

See It, Want It, Have It: A Visual Diary of the Suburban Housewife,
1946-1958

by

Elizabeth M. Phillip

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

American Studies

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2014

See It, Want It, Have It: A Visual Diary of the Suburban Housewife,
1946-1958

Elizabeth M. Phillip

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand that this thesis will be made available from the OhioLINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Elizabeth M. Phillip, Student

Date

Approvals:

Dr. Stephanie Tingley, Thesis Advisor

Date

Dr. Martha Pallante, Committee Member

Date

Mr. William Mullane, Committee Member

Date

Dr. Salvatore A. Sanders, Associate Dean of
Graduate Studies

Date

ABSTRACT

Post-World War II America was hustling and bustling with change. These changes are too numerous to discuss in detail. For the sake of focus this thesis will limit its investigation to the development of what would become the postwar stereotype of the middle class suburban housewife and her middle class life.

The irony of this era begins with a mixture of power and player. The purchasing power in the middle class household often rested in the hands of the wife, but the income was made by the husband. She influenced financial decisions, but it was his responsibility to be the provider.

Intertwined with the notion of suburbia and the housewife is the social and economic status within middle class America. Increased income level allowed families to possess more material objects. Neighborhoods, too, contributed to this socio economic system. Advertisements demonstrated these trends and catered to specific audiences within the middle class America.

The interdisciplinary nature of this project provides methods of explaining the intricacies of this post-war era and provides a full appreciation of the effects past actions have on present day.

Table of Contents

Abstract	I
Introduction	1
Scholarship	2
Cause and Effect	4
Money and Technology	4
Consumerism	5
Organization	7
Why a Visual Diary?	9
Method to Advertisement Selection	13
Advertisement Analysis Rubric	16
Chapter One: Middle Class at Home and On the Go	19
The Middle Class	22
Seeing, Wanting, Having	24
Home	27
Away	31
Chapter Two: New Middle Class, New Lifestyle	35
Suburbia	37
My Family	40
The One and Only, Housewife	44
Me	47
Conclusion	51
Works Cited	56

Introduction

The post-World War II era was a time for America to rejoice and celebrate. The country had survived the stress and strain of two major events in history, the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II. The United States, in conjunction with the Allied forces, defeated Nazi Germany and became a major world power.

From 1945 through roughly 1948 thousands of proud young men returned home after having served their country. Mothers and daughters, wives and girlfriends eagerly awaited their loved ones' return, anxious to continue their lives. The nation grew strong and prosperous from the war. The country's triumph led to a thriving economy which created an environment that made possible for suburban Americans to, in effect; take an extended 'vacation'.

This thesis is limited to post World War II America 1946 through 1958. The focus group is the white middle class, concentrating on suburban communities. Within the center of this focus group, the housewife lies at the core of the changes occurring in post-war America. Changes in consumerism, suburbia, materialism, and self-image are communicated using advertisements tailored for the housewife and her life.

America's celebration after the war was possible through the emergence of a new middle class and the return of household gender

defined roles. Popular media defined these roles and expectations. Through the critical examination of advertisements, the portrayal of the 1950s housewife both explains and influences the societal changes taking place through the post-war period.

The interdisciplinary nature of this thesis explores post-World War II America using various fields of study and scholarship making use of disciplines such as psychology, history, economics, commercial art, science and technology. Establishing how the housewife was fundamental to the changes in the middleclass and consumerism through advertisement analysis and research.

Scholarship

History and scholarship serve as tools in reading the chosen advertisements, thus exploring postwar American life. Much has been said about post-war period providing a range of perspectives from different disciplines. I have built on established works and gathered sources from these various disciplines to explain the changes society experienced in the post-war period.

Sources most helpful come from fields such as consumer culture of the 1950s, psychology, post-war economics, and women's studies. A primary source is author Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* which explores concentration the post-war consumer culture. This book was

used as a strong reference in explaining the cultural mindset of both business and consumer. She is referenced frequently as her research is relative to the themes of this study. Historian David Halberstam provides a broader perspective of the decade in particular focusing on the economic state of the country. The scope of historic scholarship does not fully encompass the intricate explanations within this study. Therefore research in fields such as advertising and art are needed to complete the material presented on this topic.

Creative or artistic scholarship focuses on the use and understanding of the visual arts. Commercial art and advertising practices of the period are studied extensively. The book *Ad Women* by Juliann Sivulka was useful in gaining an understanding of the marketing and advertising of the period. It focused on the crucial role women played in the advertising field as creator as well as consumer.

The textbook titled *Art Fundamentals: Theory and Practice* by Otto G. Ocvirk and others, was extremely valuable in understanding how color and design subconsciously influence humans. Our reaction to a specific color palette can either enhance or hinder our desire to purchase goods. The concepts and practices found within these sources are directly related to reading the advertisements chosen.

Cause and Effect

After being discharged from the service, husbands and fathers went back to work. The housewife dutifully returned home as caretaker from her wartime factory employment. The role of caretaker fueled by disposable income and the increase in availability of manufactured goods gained importance economically. Societal shifts from worker provider to caretaker and housewife successively reinforced through government and business communicated a sense of duty and purpose. Attitudes toward consumption began changing from a 'thrift and save' mentality to a 'spend and consume' mentality. Anything and everything a family needed and desired could be purchased with newly-earned wages or credit. Middle class materialism and impulse purchasing are portrayed as providing happiness and satisfaction in the 1950s.

Money and Technology

The middle class experienced an increase of disposable income and frame of mind to splurge gave them the ability and freedom to enjoy themselves. Furthermore, an increase in capital came from diverse sources including the GI Bill for veterans, government jobs, and the advent of lucrative employment within large corporations. Veterans could obtain low interest bank loans and store credit, thus allowing purchases beyond their immediate cash resources.

Technological innovations vastly changed the variety of materials available for consumer goods. The manufacturing system from wartime transitioned in order to produce enormous quantities of mass-produced goods “This change came as the new materials, improved technologies, and efficient manufacturing systems developed for the military defense effort were adapted for civilian use” (Sivulka 205). Materials needed for building middle class homes became available through the technology of plywood, plastics, and fiberglass. Plastics specifically were useful for producing cost efficient products such as bottles, furniture, food storage containers and appliances. Countless goods filled the consumer demand and created manufacturing and service jobs that resulted in a robust economy.

Consumerism

Mass production of consumer goods and mass consumption of those goods were substantial due to the changes of the post-war period. During the era a twofold force drove this sensation. Government propaganda inserts the values of good citizenship into those women who sustained their role as housewife and homemaker through the purchase of commodities.

Middle class consumerism exploded because of the introduction of new manufacturing materials which producers used as the main

components in a wide variety of materials. Our incessant desire to buy can be summarized by author Geoffrey Miller who explains the need for humans to consume in his book *Spent: Sex, Evolution, and Consumer Behavior*. He remarks there are two categories into which a consumer falls, “things that display our desirable traits and bring us ‘status’ when others see that we own them, and the things that push our pleasure buttons and bring us to satisfaction even if no one else knows we have them” (Miller 20). The middle class stood as the focus customer of these products experiencing the sensations of the two categories Miller describes. Psychologist Ab Maslow discusses three types of needs satisfied from the act of consuming material objects. The cognitive, the aesthetic, and the self-actualization briefly gratify the consumer providing a feeling of temporary satisfaction (Miller 23). A consumer typically makes a decision based on why the product is needed or wanted, how it looks, and the amount of satisfaction gained from the purchase. Throughout the decade, the middle class’s income drove the desire to satisfy their needs.

Jobs were plentiful in the post-war period as manufacturing shifted from the war effort toward consumer goods. Wives of servicemen who set aside money during the war years had accumulated a considerable savings to their husbands upon arrival home (Sivulka 199). Along with this lift in financial stability, the countrywide rationing of foodstuffs ended. Improved packaging

materials, pressure packed containers, and freezer foods, widened the competitive consumer market. Added resources contribute to a comfortable living and allow for indulgences.

