

# THE ELECTRIC HOUSEWIFE: POST-WAR SUPERMOMS AND THE MODERNIZATION OF THE AMERICAN HOME

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## MYTH OF THE 1950s HOUSEWIFE

ELECTRIC APPLIANCES WERE MARKETED TOWARDS WOMEN WITH THE PROMISE OF FREEING HER FROM HER DOMESTIC DUTIES. SOCIETY QUICKLY ADOPTED ELECTRIC APPLIANCES AS MODERN NECESSITIES IN THE HOME, WITH THE PROMISE OF INCREASED RELAXATION TIME FOR THE HOUSEWIFE. MEDIA PORTRAYED A HAPPY HOUSEWIFE WHO WITH THE AID OF HER ELECTRIC HOME APPLIANCES WAS ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY KEEP A HOME, RAISE A FAMILY, AND EMOTIONALLY SUPPORT HER HUSBAND.

## TRUE DEMANDS ON AN AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE

OPPOSITE TO THE MYTH THAT ELECTRIC APPLIANCES WOULD DECREASE A HOUSEWIFE'S WORKLOAD THE ROLE OF A HOUSEWIFE BECAME MORE DEMANDING AS SHE WAS EXPECTED TO COMPLETE HER DOMESTIC DUTIES EFFICIENTLY WITH THE AIDE OF THE NEW NECESSITIES. AS MARKETED ELECTRIC APPLIANCES ALLOWED FOR WOMEN TO COMPLETE MUNDANE HOUSEHOLD CHORES IN A DECREASED AMOUNT OF TIME, ALLOWING FOR HER ATTENTIONS TO BE FOCUSED ELSEWHERE. ALTHOUGH THE APPLIANCES DID ENABLE WOMEN TO COMPLETE HOUSEHOLD CHORES QUICKLY SOCIAL STANDARDS DEMANDED THAT THE WOMAN REMAIN IN THE HOME. THE NEW APPLIANCES LED SOCIETY TO BELIEVE THAT FOR A HOUSEWIFE TO PRODUCTIVELY SPEND HER DAY SHE NEEDED TO BE CONTINUOUSLY BUSY ATTENDING TO HER FAMILY'S NEEDS BY DIRECTLY TAKING CARE OF THE HOUSE OR THE CHILDREN.

## IMPACT ON FEMALES

FOR THE AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE ELECTRIC APPLIANCES DID NOT ENCOURAGE MOVEMENT WITHIN SOCIETY. AS MODERN APPLIANCES WERE FURTHER INTEGRATED INTO THE HOME THE ROLE OF THE HOUSEWIFE WAS FURTHER CEMENTED. MEDIA IMPACTED THE ROLE OF WOMEN OF THE 1950s BY ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO LIVE THE CONTENT LIFE STYLE OF A SUBURBAN HOUSEWIFE. SOCIAL PRESSURES GREATLY INFLUENCED BEHAVIORS OF THE 1950s, WHICH ENCOURAGED WOMEN THAT NO GREATER SATISFACTION COULD BE ACHIEVED THAN BECOMING A WIFE AND A MOTHER. THE INVENTION OF THE "SUPERMOM" INCREASED SOCIAL PRESSURES OF BEING THE PERFECT HOUSEWIFE AND MOTHER. IN AMERICA THE IDEAL MOTHER IS BASED OFF OF THE 1950s STEREOTYPED MEDIA DRIVEN IMAGE OF A SUPERMOM.



## IMPACT OF THE AMERICAN HOME

BEGINNING IN THE 1950s ELECTRIC APPLIANCES IN THE AMERICAN HOME BECAME A NECESSITY. AS THE SUBURBAN HOUSING MARKETING EXPLODED IN THE 1950s IN AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE HOUSING FOR WWII VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES ARCHITECTS AND HOME DESIGNERS BEGAN DESIGNING HOMES AROUND THE USE OF ELECTRIC APPLIANCES. HOME DESIGN ACCOUNTED FOR THE FEMALE FIGURE ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR FEMININE COMFORT DURING HOUSEWORK. AS A RESULT OF THE HOUSING BOOM, ELECTRIC APPLIANCE BECAME AN INTEGRATED PART OF HOME DESIGN.

