

# Happiness, Womanhood, and Sexualized Media: An Analysis of 1950s and 1960s Popular Culture

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America during the 1950s and 1960s was grounded in and centered on the conception of the nuclear family. The suburbanization of white middle class families after World War II yielded unique conditions for both media outlets and the U.S. government to push explicit messages on gender roles to preserve the sanctity of the nuclear family. The widespread affluence of millions of suburban, white middle class families served as a marker of success for the U.S. in the international community, which was a matter of national security during the Cold War. The preservation of the nuclear family, however, was highly dependent on women in their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Women across the nation were responsible for raising the next generation of Americans, approximately 76 million baby boomers from 1946 to 1964.

<sup>1</sup>American greatness was to be determined in the choices and actions of these baby boomers and therefore many messages on gender roles were strictly dictated to ensure that the nuclear family and capitalism would be upheld for generations to come.

These messages of tradition and stability were also mixed with the modernity and affluence of a postwar nation. Advertisements, television shows, films and songs all showcased American technology and innovation. The mixed messages of preserving the country through the nuclear family, while still attempting to be glamorous and modern by keeping up with Hollywood trends proved to be confusing and stressful for young women and girls. All forms of media promoted marriage as the ultimate goal for the American female. Some showed "true love" as the catalyst, while others insinuated exciting yet dangerous premarital sex. Any deviation from the capitalist blueprints of the

nuclear family, however, was faced with societal shame. Popular culture and media outlets of the 1950s and early 1960s raised young women to be sexually charged and hyperaware of their public appearances, but ultimately women were told to channel their sexuality into marriage and procreation.

Girls growing up in the 1950s experienced a flood of media unlike any other moment in the United States. The sensation of Walt Disney films captures the gendered messages of fairy tales, princesses and their virtues. The most popular Disney films of the 50s include *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Peter Pan* (1953), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). All of these films star a princess or virtuous female character, one with beauty, passivity, kindness, gentleness, and a peculiar knack for getting into trouble. The precious damsel in distress being saved by a handsome prince to live happily ever after famously characterizes these princess films. The fairy tale endings in these films play a larger role in the psyche of young women. True love and marriage are presented as the only goals for a female and the only path to happiness.<sup>2</sup> In both *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, the main characters barely have a conversation with their princes before the men are smitten. Their beauty is what attracts the princes to them, but their hardworking, docile, pure and innocent temperaments is what make the female characters marriage material.

Besides the damsel in distress narrative, these films also present other gendered messages. In all of the films, the villains or disliked characters are single females who have become evil because of their power or independence. Cinderella is plagued by an evil, widowed stepmother who unrightfully abuses her because she has control of property. Owning property is a distinctly male attribute in the traditional sense, so a female who obstructs this important patriarchal element is deemed villainous. The Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* menacingly taunts Alice and is depicted as mad. She also emasculates the King of Hearts (in size and personality) in a way that is laughable to the audience, but most importantly her fits of rage and

<sup>1</sup> "Just How Many Baby Boomers Are There?" Population Reference Bureau, last modified December 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 28.

tyrannical rule of the kingdom make her the villain of the film. Tinkerbell is not the villain per se in *Peter Pan*, but her jealousy of Wendy is presented negatively and envy is often attributed as an undesirable female trait. Aunt Sarah's character in *Lady and the Tramp* is an old spinster who takes too much control of Lady's house while her owners are away. She is deemed the villain for her overbearing personality. Lastly, in *Sleeping Beauty*, Maleficent plays the villain as an evil witch who tries to take over Aurora's kingdom. The Disney films of the 1950s feature this single, overly powerful female figure that is created to send the message that marriage and the private sphere are the only acceptable futures for women.<sup>3</sup> Their independence is extremely threatening and painted in a negative light.

