to actually get involved in war production.[88] There were two jobs listed for women in factories, and one specified a light colored girl that must have prior experience working in a factory.[89] It however did not indicate if this was in a defense factory producing war materials or not, just that it was in a factory. The other did denote that it was a position in a defense factory, but the job was only available to middle-aged women.[90] The United States had been fighting abroad for almost six months and still there were very few prospects for women in the New York City metro area to find jobs in war production and become Rosies themselves.

Women were also depicted in advertisements as the girlfriends and wives of American soldiers. An advertisement for Palmolive soap featured a woman who pledged to "guard every bit of beauty that [the soldiers that she loves] cherishes."[91] While women were portrayed as Rosies and encouraged them to do their part for the war effort, they were still expected to

[87] "Sunbeam Toaster," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 16.
[88] *New York Times*, June 7, 1942, RE 21, RE 22.
[89] *New York Times*, June 7, 1942, RE 26.
[90] *New York Times*, June 7, 1942, RE 26.
[91] "I pledge myself to guard every bit of Beauty that he cherishes in me, Palmolive Soap," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 52.

maintain their femininity and beauty for the soldiers fighting for liberty abroad. Similarly, advertisements for toothpaste and deodorant were always targeted towards women. An advertisement for Forhan's toothpaste detailed the dangers of gingivitis and included a picture of a woman in the ad.[92] Likewise, an advertisement for Etiquet deodorant cream featured a woman in the ad, but did not specify that the product was only for women.[93] Advertisements such as these that were targeted to women and were used to maintain good hygiene demonstrated how women were expected to maintain their feminine beauty even if they were working in a factory or some other defense production company.

Not only were women portrayed as being the main line of defense on the home front, but *Life* also featured an article about female Army nurses abroad in the October 5, 1942 issue. The article commended the nurses and included a number of pictures of the work they did in the field hospitals.[94] Even though they were pictured as important and courageous nurses doing their patriotic duty abroad, they were also depicted as traditional and feminine. The subtitle of the article stated that the nurses "swim, dance, and have picnics even in the faraway jungles of the South Seas."[95] The subtitle emphasized their daintiness and femininity, rather than the dangerous and courageous work they were doing as Army nurses. This demonstrated how women continued to be perceived in relation to their traditional roles even with all the advancements they had been making in American society during the beginning of the war.

Towards the end of 1942, women were finally given the opportunities to take jobs in factories and plants as defense workers in the New York metro area. With so many brothers, sons, husbands, and fathers fighting abroad, women were needed to take on new roles. Adkins

[92] "Forhan's," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 6.
[93] "Etiquet Deodorant Cream," *Life*, June 1, 1942, 82.
[94] "Life Visits U.S. Army Nurses in New Caledonia," *Life*, October 5, 1942, 126-127.
[95] "Life Visits U.S. Army Nurses in New Caledonia," *Life*, October 5, 1942, 126-127.

Covert asserted that advertisements in women's magazines explained that women took war jobs to "do their part" rather than for the money.[96] Regardless, there were a number of job opportunities for women as accountants, something that had previously only been advertised as for men.[97] Similarly, there were many job opportunities for women in defense industries, and many advertisements even stated that the jobs were permanent.[98] Many of the defense jobs specified an age range of eighteen to thirty year old women and stated that there were positions available for lawyers, secretaries, general office clerks, chemists, draftswomen, engineers, and production operators.[99] Many of these positions required a college degree but did not require previous work experience. Additionally, there were still positions available for women as stenographers, bookkeepers, models, nurses, teachers, secretaries, and salesladies just as in months prior. There were also plenty of positions still available for women in household help, but there were a great many more positions as cooks than in prior months.[100] Prior to October 1942, most of the cook jobs were male positions, but since so many men had enlisted, women were given the opportunity to work as cooks in private households. Once the United States had submerged its entire society in the war and so many men enlisted to fight, many new job opportunities presented themselves for women. Not only were women able to get wartime jobs in the defense industry, but they were also able to fill previously male dominated fields, such as accounting. However, even though these jobs were made available to women, they were not made available to all women. As was made evident in *The New York Times* "Help-Wanted – Female" section, many of the permanent, defense jobs that were available for women were

[96] Adkins Covert, 131.
[97] *New York Times*, October 4, 1942, RE 17.
[98] *New York Times*, October 4, 1942 RE 19.
[99] *New York Times*, October 4, 1942 RE 19.
[100] *New York Times*, October 4, 1942 RE 27, RE 28.

reserved for college-educated women, which excluded a vast majority of the American female population.

Following with tradition, women continued to be portrayed in 1942 advertisements as homemakers and housewives even after the United Stated entered the war and women were taking on war production jobs. An advertisement for Campbell's Tomato Soup asserted that serving tomato soup to one's family was not only patriotic, but made you a good housewife.[101] Additionally, an advertisement for Hoover vacuums specified that their product was the preferred vacuum among housewives.[102] This advertisement emphasized the traditional women's role as a homemaker as it specified that it was the preferred vacuum among women specifically. Even as women began to take non-traditional jobs, they were still portrayed as housewives and expected to maintain their domestic duties.

As the war went on, women continued to be portrayed as a vital part of achieving an allied victory. Adkins Covert asserted that during the war, women's motivation for taking a war job was most often depicted as a connection to a man overseas.[103] She highlighted, "each ad makes a personal connection between a woman taking a war job and a husband, fiancé or family member overseas."[104] Historian Susan Hartmann, however, asserted that servicemen's wives had a different motivation for entering the workforce than Adkins Covert discussed. Hartmann believed that servicemen's wives in particular had a compelling reason to seek employment because war wives received a minimum of fifty dollars per month, twenty-eight dollars from the

[101] "We're Having Our Favorite Soup Often These Days, Campbell's Tomato Soup," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 25.
[102] "Home Sweet Home, Hoover Vacuum Model 305," *Life*, February 2, 1942, 32.
[103] Adkins Covert, 130.
[104] Adkins Covert, 130.

government and twenty-two from their husband's salary.[105] Hartmann asserted that war wives worked to make up for the income loss that they suffered when their husbands went off to war, and to ease the loneliness and separation of having their husbands overseas.[106] In February of 1944 for example, an advertisement encouraged American citizens to do their part in the war effort and be a fighter backer. The advertisement featured a Rosie and encouraged all men, women, and children to do their share to back the soldiers fighting for victory.[107] Another advertisement that encouraged women to do their part in the war effort used a highly emotional angle to persuade them. It featured a hypothetical letter from a soldier to his girlfriend back home that she was to receive after he had been killed.[108] It then emphasized that tragedies like this occurred every day, and would continue to occur until the war ended. The advertisement urged women to do their part, stating that, "America needs millions of her women – needs you personally – to make this day of victory come sooner. You can do a vital job in ending this war quicker."[109] It stressed that they could save hundreds of soldier's lives by taking a war job and encouraged women to look in the classified section of their newspaper or go to a United States Employment Service office to find a job aiding the war effort.[110] Furthermore, it declared, "the more women at war the sooner we'll win."[111] These advertisements highlighted how women

[105] Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 79.
[106] Hartmann, 79.
[107] "With Sons at War America Needs Workers, Be a Fighter Backer," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 56.
[108] "The more women at war the sooner we'll win, sponsored by Hoffmann-La Roche, Inc." *Life*, February 7, 1944, 83.
[109] "The more women at war the sooner we'll win, sponsored by Hoffmann-La Roche, Inc." *Life*, February 7, 1944, 83.
[110] "The more women at war the sooner we'll win, sponsored by Hoffmann-La Roche, Inc." *Life*, February 7, 1944, 83.
[111] "The more women at war the sooner we'll win, sponsored by Hoffmann-La Roche, Inc." *Life*, February 7, 1944, 83.

were perceived as being an essential part of the war effort and not only was women's defense work accepted, but it was encouraged.

In the June 5, 1944 issue of *Life* an article, along with four pages of paintings depicted Rosies hard at work at an aircraft plant and a shipyard both in California. The article emphasized that 15,000 women now worked at the Lockheed aircraft plant taking the place of men who had since gone off to fight in the war.[112] The article specified that while many women worked in the plant because their husbands, fiancés, or brothers had joined the military and they wanted to bring the men back as soon as possible, others worked because it provided an opportunity to earn as much money as men.[113] However, the article did not mention anything about the job positions being temporary or permanent.[114] This five page exclusive in *Life* demonstrated that women were getting recognition and applause for working outside the home. Similarly, an advertisement for the WAC encouraged women to do their part for the war and placed a spotlight specifically on the women in the armed forces.[115] Even makeup advertisements, like one for Pan-Cake makeup by Max Factor encouraged women to join the WAC.[116] Women were applauded for taking traditionally male jobs, going into traditionally male fields of military service, and aiding in the war effort in whatever way they could.

A number of advertisements in *Life* encouraged women to take a defense production job; the job listings in the *New York Times* demonstrated there were many job prospects for women at the beginning of 1944, and that in two years the job market for women altered significantly. Just as in 1942, women were able to find jobs as stenographers, bookkeepers, nurses, secretaries, typists, salesladies, and household workers, in addition to opportunities in other fields in

[112] "Women at War," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 74.
[113] "Women at War," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 74.
[114] "Women at War," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 74.
[115] "Mine eyes have seen the glory, The WAC," *Life*, October 2, 1944, 73.
[116] "Pan-Cake makeup by Max Factor Hollywood," *Life*, October, 2, 1944, 103.

February of 1944. There was a great deal of job prospects for women as comptometer operators, a position that had not been available in previous years.[117] Furthermore, many of these comptometer operator positions specified that they were permanent positions since they were not related to war production.[118] There were also many opportunities for women in plants; some war plants and some that were not. All of the positions that were in defense plants offered both day and night shifts for female employees.[119] This was incredibly interesting considering women were expected to still care for their homes and families. Blackwelder described that as women were earning their own wages, they were able to hire household help.[120] One of the factory positions specified that there was a "post-war opportunity" with the job, while the other stated that there was a "future opportunity" with the position.[121] Blackwelder asserted, "World War II redirected and accelerated occupational changes among women in addition to increasing their labor force participation."[122] Help-wanted advertisements in the *New York Times* demonstrate that the career prospects for women in the defense industry continued to be readily available during the beginning of 1944.

With the advancements that women were making in the labor force, they were able to take on positions of authority, something women had rarely been given the opportunity to do in 1942. In the February 6, 1944 "Help-Wanted – Female" section, there was an advertisement for a female law school graduate to oversee the workers in a war plant.[123] While this position required a great deal of advanced education, the fact that a woman would be given the opportunity to oversee a war plant was a completely novel concept at the time. Other job

[117] *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, RE 9.
[118] *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, RE 9.
[119] *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, RE 9.
[120] Blackwelder, 125.
[121] *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, RE 9.
[122] Blackwelder, 124.
[123] *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, RE 9.

positions, such as machine operator and radio wirers and radio war workers were some of the other opportunities women had available to them.[124] It had seemed that women were making a great many advancements in the labor force, but as victory neared the factory and plant jobs for women became more few and far between.

By mid to late 1944, there were fewer and fewer war related jobs for women even though magazine advertisements continued to encourage women to do their duty and take a defense job. There were a number of permanent comptometer operator positions available for women, in addition to a few permanent positions as foreladies.[125] Additionally there were a few positions as elevator operators and some non-defense factory work.[126] What was most intriguing were the war jobs that were available for women and how they were advertised. Almost every one of the factory jobs, both war and non-war related explicitly stated that the job included "light factory work."[127] This language was not used in job descriptions prior to June of 1944, and suddenly was used to describe every factory position. Emphasizing that the job only entails "light" factory work might have been a way to lure women who had wished to maintain their femininity and had not taken a job in the defense industry because they believed that it was not feminine. Likewise, it could be the employers' way of asserting that women were fragile and feminine and should not partake in heavy factory work. Regardless of their intentions, this was a significant shift in the representation of women's jobs and women's position in the labor force.

The end of 1944 saw the most drastic shift in job availabilities during the war. There were significantly fewer jobs available for both men and women, and there were virtually no jobs for women in the defense industry in October 1944. Even though the war did not end until the

[124] *New York Times*, February 6, 1944, RE 10.
[125] *New York Times*, June 4, 1944, RE 10.
[126] *New York Times*, June 4, 1944, RE 10.
[127] *New York Times*, June 4, 1944, RE 10.

summer and fall of 1945, there were very few war jobs available for women. One job description for a female bookkeeper emphasized that the position was permanent and that it would continue into the post-war years, which suggested that many women were concerned about their job stability and what would happen once the troops came home.[128] Blackwelder emphasized, "wartime propoganda thus conveyed the message that women's work roles in the defense economy would end with the war, and by the end of 1944 women appeared to have heeded this message."[129] Furthermore, she asserted that even though women's wartime employment did not end until 1945, in 1944 *Time* magazine reported that women were fading from the labor market.[130] It is possible that with victory on the horizon, many companies stopped employing women, or perhaps it is simply that all of the necessary positions had already been filed in the earlier years of the war and the factories did not need any more female employees. Whatever the reason, women were already facing fewer job opportunities before the war even ended and were expected to start returning home to their traditional role as a homemaker.

Throughout 1944, women were encouraged to take part in the war effort any way they could, even if they could not find a position in the defense industry. Many advertisements for women-specific products like household items and appliances advocated that women buy war bonds with expectations of victory and post-war purchasing of items that were not available during the war. Advertisements like the ones for Westinghouse light bulbs featured a mother and daughter in their kitchen and urged everyone to purchase war bonds to bring the brighter days of victory sooner.[131] Westinghouse also advertised for their new at home Laundromat, yet another

[128] *New York Times*, October 1, 1944, R 8.
[129] Blackwelder, 135.
[130] Blackwelder, 135.
[131] "For See-Ability, Westinghouse Mazda Lamps," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 4.

appliance that would make the duties of housewifery much easier. Naturally, they advertised that their product was well worth waiting and saving for, and that all Americans should buy war bonds so that one day this at home Laundromat would be theirs.[132] Likewise, an advertisement for General Electric depicted what the happy days of victorious post-war America could be like. It featured a woman and her daughter outside a beautiful home with a white picket fence. The advertisement asserted "women want homes like this" and tempted readers with ideas of dishwashers, washers and dryers, a glorious kitchen, and much more.[133] They reiterated that until the war was over, General Electric would continue to only produce "tools of victory" and pushed people to buy as many war bonds as they could in order to speed up victory.[134] Likewise, Cannon Towels tempted consumers with depictions of post-war America. This advertisement featured a naked woman in a luxurious bathroom with a towel and urged people to purchase war bonds to make this luxury a reality.[135] Blackwelder asserted that advertisements during the war romanticized the idea of post-war America and painted women as housewives and consumers once victory was achieved.[136] Likewise, historian Cynthia Henthorn emphasized that during the war, the dream kitchen was advertised as something Americans could look forward to when the war ended, and war bonds were illustrated as the way to attain it.[137] Many luxury items, such as these household appliances, encouraged consumers to buy war bonds and ensured them that once the war was over, they too would be able to own a dishwasher, refrigerator, and in home Laundromat.

