

Communicating Roles: The Television Housewife

Samantha Ackley and Erin Balaska

Senior Division

Group Performance

Words: 463

The project began in our Government class, where it was assigned. Next, to choose our topic, both Erin and I made lists of topic ideas. The goal was for our topic to stand out, so we don't choose from the pre-specified lists. After that, we narrowed it down to the effect of women's portrayal in 1950's media due to how arguable of a position we could make and the modern effects we could discuss. It also pertained well to the theme since media implicitly communicates ideals to the public. Lastly, we decided upon a performance because it helped us stand out and we have experience in this project type.

Once research began, our access to ProQuest helped. Along with the essays, we used sources such as television shows, movies, children's books, and accounts from people who lived in the 50's. We had difficulty picking and choosing which episodes of television programs to watch and include, since it is difficult to sift through hundreds of episodes of television shows. Our secondary sources addressed our topic well; they were about how stereotyped 50's media affected society up to modern day and were mostly essays drawing on primary sources and statistics. This helped us to understand how women were portrayed in media, or the ideal that 50's women should try to attain. The research was compiled in Google Forms.

Then, we began writing the script. Erin had the idea to create it in a dream-like sequence, where a stereotypical 50's housewife was talking to a 2020 college student. Since we worked in different class periods, Erin often outlined her ideas during her class period, and we collaborated during my class period. Writing this script in a way that didn't feel forced was the most difficult part, specifically trying to cite sources within the material while creating natural dialogue. To overcome this, Erin and I would ad-lib to each other about the topic and then add it to the script, editing as we went.

Lastly, the topic of how gender roles were communicated through 1950's media pertains to the theme in that it addressed the implicit communication of ideals. Communication does not always have to be direct and verbal. Sometimes it is as simple as showing a housewife fail at every job she is given outside of the household. Either way, this form of communication in early television shows has affected the modern day, and thus it must have been communicated intergenerationally, as well. Even now, it communicates to modern audiences how women in the 50's were supposed to act. Overall, the topic addresses a nuanced and complex, though sparsely identified type of communication that we thought we could represent well.

Primary

American Psychological Association, Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls.
(2007). Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls.

<http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf>

This source is a report on different studies about women's objectification in media and how their gender roles are perceived. This was an extremely helpful source as it detailed some of the consequences women and girls face as a result of harmful media.

Brooks, Richard. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc., 1958.

This film is often lauded as a classic and yet it paints a picture of what women are supposed to be by making all the main characters the opposite of their roles. This helps develop roles for both males and females by showcasing often vulgar things to make the point that women should be mothers and men should be loving, masculine husbands. In the unhappy resolution, Brick is shown to give way to his wife's way and thus, though unhappy, the gender roles win in the end.

By, ANN M. "Housewife Or Career Woman?: Here is the Case for the Housewife, Who Holds that Her Way of Life is Better, Her Husband and Children Happier. Housewife Or Career Woman Housewife Or Career Woman." New York Times (1923-Current file), Mar 11, 1945, pp. 2. ProQuest,
<https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F107284712%3Faccountid%3D11620>.

This source shows another way gender roles were enforced in the 50's: by other women. It also gives us a baseline to judge other sources against. This is a direct opinion from a housewife's mouth, so we can more accurately assess how culture affected media and vice versa by having a clear idea of what people within this culture thought. It also shows how career women were thought of by housewives and what housewives valued, which helps clear up any confusion while deciphering other sources.

"Clark, Roger, et al. ""Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Presence of Female Characters and Gender Stereotyping in Award-Winning Picture Books between the 1930s and the 1960s."" Sex Roles, vol. 49, no. 9, 2003, pp. 439-449. ProQuest,
<https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F225368411%3Faccountid%3D11620>,

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/10.1023/A:1025820404277>."

This source is about gender stereotypes in children's picture books. This furthers our research on women's portrayal in the media as the source discusses picture books. This also furthers our research as it shows that not just film stereotyped women but other media types as well.

Connelly, Joe, and Bob Mosher. Leave It to Beaver, ABC, 4 Oct. 1957

This source is a slice-of-life, like I Love Lucy, in that it portrays the average American family navigating every day. June is the picture perfect idea of a wife, never seen disheveled and is often described as beautiful. This helps paint an idea of, first, what the perfect wife was, and also how that might have been unachievable or hard to reach.