These films reach an impressionable audience and media has been determined as a "major means by which children assimilate culture".<sup>4</sup> Disney films would be the earliest form of media that children of the late 1940s into the early 1960s were exposed to. Therefore, the large masses of white, middle class suburbanite children who had access to these films and would identify with the white, beautiful characters are learning that appearances and a pleasant demeanor are essential to future happiness, and if one rejects those attributes she is doomed to a life of loneliness and evil-doing as the Disney villains are.

Messages of the female societal role are seen elsewhere in 1950s media as well. The most popular television shows at the time provided similar nuclear family type narratives, where the father is the breadwinner and the mother is dutiful and pleasant. Sitcoms like *I Love Lucy*, *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best* created the illusion that American homes were dominated by the nuclear family with the wife staying at home to raise the children. In reality, thirty-eight percent of women over the age of sixteen held a job by the year 1960, including twenty percent of mothers who had children under the age of six. 1950s television did not show this growing truth of U.S. households.

Television shows of this era presented average Americans with the perfect family, highly dependent on the perfect housewife. The character, Donna Stone of *The Donna Reed Show* (1958-1966) is the prototypical housewife; she dons heels and pearls to perform chores and has a positive temperament when disciplining her children. Most importantly, Donna Stone is very active in her community, helping to organize charity events and local theatre productions. This particular representation of the American housewife is carefully constructed because it shows Donna being able to perform an important societal role of community leader, i.e. something intellectually stimulating enough to keep her content, but is not radical enough to show Donna competing with men in the workforce. *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1963) also represented the housewife, June Cleaver, in a traditional role, even more so than Donna Stone. June also wears pearls and heels when doing housework and the Cleaver life is dependent on tradition and formality with the family always eating dinner in the formal dining room. She has impeccable hair and makeup, but is never seen tending to it, implying that beauty and selflessness should go hand in hand and that her beauty is something expected. These female characters were beautiful, but not necessarily sexy or glamorous. 1950s television was largely sterile in its excitement or dangerousness. The virtue of 50s television housewives is similar to that of Disney princesses; all of the positive representations of women in the 1950s were ones where the female is effortlessly beautiful, kind, innocent, and a protector of the family.<sup>6</sup>

Television and film of the 1950s aimed to reach a wide audience, so universal messages were used to instill conformity. As Andrea Press notes, these representations "presumed a unified American majority identity"; an America without minorities, social problems, or poverty.<sup>7</sup> Television and film was sometimes used as a tool to present the "best aspects" of America, even though they were not

<sup>3</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 29.

<sup>4</sup> Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz, "The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales," *Gender and Society* 17, no. 5 (Oct. 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 27

<sup>7</sup> Andrea Press, "Gender and Family in Television's Golden Age and Beyond," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625, (Sep. 2009): 140.

particularly accurate. In the height of the Cold War, the display of perfect families on television was important to make Americans feel safe. The government and media executives tied the nuclear family and capitalism into one, so that both are dependent on each other. With heavy importance placed on women to be beautiful and perfectly domestic, there was a huge commercial market for female products ranging from makeup to kitchen appliances.

The ever-popular *Ladies Home Journal* was a magazine for women that featured articles on proper cooking, cleaning, and maintenance of one's marriage, but advertisements throughout the magazine cued women to connect domesticity with capitalism and buying products. An NBC advertisement in a 1955 edition of *Ladies Home Journal*, for instance, reveals a strictly gendered message for housewives. The advertisement features a doll-like woman dressed in an apron and heels with a baby-boomer child playing on the floor. There are seven small television sets displaying different shows throughout the day. The excerpts for each television show image are in the housewife's voice, giving appreciation to the shows for helping her get through her long day of chores.<sup>8</sup> The advertisement gives the illusion that being a woman in the private sphere is fun and effortless. It also places a heavy value of television and media into women's daily lives. While *Ladies Home Journal* is targeted at the generation of housewives during the 1950s and early 1960s, it serves as an example of the types of messages girls and young women were receiving about their role in society dictated by their gender.