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[132] "Do Your Darlings Enjoy 'Good, Clean Fun?, Westinghouse Laundromat," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 10.
[133] "Women Want Homes Like This!, General Electric," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 9.
[134] "Women Want Homes Like This!, General Electric," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 9.
[135] "Wake Up and Dream, Cannon Towels," *Life*, October 2, 1944.
[136] Blackwelder, 134.
[137] Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939-1959* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 129.

Many other women-specific products, such as clothing and cookware also attempted to persuade their consumers to purchase war bonds. An advertisement for Perma-lift Brassieres featured a catch phrase in a font larger than most of the text in the advertisement advising women to buy war bonds and stamps.[138] Similarly, an advertisement for Wear-Ever aluminum cleaner encouraged women to purchase war bonds. This advertisement advocated for both wartime conservation and purchasing war bonds. The product itself, Wear-Ever aluminum cleaner is advertised as being able to prolong the life of aluminum cookware which would contribute to wartime conservation and avoiding wasteful and unnecessary spending.[139] Additionally, the advertisement urged people to buy more war bonds and stamps every time they got a paycheck.[140] By placing these statements about buying war bonds on advertisements for female-specific products, the advertisers specifically targeted women to do their part for the war effort and buy war bonds and stamps.

Just as in 1942, some advertisements in *Life* in 1944 pictured women as Rosies. An advertisement for Lipton Soup, for example, depicted a bunch of different people discussing their love for Lipton's Noodle Soup.[141] Among these people, there were two Rosies that discussed how quick and easy Lipton's was to prepare.[142] Likewise, an advertisement for 7Up included an image of a Rosie enjoying a bottle of 7Up.[143] Furthermore, the 7Up ad also encouraged Americans to "be a fighter-backer" and purchase more war bonds.[144] These representations of Rosies in consumer product advertisements further highlighted to American

[138] "For Real American Beauty 'The Lift That Never Lets You Down,' Hickory Perma Lift Brassieres," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 18.
[139] "Your Aluminum Will Shine, Wear-Ever Aluminum Cleaner," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 105.
[140] Your Aluminum Will Shine, Wear-Ever Aluminum Cleaner," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 105.
[141] "Lipton's Noodle Soup," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 46.
[142] "Lipton's Noodle Soup," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 46.
[143] "Fresh up with Seven-Up, 7Up," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 108.
[144] "Fresh up with Seven-Up, 7Up," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 108.

women how important women's involvement in the war effort was, and how being a defense worker made you an ideal woman.

As in 1942, product advertisements in *Life* throughout 1944, encouraged women to take part in the war effort, but continued to depict women as housewives and advertised products that would make them the perfect wife and mother. An advertisement for Libby's Deviled Ham and Vienna Sausage asserted, "women in the know favor these choice meats" and emphasized that they were perfect meats for their hard-working husbands.[145] An advertisement for Clairol frowned upon women who had let their hair turn gray, and instead advised women to dye their hair.[146] Advertisements continued to focus on the femininity of women and recommended a variety of ways in which they could maintain or get back their femininity. Additionally, women were represented as the girlfriends and wives of soldiers in many advertisements, such as in an ad for Palmolive soap. The advertisement featured a woman with flawless skin greeting her soldier.[147] The advertisement advised women not to waste soap during the war, however it did not picture the woman doing anything to help with the war effort. Rather she was depicted as the very feminine wife or girlfriend of a heroic soldier. Throughout the war women were encouraged to participate in the war effort and do what they could to bring the troops home quickly, but nonetheless they were still expected to maintain their femininity and be good wives and mothers.

Women's lives in America went through many dramatic changes during World War II. They were encouraged to do everything they could to support the war effort, whether that meant taking a defense job, purchasing war bonds, or conserving the amount of food their family ate and money their family spent. Women maintained an important role in the war effort and played

[145] "Women in the know favor these choice meats, Libby's," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 64.
[146] "Clairol," *Life*, February 7, 1944, 111.
[147] "Palmolive Soap," *Life*, June 5, 1944, 66.

a huge role in the allied victory in 1945. Blackwelder emphasized even though the war did not narrow the gendered wage gap, and many women returned to full-time homemaking when the war ended, "women's war work changed the occupational structure permanently, and it changed women's assessment of their own abilities."[148] During the early war years, women were presented as being strong, independent women who worked hard every day to ensure that the troops came home safe. However, they were still depicted as feminine, regardless of their work for the war effort. Women made a great number of advancements in jobs that were available to them. They were able to work in jobs that had been traditionally male dominated fields, and in many cases they were able to earn as much as men. Furthermore, based on the help wanted ads in the *New York Times* some women could even look forward to continued employment after the war. However, as the war began to come to a close fewer and victory was on the horizon, fewer job opportunities in the traditionally male fields were available for women. Throughout the war, the image of Rosie and the conservation-minded, patriotic, yet feminine woman was represented as the ideal American woman.

[148] Blackwelder, 133.

Chapter Three: The Cold War and its Effects on American Women

It is 1946 and the American troops have finally come home. September 2, 1945 marked the end of the four-year period of United States' involvement in World War II and the American people could once again return to life that did not revolve around wartime production and conservation. Many women were forced to leave their wartime jobs when there was no longer a need for wartime production. Millions of men returned from war ready to work, and women were expected to return to the home to take care of their husbands and growing families. Furthermore, with the end of World War II came the start of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and communism. A strong nuclear American family was thought to be the strongest defense against communism, and that embraced the idea of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker. As a result, the mass media encouraged women to remain in their homes, rather than seek employment elsewhere.[149] The media portrayed the ideal feminine woman as one who took care of their family, and a great deal of consumer products were targeted towards women to help them better provide for their family. Women were expected to keep up with their appearance as well and to strive to be the best housewife in the neighborhood in order to achieve the status of the ideal American woman. Similarly, the jobs that were available to women were increasingly gendered. The American government wanted to return society to a time of normalcy, and in many people's eyes that meant women staying at home fulltime and taking care of their families.

With the start of the Cold War, everything was made to be as "American" as possible. The government wanted to portray to the Soviets and the rest of the world how superior the

[149] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 21.

United States and capitalism was. Historian Elaine Tyler May asserted that the American government used American consumerism as a way to demonstrate their superiority to the rest of the world.[150] She emphasized that

> American superiority rested on the ideal of the suburban home, complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members… the "model" home, with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide array of consumer goods, represented the essence of American freedom.[151]

As a result, many products were advertised as being the "most American products" or an "American favorite." For example, a February 4, 1946 advertisement for a Frigidaire electric stove promoted the product as "America's finest Electric Range."[152] During the Cold War, communism was depicted as being an extremely backwards system, so companies' advertisements such as the one for Frigidaire emphasized that their product was modern and had new convenient features as a way of demonstrating how capitalist society was far superior to communism.[153] Similarly, the same issue of *Life* featured an article about the tradition of the "American Barbecue." The article featured pictures of a group of American adults in North Carolina partaking in this Southern American tradition.[154] The article emphasized the rich and delicious foods that were served in abundance at barbeques, something that could not have been possible during the war.[155] The feature about the barbeque demonstrated the ease of American life since the end of World War II in addition to depicting the superiority of American society to the Soviets. During the immediate post-war period, American society demobilized, but continued to fight a foreign enemy. There were no bloody battles, and no lives lost, but there

[150] May, 155.
[151] May, 19-20.
[152] "Why Frigidaire is America's finest Electric Range!, Frigidaire," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 13.
[153] "Why Frigidaire is America's finest Electric Range!, Frigidaire," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 13.
[154] "The Barbeque… An Old American Institution," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 16.
[155] "The Barbeque… An Old American Institution," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 16.

continued to be a constant struggle to prove national superiority between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Likewise, there was a huge emphasis in American society on having the perfect suburban home. May asserted "the most tangible symbol of that [American] dream was the suburban home – the locale of the good life, the evidence of democratic abundance."[156] Millions of people moved from cities to the suburbs in the hopes of achieving the American dream of a home with a white picket fence, two children, and a dog playing in the yard.[157] Historian Wini Breines highlights that "one sign of this was the family focus that proliferated in advertising: 'family-size carton, family room, family car, family film, family restaurant, family vacation'."[158] A large, beautiful, and modern kitchen was one of the features that many Americans desired in their new suburban home. As a result, many advertisements featured new modern refrigerators and other kitchen appliances. Historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder emphasized, "real estate developers ad manufacturers of home furnishings and appliances courted the housewife and reasserted the importance of feminine domesticity."[159] Two 1946 advertisements in *Life* for Hotpoint Electric refrigerators boldly stated "You've waited four long years for a new electric refrigerator," which emphasized that since the war was over, Americans could finally have their dream kitchen.[160] Similarly, the Gas industry advertised the "New Freedom Gas Kitchen" that they designed.[161] The ad highlighted that American women have been longing for a modern "workshop" where

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[156] May 153.
[157] Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 51.
[158] Breines, 52.
[159] Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 148.
[160] "Hotpoint Electric Refrigerator," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 47.
See also: "Hotpoint Electric Refrigerator," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 23.
[161] "New Freedom Gas Kitchen, American Gas Association," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 91.

everything is perfectly arranged for an easy flow of housework.[162] The advertisement featured a family going over the layout of their new kitchen, and asserted that the layout was perfectly arranged to cut down on wasteful motion and fatigue.[163] Since women were assumed to primarily the ones in the family doing the majority of the cooking, this layout was targeted towards them to prevent housewife's fatigue after a long day of cooking and cleaning. Additionally, the emphasis on the word "freedom" implied not only freedom within your kitchen, but also the freedom of living in the United States. With the rise of suburbia and the American dream, also came an emphasis on housewifery and the nuclear family as a way to fight against Communism.

With the rise of suburbia also came a great deal of highway expansion. With families moving out of cities, people needed a way to get from their suburban home to their jobs in the big cities.[164] The increase of highway and air travel had a dramatic negative impact on railway travel. The railroads, however, were still used to transport goods across the country, and an advertisement in the June 3, 1946 edition of *Life* emphasized the importance of the railroads and how they supplied American life. The feature included a housewife sitting on her front porch watching her young daughter play in the yard. She declared that running her home would be nearly impossible without the railroads.[165] It highlighted how railroads were an essential element to the superior American life and in turn the American dream. As the perfect American home was stressed in a great number of advertisements, so were the perfect American family and the perfect American woman.

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[162] "New Freedom Gas Kitchen, American Gas Association," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 91.
[163] "New Freedom Gas Kitchen, American Gas Association," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 91.
[164] May, 161.
[165] "Railroads bring the world to my door, Association of American Railroads," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 128.

As World War II ended and the soldiers came home, many women were expected to leave the jobs they held during the war to return to their homes and raise their families full time. The 1950s is often categorized as "a time when the stay-at-home wife was the cultural ideal and gender roles stood firm."[166] Blackwelder asserts that while there were "plentiful job opportunities… counter pressures discouraged wives' employment."[167] Many advertisements emphasized the important duties of the perfect American woman and housewife and the types of products she should use to achieve that perfection. One advertisement featured a woman who declared, "now I know why my mother bragged," when discussing Pequot Sheets.[168] This advertisement implied idea of the return to the traditional roles for women as housewives, just as their mothers were decades before them. Similarly, an advertisement in *Life* for Campbell's Soup featured a man and a woman as the man proudly declared, "I courted an angel… and married a cook."[169] The woman was quite pleased and proclaimed that she had Campbell's Soup to thank for helping her prepare wonderful meals for her husband.[170] Another comparable advertisement for Mott's Juices suggested that you could be the perfect wife and mother if you served your family Mott's.[171] The advertisement featured a woman named Mrs. Lee in the foreground holding up a tray of various Mott's juices, while her husband, son, and daughter were in the background looking gleefully happy. The advertisement also featured a poem about Mrs. Lee and how her entire family flocked around her because she served them their favorite treat,

[166] Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 134.
[167] Blackwelder, 147.
[168] "Now I know why Mother bragged, Pequot Sheets," *Life*, February 4, 1946, 8.
See also: "Hot in 30 seconds, Sunbeam Double Automatic Ironmaster," *Life*, October 7, 1946, 46.
[169] "I courted an angel… and married a cook, Campbell's Soup," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 41.
[170] "I courted an angel… and married a cook, Campbell's Soup," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 41.
[171] "Mott's," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 61.

Mott's.[172] Advertisements such as the ones for Pequot Sheets, Campbell's Soup, and Mott's Juice all suggested to women that if they used these products that they would be the perfect wife and mother. As the image and concept of the nuclear family was emphasized by the American government as being the main defense against Communism, women especially were encouraged not only to be wives and mothers, but also to be the perfect housewife that her family adored.

By 1948 suburbanization was well underway and many American families left the cities in the hopes of owning their dream home. Advertisements continued to assure Americans that their dream kitchen was completely in reach. Youngstown Kitchens by Mullins advertised that a beautiful kitchen like the one pictured was so easy to own, and it detailed about all of the special features that the appliances had.[173] There were a great deal of advertisements for various household appliances such as washing machines, refrigerators, and stoves, that could further improve the quality of a family's ideal home. In the June 7, 1948 issue of *Life*, Kelvinator, for instance, advertised many of their kitchen appliances and encouraged women to update their appliances to make their dream kitchen even more convenient.[174] Additionally, many companies chose to emphasize consumer satisfaction and how many women preferred their product. An advertisement for Maytag washing machines, for example, insisted that housewives could not stop talking about how much they love their Maytag.[175] Companies advertised products that could further improve a family's kitchen's appearance and convenience, in addition to assuring Americans that their dream kitchen was completely attainable.

When advertising their products, many companies highlighted that their household appliances were novel and provided even more features and conveniences than any other

[172] "Mott's," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 61.
[173] "Your kitchen dream… so easy to own, Youngstown Kitchens by Mullins," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 107.
[174] "Kelvinator," *Life*, October 4, 1948, back of front cover.
[175] "Maytag," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 16.

products of its kind. The Kelvinator refrigerator advertisement mentioned earlier declared that its refrigerator was the first of its kind to offer storage from top to bottom.[176] Additionally, the refrigerator featured a large freezer section and a cold-mist zone to keep fruits and vegetables fresh.[177] These convenient new features are said to "save hours of shopping, save hours in the kitchen – and make every menu sparkle with excitement."[178] Likewise, an advertisement for Crosley refrigerators pronounced their product to be the most novel and convenient of its kind. This refrigerator included five different temperature compartments so that the temperature in any specific compartment would be perfect for specific types of food.[179] It also included door shelves, a feature that was completely unique to Crosley.[180] In 1948, the majority of the advertisements for household appliances emphasized their novelty and convenience and asserted that the daily tasks of an American housewife would be eased with the purchase of these appliances. While these advertisements did not explicitly highlight their "American-ness" they did emphasize novel and convenient features. This emphasis directly related Cold War ideology and trying to prove America's superiority.