"Furnham, Adrian, and Twiggy Mak. "'Sex-Role Stereotyping in Television Commercials: A Review and Comparison of Fourteen Studies done on Five Continents Over 25 Years.'" Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, vol. 41, no. 5-6, 1999, pp. 413-437. ProQuest, <https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F619433347%3Faccountid%3D11620>, doi:<http://dx.doi.org.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/10.1023/A:1018826900972>."

This source is about the gender-role stereotyping in many of the TV ads in many different parts of the world. This helps our research as most of it is focuses on America, but reading about other countries provides context for the time period. The source helps us understand our topic as it shows the gender-role stereotypes that appeared in media.

Geronimi, Clyde, et al., directors. Cinderella. Disney, 1950.

As a Disney Princess, it only makes sense that a princess would be considered the most representative example of what women and girls should be. This shows us what the male population views as attractive and desirable. It shows us, also, how they believe that women should act in the face of adversity.

Geronimi, Clyde, director. Sleeping Beauty. Walt Disney, 1959.

This is another layer of Disney examples, showing how Disney captures audiences into roles young. As one of the main strongholds of comfort and nostalgia, Disney caters to the values of the time. By assuring American audiences of the perfect gender roles at young age, they can ensure that American audiences that they are correct and in the right. It demonstrates how gender roles were watered down, or not, to help American audiences subconsciously understand where they were supposed to be and what they were supposed to do.

"Neuhaus, Jessamyn. "'The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cook-Books in the 1950s.'" Journal of Social History, vol. 32, no. 3, 1999, pp. 529. ProQuest, <https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1297372401%3Faccountid%3D11620>."

This source is about the gender roles that are presented in the cookbooks of the 1950s. These roles are presented as women only being as useful as they are as a wife. This improves our research towards showing the objectification in many forms of media in the 1950s.

"Olson, Beth, and William Douglas. ""The Family on Television: Evaluation of Gender Roles in Situation Comedy."" Sex Roles, vol. 36, no. 5-6, 1997, pp. 409-427. ProQuest,

<https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F60071276%3Faccountid%3D11620.>"

This source discusses whether how TV displays domestic family gender roles has changed since the 1950s. This source discusses situational comedies from the 1950s to the 1980s. This helps our research as it shows how the gender roles depicted in 1950s media compares to that of the early 1980s.

Oppenheimer, J., Schiller, B., Pugh, M., & Carroll, B., Jr. (Writers). (1951, October 15). I Love Lucy [Television series]. New York City, New York: CBS.

This source is a well-beloved show from the 50's and is a slice of life comedy. It showcases the marriage of Lucy and Ricky Ricardo and Ethel and Fred Mertz. It is well-loved, though it often subtly enforces where the women's sphere is and how a proper 50's wife should act. It is one of the most crucial primary sources because of its volume of content to work from, and it proves our thesis by showcasing Lucille as a "wacky" housewife with "delusions" of something more, all while demonstrating how wives lives were viewed to revolve around their husband. It also demonstrates how dependent they were.

Rogers, Roswell, and Murray Bolen. Father Knows Best, CBS Network, 27 May 1954.

This is about a series in which a father consistently counsels his children how to live life. Margaret does not feature prominently in most episodes, showing how sometimes even mother's were not considered important in the moral raising of their children. Betty's consistent boy-chasing and Margaret's dutifulness show how women were expected to be in constant service or want of men. Even the title, "Father Knows Best" establishes the mothers did not know as well.

""Textbooks and TV shows Still Reflect Gender Bias."" Korean Women Today, 1986, pp. 4. ProQuest,

<https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F230092588%3Faccountid%3D11620.>"

This source is about textbooks and tvs reflection of the gender bias within Korean media. This source provides an angle to our research that is not focused on American media. This expands our thesis to the whole worlds and not just the United States.

Secondary

bzukovich657. "Masculinity, Gender Roles, and T.V. Shows from the 1950s." The Artifice, 18 Oct. 2014, the-artifice.com/masculinity-gender-roles-tv-1950s/.

This source is about how hyper-masculinity may cause violence by how gender roles set rigid standards. It also provides an argument as to how women were demeaned within American society and were seen as less, even though they were expected to go about life happily. This helps within the project because it provides a starting place for analysis and exemplifies how these roles were unattainable often within households where they inspired the opposite. It also cites multiple of our examples in how they affected the cultural mindset, and provides multiple other sources to look at.

Kennedy, Kimi. "Starting Young: Gender Roles in Children's Films." Omeka RSS, The American Century, americancentury.omeka.wlu.edu/exhibits/show/reinforcement-of-gender-roles-/starting-young--gender-roles-i.