Conformity was the over-arching theme of the 1950s, but there were still seeds of rebellion throughout America. Smaller acts of rebellion pushed the status quo without going too far. These actions, as displayed in popular culture, helped develop later feminist rebellions that came about by the mid 1960s. Rock n' roll and pop music captured the attention of millions of baby boomer teenagers by the late 1950s. Both styles of music were developed from African-American rhythm and blues and jazz. The music was rougher and less tidy than boring, traditional love songs from earlier

years. Teens were excited about "issues of sex, race, and class in a culture dedicated to ignoring them and [they felt] liberat[ed] because of it".<sup>9</sup> Rock stars usually represented the working class and always insinuated sexual promiscuity.

Elvis Presley, for example, used hair grease, a tradition taken from African-Americans who, "had their hair straightened and curled into curious shapes", as Wini Breines notes.<sup>10</sup> He danced and gyrated his hips on stage as to illicit sexual fantasies from his predominantly young, white, middle class female fan base. Girls went into hysteria over Elvis's music, feeling as though they too were rejecting "the calculated, pragmatic sexual repression of teenage life."<sup>11</sup>

Elvis's persona was seen as a marker of rebellion, but his actual songs were more ambiguous. Titles including, "I Need Your Love Tonight", "A Big Hunk O' Love", "Love Me Tender" and "Baby, Let's Play House" promoted romantic affections between young lovebirds and skirted the line of promoting premarital sex. "Love Me Tender" described eternal love and commitment, while the message of "I Need Your Love Tonight" was a bit more immediate in sexual and romantic satisfaction. The conflation of love and sex in these lyrics gives a confusing message to the young women fawning over them. Elvis, and other male rock n' roll stars, sang lyrics such as "I've been waiting just for tonight/ To do some lovin' and hold you tight" or "I ain't askin' much of you/ Just a big-a big-a hunk o' love will do"<sup>12</sup>. These lyrics, and similar ones from the era, promise true love, but only if premarital sex is given first. Disney fairy tales originally promoted true love and fantastical romance, but rock n' roll and other forms of media sexualized it. Rock n' roll was an attempt to rebel against the conformist nature of domestic life as shown in *Leave it to Beaver* or *The Donna Reed Show*. Because the lyrics of this genre were so obsessed with relationships, love, and sex, young women were still receiving the message that these aspects of life were the most important. Through the

<sup>9</sup> Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 157.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Sid Wayne, *I Need Your Love Tonight* (1959); Aaron Schroeder, *Big Hunk O' Love* (1959)

<sup>8</sup> "Where Did The Morning Go?", NBC Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal* (1955).

seemingly rebellious music at the time, young women and girls are told to celebrate true love so they “scrutinize[ed] every pore, every gesture, every stray eyebrow hair, eradicating every flaw, enhancing every asset” in an attempt to mimic the objects of desire in rock n’ roll songs.<sup>13</sup> In reality, this fan base of young women was looking for love to justify natural tendencies to sex.<sup>14</sup>

Pop music emerged by the early 1960s to capture these confusing messages as well. The song “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” (1960) by the girl group, The Shirelles, marketed toward young, love-stricken teens. Lyrics include, “Is this a lasting treasure?/ Or just a moment’s pleasure?/ Can I believe the magic of your sighs?/ Will you still love me tomorrow?”<sup>15</sup> The theme of the song describes a universal, female question of whether premarital sex is worth the in-the-moment pleasure, or if the negative societal stigma against it will cause the man to leave. Music producers wanted to capitalize on girls’ confusion and ambivalence about sex.

Susan Douglas argues that for the young women: some of [them] wanted to be good girls, and some of [them] wanted to be bad.