Just as in the immediate post-war period, consumerism was used as a way to demonstrate the United State's superiority throughout the early part of the 1950s.[181] There continued to be a large emphasis in American society on having the perfect suburban home. May asserted that the suburban home was the most concrete symbol of the American life and the American dream.[182] As Americans moved into their suburban homes, they desired state of the art appliances to make their home absolutely perfect. May detailed that "in the five years after World War II, consumer

[176] "Kelvinator," *Life*, June 7, 1948, back of front cover.
[177] "Kelvinator," *Life*, June 7, 1948, back of front cover.
[178] "Kelvinator," *Life*, June 7, 1948, back of front cover.
[179] "The New 5 Way Refrigerator, Crosley Shelvador," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 128.
[180] "The New 5 Way Refrigerator, Crosley Shelvador," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 128.
[181] May, 155.
[182] May 153.

spending increased 60 percent, but the among spent on household furnishings and appliances rose 240 percent."[183] Advertisements for household appliances and products were featured in magazines as a way to highlight all of the products that Americans had available to them. Furthermore, these ads emphasized the importance of housewifery for American women. Kelvinator advertised for their new refrigerator model multiple times throughout 1950. They emphasized the innovation of their new model and declared that even though there was a substantial amount of storage space in it, that it could fit "right in place of your pre-war '6'."[184] Almost five years after the end of World War II, advertisers continued to compare American life to pre-war time. One of the Kelvinator advertisements also highlighted how dependable their product was.[185] Consumer patterns during the 1950s "reflected one more aspect of containment behavior as the nation's affluent majority poured their income into homes and family pursuits."[186] The abundance of quality consumer goods acted to demonstrate to Americans themselves how fortunate they were to be living in the United States during such a prosperous time.

Similarly, many companies promoted their products as having features that women desired. These consumer goods and their consumption by middle-class America fostered traditional values.[187] For example, an advertisement for Philco refrigerators and electric ranges declared that their products had "all the features that women want."[188] They insisted that all of their products were made with women and their needs in mind.[189] Advertisements such as this

[183] May, 157.
[184] "Kelvinator," *Life*, February 6, 1950, back of front cover.
See also: "Kelvinator," *Life*, June 5, 1950, back of front cover.
[185] "Kelvinator," *Life*, June 5, 1950, back of front cover.
[186] May, 158.
[187] May, 158.
[188] "Only Philco has them all…, Philco," *Life*, June 5, 1950, 20.
[189] "Only Philco has them all…, Philco," *Life*, June 5, 1950, 20.

demonstrated how the media encouraged women to be perfect housewives through consumer products. They also further demonstrated how it was assumed that women would be doing the majority of the cooking in the house, so appliances were specifically geared towards their desires. Likewise, many advertisements for other household appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, and vacuum cleaners featured women using them. Each of these ads highlighted how their products lessened the work and effort that was supposedly required of a good housewife.[190] The advertisement for the General Electric dishwasher even stated, "if ever a kitchen appliance was a sheer blessing to the American housewife (and to husbands who have to help with the dishes), it's this new G-E Automatic Dishwasher!"[191] This advertisement overtly implied that women did all of the housework in the typical American family, and men only took part when they were forced to. With the rise of suburbia also came an emphasis on housewifery and the importance of rigid gender roles.

Like in previous years, a number of household appliances were advertised in *Life* in 1952 and were promoted as being the newest, most innovative, and best available product of its kind. Many advertisements, like one for a Sunbeam Coffeemaster implied the femininity of housework as it pictured a woman's hand holding the coffeepot and pouring the coffee into her husband's coffee cup.[192] The woman's hand was visibly small and feminine and all of the nails were perfectly shaped and painted.[193] While the advertisement did not explicitly say anything about women using the product or being the ones to make and serve coffee, by picturing a woman serving the coffee to her husband, this ad demonstrated the expected gender roles to the consumer. Similarly, an advertisement for a Dormeyer hand mixer featured a woman's hand

[190] "Thor," *Life*, June 5, 1950, 68; "General Electric," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 5; "Lewyt," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 55.
[191] "General Electric," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 5.
[192] "Sunbeam Coffeemaster," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 47.
[193] "Sunbeam Coffeemaster," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 47.

holding and using the product.[194] Just as in the Sunbeam advertisement, the woman's hand appeared feminine and her nails were perfectly shaped and polished.[195] Not only does this depiction of a woman's hand in the advertisements imply that the product was meant to be used by a woman, but also it demonstrated the feminine beauty ideal that existed during the early 1950s.

Many other advertisements for household products that were featured in *Life* during 1952 depicted the image of a woman using the product. Unlike the advertisements for the Sunbeam Coffeemaker, Dormeyer Hand Mixer, and the General Electric Toaster that only pictured a woman's hand using the product, other advertisements featured a complete image of a housewife using the product in her everyday housework. For example, an advertisement for the new adjustable Proctor's ironing board pictured a housewife ironing clothing.[196] It also addressed the innovation of their new style of ironing board. Because this board was adjustable, housewives could iron either sitting or standing, to ease the stress and discomfort of ironing.[197] Similarly, an advertisement for the new model of the General Electric vacuum cleaner depicted a housewife vacuuming her living room and then featured a sketch of her figure reaching every possible spot in her living room with the new "Reach-Easy" vacuum.[198] Not only did these advertisements imply that women did all of the housework, but they included features that made this work easier and less strenuous.

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[194] "Dormey is here!, Dormeyer's New Portable Hand Mixer," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 114.
[195] "Dormey is here!, Dormeyer's New Portable Hand Mixer," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 114.
See also: "The Toaster that never talks back!, General Electric," *Life*, February 4, 1952, back of front cover.
[196] "Proctor's Hi-Lo Table, Pad & Cover," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 80.
[197] "Proctor's Hi-Lo Table, Pad & Cover," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 80.
[198] "Reach-Easy Cleaning, General Electric," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 105.
See also: "No Dust Bag to Empty, Lewyt," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 71.

Likewise, the advertisements featured in *Life* in 1952 for household appliance such as dishwashers, washing machines, and dryers depicted women either using the product or showing it off to her friends. For example, an advertisement for the newest Hotpoint Automatic Dishwasher featured two images, one small image of a woman loading dishes into her dishwasher, and the other much larger image of her showing her "favorite" appliance off to another couple.[199] Unlike other appliance advertisements, this ad was targeted towards men as it declared that their product would "end your wife's most disagreeable task forever!"[200] Not only did this insinuate that women did all of the dishwashing in their families, but also that men were in complete control of the finances and that they would be the ones to purchase this appliance to ease their wives stresses. Similarly, Frigidaire advertised both their new automatic washers and dryers. Both of these advertisements featured housewives loading the machines with their families' clothes with smiles across their faces.[201] Both advertisements emphasized how novel these appliances were and how they were more efficient than any washers or dryers that preceded them.[202] They highlighted how their efficiency would save time and effort for women when they performed their housewife duties.[203] Advertisements for household appliances such as these, directly demonstrated the rigid gender roles that were in place in 1952. Women were clearly expected to do all of the housework and if their husbands wanted to help ease their demanding work load, they could buy their wives these new innovative appliances, rather than actually helping with the housework.

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[199] "Hotpoint Automatic Dishwasher," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 78-9.
[200] "Hotpoint Automatic Dishwasher," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 78-9.
[201] "Frigidaire Filtra-matic Dryer," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 138; "Frigidaire Automatic Washer," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 139.
[202] "Frigidaire Filtra-matic Dryer," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 138; "Frigidaire Automatic Washer," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 139.
[203] "Frigidaire Filtra-matic Dryer," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 138; "Frigidaire Automatic Washer," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 139.

American society continued on with the model of the nuclear family in 1954. With the Cold War still waging on, the American government continued to portray American society as superior to the Soviets, and did so by emphasizing the importance of the nuclear family, suburban life, and consumer goods.[204] 1954, however, saw a shift in the types of products advertised. While household appliances continued to be advertised in *Life* they were not depicted nearly as much as they had been in previous years. Regardless, all of the advertisements for household appliances directly implied that their features and design were specifically made with women in mind. An advertisement for the new Norge Customatic refrigerator-freezer declared that their new design contained "all 7 features women want more in one refrigerator-freezer combination."[205] Like appliance advertisements in previous years, this Norge Customatic ad also emphasized how modern this new design was, a description that feed into the Cold War ideology that the United States and capitalism was much more modern than communism.[206] Similarly, advertisements for other household products such as irons and stand-mixers featured women using the products in their everyday housework.[207] Similarly, both products were promoted as being the most modern and novel with features that made them even more convenient and easy to use than ever before.[208] Companies highlighted the modern features of their appliances as a way to combat the threat of Communism.

Similarly to the household appliances that were supposed to alleviate some of the time and effort that housewife duties took, many food products advertised their simplicity and how easy it could be to prepare hearty meals for a family without being too costly. For instance, an

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[204] May, 153, 155.
[205] "Norge Customatic," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 4.
[206] "Norge Customatic," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 4.
See also: "Victor's Quickfreezer," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 193.
[207] "General Electric," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 6; "Sunbeam Mixmaster," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 152.
[208] "General Electric," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 6; "Sunbeam Mixmaster," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 152.

advertisement for Hunt's tomato sauce assured women that they could cook a savory goulash for their family with Hunt's and still be a thrifty shopper because Hunt's was so affordable.[209] An advertisement for Bird's Eye insisted that you did not need to be wealthy to serve your family quality meals, while an advertisement for Campbell's Soup declared that their soup was both affordable and an American staple.[210] In addition to the grocery items that highlighted their affordable price, new pre-measured dry mixes for baked goods were frequently advertised. Historian Susan Strasser discussed the new wave of frozen foods and baking mixes that made a housewife's work quicker and easier because it eliminated all of the guesswork.[211] One advertisement for Duff's devil's food cake mix boldly stated "Sally got an "A" in baking… and she never baked before!"[212] It declared that all you needed to do was add water to the mix and when baked, the cake tasted as if it was homemade.[213] The advertisement also pictured the other mixes that Duff's sells, such as other flavors of cake, muffins, and even waffle mixes.[214] Another Duff's advertisement that featured their hot roll mix encouraged women to simply throw away their cookbooks, because with Duff's they would never need to follow a recipe again.[215] These "just-add-water" mixes were designed to take the effort out of baking. Instead any housewife could bake delicious cakes, muffins, roles, and waffles with ease. Many people believed that every woman strived to be the perfect housewife, so as a result, many grocery items made it possible for women to prepare delicious meals with ease and at an affordable price. Therefore, these products made becoming the ideal woman easier than ever before.

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[209] "Hunt's Tomato Sauce," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 56.
[210] "You don't need a lot of money to eat swell?, Bird's Eye," *Life*, October 4, 1948, 54; "Truly American Truly Good, Campbell's Soup," *Life*, October 4, 1948, 51.
[211] Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1982), 277.
[212] "Sally got an "A" in baking, Duff's," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 29.
[213] "Sally got an "A" in baking, Duff's," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 29.
[214] "Sally got an "A" in baking, Duff's," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 29.
[215] "Throw away the cook book – get set for baking fun!, Duff's," *Life*, October 4, 1948, 110.

Other food products that were advertised emphasized that the best housewives preferred their products. For example, an advertisement for Kraft Mayonnaise proclaimed "women who are hard to please prefer one special mayonnaise."[216] Likewise, an advertisement for Kellogg's Pep cereal declared that a mother that knows best, knows to serve her family Kellogg's.[217] Just like appliance ads that were declared as a "housewives' favorite," these grocery items were advertised as being staple products that every ideal housewife had in her pantry.

In 1950 women were still expected to strive for perfection, especially in regards to cooking and baking for their family. In the June 5, 1950 issue of *Life* an advertisement for Swift'ning Shortening presented their product as being versatile and helpful for both baking and cooking.[218] In addition, they detailed that women could get seventy-seven of Martha Logan's recipes just by sending in the attached order form.[219] Similarly, an advertisement for Bird's Eye frozen peas described green peas as the "versatile vegetable" and featured a number of ways for housewives to prepare peas in a meal.[220] Advertisements such as these demonstrated how women were expected to prepare a variety of hearty and delicious meals for their family while still maintaining a budget.

Likewise, as in the immediate post-war years, a number of advertisements for cake mixes were featured in *Life* in 1950. In the immediate post-war period the mixes were advertised as being quick, easy, and efficient. During the early 1950s, however, Pillsbury cake mixes were declared to be so delicious that even a beginner baker would be able to easily bake a wonderful cake.[221] An advertisement for another brand of cake mix, guaranteed a perfect cake every single

[216] "Kraft Mayonnaise," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 12.
[217] "Mother Knows Kellogg's Best, Kellogg's," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 24.
[218] "Swift'ning Shortening," *Life*, June 5, 1950, 56-7.
[219] "Swift'ning Shortening," *Life*, June 5, 1950, 56-7.
[220] "Thrifty Tilly discovers the 'Versatile Vegetable', Bird's Eye," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 42.
[221] "Pillsbury," *Life*, February 6, 1950, 62.

time you bake.[222] Reddi-whip was described as "dessert magic" and according to the advertisement; housewives everywhere were using the product to transform deserts into "glamorous treats" and "dessert masterpieces."[223] Each of these products was described as being a friend to a woman's budget, in addition to a delicious treat for her family. With the start of the 1950s, women were expected to embody perfection. Not only were they supposed to be efficient in their housewife duties, but they were also expected to achieve perfection in everything they did in order to please their families.