The interwoven themes of 1950s history, advertising, and consumer culture are critical in describing the changes occurring in the course of the post-war period. Organizing the specific themes, while using visual aids in the form of advertisements, presents a cohesive perspective with which the changes are described.

Organization

Four advertisements chosen for analysis, seen in popular magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, *Life*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, illustrate the how consumerism evolved. Women's magazines stood as the number one outlet for marketing consumer goods post-war. Radio was gaining popularity but obviously lacked visual stimulation. Television was in its infancy and had not yet reached the masses of the middle class. The basic service of these magazines was to advise the middle class wife and mother on her life: children, husband, home, and her role as a housewife. Sivulka adds to the primary function of publications by implying that the magazines provided meaning to maternity and community for the suburban middle class housewife. They informed her about important aspects of the housewife's life such as childcare, homecare, cooking, health,

beauty, and relationships (Sivulka 223). Magazines basically advised the housewife how to be, who to be, and what to be. Naturally, advertisers flooded magazines with advertisements featuring new and innovative products, as well as staples for middle class suburban life.

Advertisements are useful in explaining how the American way of life changed post-war. In addition to clarifying a new way of life, advertisements demonstrate how new technology and consumerism all played determining factors within the new role of the housewife. The ad analyses, in two separate chapters, illustrate the four main aspects of the housewives' life.

Chapter One uses an essential and non-essential product to explain how nondiscretionary spending changed for the first time since the 1920s. Young housewives embraced the concept of spending wages to purchase items serving no utilitarian purpose. Analysis, 'Home' discusses the middle class household of a suburban neighborhood. A refrigerator advertisement features a major appliance necessary for all middle class families. The second ad analysis 'Away', explores travel and transportation in America post-war characterized by advertisements from the Ford Motor Company. The housewife played a part in the purchase of a vehicle as well as how that purchase affected other aspects of her life.

The second chapter examines two advertisements for goods that are considered semi essential. They possess a utilitarian purpose, but are conveniences and embrace the new mentality of spend and consume, giving the consumer more power and variety in purchasing. The housewife is the main character which these visuals mean to entice. The third advertisement analysis, 'My Family,' focuses on the middle class suburban family approving of a new food product, Franco-American Spaghetti. The ad analysis explains how the family functioned and grew with the cultural shifts and ideals of the post-war period, in part to money and technology, and to their mother the housewife. The final section 'Me,' is dedicated to the housewife herself. An advertisement featuring Palmolive soap explores how a higher importance was placed on appearances. The newfound devotion attributed to outward appearances, seen in magazines and department stores, also increases social pressures to fit into the suburban community. Reading the visuals will capture the attitudinal shifts of consumerism resulting in an increase of resources and productivity.

Why a Visual Diary?

Advertisements are significant because of the psychological relationship humans have to the visual arts. We are visual creatures, vulnerable under heightened sensation of imagery. Specific colors,

patterns, and words provoke certain emotions and desires.

Psychologist Louis Cheskin performed experiments throughout the 1930s on human reactions toward color and pattern through the visual arts. He found that “certain color combinations could imbue packages with a bold new look or seductive manner” (Sivulka 211). Through his findings, Cheskin observes how colors can evoke emotions.

Advertisement agencies formulated general psychological principles that guided renderings, or artist drawings, and found five items that must be addressed in order to produce a consumer incentive ad: “(1) To whom may the product be sold? (2) By what appeals may it be sold? (3) How may the appeals be most effectively presented? (4) What media should be used to present the appeals to reach the people to whom the product is to be sold? (5) What is a reasonable expenditure for promoting the sale of a product?” (Sivulka 86). The necessary components for a good advertisement depend on the intentions of the message in the ad as well as the aesthetic attraction of the overall appearance.

Addressing the intensity of a consumer’s needs and wants within an advertisement can evoke emotions, swaying a customer into either buying or ignoring a specific product or advertisement. Product presentation and the colors and patterns incorporated into the

advertisement entice the consumer. Color evoking emotions has been explored in the textbook *Art Fundamentals: Theory and Practice* by Otto Ocvirk and others. In the following passage, the authors explain a color's relationship to an emotional state:

Color may be organized or employed according to its ability to create mood, symbolize ideas, and express personal emotions. Color, found upon the canvas, can express a mood or feeling in its own right, even though it may not be descriptive of the objects represented. Reds are often thought of as being cheerful and exciting, whereas blue can impart a state of dignity, sadness, or serenity. Also, different values and intensities of the hues in a color range may affect their emotional impact. A wide value range can give vitality and directness to a color scheme; closely related values and low intensities help create the feeling of subtlety, calmness, and repose (Ocvirk 165).

The following passage describes how color provokes human emotions and reactions. The psychology involved when color is presented to a viewer can influence their decisions about purchasing goods:

Research has shown that light, bright colors make us feel joyful and uplifted; warm colors are generally stimulating; cool colors are calming; while cool, dark, or somber colors are generally depressing...

We are continually exposed to the application of color's emotive power. In a supermarket, the meat section is sparkling white to assure us and evoke feelings of cleanliness and purity. To encourage us to purchase the product, the best steaks are garnished lavishly with parsley or green plastic trim to make them appear redder and more irresistible. Bright yellow and orange cereal boxes use contrasting lettering to scream for our attention (Ocvirk 17).

The use and representation of a specific color(s) has the ability to arouse emotions based on how the viewer digests the visual presentation. Advertisements are meant to entice a viewer into wanting a proposed product, with the likelihood of establishing brand loyalty. Julianne Silvulka agrees with this idea and adds "marketing agencies aim to sell emotional satisfaction through material goods" (Sivulka 207). Taglines often fed the product to the audience through a catchy phrase, a guarantee, or a promise of betterment (Sivulka 207). By selling on an emotional level advertising agencies, both private and

federal, used this psychological tactic to sell goods to the public. The housewives' spending habits promoted status within society along with communal acceptance and a positive reputation among family and friends.

Method to Advertisement Selection

The advertisements were chosen for analysis based on page layout, readability of the content, overall appearance, attractiveness of the ad, and the content of the text. Enhanced through printing capabilities and photography, magazine advertisements were rich with color, product magnetism, and alluring taglines. All of these factors heightened the potential of selling the proposed products to the consumer. The ads were aimed at the middle class because they were the largest population or focus group. The visuals are indicative of the attitudes and stereotypes being promoted during this period.

My background in art history has taught me to read these advertisements and decipher the intentions of the psychological message in the ad. When critically reading an advertisement, it is important to consider the intentions of the artist or creator of the ad. It is imperative to think about the perspective from which the artist sees the product, potential consumer, and the method of presenting the sales pitch. The variations in psychological messages in advertising are discussed in detail in chapter one.

It is important to realize how advertisements changed in the course of the years leading up to this time period. During the Great Depression and World War II, advertisements lacked visual appeal. The majority of products advertised were purely utilitarian. These advertisements possess most of the criteria of a good marketable presentation, however the visual stimulation contained within the 1930s advertisements provide a stark contrast to the 1950s advertisements.

Two ads, one from each aforementioned decade, have been chosen for comparison to highlight these differences. The 1930s advertisement for Kotex feminine product is bland in appearance and is black and white. In addition, the lack of movement between the imagery and text makes the advertisement visually rigid. The amount of paragraph text outweighs the image by more than half. In this presentation, more reading is required than simply observing the ad for a clear and concise message.

Figure 2, from the 1950s, promote the same feminine product. The aesthetic appeal is stronger in this advertisement most noticeable by the color saturation of the artist rendering. Though some text paragraphs are placed within the ad, the imagery is more prominent and pleasing. The young woman's movement and action exhibit pleasure in her activity though she is experiencing nature's burden.



**You feel at ease
because Kotex is *shaped to fit***

Then, too, Kotex absorbs scientifically, giving greater comfort, more secure protection.