But most of [them] wanted to get away with being both, and girl group music let [them] try and act out a host of identities, from traditional, obedient girlfriend to brassy, independent rebel, and lots in between.<sup>16</sup>

Popular culture capitalized on young women’s struggle between preserving the family and being an object of desire.<sup>17</sup>

Just as music began challenging conventional sexual mores for women, 1950s films could also be considered groundbreaking in their attention on female characters and actresses in their glamour and sexuality. For the first time, females were the focus of the plot and overshadowed their male counterparts. Many films, such as *Susan Slept Here* (1954), and movie stars, such as Doris Day,

<sup>13</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 27.

<sup>14</sup> Chester Pach, “Rock n’ Roll is Here to Stay,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 4 (Jul. 2004)

<sup>15</sup> Gerry Goffin and Carole King, *Will You Love Me Tomorrow* (1960)

<sup>16</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 88.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, represented an increasing consciousness in women seeking out their own satisfaction or pleasure. *Susan Slept Here* was a controversial film at the time for its depiction of a middle-aged man housing and marrying a seventeen-year-old female delinquent so she can avoid jail. Susan develops a crush on the upper class man and convinces him to fall in love with her and engage in an actual marriage (including sexual relations). The tagline, “it’s all about a man-about-town and a girl about 18... and the things he learns about love from HER!”, suggests that a young woman does not have much to offer besides domesticity and sexual fulfillment for men. The female characters in films were not seen as sterile, pretty, passive, and domestic as in Disney movies or 50s family sitcoms, but were idols of beauty, glamour, risk, and sex.

Even the idolizations of women’s bodies were changing because of these films. Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and most pin-up models had curvy frames with large busts and hips but cinched waists. Their clothing was more revealing as well. This challenged and conflicted with portrayals of women in family-centered media outlets, which kept the female body thin, but not flashy. This reflects the decade’s affluence and promotion of abundance.<sup>18</sup>

Marilyn Monroe has been remembered as the biggest sex symbol and movie star of the 1950s and early 1960s. Her breakout role in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) established the dumb blonde persona that men fawned over and women tried to emulate in millions of dollars in cosmetics every year. The bright pink evening gown Monroe wears in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was the epitome of femininity and sex appeal, as with many of her iconic looks (the white dress above the subway grate in *The Seven Year Itch* and her cropped and sculpted platinum hair). The ditzy blonde role is used mostly for comedic relief but her seduction of male co-stars is usually the focus of the plot. She gained international success because of these roles and her celebrity status, glamorous outfits, and popularity among men were envied and admired by almost every young woman growing up in the United States. In the 1950s and 60s, teens made up

<sup>18</sup> Charles Winick, “The Beige Epoch: Depolarization of Sex Roles in America,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 376, (Mar. 1968): 19.



three quarters of moviegoers, so the roles and messages of beauty were largely aimed at that age group. Hollywood gained its notoriety as a fantastical entity by the 1950s and Monroe represents the ultimate celebrity.<sup>19</sup>

Rebellion as seen in pop/rock n' roll songs and film posed contradictory ideas to a young female audience. Female celebrities were designed to be objects of desire; men want to be with them and women want to be like them. Their narratives in the media are more playful by the 1950s because of the abundant and affluent nature of the Cold War economy and lifestyle. Leisure time promoted more purchases, such as movie tickets, music albums, lipsticks to emulate movie star trends, etc. These kinds of purchases were becoming more popular into the late 1950s, while the old "June Cleaver" paradigm, consisting of kitchen and home purchases existed as well. The existence of these two ideals of womanhood largely benefitted advertisers and media executives because they could capitalize on young women trying to have fun and attract a husband, while still capitalizing on the consumerist needs of the "Cold War Mother" and family.

Because there was a flood of sexist media during the 1950s, young girls tried to escape the monotony of conformist suburbs with more thrilling narratives. *Marjorie Morningstar* (1955) by Herman Wouk was a best-selling novel during the decade that described a Jewish teen's journey from a sheltered girl on the Upper West Side in Manhattan to her daring attempts of becoming a Broadway star and falling in love.