This source helps expand upon how Disney roles indoctrinated people into gender roles. It starts young to teach young people how to conform and 'behave' at a young age. It also cites multiple other arguments and sources that can strengthen our argument and helps us understand mediums other than consistent television shows.

"Murphy, Jocelyn Nichole, ""The role of women in film: Supporting the men -- An analysis of how culture influences the changing discourse on gender representations in film"" (2015). Journalism Undergraduate Honors Theses. 2. <http://scholarworks.uark.edu/jouruht/2>"

This source is about the objectification of women and their portrayal in the media. The text discusses how females may have a shared social experience through their objectification in the media. This helps support our thesis that the media reduces women to just their role or features and does not display them as real whole people.

Press, Andrea. "Gender and Family in Televisions Golden Age and Beyond." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 625, 2009, pp. 139–150. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40375911. Accessed 1 Oct. 2020.

This source is about how family and women's media has changed, and includes analysis of examples through the ages, including *Sex in the City*, *Ally McBeal*, and *I Love Lucy*. This source shows us how television has changed, but is still affected by the 50's original media. This explains the significance of our topic.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION	
Project Title	<i>Communicating Roles: The Television Housewife</i>
Student Name(s)	Erin Balaska, Samantha Ackley
Division/Category	Senior Performance
Performance Runtime	9:42
Performance Companion Worksheet Word Count (starting with the performance overall scenario box; should not exceed 1,270 words)	330
Thesis	Since television is such a large form of communication to the world, the fact that women were almost exclusively portrayed as housewives in the 1950s contributes largely to the widespread propaganda that women are just objects that should be domestic and live to men's expectations.
Performance Recording Link	https://drive.google.com/file/d/13vdM9sVYfhJTs1DnCXuZjPbXD1B3HVLc/view?usp=drivesdk

PERFORMANCE OVERALL SCENARIO

Story Setting(s)- 60 *Word Limit*

Where does the performance take place?

The performance takes place in a college student's dorm room.

Timeframe- 60 *Word Limit*

When does the performance take place?

The performance takes place in the 21st century, the modern day.

Story Synopsis - 100 *Word Limit*

Our project features a housewife, as portrayed by television, interacting with a 21st century college student. Their conversation details how women's roles were communicated by media in the 1950's. Furthermore, maybe it is even this communication that helps the television housewife realize what role she plays in history.

CHARACTERS

Remove rows as needed.

Character Name	Actor	Description/background for the character <i>10 Word Limit per Character</i>
Mary Balska	Erin Balaska	Mary Olson is the ideal domestic television housewife.
Sam Cussom	Samantha Ackley	Sam is a student who dreams of talking to Mary.

PERFORMANCE BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND BY SCENE

Scene # 1

Photo

Photo Size should be 3x3 maximum



Description

*What is the purpose of the background in this scene?
50 Word Limit*

The purpose of the background in this scene is to establish the both the viewpoint distance as well as physical difference between the characters. With Mary in the TV, and Sam at her table.

PERFORMANCE COSTUMES

COSTUME(S) BY SCENE

Scene # 1

Photo

Photo Size should be 3x3 maximum

Description

*What is the purpose of the costume in this scene?
50 Word Limit*



Sam is in modern attire to establish her place in history while Mary is in a 1950s inspired outfit to demonstrate the binary in their time periods.

PERFORMANCE PROPS

KEY PROP(S) BY SCENE

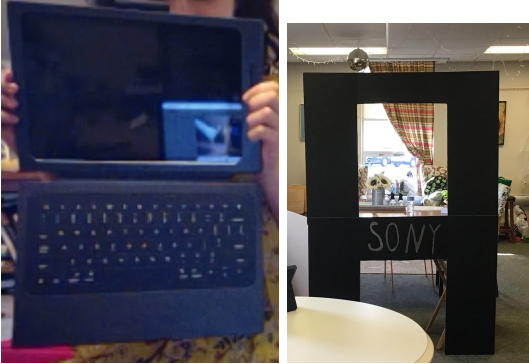
Scene #1

Photo

Photo Size should be 3x3 maximum

Description

*What is the purpose of the props?
50 Word Limit*



The purpose of the iPad is to show that Sam is a student writing a paper on feminism, and to show the quotes are credible. The T.V. is used to show that Mary is a stereotype of a written television housewife.