WHEN you realize how individual your sanitary protection is, you appreciate the fact that Kotex is so made that you can adjust it to your changing needs.

That, of course, is only one of the advantages of Kotex. It is shaped to fit inconspicuously under any frock or costume how close-fitting. It is shaped to disintegrate—keeps one feeling clean and immaculate at times when that is more than most necessary. It is safe—safe only at first, but during hours of use.

Why Kotex stays soft:
Kotex filler—Cellulose (not cotton) absorbent wadding—takes up five times as much as moisture—is so amazingly efficient that 85% of our great hospitals now use it for all kinds of surgical drainage.

The comfort and the safety of a sanitary pad are dependent not only on the quantity of absorbent but also—and this is a great factor, too—on the method of absorption.

Kotex owes its unique dependability and comfort to the fact that it absorbs laterally. The soft, delicate fibers of which it is made carry moisture equally away from the surface, leaving the pad soft and delicate. The sides remain unpermeated, thus preventing chafing and irritation.

KOTEX

Kotex can be worn on either side. It will serve with equal comfort, with no possibility of embarrassment. Adjust it to your use, just as, because of the tape construction, to meet changing requirements. Dispose of it quickly, easily. Buy it anywhere. Simply specify Kotex. Kotex Company, Chicago, Illinois.

IN HOSPITALS . . .

1. **The Kotex absorbent is the ideal material used by surgeons in 85% of the country's leading hospitals.**
2. **Kotex is soft . . .** Not merely an apparent softness, but one which is so pleasing to patients. But a delicate, strong material.
3. **Can be worn on either side with equal comfort. No embarrassing possibility.**
4. **Disposable, sanitary, completely. Buy Kotex in the hospital—where it is used.**

The new Kotex Belt, Soft and absorbent, is now available in 10" and 12" lengths and in 10" and 12" widths. (U. S. Patent No. 1,979,412)

Figure 1 The Home Magazine, 1 May 1931



Very personally yours

Never a full in your life, three days—when you've run off "outside" cars for the smiling comfort Kotex gives. You've found the softness holds its shape; there's full, because the new Kotex is made to stay soft while you wear it . . .

So why should you stay in the full? You're wary due to a sore before, with those flat pressed ends to prevent revealing sores. And the special safety center for your extra protection. In fact . . .

Free is the word that best describes your life with the new Kotex. Explain the perfect pain-free to my personally yours.

IN HOSPITALS . . .

1. **The Kotex absorbent is the ideal material used by surgeons in 85% of the country's leading hospitals.**

2. **Kotex is soft . . .** Not merely an apparent softness, but one which is so pleasing to patients. But a delicate, strong material.

3. **Can be worn on either side with equal comfort. No embarrassing possibility.**

4. **Disposable, sanitary, completely. Buy Kotex in the hospital—where it is used.**

The new Kotex Belt, Soft and absorbent, is now available in 10" and 12" lengths and in 10" and 12" widths. (U. S. Patent No. 1,979,412)

More women choose Kotex than all other sanitary napkins

Figure 2 Life Magazine, 2 July 1951

The following analysis rubric is used to analyze the changes that took place in advertising during the time preceding and during this study. The rubric describes how the strategic placement of text and image present an organized product advertisement. Psychological elements within ads are embedded into color choice and font style as well as the abovementioned text and image. The ultimate success of an ad is reliant on the cohesion on these elements. The ads play on the housewife's sensibilities in an attempt to persuade her housewife's to purchase these items based on her reception of the visual presentation. Her connection with advertisements and purchasing power now in the hands of the middle class are indicative of the overall changes of the time period.

Advertisement Analysis Rubric

The following questions make up the advertisement analysis rubric.

1. Is the page laid out vertically or horizontally?

This action requires interaction between the viewer and the ad.

The layout is essentially the introduction to the advertisement.

2. Is the advertisement black and white or color?

This is also a part of the introduction to the ad. There are advantages and disadvantages to the chosen color palette. A black and white advertisement is stark in nature but bland in appearance. With a black and white ad, there is more emphasis applied to the rest of the ad elements, such as directional reading pattern, font size and style, and text and image content. Color advertisements are eye catching in nature and attractive to the viewer. However, this palette choice could overshadow the message in the ad. Text and image content must be clear and concise in order for the ad to be received as intended.

3. What is the directional reading pattern? Top to bottom, left to right? Top to bottom diagonally? Top to bottom in a zigzag pattern? Or meant to read vertically, left side top to bottom then right side top to bottom?

The action is reliant on the images and text in the ad. Americans are trained to read in a top to bottom, left to right fashion. Should an advertisement diverge from this traditional pattern, there must be a clear path developed for the viewer to follow in order to communicate the advertisement's message.

To help explain the directional reading pattern of these analyses, I have rendered visual aids including the essential elements advertisements possess. The main pieces of the advertisement typically follow the course the viewer's eye is anticipated to use.

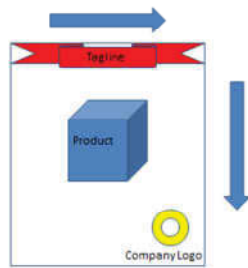


Figure 3 Top to bottom, left to right

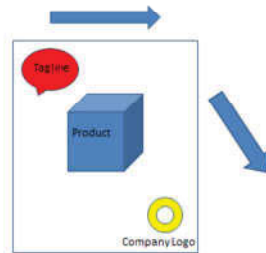


Figure 4 Top to bottom, diagonally

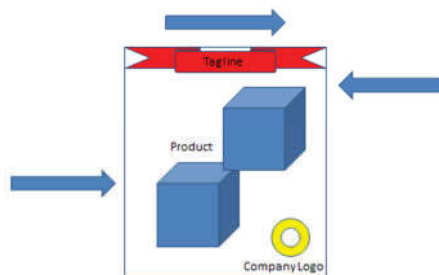


Figure 5 Top to bottom, zigzag

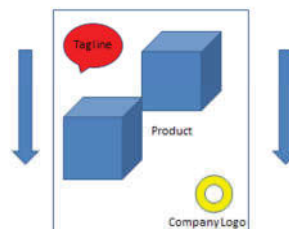


Figure 6 Vertically top to bottom, left to right

4. What is the placement of the imagery and text within the advertisement? What does the image in the ad say?
5. What is the size of the text? Are there more than one? What is the amount of text that appears in the ad? Where is the placement of the tagline to the advertisement? What does the text say?

Questions 4 and 5 are interconnected in that they are reliant on each other in the advertisement. The imagery and text are elements that communicate the intended message to the viewer. The absence of one puts all of the emphasis on the other. In doing so, it is imperative the message be clear and concise. If both elements appear, the image summarizes the message while the text explains the message. The placement of these elements in most instances follows the directional reading pattern.

6. How does the imagery and text present a cohesive advertisement?
As a whole the advertisement must present a readable message that is both attractive and understandable to the intended audience. All of the selected advertisements for this thesis are aimed at the middle class housewife. Therefore, the ad's messages and products are both attainable to the housewife and within her budget for consumption.
7. How does the advertisement relate to the above mentioned themes?

Question 7 answers part of this question as well as explain the advertisements as the center of this thesis. This paper will explore how money and technology brought about the changes in middle class, suburbia, consumerism, and cultural attitudes.

Chapter One

Middle class at Home and on the Go

The return to traditional gender defined roles caused a great movement in consumerism and societal norms. This movement helped change the way in which the middle class functioned within their defined social status. Ad agencies, keenly aware of these societal changes, present the housewife at the forefront of most ad campaigns. The portrayal of the housewife differed during war effort and postwar era. Nonetheless the housewife's physical appearance remains relatively the same. Marketing firms used similar visual characteristics in the appearance of the housewife, creating a sense of trust with the product. Understanding psychology and the creating of campaign advertising is crucial when analyzing the influence ads possessed over the housewife. The selected advertisements are read through the rubric to provide a better understanding of the visual marketing. The status of middle class lead many new housewives to indulge in their newfound purchase power influenced and maintained by advertisements.