Set in the 1930s, Marjorie's family lives in Manhattan after Marjorie's father recent success as a wealthy businessman. Her parents have plans for Marjorie to find an acceptable provider for her to marry so she can eventually become a housewife. Marjorie aspires to be an actress and creates the stage name "Marjorie Morningstar" to break away from her Jewish identity. Eventually, she falls in love with a budding playwright, Noel Airman. Noel challenges Marjorie's upper middle class lifestyle and taunts her consumerism, virginity, and observances of Jewish traditions. This pressure

pushes Marjorie into a sexual relationship with Noel, even though he has no intention of ever marrying her or settling down, something Marjorie has been told to want in the future. The banality of the relationship and unsteady work proves to be too much for Noel and he flees to Paris. Marjorie is distraught with heartbreak but ultimately decides to wait for Noel to change his mind and she follows him to Paris a few months later. Along the way she meets a helpful young man who charms her so much that she realizes "that there was really more than one man in the world- the piece of knowledge that more than anything divides women from girls".<sup>20</sup> Noel is excited to see Marjorie once she finally reaches Paris and offers to settle down with her in America, but the proclamation of commitment comes too late and Marjorie leaves by herself. Back in New York, Marjorie finds a nice, Jewish man and quickly settles down, marries and becomes a housewife.<sup>21</sup>

Marjorie's journey, while exciting and a bit dangerous, is ultimately lackluster by the end. The resolution of the novel is no better than the Disney fairy tales. She had set out to be different and to be glamorous, but Marjorie finds herself in the same gendered narrative as her peers. Marriage is the only acceptable outcome for Marjorie. The novel does, however, represent the gnawing ambiguity that young women in the 1950s were facing; the divide between societal content through marriage and new desires for danger or rebellion. Marjorie is someone young women would identify with, better than the cookie-cutter characters in television sitcoms. Even an academic review of the novel from 1957 reveals the "exceptional insight, especially in [the author's] portraits of women."<sup>22</sup> Some forms of media, as shown by *Marjorie Morningstar*, were capitalizing on the confusing messages between both societal pressures to protect virginity and pressures to have sex. Young girls felt that they aligned themselves "romantically and morally with the rebel hero; [they could] proclaim [their] independence from society's predictable expectations about [their] inevitable

<sup>19</sup> Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 92; Gabriel Miller, "The (Sex) Symbol: Marilyn, Primetime and the Nielsons," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 12, (1984).

<sup>20</sup> Herman Wouk, *Marjorie Morningstar* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1955)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Laurence Davies, "Some Novels on Minorities," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 16, no. 2 (Jan. 1957): 217.

domestication.”<sup>23</sup>

Messages in “Will You Love Me Tomorrow?” and *Marjorie Morningstar* more accurately displayed the reality of teenage sexuality in the 1950s and early 60s. The catalyst for better understanding these societal pressures was the Kinsey Reports. Alfred Kinsey’s 1953 report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, was groundbreaking in its scientific argument that men and women were equal sexual beings, meaning that women desire sex just as much as men do. The Kinsey Reports discredited the postwar gender roles that kept men as the authoritarian breadwinners and women as nurturing mothers. Kinsey’s focus on sex and marriage bolstered controversy around his findings, but ultimately changed the way academics viewed sexuality. Previous psychologists, usually followers of Freudian beliefs, “emphasized sexuality as an impulse rooted in the unconscious”.<sup>24</sup> There was more of a concentration on women’s mental link between sex and motherhood, but Kinsey found that both men and women’s sexuality was mostly biological and complex. The study was comprised of 17,500 interviews and largely asked questions on how participants reached orgasms, either through nocturnal sex dreams, masturbation, heterosexual petting, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual intercourse, or contacts with animals.<sup>25</sup>