In 1952 many grocery items were advertised in *Life* as being quick and easy, but still delicious, just as they were in previous years. Soup, for example, was advertised a great deal in 1952 as being incredibly easy to make and extremely versatile for any meal or menu. Two different advertisements for Campbell's Soup highlighted similar points with two very different approaches. One featured a woman grocery shopping with her daughter, while the other featured a man grocery shopping with his daughter.[224] The former emphasized the many possibilities that women have for preparing different meals for their families using Campbell's Soup.[225] The latter declares that men all across America love soup, and that when "Daddy goes to market, you can tell he likes soup," because of how much he buys.[226] This advertisement was quite unique because it was the only advertisement in *Life* during both the 1940s and 1950s that featured a man doing a stereotypical woman's task. Both advertisements asserted that soup was a family favorite across America and that it not only made a fantastic meal, but it could also be useful for

[222] "Duff's," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 62.
[223] "Reddi-whip," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 63.
[224] "Soup for Lunch, Campbell's," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 31; "Soup for Lunch, Campbell's," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 39.
[225] "Soup for Lunch, Campbell's," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 31.
[226] "Soup for Lunch, Campbell's," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 39.

cooking other things.[227] Likewise, an advertisement for Jell-o detailed that Jell-o was a neighborhood favorite.[228] It featured a group of the neighborhood children rushing into a house looking for a delicious afternoon snack, and proclaimed that Jell-o was the best thing to feed them because not only does it taste and look good, but also it is a friend to your budget with its low price.[229] These advertisements for grocery items in 1952, just as in previous years, demonstrated how women were expected to prepare a variety of delicious meals for their families and friends while still minding her budget. Advertisements emphasized their affordable prices and assured women that they would not have to sacrifice quality for price. Additionally, the advertisements for both the grocery items and the household appliances demonstrated how society was aware of the sheer amount of housework women were expected to do each day as all of the products were promoted as being quicker, easier, and more efficient than ever before.

In 1954 there was a much more distinct emphasis on the "family food budget" than in previous years and various products were produced that would help women spend less money on groceries. Both appliances and food products addressed this idea and detailed how their product would help women save money. The Victor Quickfreezer was advertised as being able to pay for itself with all of the money you would save on groceries because of how fresh the Quickfreezer kept everything, from vegetables to meats.[230] The advertisement for the Quickfreezer also featured a form that women could mail in to receive a personalized and free "Victor Family Food Budget" based on the types of food a family used and the size of their family.[231] This strong emphasis on housewives saving as much as possible when buying their

[227] "Soup for Lunch, Campbell's," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 31; "Soup for Lunch, Campbell's," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 39.
[228] "Jell-o," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 55.
[229] "Jell-o," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 55.
[230] "Victor Quickfreezer," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 192.
[231] "Victor Quickfreezer," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 192.

families' groceries is also demonstrated by the food products that were advertised at the time. Many advertisements proclaimed that their product was a "friend to the family budget" at its low price. Likewise, some grocery items were intentionally made to not spoil. For example, Qwip was promoted as a new whipped cream that never sours, so there is never any wasted.[232] Similarly, an advertisement for bread wrapped in waxed paper highlighted that the bread would stay fresher longer, thus saving money.[233] This advertisement was unique because it did not feature a typical housewife, but rather an ultra glamorous woman holding the waxed paper-wrapped bread in a seductive manner.[234] This suggests the significant importance of beauty and femininity that was expected of women during the mid 1950s. Since women were assumed to be doing the majority of the grocery shopping for their families, they were in turn expected to be as frugal as possible without sacrificing the quality of the food they prepared.

There was a much more significant emphasis on quick and delicious food products that women could prepare for their families while still minding their budgets in 1954 than in previous years. Women were still expected to prepare delicious meals for their family every day, so companies promoted products to women to help them continue to prepare fabulous meals in a time restraint and on a budget. Chef Boy-Ar-Dee products for example, were advertised as perfect for "the lady who's short of time."[235] Cake mixes were also a staple in many American homes because they were a quick and foolproof way of preparing decadent desserts. Two different Swans Down advertisements declared that American housewives rated their cake mixes number one in size, texture, moistness, and taste, when compared to other cake mixes.[236] The concept of a cake mix itself is to simplify the process of baking a cake from scratch. The

[232] "Qwip," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 101.
[233] "Buy Bread in Waxed Paper," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 147.
[234] "Buy Bread in Waxed Paper," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 147.
[235] "Chef Boy-Ar-Dee," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 124.
[236] "Swans Down," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 75; "Swans Down," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 115.

abundance of cake mixes and their popularity in America during the 1950s demonstrated the importance of products that saved women time. There were so many household chores women were expected to do whether or not they worked outside of the home, so the quicker the better.

By the middle of the 1950s, many Americans were aware of the stressful long hours that housework entailed. Other household products were produced or redesigned to make aspects of housework less time consuming. Interestingly, a new style of bed sheets included a fitted-sheet with each of the four corners being a boxed corner, and a novel top sheet had two boxed corners to keep it in place at the foot of the bed.[237] These sheets were advertised as being a time-saver for wives everywhere because they made it much easier to change the sheets and make the bed every morning.[238] The Pan-American Coffee Bureau also addressed the busy days that housewives have of cooking, cleaning, and taking care of their children, and urged them to take a few minutes each day to take a break and enjoy a cup of coffee.[239] As the media fully began to recognize the stress and strain of housework, there was an even stronger emphasis on appliances being as innovative and modern as possible, and food products being as quick and simple as possible to alleviate some of the time and effort required for women and housewifery.

The consumer product advertisements in *Life* that presented the ideal woman as a fulltime housewife interestingly contradicted the household help wanted advertisements during 1946. There were an abundance of families in New York City and its surrounding suburbs that advertised their need for household help, which often included most of the cleaning and cooking, in addition to caring for any children that the family may have. There were a few advertisements for housekeepers and governesses that specified that the house was a "motherless home" which

[237] "Pacific Contour Sheets," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 49.
[238] "Pacific Contour Sheets," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 49.
[239] "Coffee-break for a busy mother, Pan-American Coffee Bureau," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 126.

was why the male widow needed the extra hands around the house.[240] Another specified that a "business woman" needed help around her house because of her busy schedule, but the majority of the advertisements simply stated that the family was looking for extra help around their house.[241] While it is important to note that not all families could afford to bring in a housekeeper and that these advertisements were only put out by families with a large income, it still sheds an interesting light on the upper and middle classes in the late 1940s. Product advertisements, like the ones for Pacquins Hand Cream and Campbell's Soup implied that the ideal American woman and housewife did all of the cooking and cleaning and took care of her husband. The number of help wanted advertisements seeking household help suggested that the some of the wealthiest women in the country, who should be the epitome of "ideal," hired someone else to do their daily housewife duties. Furthermore, if so many American women, both black and white, were taking jobs as housekeepers in another woman's home, raising another woman's children, then someone else presumably needed to be at the housekeeper's home raising her children. To assume that every American woman was at home raising her children and taking care of her family day after day in the late 1940s is a serious misconception. American life and American society was far more complicated than the mass media lead to believe.

An advertisement for Aunt Jemima's Pancake mix in the February 2, 1948 issue of *Life* was very unique. Like the other advertisements, it asserted that it was an American favorite, especially during the winter, however this was the first advertisement among those examined for this study that featured an African American woman. Aunt Jemima served as the image and trademark of the brand, and she was depicted as an older woman, much like the mammy figure,

[240] *New York Times*, February 2, 1946, R 14; *New York Times*, October 6, 1946, R 22.
[241] *New York Times*, February 2, 1946, R 14; *New York* Times, June 1, 1946, R 16; New *York Times*, October 6, 1946, R 22.

telling Americans that Aunt Jemima pancakes were a favorite winter treat.[242] The family that was pictured eating the pancakes however, is a Caucasian family.[243] Even though this was only one advertisement, the implied racial stereotypes depicted tell a great deal about American society in the late 1940s. Just as in 1946, there were a number of families seeking household help in 1948. The advertisements sought out African American and Caucasian women, and positions included housekeepers, dressmakers, babysitters, governesses, nurses, and laundresses.[244] These household help ads suggested that both the wealthy elite, and the lower class women were not taking care of their own children, contrary to the mass media depiction of American society. Wealthy women were hiring help to take care of their houses and children, and the lower class women were working in homes raising wealthy children while, presumably, someone else stayed home and took care of their children. The dynamics of American society, and the role of the mother in a household was not as one-dimensional as the mass media portrayed it to be.

Even though the ideal American women was portrayed as a perfect housewife that did all of her family's cooking and cleaning, household help wanted advertisements demonstrated that a number of women hired other women to do all of their "housewife" chores. Historian Jacqueline Jones asserted, "as early as 1944, black women had begun to feel the full impact of 'powerful forces at work… to repopulate the abandoned kitchens of Southern, and Northern, white women'."[245] She also emphasized how, as soon as World War II ended, many white housewives wanted to buy all new appliances and then hire maids to run them.[246] About half of all wage-

[242] "Aunt Jemima Pancakes," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 8.
[243] "Aunt Jemima Pancakes," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 8.
[244] *New York Times*, February 1, 1948, R 20; *New York Times*, June 6, 1948, R 30; *New York Times*, October 3, 1948, R 28.
[245] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), 256.
[246] Jones, 256.

earning African American women worked in private homes.[247] In 1950 an estimated 773,590 African American women were employed in private households, while only 554,859 white women were.[248] There were a number of advertisements for household help featured in the *New York Times* throughout 1950, 1952, and 1954. Some advertisements specified race, while others did not, and a variety of positions were open such as cooks, housekeepers, maids, nurses, and mother's helpers.[249] A few of the advertisements specified that the position was for a "motherless home," but the majority were for couples looking for help with their children and housework. The ideal American woman was depicted as a happy housewife, and ironically some of the wealthiest women were not doing any of their own housework or even raising their own children. In turn, the women that worked as house workers had to leave their children and families behind as they worked in another woman's home and raised another woman's children. The concept of private housework in the 1950s created an intricate dynamic. The social ideal that all women took care of their houses, did all of their families' cooking and cleaning, and raised their own children was certainly not a reality that applied to every American woman.

If an American woman aspired to be the perfect woman, it was understood that she would need to care about her appearance and use the correct products in addition to carrying out any housewife duties she may have. For instance, an advertisement for Palmolive Soap proclaimed that two out of three women could improve the look of their skin in just two weeks if they washed their face with Palmolive three times daily.[250] Likewise, advertisements for cosmetics

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[247] Jones, 262.
[248] Blackwelder, 154.
[249] *New York Times*, February 5, 1950, 221-222; *New York Times*, June 4, 1950, W27; *New York Times*, October 1, 1950, 168; *New York Times*, February 3, 1952, S7; *New York Times*, June 1, 1952, W14; *New York Times*, October 5, 1952, W19; *New York Times*, February 7, 1954, W16; *New York Times*, June 6, 1954, W15; *New York Times*, October 3, 1954, W16.
[250] "Doctors Prove 2 out of 3 women can have Lovelier Skin in 14 days, Palmolive," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 74.

such as lipstick and face powder were frequently featured in *Life* throughout 1946 and urged women to purchase these products if they wanted to be feminine and flawless.[251] Additionally, just as in prior years, almost all advertisements for toothpaste and toothpowder featured women as opposed to men, which implied that society believed that it was more important for women specifically to have fresh breath and white teeth than it was for men.[252] For the first time in the years examined in this study, in 1946, there was an abundance of advertisements for women's sanitary napkins in *Life*. The advertisements for sanitary napkins stressed that by using them women would feel more confident, comfortable, and youthful.[253] Likewise, an advertisement for Modess sanitary napkins emphasized that women would feel carefree and confident when using their product.[254] The Modess advertisement was unique and interesting because not only did it highlight the benefits of using sanitary napkins, but it also emphasized that the product was exclusively American and that it helped American women sparkle more than any other women in the world.[255] Furthermore, this assertion that American women "sparkle" more because they use Modess enforced the Cold War ideology of trying to prove American superiority in every aspect of life. Women's cosmetic and sanitary products alike highlighted the importance of a woman's appearance and how she carried herself as a way to demonstrate her femininity.

Furthermore, women were also expected to look a certain way and be extremely feminine. Advertisements for hand cream emphasized that women's hands should be soft and white as snow. They addressed the fact that many women had red, rough skin from working in

[251] "Primitive Red, Du Barry Lipstick," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 80; "It's color that makes the difference, Revlon Face Powder," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 96-7.
[252] "Dr. Lyon's America's No. 1 Tooth Powder," *Life*, February, 4, 1946, 89.
See also: "Dr. Lyon's America's No. 1 Tooth Powder," *Life*, October 7, 1946, 5.
[253] "Very Personally Yours, Kotex," *Life*, October 7, 1946, 80.
[254] "Why Do American Girls Rate First For Sparkle?, Modess," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 78.
[255] "Why Do American Girls Rate First For Sparkle?, Modess," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 78.

the kitchen all day and encouraged them to use hand cream as a way to alleviate that.[256] Interestingly, the advertisement for Pacquins Hand Cream specified that a woman's hands should be white as snow. This explicitly implied that the product was for white women and in turn that white women specifically were the ideal housewives doing all of their families cooking and cleaning. While this may have been the case for many middle class white American families, not all American experienced this household dynamic during 1946.

Just as in 1946, there were a number of advertisements in *Life* for cosmetics for women, which implied that women not only needed to cook delicious meals for the families, but also needed to take care of their appearance if they wanted to be an ideal woman. A February 1948 advertisement for Ipana Toothpaste stated that in order to be a "model" mother, a woman must have a brilliantly white smile and teach her children to protect their beautiful smiles as well.[257] Other advertisements, such as ones for hand and face cream insisted that celebrities looked so flawless because they used these products.[258] Similarly, advertisements for beauty patches and lipstick insisted that women use cosmetics to enhance their beauty.[259] There were also a number of advertisements for products that improved the look of women's hair. The advertisements suggested that once you improved the look of your hair or solved any dandruff problems, you could easily attract a man.[260] In addition to all of the cosmetics available to women, Simmons produced a mattress called the "Beautyrest" mattress. Even though advertisements for these mattresses did not include specific language that implied gender, they subtly targeted women.

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[256] "Her Hand… cool, fragrant, white as winter fairy-snow, Pacquins Hand Cream," February 4, 1946, 9.
See also: "Noxzema," *Life*, June 3, 1946, 87.
[257] "What does it take to be a 'Model' Mother?, Ipana Toothpaste, *Life*, February 2, 1948, 1.
[258] "Pacquins," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 9.
See also: "You whole hand benefits from this wonder working new lotion, Hinds," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 92.
[259] "Beauty Patches," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 41, 43; "Max Factor," *Life*, February 2, 1948, 88.
[260] "Lustre-Crème," *Life*, June 7, 1948, 47; "Listerine Antiseptic," *Life*, October 4, 1948, 1.

The name "Beautyrest" in and of itself implied that the product was for women who wanted a good night's sleep to catch up on their beauty-rest.[261] Even while women slept they were encouraged to do whatever they could to improve their appearance. In the post war period, women were expected to be feminine and to take care of their physical appearance. If they did not take pride in their appearance, it was implied that not only would they never find a husband, but also they would also never be considered an ideal woman in society's eyes.