Advertisements designed for women depicted a common character throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The majority of ads rendered a red haired young woman with rosy cheeks, red lips, and ivory skin. The same character is used during and after the war with very different objectives. The advertisements are clear examples of the social expectations and how this character is repeatedly used, increasing sales. During the war years government-supported ads featured 'Rosie the Riveter' to inspire good work ethic. After the war, the government again supported 'Rosie' like ads, but in support of the housewife returning to her traditional gender defined role. The identity of the housewife is purposely changed by society from masculine worker to feminine housewife, boosting the mentality of the middle class. The material wealth in the advertisements are viewed as a means in gaining acceptance and perpetually changed how the middle class viewed themselves and their lifestyle.

The post-war idealized version of the housewife is closely related to 'Rosie' from wartime government campaign. The reason for the similarities was justifiable bearing in mind the government's proposal to women of the era, continuing their patriotic duty of housewife with a sense of pride and duty. Below are two advertisements, one during wartime and one from the 1950s. Figure 7, *The Saturday Evening Post* cover from 1943, pictures a strong woman working manual labor supporting her family and country. The

illustrator rendered her with hard solid lines, pale modest color, and a pose that suits the male physique. In figure 8, from a 1950 bathing suit ad, the woman has softly rendered lines, bright flashy color, and a dainty pose positioned to emphasize the curves of the female figure. Notice the color of the women's hair, rosy color of her cheeks, red lips, and the ivory skin are alike.



Figure 7 The Saturday Evening Post, 29 May 1943 *Figure 8* Life Magazine, 5 June 1950

It was not until after the war women appeared feminine and desirable. A sense of familiarity and trust, gained through the character consumer relationship, extended trust with the product. Thousands of women enter the workforce during the war and thousands of women fulfilled their gender defined role before the

war. Figures 7 and 8 demonstrate the shift of women required to work outside the home toward a more traditional role.

The Middle Class

The housewife influenced consumerism and trends as nurturer and caretaker of her conventional family. The rebirth of the middle class, first experienced during the 1920s, dissipated during the Great Depression and World War II. The increased size of the middle class to the country after the war caused profound stimulus and positivity to the economy. Everyone, from the government to business to the average citizen, benefitted from a healthy economy. The flow of cash and credit allowed for expansion of large corporations and small businesses. Returning servicemen afforded growth of suburban housing allotments, jobs, and disposable income. The growing middle class, with its ability and desire to possess material objects, moved the economy.

The majority of the returning veterans, along with thousands of men who worked within the country's borders for the war effort, found themselves in a unique position in America's history. The middle class was by far the largest on the economic spectrum. Inside this class were two very close groups defined as blue collar and white collar. Blue collar is defined as laborers and service providers who earned decent wages for their family yet did not earn enough income

annually to provide for luxuries. They could meet the expense of everyday necessities while splurging on a few of the niceties common during the consumerism boom of the period. The white collar group is defined as professionals in management positions often working in the urban centers but living in suburbia. They were commuters who brought home more disposable income, allowing them to afford luxuries. Blue collar suburban neighborhoods stood closer to city centers, though not within city limits. White collar neighborhoods were placed further out in the country, though within a reasonable driving distance for shopping and employment.

House sizes varied slightly within these two groups' neighborhoods, under the umbrella of middleclass. The square footage would typically be greater in a white collar home as well as lot size. The commodities for these houses also varied according to price with additional rooms and fully furnished appliances. Both groups within the middle class splurged; however, the consumer goods bought differed in terms of brand and retailer in which they were purchased. With additional income and access to credit, the middle class as a whole could spend frivolously on all of the new and innovative products provided by manufacturers.

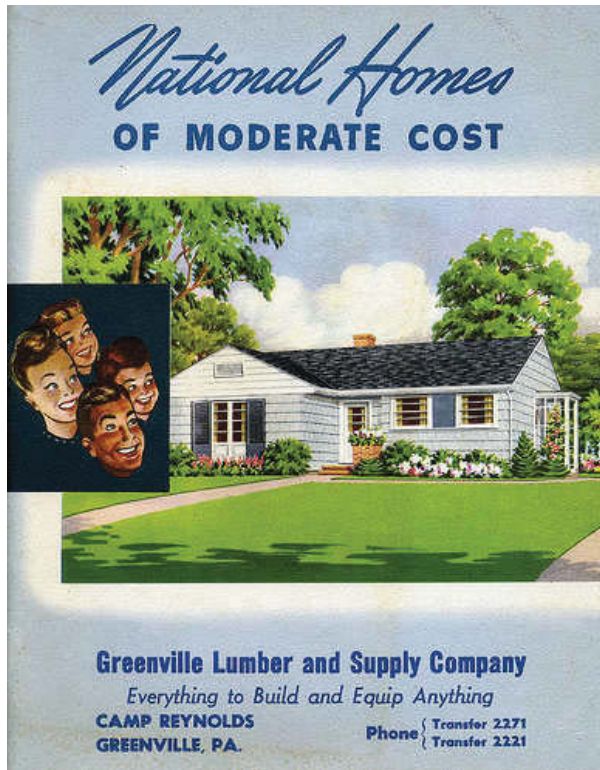


Figure 9 National Homes of Moderate Cost Brochure, 1949

For example, Greenville Lumber and Supply Company made houses beyond expectations yet affordable for all middleclass families. They supplied more than enough space for a young couple raising a family, located in a safe area away from city centers, and priced to allow the purchase of such homes but with a budget for luxury items. With a varied selection of homes available, families could be assured they could find personalization and character in their investment.

Seeing, Wanting, Having

The reward for successful ad campaigns is the consumer's desire to buy suggested products. Figures 1 and 2, pictured in the introduction for Kotex feminine products, different methods of advertising produced flourishing sales. Government propaganda and marketing agencies led the way in this new fashion of advertising. They aimed to sell emotional satisfaction through products (Sivulka 207). Large corporations sought the services of advertisement

agencies to promote their products setting into motion a flourishing economic future for the country.

Marketing agencies and advertising firms inserted subconscious messages into ads to entice consumers. Fashion and beauty ad campaigns perfected this tactic for their products. They “learned to sell attitude and fantasy in the 1940s and 1950s, shifting from chaste to evocative images with minimal copy and high glamour suggesting an older more knowing sexuality” (Sivulka 253). The cosmetics sector, in particular, seized this idea and presented the female audience with advertisements meant to evoke a desire to be youthful.

The anticipated objectives in marketing are the sales of promotional products. Assuring the sale requires a number of different approaches in the production of the sales pitch. According to Sivulka, there are two types of selling methods. The first is referred to as a ‘hard sell’. “Concrete reasons why to buy the product...worked best for small, inexpensive, frequently purchased items that could be made cheaply” (Sivulka 87-88). Advertisements for toiletry products such as soap would be considered a hard sell. A pioneer in the world of advertising, Claude Hopkins was revolutionary in his practices as a marketing agent. His career peaked during the early twentieth century, he developed the practice of ‘reason-why’ advertising.

From this perspective, advertising served as business news on brand features, prices, and availability through distribution...Hopkins guided consumers through sensible, long arguments with specific reasons why the advertised product was worth buying. In order to make generic claim stronger using a preemptive claim...advertising around a single selling point and giving readers countless reasons and numeral facts to support this claim. Hopkins later added mail order selling techniques to his copy approach, including such devices as free or inexpensive samples, premiums, coupons, hard-selling arguments, and functional illustrations with informative captions (Sivulka 88).

The other side of the advertising spectrum is the soft-sell technique. "The soft sell style built prestige for large, expensive items bought infrequently and seldom on impulse" (Sivulka 87-88). The explosion of automobile sales resulted from the soft sell. The decision was thoughtfully made with consideration to many factors like family size, fuel economy, and durability.