One of the biggest findings in the study was Kinsey’s debunking of the Freudian map of the sexual female body, which argued “that the vagina gave women orgasms and the clitoris led them into psychological degeneracy”.<sup>26</sup> Second Wave feminist literature would later elaborate on the patriarchal system of female sexuality with books such as *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet or “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” by Anne Koedt. While the Kinsey Reports were not being read by the average American, the ideas became more normalized into

the 1960s. The studies further developed the sexual paradox of the 1950s where young people were being told to save sex until marriage but also receiving more sexual messages through media.<sup>27</sup>

Various forms of media were voicing concern over the growing public displays of sexuality as a means to undermine the patriarchal system and the nuclear family. By the mid-1960s the paradox was very visible for young people. In 1966, Yale University distributed an unofficial booklet at freshmen orientation on campus promiscuity, safe sex, birth control, venereal diseases and provided information on campus groups for women’s liberation and gay rights. Students mostly wrote the booklet but some faculty oversaw the making of it. While most students on campus either welcomed the information or did not mind it, others saw it as controversial. This was one of the first times that an institution for young people was acknowledging that premarital sex was occurring and instead of demonizing it the booklet was giving information on how to be safe.<sup>28</sup> Numerous sources argue that sexual behavior, for the most part, did not change, but the attitudes did. Because of the growing market of sex in advertisements, television, films and music, many Americans became desensitized. This does not, however, mean that large numbers of young people were engaging in more premarital sex. Those statistics remain relatively constant throughout the 1950s and 60s and even by 1969 two thirds of college women were married within eighteen months of graduation.<sup>29</sup> By the mid 60s, however, many women that engaged in premarital sex reported that they did not feel guilty or remorseful.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the 1950s and 60s, women were still expected to marry quickly as to preserve the nuclear families, but attitudes about sex were easing largely because of its public visibility.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 92; Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 89.

<sup>24</sup> Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 57

<sup>25</sup> “Data from Alfred Kinsey’s Studies”, Indiana University: The Kinsey Institute, accessed December 2, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> “Data from Alfred Kinsey’s Studies”, Indiana University: The Kinsey Institute, accessed December 2, 2013; Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 52-104

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Treaster, “Unofficial Sex Booklet Draws Mixed Notices at Yale,” *New York Times*, September 17, 1970, accessed December 1, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> John Corry, “A U.S. Sex Revolt? It’s Mostly Talk,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1966, accessed December 1, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Tom Buckley, “All They Talk About is Sex, Sex, Sex,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1969, accessed December 1, 2013.

Starting from Disney princesses to descriptions of sexual rendezvous in *Marjorie Morningstar* or girl group songs, young women growing up in the 1950s and early 60s had difficult decisions regarding their sexuality. To “give it up” meant to possibly tarnish one’s reputation and ruin chances of marriage in the future. Conflations between sex and true love in the media, however, made sex seem glamorous and exciting, albeit risky. Girls had to find a balance of their sexual presence in public, “doling out just enough to be popular with boys and never enough to lose esteem of the ‘right kind of kids’”.<sup>31</sup> The ideas and messages in the media paralleled with young women’s actions as well. More felt comfortable with premarital sex by the early 1960s, but ultimately marriage and domesticity was the most suitable future. Media was used to both push messages that preserved the nuclear family and conservative sexual values, like in Disney films or advertisements for daytime television, and also messages that exploited the confusion and ambivalence teens were feeling about their own sexuality. The media, because it was so encompassing, sought “to create desires in order to satisfy, rather than, as the parent, teacher, or minister must often do, to discipline, restrict or deny them. The advertiser is, thus, is on the side of the teenager”<sup>32</sup>. Girls became obsessed with the fantasy of risky behaviors that satisfied personal growth or got the attention of handsome men as seen in *Marjorie Morningstar* or Marilyn Monroe films, but ultimately these were just daydreams for most girls. Young women of the 1950s generation had to balance expectations from both the “rebellious” sides of media and the traditional paradigm of womanhood in domesticity, with both forms of popular culture equally dependent on beauty.

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<sup>31</sup> Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 131.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

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