In 1950 women were still expected to be feminine and flawless. For example, an advertisement for Sil-o-ette panty girdles highlighted the fact that their new material allowed women to do all sorts of activities while wearing their girdle.[262] In order to be a picture perfect woman, one must either have the perfect figure, or attain it by wearing a slimming girdle, but still be able to perform her respective household chores. Similarly, there were a number of advertisements for feminine accessories such as dress-slips and fashionable nylons.[263] Women were expected to be as feminine as possible. Even an advertisement for Kotex sanitary napkins emphasized that women would have both freedom and freshness when using their product.[264] The ideal American woman was expected to be flawless both in her actions and in her appearance at all times. Products were specifically targeted towards women to provide them with the assistance they needed to attain that flawlessness.

Just as in previous years women were expected to maintain both physical beauty and femininity in the early 1950s. Hair products, such as Halo Shampoo, were advertised as being

[261] "Simmons Beautyrest," *Life*, October 7, 1946, 3.
See also: "Simmons Beautyrest," *Life*, October 4, 1948, 136.
[262] "Sil-o-ettes," *Life*, June 5, 1950, 109.
See also: "Playtex," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 3.
[263] "Slipmates," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 53; "Van Raatle," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 107.
[264] "Kotex," *Life*, October 2, 1950, 47.

able to glorify and "reveal the hidden beauty of your hair."[265] An advertisement for Kotex sanitary napkins depicted a bride in her wedding dress and asserted that there is "not a shadow of a doubt – with Kotex."[266] By comparing the ease of using a Kotex sanitary napkin with walking down the isle, this advertisement suggested how flawless women were the most beautiful, and thus were the ones that found husbands. Likewise, advertisements for toothbrushes and toothpaste often featured women using their product.[267] This suggests that women, more than men, were expected to maintain good hygiene. Maintaining good hygiene was just one of the many things that women were expected to do to be feminine and an ideal woman. During the early part of the 1950s, American women were expected to not only fit into their respective gender role by performing all of the housework in their homes, but it was also presumed that they would maintain their physical appearance.

Additionally in 1952 there began to be a large emphasis on women maintaining a slim figure. A number of advertisements for both diets and diet supplements were featured in *Life*. For example, Ayds supplements were promoted as a natural way for women to lose weight by reducing her desire for "those extra fattening calories."[268] The advertisement asserted that Hollywood stars used Ayds to stay slim and that "the loveliest women in the world take Ayds."[269] Similarly, the February 4, 1952 edition of *Life* featured a report detailing the importance of meat in the modern weight-reducing diet.[270] The report included a picture of a woman weighing herself, which implied that women were in fact their target audience for the

[265] "Soaping dulls hair – Halo glorifies it, Halo Shampoo," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 66.
[266] "Not a shadow of a doubt – with Kotex, Kotex Sanitary Napkins," *Life*, June 2, 1952, 81.
[267] "Colgate Dental Cream," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 12; "Dr. West's Flexite," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 44.
[268] "Slim the Way the Stars Slim, Ayds," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 36.
[269] "Slim the Way the Stars Slim, Ayds," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 36.
[270] "1952 Report on the importance of Meat in the modern Reducing Diet," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 87.

information about this diet regimen.[271] Likewise, advertisements for girdles emphasized the slim figure women could attain if they wore a girdle discreetly under their everyday clothes.[272] American women were expected to maintain a feminine ideal in both their actions and their appearance. By 1952 not only were women expected to use certain cosmetics to achieve beauty, but they were also supposed to maintain a slim frame that would emphasize their feminine figure. Interestingly, throughout the early 1950s, there were a handful of job availabilities for women as dietitians.[273] These positions either required a degree in nutrition and being a dietitian, or at least a great deal of experience in the field. Society's image of femininity and women's desires to maintain a slim frame opened up new jobs opportunities for women.

A woman's physical appearance was always seen as a vital aspect to their femininity and beauty, however the number of advertisements featuring cosmetic and hygiene products in 1954 suggested that maintaining a flawless appearance was more important than ever before. The advertisement previously mentioned for bread wrapped in waxed paper demonstrates the increased importance of female beauty and femininity.[274] If a woman aspired to be the perfect American woman, she was expected to look flawless regardless of any affects her housewife duties would have. An advertisement for hand lotion, for example, declared that their product would protect a woman's hands like gloves throughout her daily housework and any clerical work if she were to work outside of the home.[275] The advertisement for enHand lotion also featured an image of a woman's hands doing dishes and her wedding band was clearly visible,

[271] "1952 Report on the importance of Meat in the modern Reducing Diet," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 87.
[272] "Playtex Girdles," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 7.
[273] *York Times*, October 1, 1950, 258; *New York Times*, February 3, 1952, W4; *New York Times*, June 1, 1952, W3; *New York Times*, October 5, 1952, W4; *New York Times*, February 7, 1954, W4; *New York Times*, June 6, 1954, W3; *New York Times*, October 3, 1954, W3.
[274] "Buy Bread in Waxed Paper," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 147.
[275] "EnHand Hand Lotion," *Life*, February 1, 1954, 48.

highlighting the role of housework in a marriage.[276] Similarly, an advertisement for Woodbury soap emphasized the importance of flawless and cared-for skin.[277] Having a flawless complexion was absolutely necessary for a woman to be considered beautiful, however, was still only one aspect of achieving ideal beauty.

In addition to having flawless complexion, women were also expected to have good hygiene. Just as in years prior, the majority of toothpaste, toothbrush, and mouthwash advertisements featured women using their product, suggesting that by society's standards, it was more important for a woman to maintain good hygiene than it was for men. An advertisement for Listerine mouthwash completely embodied this expectation. It featured a beautiful, well-dressed woman named Eleanor but declared that she was "often a bridesmaid, never a bride."[278] The advertisement went on to discuss how all of Eleanor's friends had been married except her. Initially men found Eleanor very attractive but were quickly turned off by her bad breath and her best friends did not have the heart to tell her.[279] Although Eleanor was a beautiful woman, her bad breath had prevented her from finding a husband.[280] This story demonstrated the importance of good hygiene for women, and how it is one of the many factors that affected a woman's femininity and beauty. Likewise, tampons became widely available for women in the 1950s as another feminine hygiene product. Meds promoted their tampons as the safer and softer tampon, and would allow women the freedom the live each day like every other, regardless of the time of

[276] "EnHand Hand Lotion," *Life*, February 1, 1954, 48.
[277] "Woodbury," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 127.
See also: "Palmolive," *Life*, October 4, 1954, 64.
[278] "Often a bridesmaid, never a bride, Listerine Antiseptic," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 155.
[279] "Often a bridesmaid, never a bride, Listerine Antiseptic," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 155.
[280] "Often a bridesmaid, never a bride, Listerine Antiseptic," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 155.

the month.[281] Femininity implied a sense of cleanliness, so naturally a feminine woman in the 1950s was expected to have flawless hygiene.

While a flawless complexion and good hygiene were vital aspects of femininity and natural beauty, cosmetics and other products were marketed towards women to enhance their natural beauty in 1954. At-home permanent products for natural-looking curly hair and lipstick were among the cosmetics advertised for women to enhance their natural beauty.[282] Likewise, an advertisement for Life Bras by Formfit urged women to "bring out the hidden glamour of your beauty zone" by wearing their bras.[283] It emphasized that their extensive line of bras contained something for every figure, so that each and every woman could enhance their appearance.[284] Additionally, just as in previous years, the Beautyrest mattress was marketed towards women. An advertisement for a Simmons Beautyrest pictured a woman lying on the mattress, and then detailed about the specific features of the Beautyrest.[285] While the advertisement did not explicitly state that the product was meant specifically for women, the image and the name "Beautyrest" implied that women were in fact the target audience.[286] Simmons highlighted the idea that with the right mattress, you could get a better night sleep and thus wake refreshed and more beautiful than you would be after a restful night.[287] This emphasis on enhancing a woman's natural appearance, rather than completely altering it, suggested that ideal beauty for women in the early to mid 1950s meant being flawless, yet natural.

Even though women were expected to maintain their femininity, many women desired to find work outside of their homes. The jobs available for women in 1954 continued to be

[281] "Meds Tampons," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 9; "Meds Tampons," *Life*, October, 4, 1954, 120.
[282] "Lift Home Permanent," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 1; "Tangee's Bright 'n Clear," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 140.
[283] "Life Bras, Formfit," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 129.
[284] "Life Bras, Formfit," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 129.
[285] "Simmons Beautyrest," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 160-1.
[286] "Simmons Beautyrest," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 160-1.
[287] "Simmons Beautyrest," *Life*, June 7, 1954, 160-1.

considered feminine jobs such as clerical work, cashier, nurse, teacher, dictaphone operator, or dental assistant. Positions in the clerical field were arguably the most feminine of all and also placed a strong emphasis on a woman's physical appearance. The number of clerical positions available for women continued to rise in 1954, but the gendered and sexualized aspects of the positions did not change. Many employers desired "young, single, and attractive" women and they typically specified an age range that did not exceed thirty years old.[288] One advertisement even went so far as to state "if you are attractive, a capable steno and wear a 34-B, we have a wonderful opportunity for you."[289] The heavy emphasis on physical beauty in the clerical field enforced the social ideals of femininity depicted in the advertisements in *Life*. In 1954, a large emphasis was placed on female beauty, and American women were expected to live up to that social ideal.

Even though advertisements in *Life* depicted women as happy housewives that cooked, cleaned, and took care of their families' fulltime, help wanted advertisements in the *New York Times* suggest otherwise. While mothers in the Cold War Era were most likely to seek employment after their children entered secondary school, the number of working mothers with both younger and older children increased rapidly during this period.[290] Throughout 1946, there were a number of jobs available for women. While there were a few various factory positions advertised in February of 1946, the majority of the positions available for women were clerical jobs and housework positions. There was an abundance "feminine" jobs such as stenographer, typist, secretary, and bookkeeper positions advertised for women.[291] Offices preferred their female employees to be attractive and pleasant, and one advertisement even specified that they

[288] *New York Times*, February 7, 1954, W1-W6, W14; *New York Times*, June 6, 1954, W1-W6, W13; *New York Times*, October 3 1954, W1-W5.
[289] *New York Times*, February 7, 1954, W5.
[290] Blackwelder, 155.
[291] Petigny, 173.

were looking for a woman with either a size eight or ten dress size.[292] Additionally, there were positions as cosmetic sales representatives, television technicians, dressmakers, and dress alterations help advertised for women.[293] Throughout the early summer months, there were positions as camp counselors for women, but the nature of the position was seasonal, so unlike many of the other job opportunities, the camp counselor positions were not permanent.[294] Furthermore, these seasonal counselor positions for women enforced the message that women's work was not meant to be permanent or a life-long career. Similarly, in June there were a number of advertisements for female teachers to teach varying subjects and grade-levels.[295] While there were a few positions available for women in factories during February of 1946, there were hardly any in the later half of the year. As wartime production ended, so did the abundance of high paying factory jobs for women.

Even though many advertisements were targeted towards housewives that stayed at home and took care of their families, an article in the October 4, 1948 edition of *Life*, detailed about the rise in production of television sets, and it includes an image of assembly line workers, all of whom are women.[296] The article did not mention anything about the female workers, but the image demonstrated that women continued to work in factories even after the war and accompanying demobilization. Surprisingly, there was only one single advertisement for a female position as a factory or assembly line worker in 1948.[297] Similarly, there were one or two

[292] *New York Times*, February 3, 1946, R 10; *New York Times*, June 2, 1946, R 12; *New York Times*, October 6, 1946, R 16.
[293] *New York Times*, February 3, 1946, R 11; *New York Times*, June 2, 1946, R 12; *New York Times*, October 6, 1946, R 16, R 18.
[294] *New York Times*, June 2, 1946, R 15.
[295] *New York Times*, June 2, 1946, R 15.
[296] "Television Sets: Assembly Line Turns Out 600 a Day," *Life*, October 4, 1948, 84-5.
[297] "Light Factory Work," *New York Times*, February 1, 1948, R 12.

jobs as female foreladies during 1948, and the amount of high paying factory jobs for women had declined a great deal.[298]

While there were many more jobs available for both men and women in 1948 than in previous years, the majority of the jobs available for women were positions that were considered traditionally female positions, or "pink collar jobs." There was an expansion of clerical work in the post war period, which provided millions of new jobs for women, and as a result, job availabilities as a stenographer, secretary, typist, or bookkeeper were abundant in 1948.[299] Consistently throughout the year there were about two and a half pages each month of job advertisements for these four types of jobs for women.[300] There were also a number of advertisements for female hostesses, waitresses, and counter waitresses, jobs that also had been considered traditionally feminine.[301] Similarly, there were many positions opened as comptometer operators, telephone operators, and keypunch operators, jobs that were also traditionally held by women.[302] While there were in fact more job positions available for women in 1948, theses opportunities were only in jobs that had been traditionally considered female throughout the years.

There was a massive expansion of clerical work in the post war period that continued into the 1950s. This provided millions of new jobs for women, and as a result, job availabilities as a stenographer, secretary, typist, or bookkeeper were abundant in 1950.[303] These positions were

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[298] "Forelady," *New York Times*, February 1, 1948, R 12; "Forelady," *New York Times*, October 3, 1948, R 21.
[299] Blackwelder, 152.
[300] *New York Times*, February 1, 1948, R 11, R 12, R 13; *New York Times*, June 6, 1948, R 21, R 22, R 23, R 24; *New York Times*, October 3, 1948, R 19, R 20.
[301] *New York Times*, February 1, 1948, R 12; *New York Times*, June 6, 1948, R 24; *New York Times*, October 3, 1948, R 21.
[302] *New York Times*, February 1, 1948, R 22, R 23; *New York Times*, June 6, 1948, R 23, R24; *New York Times*, October 3, 1948, R 20, R 21.
[303] Blackwelder, 152.

traditionally viewed as more feminine jobs and were often classified as women's work. Throughout the year there were consistently three to four pages of various available clerical positions for women.[304] Often times, the advertisements would specify that applicants should be young and attractive, and some would even include a specific desired age range, while others would specify that the applicant should be single.[305] Women who worked in clerical work had a great deal of interaction with other people, so employers wanted these women to be youthful and flawlessly beautiful. These help wanted advertisements demonstrate the importance of physical beauty in American society during the early 1950s.