Beyond product promotion, postwar technology introduced sought after materials and innovations, allowing manufacturers to modernize existing merchandise for a rejuvenated interest in the

product. Established manufacturers brought forth a wealth of products already in existence that could be modified to give them a fresh and new look. Food packaging and appliance design were two of the main product areas marketing companies made advertisements. Frozen foods, pressure packed containers, and all-in-one products, are just a few of the innovations manufacturers developed and extensively marketed. Within these innovations, companies took into consideration product longevity and profit.

In order to secure return customers for their merchandise, businesses manufactured bigger and better products that had to be more convenient and attractive. However, the durability of the product diminished intentionally. This practice gave companies the assurance needed to continue their business by creating a demand from their consumer.

Home

Filling newly acquired homes remained a job specifically suited for the housewife. With the husband away, earning a living for his family, the housewife worked to manage the household income to provide both necessities and conveniences for their new home. In order for the housewife to make her house a home she needed furniture, appliances, and, of course, home decor. A refrigerator is one of the first major appliances a middle class family needed in their

new home. Without this necessity, it would prove difficult to feed the family and would make trips to the grocery store tedious and time consuming. The first of the advertisements to illustrate this is the International Harvester Refrigerator handle campaign, figure 10. Though the refrigerator model had been on the market for some time, the colored handle that accompanies the appliance is new, exciting, and personalized for the housewife.

Figure 10 The Saturday Evening Post, 15 September 1951

One of the products within the advertisements of chapter one is nonessential in that they serve no utilitarian purpose. Though most families in the post-war era had a refrigerator for example, a colored handle served no function yet was advertised as frequently as the refrigerator itself. The automobile advertisement is marketing a product essential for suburban life. The emphasis is placed on appearances in both essential and nonessential product advertisements using color, flashy text, and bold tagline for manufactured goods.



This advertisement is vertically laid out to allow for easy readability, however creating a lack of interaction from the viewer to the ad. The primary draw to the advertisement is a rainbow of bright vibrant colors. The eye popping color invites the viewer to walk through the imagery and lively text. The product for sale in this ad is a handle for the International Harvester Refrigerator. The new personalized color refrigerator handles provide a new attraction to an established product, which ensures a returning consumer demand.

All of the artistic elements: color, stylistic design, and color palette, are clearly aimed at a female audience. The color image and text entice the housewife not with a new and innovative product, but to desire the accessory for the appliance. The marketing agency responsible for this ad is selling personality, individuality, and style. The initial selling point of this product is in the past because it is more than likely that the consumer already owns a refrigerator. However, not everyone has a refrigerator with a bright red handle to match the other décor of a middle class home. The importance of this ad lies in the fact that the refrigerator could be customized to the owner's taste and therefore became a status symbol.

The wave of bright warm tones creates an aesthetically appealing invitation for the viewer through color motif. The first image the viewer's eye encounters is the face of a beautiful red head:

like that of Rosie the Riveter and the Janzen woman we discussed earlier. Her shiny locks are tied back, framing her rosy cheeks. Her red lips form a cheerful smile and her eyes look out at the viewer. This practice is especially important because once the subject of a rendering makes eye contact with the viewer; it increases the interaction and familiarity by putting the two dimensional subject and real life audience on a more intimate level. Rather than simply presenting a product for sale, this ad creates a relationship between the housewife of the ad and the real life housewife.

The viewer's eye is entertained throughout the ad by splashes of color text and images. The directional reading pattern leads the viewer's eye from top to bottom, zigzagging left and right. The ad begins in the upper left hand corner with an image of a beautiful woman's face. Her smiling red lips and rosy cheeks are complimented with her vibrant red hair. She holds in her hands a fan of colorful objects. The objects are all of the color choices for the new and exciting refrigerator handle.

In the right hand corner, printed in bright blue, the tagline of the ad reads "Pick a Color from the Rainbow!" The tagline is printed in bright blue ink using a playful font, and is placed above the rainbow of bright colored refrigerator handles. The bulk of the text in the advertisement can be seen at the bottom right hand corner of the

page. Purposefully printed in black ink, because it blends into the background, the most noticeable and easy to read text is printed in a larger colorful stylized font.

As the viewer's eye is guided through the rainbow of colorful handle samples, leading to more bright blue text along the bottom left with a smaller rainbow text that reads "Color Keyed". Overlapping the center text of the ad stands a life-like rendering of the International Harvester refrigerator. Below this picture, to the right is an inset image of the open refrigerator bursting with colorful foods. To the right of this are two paragraphs of text. Dividing the paragraphs in large red ink reads "they're femineered!" The company logo appears in the bottom right corner of the ad.

The imagery and text for this advertisement present a clear and cohesive message to the audience. The selling point of the ad is the vibrant colored handles to accent the large appliance. During this ten year post-war period, an indulgence was considered a symbol of social status. New outlets of credit through banks and independently-owned department stores, along with disposable income, allowed the middle class to afford the wealth of newly available conveniences.

Away

For the middle class housewife, new to suburban life, a trip for groceries required either public transportation or a vehicle. The

vehicle had to be large enough to accommodate not only the groceries, but in many cases the children who came along for the trip. Sivulka comments on this subject and remarks that housewives in the suburbs were not only responsible for the house and children but also the grocery shopping, school supplies and consumer goods. This momentous task at times required large vehicles as a mode of transportation. This meant station wagons and large sedans were in high demand (Sivulka 203). The family car not only served as transportation from one side of town to the other but for long and extended trips popularly known as the family vacation. The following advertisement summarizes the idea of family vacationing with few words required.

Money and technology are at the forefront of the many changes during this time period. Disposable income, vacation time from their employer, and the purchase of a new family car allowed the middle class to travel comfortably. The midsize automobile gave the middle class family the capability to leave their local suburb and see other parts of the country they could not before. The consumption of the vehicle led to consumption of products for the vehicle. The social norm shifted from a stay at home mentality to seeking out all of the sights and sounds America had to offer. Advertisements for cars led to more advertisements for a vast number of accessories one would need. Once a family purchased these goods they looked forward to



Figure 11 Ford Motor Company, Edsel Division Brochure, 1957

travel more often, which, in turn drove tourism upward and led to the infamous summer family vacation.

The poster for the Ford Edsel station wagon (figure 11) is vertically oriented with three-quarters of the page dedicated to the image.

The advertisement is drenched in color picturing the average middle class family all piled into a station wagon driving down a road with majestic mountains full of bright green pines in the background. The smiling faces of the happy family look to the ad inviting the viewer into the picturesque scene, making a personal connection between the characters rendered and the real life audience. The only text that appears in the image is the word 'EDELSEL' placed on the grill of the automobile to indicate the Ford model.

The directional reading pattern of the text in the advertisement is constrained because of the spacing on the page. This practice was

used so the viewer will saunter through the image first and foremost, while the text offers a detailed sales pitch for the product. If the consumer wants to attain the picturesque image of this family on vacation, they should simply purchase the 1958 Ford Edsel station wagon.

The small paragraph of the advertisement is introduced by the tagline which reads, 'DRAMATIC EDSEL STYLING is here to stay - bringing a new distinction to American motoring.' The paragraph text follows by discussing the main selling points about the car, stylistic design being the most prominent. Other selling points mentioned are the economic engine and one touch shifting feature. The company logo appears in the bottom right of the advertisement. Though the vehicle is manufactured under the Ford Motor Company name, the Edsel division is responsible for the car's design as well as the promotional advertising.

Leisure travel exploded during the post-war period, in lieu of the confinement of war, veterans wanted to see the country. Government funded programs ensured that the national parks and other tourist attractions were desirable for thousands of travelers they estimated would visit. Propaganda advertisements, as a part of the building projects set in place by the government during the Depression, supported the natural landmarks as well as the majestic

West. New state and interstate highways were constructed to make travel easier. Public transportation such as trains and buses provided transportation for travel from suburbia to downtown and automobile sales soared (Sivulka 198). Advertisements like figure 11 influenced the ideal family vacation and at the center of these marketing campaigns was the housewife.

