

Television is much the same, with daytime TV — prime viewing time for housewives — taken up with inane quiz shows and soap operas.

In 1967, for instance during the Fulbright hearings on the Vietnam war, CBS made a rather major decision about housewives.

"Fred Friendly, who was working with the News Division at CBS at the time, quit over the decision," writes Alice Embree in an article for a yet unpublished book on women. "CBS broadcast an I Love Lucy rerun instead of the Senate hearings — not because the rerun was part of television folklore, but because the commercials surrounding it involved money."

"Friendly reports in his book, *Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control*, that one of the unpublished reasons for the CBS decision was the fact that housewives, not 'opinion leaders', were tuned in at the hour, and housewives weren't interested in Vietnam."

The daily work of the American housewife is generally boring and repetitive — and certainly doesn't require much thought. Business is aware of this. But rather than trying to alleviate her work so she is free to do other things, corporations in the woman market bind her even more by creating new household problems and then new products to "solve" those problems.

All people desire creative forms of self-expression, and business knows housewives can be convinced that their home-making tasks are creative.

As a motivational research expert put it:

"In a free enterprise economy, we have to develop a need for new products.

"And to do that we have to liberate women to desire new products. We help them rediscover that homemaking is more creative than to compete with men. This can be manipulated. We sell them what they ought to want, speed up the unconscious, move it along."

Men like this motivational manipulator understand that there is a gap to be filled in the housewife's life — not by helping create conditions and institutions that would give her life more meaning, but by selling her things to replace that meaning.

Marriages mean good business. Every new household is a new consumption unit, TV Guide indicates in a New York Times ad, Nov. 6, 1968.

"Nothing makes markets like marriage. There's setting up the house, and future business in raising a family. All together, it's big business, appliances and house furnishings to bigger cars."

As a middle-class housewife, a woman is a ready market not only for the beauty products she has grown accustomed to wanting but for myriad household soaps, cleansers and appliances.

Her new image is that pretty, efficient homemaker, lovingly choosing her family's bathroom tissue and toilet bowl cleanser.

And if she becomes hassled by the routine of meals-dishes-laundry, business offers her headache remedies and time-saving cleaners to ease the situation.

The more hassled she becomes, the more she demands a life beyond the home, the more receptive a market she is.

"Why is it never said that the really crucial function, the really important role that women serve as housewives is to buy more things for the house?" writes Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.

"In all the talk of femininity and women's role one forgets that the real business of America is business. Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that women will buy more things if they are kept in the under-used, nameless-yearning, energy-to-get-rid-of state of being housewives."

Since as a homemaker the American housewife can have no control over the world outside her home, she is effectively cut off from the rest of society, particularly by the media.

Her world is the home. Her magazines — like *McCall's*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Woman's Day*, *Redbook*, and *Good Housekeeping* — talk almost exclusively about children, beauty, food and house-keeping.

The July issue of *McCall's*, for instance, includes articles on California and New Orleans parties; *Beauty: The Sun Catchers*; *Menus for the Family Reunion*; *The Church Social and Supper at*

the sea; *A New Life, a New Love*; Audrey Hepburn at 40; *The Case Against Little League Mothers* and *the Faith of Mamie Eisenhower*.

Only one article — *The Revolt of the Young Priests* — breaks through the perimeters of the woman's world.

So housewives are told, of course, your work is meaningful and important. Why, mother is important to the family. She is the protector — she protects her family from germs by using Lysol spray disinfectant and by cleaning the toilet bowl regularly with Sani-Flush. Of course, her life has meaning. She keeps her family healthy by feeding them "Wonder Bread to make the most of their wonder years."

Although most advertising is aimed at the white, middle-to-upper-middle income American, industry will sell to anyone, rich or poor, black or white, as long as she pays the price.



So we have scenes like the one we observed on a New York subway: a poor Puerto Rican woman, with children squirming around her, reading the latest issue of *Vogue* magazine.

We have worked with young girls from poor families, often to racial or ethnic minorities, who read *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*. They learn that the way a woman makes it is by looking like the models in the ads. And they spend large parts of their salaries on clothes, cosmetics (which they apply too generously) and synthetic hair pieces that fool no one.

Or if a woman simply can't afford all the regalia of success — the beauty products, the clothes, the household appliances — she may see herself as a failure as a woman, as inferior to the glamorous magazine creatures who swish around in long scarves, go on high protein diets or decorate their living rooms in Italian provincial.

American industry doesn't even pretend to meet the needs of these American women. Beauty and feminine success is a white thing, a thing that requires money.

But this doesn't mean that poor or non-white women should struggle to fit the image created by business and advertising. If a woman can afford the image financially, she cannot afford it in terms of her humanity. We just want to point out the class and racial nature of the woman market.

An excerpt from *Forbes Magazine*, April 15, 1968, puts the whole crass process on the line: "One Harvard grad recalls his on-campus interview

with a P&G (Proctor & Gamble) recruiter several years back. 'We sell products that aren't much different from anyone else's,' the recruiter told him. 'We sell them because someone will buy them, not because they are socially good. If we could put shit in a box and the customer would buy it, we'd sell it.'

And, an ad for the Magazine Publishers Association run in *Advertising Age*, April 21, 1969, helps clarify the intent of advertising:

"But Mother (says a Beautiful Blonde modeling a 'nude look' fashion) Underwear would hide my fashion accessories.

"It wasn't long ago that all exposure was indecent. Today it's vogue. Admittedly spunky. But not spurned even in the safe suburb.

"How did it happen?

"Magazines.

"Magazines turned legs into a rainbow. Magazines convinced a gal she needed a flutter of fur where plain little eyelashes used to wink.

"Magazines have the power to make a girl forget her waist exists. And the very next year, make her buy a belt for every dress she owns...

"Magazines help distressed damsels remake their wardrobes, faces, hair, body. And sometimes their whole way of being.

"And the ladies love it. And beg for more.

"When she gets involved with herself and fashion, in any magazine, she's a captive cover to cover..."

The lead article in the July *Cosmopolitan*

is "39 Men Tell a Nice Girl Like You

What Turns Them On." Another article

discusses the best tactics to use in seducing married men.

When you're a "captive cover to cover" all the talk about "breakaway girls" and happy homemakers with more free time, more money and the powers of femininity sounds pretty irrelevant.

And the "ladies" don't really "love" being captives; they are afraid not to play the game. The roles a woman can hold in American society are so limited that to relinquish her function as consumer (and all that involves) would be very threatening.

So as captives, American women continue to carry a heavy social and economic burden that allows American corporations to expand markets and increase profits.

It is ironic that as little as an American woman may think of herself, business brains think she's great, in somewhat the same way that Standard Oil of New Jersey, which holds heavy interests in Latin America, thinks the Venezuelan workers are great.

It is useless and absurd to ask corporations to think of women as human beings. Corporations cannot possibly do this.

In fact, as long as there are markets, prices, buying and selling and profits, technology cannot be used in human ways. As long as technology is controlled by men pursuing profit and corporate expansion, human beings, especially women, cannot participate except as investments and markets.

Alice Embree clarifies the transformation of woman as human being to woman as object:

A woman is supposed to be a body, not a person — a decorated body. If she can successfully manage that transformation, then she can market herself for a man. The commercial creates commercialized people in its own image; and the marketed commodities create people who think of themselves as marketable commodities."

Think about these things the next time you pick up one of your favorite women's magazines. Perhaps your human (and naturally beautiful) face will tingle from a corporate slap.