There was abundance of jobs available for women during the early 1950s, however, when women did work outside of the home, the only jobs available to them were gender-specific jobs, such a various positions in clerical work, that were designated as "female-only" positions [306]. With the growth of the clerical field in the post-war period and the 1950s there were a great deal of various clerical jobs available for women.[307] In 1952, companies began advertising their typewriters in *Life* and these advertisements were specifically targeted towards women that held clerical jobs. An advertisement for a Royal Electric Typewriter, for example, detailed that, "girls who get ahead know why… They choose clothes, for instance, that do something good for them. Doesn't it make good "get-ahead" sense to choose your office typewriter in the same way?"[308] This explicitly depicted women that work as strong-willed and independent women that knew what they wanted and went after it. Another advertisement for all different models of Royal

[304] *New York Times*, February 5, 1950, 212-214; *New York Times*, June 4, 1950, W17-W19; *New York Times*, October 1, 1950, 255, 256, 259, 266.
[305] *New York Times*, February 5, 1950, 212-214; *New York Times*, June 4, 1950, W17-W19; *New York Times*, October 1, 1950, 255, 256, 259, 266.
[306] Blackwelder, 151.
[307] Blackwelder, 152.
[308] "Girls who get ahead know why, Royal Electric Typewriter," *Life*, February 4, 1952, 69.

typewriters pictured various women using different models for different uses.[309] 1952 continued the growth of clerical jobs available for women. There were consistently five to six pages of clerical positions, such as bookkeeper, secretary, typist, stenographer, or receptionist available for women throughout 1952.[310] Many of the advertisements specify a specific age range that they are looking for, often under the age of thirty, and they assert that they are seeking single, attractive women with lovely personalities.[311] Additionally, many of the advertisements required that the applicants have prior experience. This demonstrated how American women were taking paid positions outside of the home more than ever before. Since so many employers desired their applicants to have prior clerical experience, it implied that there is in fact an abundance of women who did have such experience.

The amount of jobs available for women continued to grow in the early 1950s. Historian Jessica Weiss describes that many of the postwar brides that worked did so to help their husbands get through college. She highlights that, "working wives of college men were mockingly said to be earning their Ph. T.s, for 'putting hubby through,' along with their salaries."[312] Even when women were working for wages, they were mocked, which demonstrated that the advancements that women made during World War II had little lasting impact on American society. Historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder asserted that during the 1950s "employers increased their efforts to lure mothers into the labor force while psychologists and advice columnists warned parents of the need for full-time attention to child nurture."[313] The

[309] "Royal," *Life*, October 6, 1952, 83.
[310] *New York Times*, February 3, 1952, W1-W3, W5-W6; *New York Times*, June 1, 1952, W1-W5; *New York Times*, October 5, 1952, W1-W6, W17.
[311] *New York Times*, February 3, 1952, W1-W3, W5-W6; *New York Times*, June 1, 1952, W1-W5; *New York Times*, October 5, 1952, W1-W6, W17.
[312] Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 28.
[313] Blackwelder, 148.

American Cold War ideology enforced these rigid gender roles and stereotypes as a way to shape the perfect American society and combat Communism.

When World War II ended, American society changed dramatically. With the start of the Cold War, the American government made a point to depict the United States' society as the most superior in the world. Millions of Americans moved out of big cities for the quaintness of the suburbs and to secure their own part of the American dream, and women were expected to stay home and take care of their families. It was a time of extremely traditional gender roles, and women were expected to strive for perfection, not only in their actions, but also in their physical appearance. To be the picture perfect wife and mother, a woman was expected to both act and look the part. Many products advertised towards women such as household appliances and groceries, were depicted as ways to help diminish some of the work and stress from housewife duties, without sacrificing any quality. Furthermore, while there were a number of jobs available for women throughout the early 1950s, all of the positions were extremely gendered and in fields that had traditionally been considered "women's work." The positions for women in clerical work often times required the applicants to be young and attractive, which further enforced the importance of physical appearance and femininity for women in American society. The rigid gender expectations of the 1950s determined women's roles in society and created a very clear depiction of what the ideal was. During the Cold War, women were expected to be ultra feminine and flawless in addition to being a perfect wife and mother, even though this was not necessarily the reality for many American women.

Chapter Four: The End of Nostalgia and Rigid Gender Roles for American Women

It is 1956 and America is nearing the end of an era. While traditional gender roles still remain in place and women are still pictured as housewives in advertisements, there is a much lesser emphasis on women as consumers in *Life*. Likewise, while the traditional "feminine" jobs continued to be the only option for women who desired employment, the help-wanted advertisements in the *New York Times* began to focus less on the woman's appearance, and more on her ability to do the job effectively. Furthermore, housewives with grown children were encouraged to seek paid employment and a number of part-time positions were advertised as a way for women to maintain a job, while still performing their housewife duties. The late 1950s and early 1960s represented a time for American society when traditional gender roles remained in place, but nevertheless slowly began to evolve prior to the outbreak of the Second Wave of Feminism in the mid 1960s.

Cold War ideology continued to play a role in advertisements for consumer goods such as household appliances during the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, there were far fewer product advertisements and many more feature articles in *Life* than there had been in previous years. As a result, there were fewer advertisements that depicted or targeted women specifically. Nevertheless, the magazine still included advertisements for household appliances, and each appliance was marketed as being innovative, novel, and American. Although these were important qualities, the ads highlighted convenience and convenient features as reason enough to purchase products. For example, an advertisement for the GE wall refrigerator-freezer unit proclaimed that their product was "the most convenient of all refrigerators."[314] Even though this

[314] "New GE Wall Refrigerator-Freezer puts all foods at your eye level!, General Electric," *Life*, February 6, 1956, 6.

concept of a refrigerator-freezer that was mounted on a kitchen wall like cabinets did not catch on, GE emphasized that the company's main focus was progress and putting out the best products possible.[315] Similarly, an advertisement for Hotpoint's Big Bin refrigerator-freezer highlighted convenient features like large bin on the door and the wheels on the bottom that made the unit easy to move, which therefore made it easy to clean below and behind the refrigerator.[316] The big bin refrigerator was advertised as being "America's new refrigerator-freezer," which confirmed the superiority of American society.[317] Historian Regina Blaszczyk asserted "nothing more famously summarizes America's fascination with these new durable goods than the 'kitchen debate' between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev."[318] She discussed how during the debate, the United States featured "Split-nik" in their display; a luxury ranch house furnished with state-of-the-art appliances. Blaszczyk emphasized, "Nixon boasted that Split-nik, outfitted with electric appliances, demonstrated the superior lifestyle enjoyed by average Americans."[319] Modern appliances and their state-of-the-art features were the most tangible way to prove the superiority of American society during the Cold War.

Since refrigerators had become a staple in American homes after World War II, they became the perfect example of American prosperity and innovation during the Cold War, while they also offered convenience as a result of new designs or technology. For example, a 1958 advertisement for Westinghouse stated that their new refrigerator-freezer model contained "cold

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[315] "New GE Wall Refrigerator-Freezer puts all foods at your eye level!, General Electric," *Life*, February 6, 1956, 6.
[316] "Hotpoint Big Bin," *Life*, June 4, 1956, 126.
[317] "Hotpoint Big Bin," *Life*, June 4, 1956, 126.
See also: "Hotpoint 2-Door," *Life*, June 2, 1958, back of front cover.
[318] Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2009), 204.
[319] Blaszczyk, 204.

injector" which made it the fastest "chilling" refrigerator on the market.[320] The advertisement claimed that, "in a way, your refrigerator is a 'cook.' It prepares foods for you by chilling them," and features a housewife taking a dessert out of her Westinghouse refrigerator.[321] Additionally, the refrigerator was advertised as being styled by the "shape of tomorrow" which further emphasizes how appliances were marketed as being modern and futuristic, which supported the idea of American superiority.[322] Likewise, a 1962 advertisement for Frigidaire declared that all of their refrigerators featured a flip-quick ice ejector, which was a favorite among homemakers.[323] This ice ejector feature, while standard in all 1962 Frigidaire models, was merely optional in all other brands.[324] Convenient features such as the cold injector, and the flip-quick ice ejector as standard features in refrigerator models emphasized American prosperity and helped support the claim of American superiority.[325]

Throughout the Cold War period, the media made it clear that the ideal American woman was expected to do absolutely everything around her house. Women were expected to do all of the cooking, cleaning, and laundry for her family all while raising her children. This assumption continued to impact American society during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and advertisements in *Life* between 1956 and 1962 bear this out. An advertisement for Serta mattresses, for example, pictured a woman shopping for a better mattress so that her husband would have a

[320] "Westinghouse," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 12.
[321] "Westinghouse," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 12.
[322] "Westinghouse," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 12.
[323] "Frigidaire," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 113.
[324] "Frigidaire," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 113.
[325] Refrigerators were not the only type of appliances that was touted for its convenient features. An advertisement for Westinghouse ranges asserted that their products featured an abundance of convenient features. *Life*, June 4, 1956, 14-17. Furthermore, the Westinghouse advertisement, along with other advertisements for kitchen ranges, highlighted the eye-catching appearance of their products in a marriage of convenience and beauty. For example, see "Flair by Frigidaire," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 58.

more restful night's sleep.[326] This advertisement highlighted how women were expected to do everything necessary to please their families. Similarly, new cookware items, such as saucepans, skillets, and rotisserie ovens were marketed towards women. For example General Electric produced an automatic saucepan that could simply be set to the proper temperature and then left alone. The advertisement emphasized how easy the automatic saucepan was to use and asserted that it would enable housewives to prepare a whole new variety of delicious meals for their families.[327] These advertisements emphasized how women were expected to take care of all of their families needs, whether it was ensuring that their husbands had the best night's sleep possible, or preparing new and exciting meals each day.

During World War II and the early years of the Cold War, grocery items were consistently marketed towards women because it was assumed that women did all of the grocery shopping and cooking for their families; this assumption proved no different in advertisements between 1956 and 1962. For example, an advertisement for French's mustard asserted that, "more women choose French's than any other mustard."[328] Likewise an advertisement for Kellogg's Corn Flakes cereal featured a woman serving the cereal to her son for breakfast.[329] An advertisement for 7-Up similarly pictured a girl serving 7-Up floats to a group of boys, which emphasized the role that women played in food preparation. It asserted that every girl should know how to make a 7-Up float because boys cannot resist the deliciousness of them.[330] Another interesting advertisement urged women to drink orange juice after a day of hard work or play because of all the nutrients orange juice contains.[331] This particular advertisement is

[326] "Sertapedic: A Perfect Sleeper Mattress, Serta," *Life*, October 6, 1958, 118-9.
[327] "A whole new world of cooking opens, GE Automatic Saucepan," *Life*, October 6, 1958, 99.
[328] "French's Mustard," *Life*, June 4, 1956, 162.
[329] "The best to you each morning, Kellogg's Corn Flakes," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 12.
[330] "Boys like girls who make Seven-Up Floats, 7Up," *Life*, June 6, 1960, back of front cover.
[331] "Refresh with Fresh-Frozen Orange Juice from Florida," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 56.

intriguing because it featured a woman in a nurse's uniform taking a break from work to drink a glass of orange juice.[332] Jobs in nursing were consistently available for women throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Like a number of clerical positions during the late 1950s and early 1960s, a number of nursing positions were also available as part-time or seasonal positions. One ad from the October 7, 1956 issue of the *New York Times* stated that both full and part time positions for registered nurses were available.[333] Likewise, during February and June of 1958 many camps advertised for RN's for the summer at a children's camp.[334] This notion of part-time and seasonal positions supported the message that women were not meant to have full-time, lifelong careers. Since its inception as a profession in the post-Civil War period, nursing has been an extremely feminized field, so the fact that a nurse is pictured in this advertisement about "taking a break" from your work to drink orange juice is incredibly significant and emphasized the traditional gender roles that were in place throughout this time.

Although marketing foods to women continued into the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was an increased emphasis on women as hostesses and products that were perfect for hosting a dinner or party. In 1956, *Life* featured a spread with forty-two different and easy ways for a housewife to serve cheese at a dinner party.[335] Likewise, Nabisco came out with Sociables crackers, a new product that featured six different party shapes in one box.[336] The name of the crackers themselves implied that they were intended to specifically be used at dinner parties.[337] Other products were designed specifically for hosting. The Ames Maid cart, for example was described as "the best help a hostess ever had," as it provided an easy way for women to serve a

[332] "Refresh with Fresh-Frozen Orange Juice from Florida," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 56.
[333] *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W5.
[334] *New York Times*, February 2, 1958, W4; *New York Times*, June 1, 1958, W3.
[335] "It's Cheese Festival Time, The American Dairy Association," *Life*, October 1, 1956, 100-1.
[336] "Nabisco Sociables," *Life*, October 5, 1962, 20.
[337] "Nabisco Sociables," *Life*, October 5, 1962, 20.

large amount food and clear dishes.[338] A number of ads featured dessert products as well as being delicious and easy, and many emphasized the variety of options that women could prepare. An advertisement for Swanson individual-sized frozen pies, for example declared that the individual-sized desserts were perfect because "everyone gets his favorite, without extra work by you."[339] This advertisement explicitly implied that women were the ones expected to prepare delicious meals for their families.

Advertisements for washers and dryers also emphasized the importance of convenient features in order to do the best for one's (the wife's) family. For example, Maytag advertised their dryer as remarkable because it featured electronic control that was able to "feel the moisture in the clothes. It shuts itself off before wrinkles are baked in."[340] Maytag asserted that their dryer was a miracle for housewives everywhere because it eliminated the need for ironing.[341] Similarly, an advertisement for Hotpoint home laundry machines depicted a family of five and asserted that the woman was one happy mother because she could wash everything her family was wearing, even her husband's suit, in her Hotpoint laundry machines.[342]

This depiction of a Baby Boom-era family is fascinating for a number of reasons. The majority of advertisements during this time that pictured a happy American family usually featured a family of four, a mother, father, daughter, and son. This advertisement however, features a family of five with two daughters and a son, rather than one of each.[343] Historian Elaine Tyler May discussed the baby boom in the Cold War era and asserted that by having children, American men and women were able to demonstrate their loyalty to the United

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[338] "Ames Maid cart," *Life*, February 6, 1956, 53.
[339] "Swanson Frozen Pies," *Life*, June 2, 1958, 31.
See also: "Borden's Fine Cheeses," *Life*, October 1, 1956, 56.
[340] "Maytag," *Life*, October 5, 1962, 140-1.
[341] "Maytag," *Life*, October 5, 1962, 140-1.
[342] "Hotpoint Home Landry," *Life*, October 1, 1956, 72.
[343] "Hotpoint Home Landry," *Life*, October 1, 1956, 72.

States.[344] Women were having more children than ever before, and most Americans believed having children was the way to achieve happiness and fulfillment.[345] May asserted that during the 1950s, women had an average of 3.2 children, which was reflected in the Hotpoint Home Laundry advertisement.[346] The majority of advertisements that featured entire families throughout the Cold War period typically only pictured two children; a boy and a girl. The Hotpoint Home Laundry advertisement, however, more accurately depicted the baby boom of the 1950s.