The vehicle not only provided a means of travel, but furthered the family experience and strengthened the middle class lifestyle. Attention to outward appearances grew at an alarming rate because of shifts in cultural attitudes toward material worth and brand loyalty. During the period and companies provided the means by which the middle class could fulfill the desired image their family wished to present. The influence of visual stimulation in the form of advertisements persuaded consumers to buy on emotion and the status that is associated with particular brands.

Chapter Two

New Middle class, New Lifestyle

The post-war American middle class needed somewhere to live that would epitomize their status, and suburbia served this purpose. The community within these housing developments represents safety, belonging, and friendship for white couples to live and raise a family. Every member of the middle class family embraced their post-war

roles with the housewife acting as the supplier for a successful suburban lifestyle through purchasing food, clothing, and home goods. Her developed spending patterns encourage growth throughout the economy thus supporting her immediate community. The critically analyzed consumer goods, through the rubric, show how shifts in consumerism during the 1950s, forever changed the manner in which consumers view product advertising as well as our rapport to materialism and brand loyalty.

The subsequent advertisement analyses depict semi-essential goods, unlike the advertisements in chapter one. Though the following products are required for everyday life, the selling points for the products are centered on other attributes. Although the purposes of these everyday products supply the family and housewife with essential goods, the specific brand name for the product, time-saving features, and easy-to-use mentality override function. Similar to the advertisements in chapter one, these ads are drenched in color and riddled with flashy text including a bold tagline.

The 1950s advertising necessitated a new way of living postwar in America. The strengthened white middle class stands as the principal consumers and benefactors of these products. The price points and availability are aimed to this specific demographic. The

numerous shifts discussed recognize how the rebirth of the role of the housewife is at the core of the postwar American vacation.

Suburbia

The introduction of suburbia had explosive affects during the post-war era and fueled the desire for a new way of living. The growth of the middle class is primarily due to the number of men who returned as veterans needing jobs and places to live. Demand was greatest in places such as Levittown, Pennsylvania, where suburban homes numbered in the thousands. Levittown became a model for what is now referred to as “cookie-cutter” neighborhoods. These homes were, in a way, built just as a baker makes a cookie. The ingredients are accumulated, mixed together, baked, and then decorated. Below is an advertisement for the Levittown housing development. In figure 12, notice the variety of houses offered and the creative names given to the stylistic house designs. As previously mentioned the floor plans, amenities, and exterior appearance vary, allowing for personal additions and individuality.



Figure 12 Levitt & Sons Home Brochure, 1957

An excerpt from the book *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History* edited by Howard P.

Chudacoff and Peter C. Baldwin summarizes the process of building another Levittown suburban neighborhood in Long Island:

On 1,200 flat acres of potato farmland near Hicksville, Long Island, an army of trucks spread over new-laid roads. Every 100 feet, the trucks stopped and dumped identical bundles of lumber, pipes, bricks, shingles, and copper tubing- all as neatly packaged loaves from a bakery. Near the bundles, giant machines with an endless chain of buckets ate into the earth, taking just 13 minutes to dig a narrow, four foot trench around a 25 by 32 ft. rectangle. Then came more trucks, loaded with cement, and laid a 4-inch foundation for a house... "After the machines came the men. On nearby slabs already dry, they worked in crews of two or three, laying brick, raising studs, nailing

lath, painting, sheathing, shingling. Each crew did a special job, then hurried on to the next site...a new one was finished every 15 minutes (Chudacoff 429).

Originally these were rental properties, however soon after moved toward real estate. Special incentives were given to veterans in that they had the option to buy with only five percent down and pay a mere fifty eight dollars a month in rent (Sivulka 198).

Newly constructed homes, presented to fit the new budgets of the middle class, brought forth the birth of suburbia. Annual incomes rising to a comfortable three thousand dollars enabled young couples to purchase these houses, live comfortably, and raise a family. Elizabeth Cohen comments “new house construction provided the bedrock of the postwar mass consumption economy, both through turning the ‘home’ into an expensive commodity for purchase by many more consumers than ever before and by stimulating demand for related commodities” (Cohen 121-122). In addition, government initiated building projects meant to serve as an economy boost during the depression resulted in a number of housing allotments conveniently located just outside cities across America.

All suburban houses purchased in the post-war period needed furnishings, appliances, and personal decor to help create a sense of home. Necessary appliances such as stoves and refrigerators many

times came included with a house. Luxury items, including televisions, dishwashers, and dryers, were introduced to supply middle class consumers with conveniences they never had before. Small appliances like mixers, choppers, and well-designed utensils gave the housewife convenience in food preparation. Newly attained income allowed them to afford necessary things as well as conveniences.

Attitudes toward materialism shifted consumer practices and further perpetuated advertising practices and spending. Disposable income, which was unheard of before the depression and war, was now plentiful and the middleclass wanted to indulge in their newfound wealth. Living in the suburbs became a symbol of status for the middle class. A display of the newest, latest, and greatest showed others your monetary worth, which, in many cases, led to influence and popularity in these close-knit neighborhoods.

My Family

Suburbs supplied the space and sense of community middle class couples required for their growing families. A new idealized sense of family strength rose with the end of World War II. There was a revival in family ideals and family ties. The strength of the family was centered to the home: the strength of the home lies in the suburban community. The following advertisement is one example of

companies and marketing agencies' attempts to confirm the notion of family bond through food. Figure 13 depicts an ad for Franco-American spaghetti, introduced as a quick and easy dinner. The time saved in dinner preparation is thought to allow for more time with the family. More time with the family circles back to enforce the idea of a stronger family bond.

The layout for the Franco-American spaghetti advertisement is horizontal, encouraging audience interaction including additional photographic elements. The use of photography in advertising came into practice with the revolution of television. In an effort to stay current with the times, marketing agencies recognized the real life component of commercials. To compete with this, marketing firms instituted the use of photographic images instead of artists' renderings. As a result, commercial art began to decline. If magazines were to keep consumers interests, photography was imperative. This ad is indicative of the transition from pure commercial art to the photographic phenomenon which takes hold of the advertising sector shortly after its debut.

The directional reading pattern of the ad is left to right, but does not follow a top to bottom pattern. The tagline introduces the ad which reads "So Good- So Easy-". The viewer's eye is then directed to the photograph of the Franco-American spaghetti followed by the

photograph of a can of Franco-American spaghetti. The bottom left of the advertisement, full of paragraph text, is completely overlooked. As seen in the next ad for Palmolive, the message for this brand of canned spaghetti can be viewed and understood in a matter of a few seconds.

The color in this advertisement mainly due to the use of photographs is very bright and vibrant. Below the tagline are two headings which say “You’ll Serve It Often!” and “Shopping Day Meal...That’s Ready In 5 Minutes!” Sandwiched between both headings is an artist’s rendering of three women holiday shopping. This image implies these women must have purchased Franco-American spaghetti because they are out holiday shopping instead of slaving away in the kitchen to cook a delicious meal. Franco-American spaghetti provides a fast meal that is both tasty and appealing to her family. It also allows the housewife to enjoy fun things like shopping. Two sections of paragraph text can be seen below these headings although this is hardly noticeable. The text contains the sales pitch for the product.

The advertisement presents a cohesive display for the viewer that is attractive, easy to read, and supplies the audience with a guarantee. The balance of the color red and green, which also adds to the holiday theme, presents an aesthetic appeal. The easy to read font style and size as well as placement within the ad summarizes the

lengthy text at the bottom left and provide the viewer only the most important points to the ad; the claim to a good and easy meal and the product name.



Figure 13 Life Magazine, 11 December 1950

As pointed out in the other examples there is an emphasis on the middle class housewife. This product would not be affordable to the lower classes nor provide for their commonly larger family. It would also not appeal to the upper class who would not likely consume such a meal. As described in the analysis, the suburban housewife is the focal audience because she is in charge of providing the family with nutritious and tasty meals. These ads seek to present products in a way that fulfills the obligation of the housewife to maintain her new lifestyle. After school activities, clubs, and church programs in suburban communities kept the middleclass family busy. Keeping to her responsibilities, the housewife can provide fast nutritious meals while performing her established gender identity.