The February 6, 1956 issue of *Life* included an extremely striking advertisement for Bendix automatic dryers, which asked the question "Is your playroom a washout?" It featured a father and his son at a ping-pong table, but they were unable to play because all of the family's laundry was hanging to dry in the playroom.[347] This advertisement was so striking because it highlighted how life without an automatic dryer proved to be inconvenient for the males in the family and how they could spend their leisure time. While the inconvenience it caused for the homemaker is mentioned in the advertisement, it is merely secondary to the hassle it caused for the father and son.[348] Another advertisement for a Bendix product, an all-in-one washer-dryer also asserted that their innovative features provided more time for leisure.[349] Unlike the previous advertisement, this one focused on the housewife's leisure time. It urged women to picture the thought of being able to do all of their families' laundry while enjoying a backyard picnic with them.[350] Even though these advertisements varied slightly in the message they portrayed, both

[344] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 130.
[345] May, 132.
[346] May, 131; "Hotpoint Home Landry," *Life*, October 1, 1956, 72.
[347] "Is your playroom a washout?, Bendix Super Fast Automatic Dryer," *Life*, February 6, 1956, 9.
[348] "Is your playroom a washout?, Bendix Super Fast Automatic Dryer," *Life*, February 6, 1956, 9.
[349] "Bendix Duomatic Washer-Dryer All-In-One," *Life*, June 4, 1956, 22.
[350] "Bendix Duomatic Washer-Dryer All-In-One," *Life*, June 4, 1956, 22.

highlighted the importance of how a particular household appliance was not merely convenient but also improved the American family's leisure in the late 1950s.

Although women were responsible for keeping house in a variety of ways, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was an understanding that a housewife in fact did an immense amount of work each day, so products were marketed as a way to cut down on both the housewife's duties themselves, and the time it would take a woman to complete them. Paper cups were a staple in many American homes during this time, and the Dixie Cup brand produced a dispenser for the cups to make using Dixie Cups even more convenient. The advertisement for the dispenser featured a woman with her children and asserted that she would have fewer drinking glasses to wash if her children used Dixie Cups instead.[351] Furthermore, with the dispenser, children would be able to help themselves whenever they wanted a drink, which in turn would be less work for housewives across America.[352] Companies that marketed products such as this recognized the vast amount of work that housewives were expected to do each day, and offered items to alleviate some of the time and effort involved with new innovative products and features.

Even with innovative technology and convenient features, appliances did not solve all of the problems that housewives faced. During the 1950s thousands of American women were diagnosed with depression and began taking narcotics and anti-depressants to deal with the stresses of their lives.[353] Doing nothing but housework day after day eventually proved too much for some women, as they understandably felt isolated from the rest of the world. Betty Friedan called this "the problem that has no name" and asserted that women felt trapped in their

[351] "Dixie Cup Dispenser," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 7.
[352] "Dixie Cup Dispenser," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 7.
[353] Eugenia Kaledin, Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 181-2.

roles as housewives.[354] Historian Wini Breines asserted that, "despite the conviction that happiness was to be found in the family, the family was often a source of deep unhappiness [for women]."[355] Towards the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s different brands of aspirin promoted their product as a way to relieve "Housewives' Fatigue" among other ailments. For example, Bayer Aspirin advertised that their product could be used for pain relief for a number of things, including fatigue from housework. The advertisement included a picture of a woman relaxing on a couch and stated that if after a difficult day of housework you felt tired and achy, you could feel better fast by taking two Bayer Aspirins and relaxing for a few minutes.[356] Likewise, Nebs was introduced and advertised to provide faster pain relief than any other aspirin or aspirin-like product.[357] While the wording in the advertisement did not specify women in particular, the only image featured in the advertisement was one of a housewife before and after using Nebs to relieve her headache.[358] While it is important that Americans finally realized the stresses that housewives were under, the idea that the problem was simply fatigue that could be cured with a few aspirin was far from accurate. American women were affected by more serious illnesses, such as depression, as a result of feeling isolated day after day doing nothing but housework, along with the constant pressures to achieve perfection and fit the mold of the ideal woman.

Given the emphasis on housewives doing housework, it is ironic that not all American women did all of the housework for their families. Just as in previous years, many households

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[354] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963), 20-1.
[355] Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 52.
[356] "Bayer Aspirin," *Life*, February 6, 1956, 3.
[357] "Introducing Nebs – The Shortest Distance Between You and Pain Relief, Nebs," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 94.
[358] "Introducing Nebs – The Shortest Distance Between You and Pain Relief, Nebs," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 94.

brought in hired household help to do all of the cooking and cleaning, in addition to caring for any children the families might have. A few of the households looking for household help stated that it was for a motherless home, but most of them did not.[359] Furthermore, the advertisements that did specify a desired race most often specified that they were looking for a white woman, which implied that the majority of the women employed in private homes were African American and women of color.[360] There was however, a clear decline in the amount of household help advertisements during this time compared to previous years. By 1960 only about 7.9 percent of the female labor force were employed as private household workers, as apposed to 18.1 percent just twenty years earlier.[361] Even still, the assumption that women did absolutely everything for their families was far from accurate. While many women did do all of the necessary cooking and cleaning for their families, other women hired other women to do that work for them.

Even though women were expected to perform all of the cooking and cleaning for their families, many women chose to seek employment outside of the home. Historian Alan Petigny highlighted that, "the very definition of household needs changed to include many more consumer items [during the 1950s]. Since it was the homemaker's responsibility to purchase these items, women sought employment, ironically, to promote their roles as consumers."[362] While there were a large number of positions available for women throughout the late 1950s and

[359] *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W27.
[360] *New York Times*, February 5, 1956, W23, W24; *New York Times*, June 3, 1956, W25; *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W27; *New York Times*, February 2, 1958, W19; *New York Times*, June 1, 1958, W15; *New York Times*, October 5, 1958, W21; *New York Times*, February 7, 1960, W28, W29; *New York Times*, June 5, 1960, W27; *New York Times*, October 2, 1960, W26, W27; *New York Times*, February 4, 1962, W31; *New York Times*, June 3, 1962, W28; *New York Times*, October 7, 1962, W24.
[361] Ellen Carol DuBois & Lynn Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes: An American History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009), A-39.
[362] Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 159.

early 1960s, they were all positions that were classified as feminine jobs. The number of clerical jobs available for women continued to grow in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1956 about eight pages of the Sunday newspaper featured positions available for women in various clerical positions, such as stenographer, bookkeeper, typist, secretary, receptionist, or office clerk: by 1962 there were nearly ten pages.[363] Typewriters continued to be marketed towards women since women primarily held clerical jobs. An advertisement for the Royal Electric typewriter featured a woman walking towards her desk smiling at the beginning of a workday.[364] It then proclaimed that the Royal Electric was the world's best typewriter for secretaries because not only was it easy to operate, but it also had unmatched speed and reproduction.[365] While the ideal American woman was depicted as a happy homemaker, by the late 1950s and early 1960s many people accepted and understood that a sizable number of women worked outside of the home as well. As a result, products such as typewriters were advertised for women who worked in the clerical field.

Many women found the idea of part-time employment very attractive during the 1950s. Part-time employment was seen as an optimal compromise for balancing a career and housework.[366] A number of companies and firms advertised for part-time clerical workers during the late 1950s and early 1960s. They advertised for "Housewives looking for spare time work" and some even specified that they wanted "Housewives only."[367] Likewise, an advertisement for a temporary clerical position advertised for housewives and mothers to replace

[363] *New York Times*, February 5, 1956, W1-W8; *New York Times*, June 3, 1956, W1-W8; *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W1-W; *New York Times*, February 4, 1962, W1-W10; *New York Times*, June 3, 1962, W1-W10.
[364] "Royal Electric," *Life*, October 6, 1958, 67.
[365] "Royal Electric," *Life*, October 6, 1958, 67.
[366] Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 163.
[367] *New York Times*, February 5, 1956, W5; *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W6.

the young girls that had gone back to college.[368] Other employers advertised for housewives who were looking to earn a little extra money for Christmas time by taking temporary jobs in the fall.[369] These job openings were clearly not meant to be lifelong careers for women, rather they were advertised as something for housewives to do to earn extra money and supplement their husband's income in their spare time. Petigny emphasized that, "women sought employment to bolster the family budget but not to disrupt domestic power relationships. As long as their employment… did not undermine the authority of the male breadwinner, it was acceptable to the family."[370] These job advertisements for housewives support the assertion that a woman's income was seen simply as supplemental to her husband's rather than representing her independence.

Similarly, housewives were also welcomed back into the work force once their children were in school and they had more time on their hands. One advertisement declared, "Housewives (25 to 45) who are interested in returning to business on a full time basis."[371] Many companies, like this one, increased the upper limit of their desired age range to include housewives with school-aged children. Some advertisements even targeted women with school-aged children.[372] An ad from the October 2, 1960 issue of the *New York Times* stated, "Kids in school? Time on your hands?" as a way to attract housewives back into the workforce.[373] Likewise, many advertisements sought mature women, which implied that they were looking for slightly older women and housewives.[374] Even though the late 1950s and early 1960s provided more job opportunities for housewives, rather than just young single women, it was clear that

[368] *New York Times*, October 2, 1960, W3.
[369] *New York Times*, June 1, 1958, W2, W3.
[370] Petigny, 159.
[371] *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W4.
[372] *New York Times*, June 1, 1958, W5; *New York Times*, October 2, 1960, W8.
[373] *New York Times*, October 2, 1960, W8.
[374] *New York Times*, June 1, 1958, W5; *New York Times*, October 2, 1960, W8.

these were not meant to be their careers. Rather, these positions were simply an opportunity for women to get out of their houses for a change once their children were in school.

Throughout the Cold War period, American woman were expected to exude physical beauty, in addition to fulfilling the role of a happy homemaker and sometimes clerical or retail worker as well. Just as in previous years, advertisements for toothpaste, toothbrushes, and mouthwash were targeted towards women specifically. An advertisement for Colgate toothpaste asserted that their product could fight tooth decay and prevent bad breath.[375] It also declared that, "every mother should give her children the benefit of Colgate."[376] Furthermore, it featured an image of a mother helping her daughter brush her teeth before bedtime.[377] Not only did this advertisement suggest that dental hygiene was more of a woman's problem than a man's, it also highlighted the ideal that women were supposed to provide everything for their families. Likewise, an advertisement for Listerine Antiseptic mouthwash detailed that their product could help protect against bad breath.[378] While this advertisement emphasized that anyone, anywhere could have bad breath, it only featured an image of a single woman instead of a mixture of men and women.[379] Even though these advertisements specified that dental decay and bad breath can happen to anyone, almost exclusively featuring females in these advertisements implied that dental hygiene was more of a woman's problem than it was a man's.

Women's feminine hygiene products unlike dental hygiene products were solely intended for women. While there were no advertisements for women's feminine hygiene products in 1956 or 1958, they were featured again in 1960 after they had undergone a dramatic makeover.

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[375] "Colgate," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 14.
[376] "Colgate," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 14.
[377] "Colgate," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 14.
[378] "Listerine Antiseptic," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 1.
[379] "Listerine Antiseptic," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 1.
See also: "Dr. West's Dental Care," *Life*, June 2, 1958, 86.

The advertisements for tampons and sanitary napkins that were featured in *Life* throughout the early and mid 1950s used cartoon-like images to represent women. Beginning in 1960, Tampax completely redesigned their advertisements and featured much more realistic and colorful images of women.[380] The advertisements featured young women both in water and on land.[381] They asserted how Tampax tampons enable you to feel fresh, clean, and worry-free with everything you do.[382] The advertisements also asserted that tampons are the most modern form of feminine hygiene products, which further supported Cold War ideology in proving America's modernity and superiority.[383] Additionally, the advertisements proclaimed that Tampax was perfect for every woman's active life.[384] Even with traditional gender roles still in place, by 1960 many women had active lives that included much more than just daily housework. While the traditional gender expectations remained in tact, they slowly began to evolve as America neared the end of an era.

In order to maintain physical beauty, women needed to maintain their youth and avoid the appearance of aging. An advertisement for Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads claimed that their product provided women freedom from foot trouble and unnecessary aging.[385] It asserted that, "corns, calluses, bunions, and sore toes cause lines of pain… make you look older than your years!"[386] This advertisement specifically suggested that foot trouble was more of a woman's problem because the pain lines threatened a woman's youthfulness and facial beauty. Advertisements for facial soap also emphasized the importance of a woman's skin's appearance and how it affected her beauty. Lux Beauty Soup was advertised as both cleansing and moisturizing as it left a

[380] "Tampax," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 46; "Tampax," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 115.
[381] "Tampax," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 46; "Tampax," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 115.
[382] "Tampax," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 46; "Tampax," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 115.
[383] "Tampax," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 46; "Tampax," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 115.
[384] "Tampax," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 46; "Tampax," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 115.
[385] "Freedom From Foot Trouble, Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 112.
[386] "Freedom From Foot Trouble, Dr. Scholl's Zino-pads," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 112.

woman's complexion smooth, flawless, and "dreamy".[387] The fact that the bar of soap is named "Beauty Soap" explicitly suggested that it was intended for women to help them achieve a beautiful complexion. Having a youthful and flawless complexion was an absolute necessity for a woman to be perceived as beautiful during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Cosmetic products were also marketed towards women to help them achieve ideal beauty. Satura moisturizer by Dorothy Gray was advertised as being able to aid women in achieving youthful skin.[388] Likewise, women were expected to maintain youthful-looking hair as well. Miss Clairol advertised their hair dye as an easy and quick solution for gray or fading hair. It even emphasized that women are happiest when they appear youthful.[389] Unlike the early 1950s when women were encouraged to enhance their natural beauty, women were expected to highlight their youthful radiance with dramatic makeup during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Satura advertisement featured a woman with bright red lipstick and dramatic eye makeup.[390] Even the advertisement for Lux Beauty Soap featured a woman with incredibly dramatic eye makeup washing her face.[391] Women were expected to strive for flawless beauty and use the proper products to achieve perfection.

Furthermore, oftentimes during the late 1950s, if women desired paid employment they were required to be both youthful and attractive if they were to be considered for the position. Although this began to change in 1960, during the 1950s oftentimes women were primarily judged on their appearance, and their ability to do the job was merely secondary. For example, one advertisement sought an attractive and well-groomed girl under the age of 28.[392] Another

[387] "Lux Beauty Soap," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 108.
[388] "Satura by Dorothy Gray," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 5.
[389] "Miss Clairol," *Life*, October 9, 1960, 73.
[390] "Satura by Dorothy Gray," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 5.
[391] "Lux Beauty Soap," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 108.
[392] *New York Times*, February 5, 1956, W6.

stated that they were looking for a woman that was "5'5" and dress size 12 to 14."[393] Likewise, a number of advertisements included age ranges that started at the age of 16, which emphasized their desire to employ youthful women.[394] Both clerical and retail jobs alike desired young and attractive women because these positions required a great deal of in-person interaction, and these companies wanted physically attractive women to represent them whenever possible.