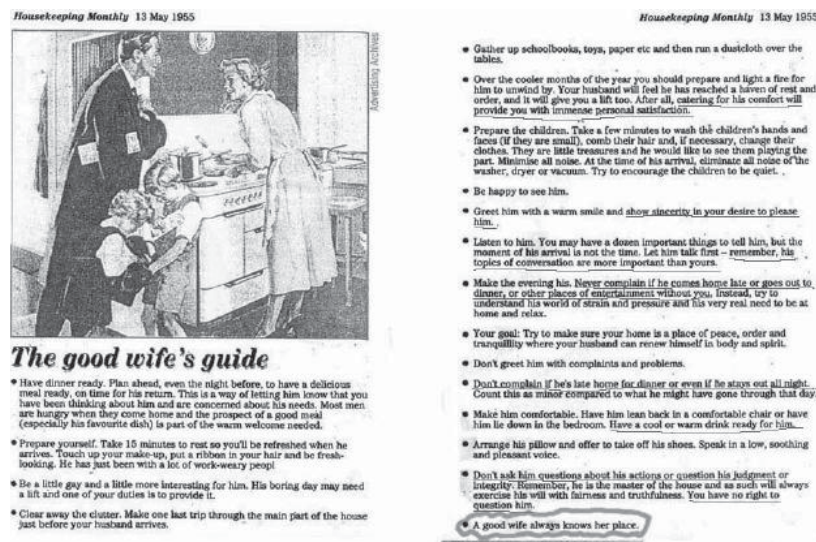
The idea that a housewife could purchase this product and many others like it while preparing it in a matter of minutes gives her time to do more enjoyable activities such as spending time with her children and personal hobbies. This demonstrates a newly accepted cultural attitude of this period. The drudgery of meal preparation is becoming a thing of the past during this period because of the manner in which foods are now sold. Technological innovations in food preservation such as canned and frozen foods have a longer shelf life and are easier to prepare. That being said, the housewife can indulge more in personally enlightening activities in her new role as post-war housewife compared to the traditional role of her mother and grandmother.

The One and Only, Housewife

After the war ended, female workers did not have job security outside of the home because there was an influx of male veterans returning to the job market. Females reverted to their roles prior to the war, which for the majority of them was a housewife. The housewife, whose ultimate purpose was to provide emotional and physical well-being to her family, because of her new found access to money and technology. The housewife took on the tasks of her prewar counterparts: raising children, cooking, cleaning, and tending to the home, among many other tedious and time consuming tasks, but she

had a new outlook on the future. These women, many of whom had worked outside the home during the war, embraced a wealth of conveniences that were introduced and marketed to the housewife. These conveniences in turn affected how the country functioned both economically and culturally.

Coordinating with consumerism and white middle class suburban status, the next image served as a sort of cheat sheet for the



new housewives embracing her role in the home. Figure 14 below, appearing in *Housekeeping Monthly* magazine is an excellent

example of the post-war housewife.

Figure 14 *Housekeeping Monthly*, 13 May 1955

In conjunction with the image placed in 'The Good Wife's Guide,' the responsibilities and characteristics of a good wife are simply defined and leave little room for interpretation. The image speaks for itself, picturing a housewife preparing a nutritious dinner as her hard-working husband arrives home from a long day at work. The young

couple and children are all smiles and the background of their neat, tidy, and modern kitchen supplies the viewer with a sense of the complete white middle class picture. The bullet points following the image give a housewife a blueprint to a happy family, such as:

Have dinner ready, plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favorite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed. Greet him with a warm smile and show your sincerity in your desire to please him. Your goal: try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquility where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit (Good Wife's Guide).

This guide represents the postwar American etiquette cheat sheet for the suburban housewife. The predisposed direction from government propaganda readied the housewife for her destination in life during this period. Her response to this, as well as all of other advertisements discussed in this paper, explains the suburban middle class culture and mindset of the fifties.

Selling an 'easy to use' or 'better than before' product became the driving force in marketing. The idea of owning a luxury product that served no necessary purpose was new to the middle class as well as marketing agencies. These products are introduced as being uplifting- to make one feel better about oneself or to emulate a popular actor or actress. Marketing agencies began selling beauty, youth, and health through advertisements. The housewife was expected to maintain an ideal image: youth, beauty, productive in her role, and attentive to her responsibilities.

Me

Society and family put forth many pressures on the new role of the housewife to provide emotional health and support. With all of these new pressures the housewife experienced social pressures relative to appearances. As a response to these responsibilities, a wealth of personal care products flooded the marketplace. This genre of merchandise allowed the housewife to feel more youthful, attractive and desirable thereby providing confidence.

The advertisement for Palmolive soap is vertically laid out, which provides easy readability. There are specific elements of the ad printed in color. The text and imagery are the key elements of the ad emphasized with bright colors. The tagline placed at the top center of the advertisement reads "100% Mild Palmolive Soap Helps You Guard

that Schoolgirl Complexion Look!" The focus "Schoolgirl Complexion Look!" of the ad is printed in bright red ink in a flirty cursive font. Using said product to look young and attractive emphasizes the importance of the so called benefits of the soap.

Figure 15 Good Housekeeping Magazine, April 1953

Printed in color, below the tagline, are a young man and woman. They are positioned cheek to cheek, the man behind the woman. She possesses classic similarities to 'Rosie the Riveter', looking at the audience. Her light brown hair neatly curled, her rosy red cheeks and lips coordinate perfectly with the red tagline above. Matching this red theme, the woman's sweater vest is red as well. She has a deep yellow blouse underneath with a shimmering necklace. Her presence overshadows the gentleman behind her, but his flirtatious gaze places emphasis on his importance in the advertisement. Social pressures, in



respect to appearances, promote during this period a high importance to attracting the attention of the opposite sex. The intention of the Palmolive advertisement is to use the grin from a young man as a promise that the same will happen for the consumer.

While he is present the focal point in the image is the young woman with the brilliant clean complexion. Below the focus image at the bottom right of the ad is an image of the product. The yellow tones of the young woman's shirt are carried through this image showing a soft yellow backdrop to the Palmolive green bar of soap.

Serving as a backdrop to the image of the young man and woman are several images of young ladies who use the soap and favor the beautifying qualities. They are patterned in five squares across the page and three squares down the page. Each square contains a picture and short text paragraph giving the woman's name and her testimonial.

Below the center of the advertisement are text paragraphs that contain the sales pitch for the soap. Typed in bold as the heading to this, the text reads "**Palmolive's Beauty Plan Is Far Better For Your Skin Than 'Just Average Care' With Any Leading Toilet Soap**" This heading as well as text explain in order to possess the kind of beauty and complexion as the young woman in the image above, one should use

Palmolive soap in their beauty routine. The marketing agency is selling the idea of beauty through the use of a selected product.

The directional reading pattern is traditional, in that it reads top to bottom, left to right. However, the majority of the color imagery is placed on the right side of the page. This action implies a stronger emphasis to read the red portion of the tagline, the image of the young man and woman, then the image of the soap itself at the bottom. Placing the emphasis on one side of the page makes for fast readability. The gist of the ad can be viewed and understood in a few seconds, versus reading all of the less noticeable black text.

Black and white with color text and images presents a cohesive advertisement in that it appeals to the eye in layout through the use of balance of positive and negative space. Very little plain white paper is seen. Roughly half of the ad is black and white while the other half is color. The poses of the large colored faces are mimicked through the black and white faces printed in the backdrop. The paragraph text below is roughly the same size as the image of the bar of soap that is also placed at the bottom of the ad. The use in space together with coordination of color and non-color present an aesthetically pleasing ad.

As attention to appearances became more prominent in this post-war period, products appeared on the market with claims to

provide success in appeal. Products like Palmolive beauty soap were considered a convenience, serving both necessity and desire. As was common with cosmetics, the middle class audience is the primary consumer for these products. Much of the middle class lived in the suburbs and this is where we see magazines distribution that features this ad. Word of mouth advertising was prominent in suburbia through housewives who have used the product and promote it to their network of other suburban housewives. Through this networking, promotions of well received products were especially successful with the middle class.

Conclusion

The changing role and image of the post-World War II housewife reflects and illustrates key shifts on post-war American consumer culture. These interconnected shifts, including suburbanization, consumerism, cultural attitudes, and materialism, touched every aspect of American life and, in turn, affected how the country and its people functioned. These changes are celebrated as a turning point in American history. The interdisciplinary research methods and sources help illustrate these key cultural shifts. Focusing on analyzing advertisements helps us understand the events, changes, and ideals of the post-war period.

The end of World War II brought changes within our society, the economy, and cultural. More specifically, gender roles, consumerism, and advertising stimulated the perpetuation of changes during the post-war period. Employment from businesses provided necessary monies for sustenance and disposable monies for luxuries.

Evolution in advertising practices shifted in an effort to compete with new technologies in television and radio. Photography became vital in magazine advertisements as a main combatant of technologies in new media. The increase of advertising mechanisms placed emphasis on print media using close-knit relationships in suburban communities as their promoter for eager to buy consumers. Throughout the 1950s the majority of advertising, specifically



marketed to the housewife, paved the way for a new progressive consumer culture.

Figure 16 Revere Copper & Brass Company advertisement, circa 1950

Redefined gender roles, postwar, put the housewife in a position of power over decision making in relation to her family

and home. The redefined role for women dictated consumption of newly manufactured goods, through spending newly acquired income. A movement toward consumption and partnerships among government, businesses, and advertising brought change in respect to how middle class Americans lived their lives.

The aftermath of War World II represented a speculative time for the United States government. Marketing campaigns utilized a representation of the American family as a keystone for a successful return to civilian life. Promotional advertisements paid for by businesses, seen above in figure 16, were promoted after the war.

Men and women strengthened America's economy through mass consumption of new and innovative products seen in advertisements such as figure 17. Government and business created advertising campaigns depicting young couples and families with hopeful dreams of an idealized American life. In the woman's traditional role as stay at home mother, the housewife became relied upon as provider and caretaker. As wife and mother many outlets to spend newly obtained disposable income became available. Government and companies placed heavy emphasis on the housewife creating a sense of duty to her role as a customer of so called proper middle class material goods.

Figure 17 Life Magazine, 4 September 1941

The components to increasing consumerism were innovative technology and advertising. Successful manufacturing methods and newly released raw materials allowed companies to

escalate the number of units made. In turn, an influx of workers allowed for high output and profits. The advertisement for Lane Furniture (figure 17) instills patriotism through consumption. The ad presents desire through a colorful palette and catchy tagline. The young couple, strategically placed at the top of the page, along with the military nuances, help build trust in the advertisement and the product presented. These types of messages create a relationship with manufacturer and consumer.

Psychological and emotional triggers capture the attention of consumers, which encouraged sales. The strategy of marketing in the form of advertisements is to promote self-satisfaction through owning



merchandise, an intangible sensation brought on through what a commodity provides beyond product function. The intangible benefit in purchasing specific goods directly correlates to the importance placed on self-image and materialism for the post-war period. Now carrying the primary responsibility to provide for her family, the housewife lies at the center of the consuming explosion. Magazine advertisements helped create a relationship with the focal audience and persuaded the housewife to consume as a way to be fulfilled emotionally.

The ripple effects of the profound changes and the close of World War II can still be felt today. Many twenty-first century consumers share post-World War II middle class consumers' attitudes toward consumption and how a product makes us feel still perpetuate spending.

The housewife plays an integral part in each of the shifts that occurred in post-war America. She not only serves as the backbone for the family unit, but her actions within her defined role supported the nation. The role of the housewife illustrated through this visual diary, explains the changes in America's post-World War II period.

Works Cited

- “After total war can come total living” advertisement campaign.
Revere Copper & Brass Company n.d. Print.
- Chudacoff, Howard P., and Peter C. Baldwin, eds. *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005. Print.
- Cohen, Elizabeth. *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print.
- “Dramatic Edsel Styling” *Ford Motor Company, Edsel Division*, 1957. Print.
- “Everything you ever wanted” Janzen Swimsuit. Advertisement. *Life Magazine* 5 June 1950: Web. <http://tinyurl.com6156okd>
- Halberstein, David. *The Fifties*. New York: Villard Books, 1993. Print.
- “Levittown in 1957” *Levitt & Sons Home Brochure* n.d. 1957: Print.
- Miller, Geoffrey. *Spent: Sex, Evolution, and Consumer Behavior*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2009. Print.
- “National Homes of Moderate Cost” *National Homes of Moderate Cost Home Brochure*, 1949. Print.
- Ocvirk, Otto G., et al. *Art Fundamentals: Theory and Practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2002. Print.
- Phillip, Elizabeth. ‘Directional Reading Pattern’. *Visual Aids*. October 2013: Print.
- “Pick a Color from the Rainbow” International Harvester Refrigerator. Advertisement. *The Saturday Evening Post* 15 September 1951: Print.
- “Rosie the Riveter” Advertisement. *The Saturday Evening Post* 29 May 1943: Print.
- “Schoolgirl Complexion Look” Palmolive Soap. Advertisement. *Good Housekeeping Magazine* n.d. April 1953: Print.

- Sivulka, Juliann. *Ad Women: How They Impact What We Need, Want, and Buy*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2009. Print.
- “So Good - So Easy” Franco-American Spaghetti. Advertisement. *Life Magazine* 11 December 1950: Print.
- TJS Labs. Gallery of Graphic Design. 2012. Web. 11 November 2013.
- “The good wife’s guide” Advertisement. *Housekeeping Monthly* 13 May 1955: Print.
- “*The War the Changed Your World: The Science and Technology of WWII*”, Dr. David Mindell. *The National WWII Museum*. Web. 5 September, 2013.
- “Very personally yours” Kotex Feminine Product. Advertisement. *Life Magazine* 2 July 1951: Web. <http://tinyurl.com/6c2rgk2>
- “You feel at ease” Kotex Feminine Product. Advertisement. *The Home Magazine* 1 May 1931: Web. <http://tinyurl.com/6eysggg>
- “Young Lovers Look Ahead” Lane Furniture Hope Chest. Advertisement. *Life Magazine* 4 September 1941: Print. <http://tinyurl.com/3s9lbpu>

Additional Works Consulted

- Adams Media Corporation, *You Mean a Woman Can Open it...?* London: Prion Books Limited, 1999. Print.
- Crum, Madeleine. “How WWII Changed the Way Americans Ate” *Huffington Post* 3 April, 2012. Print.
- Fischer, Claude S.. *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.
- Graham, Margaret and B.W. Graham. *Corning and the Craft of Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.
- Harrison, Ian. *National Geographic The Book of Inventions: How’d They Come Up With That?* Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2004. Print.

- Lopata, Helena Znaniecki. *Occupation: Housewife*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. Print.
- Matthews, Glenna. *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Print.
- Murray, Sylvie. *The Progressive Housewife: Community Activism in Suburban Queens 1945-1965*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. Print.
- Ogden, Annegret S. *The Great American Housewife: From Helpmate to Wage Earner, 1776-1986*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986. Print.
- "Partners in Winning the War: American Women in World War II." *National Women's History Museum*. Web. 5 September, 2013.
- "Representation of Women in Commercials." *Youtube*, n.d. Web. 10 November, 2013.
- Suddath, Claire. "A brief History of the Middle Class" *Life Magazine* 27 February, 2009. Print.
- "Survey of the Decades." *Retro-Housewife*, n.d. Web. 9 October, 2013.