The "young and attractive" requirement began to fade from job advertisements for women in 1960. Companies advertised that they were looking for "rapid, efficient, and reliable," women instead of single and attractive ones.[395] Many advertisements also desired women with prior experience, which further supported that companies were more focused on a woman's ability to do the job rather than her dress size. One advertisement even declared that to be hired, a woman "must have brains, top skills."[396] Even though women were still expected to be beautiful by society's standards, it finally was not a requirement for clerical and retail positions. Alan Petigny asserted that the changes in women's status in American society during the 1950s and early 1960s occurred very slowly, emphasizing that, "developments in the family, psychology, religion, politics, and public opinion show women were not losing ground or simply running in place. Instead, the status of women was advancing."[397] Even though traditional gender roles remained in place and shaped women's lives in America, the expectations for women slowly began to evolve.

And yet, women's dependence on men in American society was perpetuated by traditional gender roles during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Men were expected to be the breadwinners and the providers for their families. While many women were employed during

[393] *New York Times*, October 7, 1956, W4.
[394] *New York Times*, June 1, 1958, W2; *New York Times*, October 2, 1960, W3, W4, W5, W6.
[395] *New York Times*, February 4, 1962, W10.
[396] *New York Times*, October 7, 1952, W4.
[397] Petigny, 178.

this time, their income was assumed to be supplemental to their husband's. Although a woman could run a home, it was assumed that she probably would not be able to get along without a man's assistance. An advertisement for life insurance emphasized the notion that women need men for support. The advertisement pictured a grieving widow with her insurance agent. The advertisement stated, "this is the man your family may have to turn to someday… choose him carefully."[398] Not only did the wording in the advertisement reflect traditional gender roles of male superiority, but the image of the widow and her insurance agent did as well. The image featured the insurance agent standing over the woman with his hand on her shoulder.[399] This position that they were pictured in, along with the wording used in the advertisement, demonstrated the notions of the time that asserted females' dependence on males. Traditional gender expectations and their representation in the media facilitated the idea of female inferiority throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The late 1950s and early 1960s served as the end of an era in American society. After World War II, the United States emphasized the ideal of a nuclear family that lived in the suburbs. Along with suburbanization came nostalgia and many Americans embraced the concept of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker. When women did seek paid employment, they only found positions in feminine fields such as nursing, clerical, retail, and domestic service. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s these ideals remained as women continued to be portrayed as homemakers and hostesses, however they slowly began to evolve as fewer and fewer help-wanted advertisements required their applicants to be young, attractive, and single. The growth of women in the labor force did not transform work patterns, it did however signal

[398] "New York Life Insurance Company," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 18.
[399] "New York Life Insurance Company," *Life*, June 1, 1962, 18.

major changes to come.[400] Leading up to the emergence of the Second Wave of Feminism, American women remained trapped in traditional gender roles and expectations that shaped their roles in both society and their private lives.

[400] Blackwelder, 176.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

It is 1963 and Betty Friedan's has published *The Feminine Mystique*. Many scholars credit the publishing of this book as the start of the second wave of feminism. Friedan divulged the realities that laid beneath the surface of the happy housewife image of the 1950s in media and popular culture, an image that has been analyzed in the preceding chapters of this study. Journalist and labor union activist, Friedan, asserted that, "the feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity."[401] She further asserted that the feminine mystique prevented women to accept the idea of their own identity and instead encouraged them to identify themselves via their relationships with their husbands and children.[402]

According to Friedan, both American men and women sought conformity after the end of World War II and found the reality of a family and children in the suburbs comforting.[403] As part of the research she conducted for her book, she examined the lives of American housewives during the late 1950s in search of women who actually felt fulfilled in their roles as mother and housewife. In one affluent neighborhood she found that eighteen out of the twenty-eight housewives in the community "were taking tranquilizers; several had tried suicide; and some had been hospitalized for varying periods, for depression or vaguely diagnosed psychotic states."[404] Friedan emphasized that many women felt empty and useless once their children went off to school, which is why so many women had five or six children; they needed to continue to feel

[401] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963), 43.
[402] Friedan, 71.
[403] Friedan, 182.
[404] Friedan, 235.

needed. Friedan saw these problems that she believed literally imprisoned American women to their homes and their housework and she urged women to begin to fight back.

Friedan analyzed both women's magazines and general audience magazines like *Life* in her research. She discussed the Christmas issue of *Life* in 1956, in particular, an article featured about a typical "career woman." Friedan asserted that while she was intelligent, ambitious, and attractive, she was pictured as both unfulfilled and masculine.[405] This career woman's husband, as a result, was no longer sexually attracted to her, and turned to alcoholism as a way to cope with his "unhappy" marriage.[406] Friedan considered this poor representation of career women in the mid 1950s another element of the feminine mystique. Friedan emphasized that to face and solve the problem of the feminine mystique, American women would have to first reject the housewife image. That is not to say that women had to choose between having a family and having a career, but rather that they combine the two and find a balance between them.[407] Furthermore, women needed to "see housework for what it is – not a career, but something that must be done as quickly and efficiently as possible."[408] Likewise, she believed that women would also have to see marriage for what it truly is, rather than see marriage and motherhood as the final and only real fulfillment in their lives.[409]

Friedan highlighted that the key to escaping the trap of the feminine mystique was education. She asserted that, "the feminine mystique has made higher education for women seem suspect, unnecessary and even dangerous."[410] Friedan strongly believed that once women were educated, that they would be able to break the mold and be able to see themselves as more

[405] Friedan, 58.
[406] Friedan, 58.
[407] Friedan, 342.
[408] Friedan, 342.
[409] Friedan, 342.
[410] Friedan, 357.

than just wives and mothers. Friedan emphasized that America needed to drastically reshape the cultural image of femininity if the roles of women were to change. She asserted that every aspect of society would need to make an attempt to "stop girls from growing up wanting to be 'just a housewife'."[411] With publishing *The Feminine Mystique* Betty Friedan called for a massive movement to change the role of women in American society – she called for the second wave of feminism.

The second wave of feminism was a massive women's movement that fought issues related to sexuality, the family, the workplace, reproductive rights, and other inequalities that women faced. The movement focused on the notion of sisterhood and collective action for all women. The feminist movement accomplished a number of things, including the passage of Title VII in The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination by employers on the basis or race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.[412] In December 1968, for the first time, the classified section of the *New York Times* did not separate the job advertisements based on gender, but rather each page stated "Help Wanted – Male-Female."[413] Women were no longer confined to the feminine fields of clerical, retail, and domestic service work, but rather every job opening that was available for men was available for women as well.

Additionally, as society's gender roles and expectations for women began to evolve with the second wave of feminism, so did the mass media's perceptions of women and the amount of consumer products marketed towards women specifically. In the October 4, 1968 issue of *Life* not one advertisement for a grocery item or household appliance featured a woman or even implied that the product was meant for women only. There were only two explicitly gendered

[411] Friedan, 364.
[412] Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 153.
[413] *New York Times*, December 1, 1968, W1.

advertisements in this issue; one was for Tampax tampons, an item that is after all, a woman's product.[414] The other was for the Simmons Beautyrest mattress, which did not explicitly state that it was meant for women, but simply featured a woman in the advertisement and did not say that she would but it for her husband's comfort like a similar ad nearly a decade earlier did.[415] Furthermore, an article in *Life* featured a woman who was able to balance a career while running two households and taking care of her children from both her current and former marriage.[416] American society was finally realizing that women were capable of being both career women and homemakers; it no longer had to be an either or that had been presented to women through advertisements of the previous two decades.

The twenty years leading up to the second wave of feminism was a time of intriguing social norms and ideals. The United States' involvement in World War II resulted in previously unmatched gains for women in the labor force. For the first time, women were hired for traditionally male jobs and were able to earn higher than ever salaries in these defense production factory jobs. Women were encouraged to do their part for the war effort and take jobs in the defense industry. Advertisements in *Life* encouraged women to do their part for the war effort by helping with wartime conservation and urged them to purchase war bonds. Furthermore, women were encouraged to do their patriotic duty and take a wartime defense production job, which were advertised in the "Help Wanted – Female" section of the *New York Times* and other newspapers across the country. During the war the ideal American woman was seen as one who did her patriotic duty and worked outside of the home. Once the war ended and the troops came home, the advancements that women had made over the previous four years

[414] "Tampax Tampons," *Life*, October 4, 1968, 76B
[415] "Beautyrest by Simmons," *Life*, October 4, 1968, 91; "Sertapedic: A Perfect Sleeper Mattress, Serta," *Life*, October 6, 1958, 118-9.
[416] "The careerist-homemaker who serves a 'mean spaghetti sauce'," *Life*, October 4, 1968, 90.

were all but forgotten. Women were discouraged from seeking employment outside of the home in an effort to strengthen the notion of the nuclear family and protect the United States against Communism. Even though there was an abundance of jobs available for women, they were all in "feminine" fields such as clerical and domestic work, rather than the high paying factory jobs that were available for women during the war. It was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that housewives were invited back into the work force after their children were grown, but the types of jobs for women remained limited.

Millions of women entered the labor force in the early 1940s and took up jobs to replace the men overseas. For the first time, women were able to work in high-paying factory jobs that had historically been considered "men's work" and by 1945 the number of employed women had increased by sixty percent.[417] Unfortunately, as the war ended and the troops came home women were let go from their wartime jobs. In the years following World War II, the jobs available for women changed dramatically. Additionally, the media portrayal of women changed when the war ended to portray the ideal American woman as a homemaker, rather than a strong, independent war worker. With the end of the war came a shift in American society's expectations for women and what embodied the feminine ideal.

When World War II ended the United States was plunged into yet another war. The Cold War did not consist of bloody battles and lives lost, but rather it became a battle to prove national superiority between the United States and capitalism and the Soviet Union and communism. The American government believed that a strong nuclear American family provided the strongest defense against communism, so the mass media encouraged women to remain in their homes,

[417] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 59.

rather than seek employment elsewhere.[418] Furthermore, the government used consumerism as a way to demonstrate American superiority to the Soviets and the rest of the world.[419] Millions of American families left cities for the suburbs in search of the American dream of a house with a white picket fence, two children, and a dog playing in the yard. As a result consumer products and advertisements adjusted to reflect this trend of suburbanization and marketed a number of products towards homemakers.

The suburban home was often pictured as the image of American superiority. Historian Elaine Tyler May asserted, "the most tangible symbol of that [American] dream was the suburban home – the locale of the good life, the evidence of democratic abundance."[420] Furthermore, many Americans desired a beautiful and modern kitchen, so a number of advertisements featured new refrigerators and other household appliances with advanced features that made them better than ever. Since rigid, traditional gender roles established that a woman's role was to take care of all the cooking and cleaning for her husband and children, most of these advertisements for household appliances either featured women or declared that their product included all of the features that housewives wanted. Likewise, grocery items were marketed towards women because they were expected to do all of the grocery shopping and subsequent cooking for their families. The traditional gender roles of the late 1940s and 1950s shaped the image of the perfect American woman as one who stayed home and took care of her families needs day after day. Even though not all women fit into that mold, it was considered to be not only the norm, but also the ideal, and all women were expected to conform to it if they desired perfection.

[418] May, 21.
[419] May, 155.
[420] May 153.

Even though the ideal woman was portrayed as a homemaker during the late 1940s and 1950s, there were a number of jobs available for women. Very few advertisements depicted women working outside the home, even though jobs were readily available for women, which displayed a disconnect between the perception of ideal that was depicted in *Life* and the reality of women in the workforce, that was represented in the *New York Times*. An expansion of clerical work in the post war period provided millions of new jobs for women, and as a result, job availabilities as a stenographer, secretary, typist, bookkeeper, and receptionist were abundant.[421] There were, however, little to no opportunities for women outside of traditional "feminine" fields of employment such as clerical, retail, and domestic service work. Furthermore, the amount of household help wanted advertisements suggested that even though the ideal American woman was supposed to cook, clean, and raise her young children, many wealthy women hired other women to do their housework and child caring for them. Therefore, while the media's representation of American women may have represented a number of women, it did not represent women as a whole.

Throughout the post World War II and Cold War period, women were also expected to maintain flawless physical beauty. Advertisements for cosmetics, toothpaste, facial soap, and hair dye all demonstrated how women, more than men, were expected to take care of their hygiene and appearance if they wanted to fit the feminine ideal. Likewise, in the mid 1950s, advertisements for diet products and feature articles about staying slim further validated just how important a woman's physical appearance was. Job advertisements at the time similarly emphasized the importance of a woman's physical beauty. Many advertisements for clerical jobs in the late 1940s and 1950s specified that applicants should be young, attractive, and single, and some even specified a desired age range or dress size. While many advertisements did specify

[421] Blackwelder, 152.

that they wanted women with previous work experience, it was merely secondary to their physical beauty. It was not until the late 1950s early 1960s that employers put a woman's skills and abilities before her marital status and dress size.

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw slight changes for women from the nostalgia that had engulfed the long decade of the 1950s. Even though, as historian Stephanie Coontz asserted, the nuclear family was an invention of the 1950s, American families embraced the idea of the old-fashioned and traditional family during the 1950s.[422] During the late 1950s and early 1960s Americans still clung onto this concept of "traditional", but the representation of the ideal woman began to change. Household appliances with the most novel and convenient features were marketed towards women as a way to alleviate the amount of time cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry would take. Additionally, women were portrayed as hostesses, and there was an increased emphasis on products that were perfect for hosting a dinner or party. Even though women were still expected to be happy homemakers, a number of both full and part time positions encouraged women with grown children to get back in the labor force to earn some extra money. These jobs however, were seen merely as something for housewives to do in their spare time to supplement their husbands' income, rather than a career. Regardless, the acceptance of housewives in the labor force represented a shift in society and signaled major changes to come.

American women were expected to be ultra feminine in every aspect of their lives. Not only were they expected to exude physical beauty, but they were also expected to perform their feminine housework duties and take care of their husbands and children. Likewise, paid employment for women was feminized even though the very concept of a woman working

[422] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 31.

outside her home was discouraged. The 1950s was the last period in American history in which women's only life ambition was assumed to be a housewife and mother. Being a wife and a mother was no longer seen as the ultimate fulfillment for women as they finally recognized that they could achieve more. With the second wave of feminism, American women were finally depicted in the mass media and popular culture as more than just a wife and mother.

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