Consumerism in the Cult of Domesticity: An Analysis of *The House Beautiful* Publication Following the First World War

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Introduction

The rise of tastemakers and culturally produced design can easily be seen in shelter magazines during the early-twentieth-century surge of consumer culture, mass production, and the establishment of the middle-class after the upheaval of industry and market expansion in the United States. In particular, following the economic stratification between high, middle, and lower classes prior to the First World War, the importance placed on family made the home the linchpin of design interest for aesthetic aficionados.¹ Platforms for promoting fashionable lifestyles and conceptions of home included advertisements, etiquette guides, books, and magazines, all of which were often marketed to middle-class white women to give them “appropriate styles to produce pleasant environments for themselves and their families.”² Due to their mass readership and accessibility, shelter magazines became one of the more prominent tools to promulgate notions of taste in American architecture, giving their creators, editors, and writers a large amount of design capital and influence over the objective mechanisms for constituting ‘good taste’ among the wider community. As a genre, the shelter magazine featured landscape gardening, decorating, architecture and furnishing content that often-chronicled socio-economic shifts in the eras in which they were published.³ The readership of these magazines was predominantly white, middle-class women, and reflected a largely segregated society that

³ The genre of “shelter magazines” within the wider publication scheme sits at a compelling intersection between a women’s magazines and architectural guidebooks. Focused exclusively on the American home, this genre of publication narrows in on home interiors, decorating, and gardening, characteristics that help the publication capture the United States economic and social landscape over-time. The earliest shelter magazines included House Beautiful (1896), House & Garden (1901), and Architectural Digest (1920), which are publications that began as architectural journals and evolved into more the consumer-friendly-decorating titles. Laura Fenton, “118 Years of History Through the Lens of Shelter Magazines,” Curbed, April 10, 2014, https://archive.curbed.com/2014/4/10/10119338/118-years-of-history-through-the-lens-of-shelter-magazines.
would last well into the twentieth century. As a mass medium, the shelter magazine historically illustrates broad cultural and economic shifts and the changing roles of women and design in American society.

The earliest American shelter magazine, *The House Beautiful*, was first published in 1896 and became associated heavily with reliable yet sophisticated conceptions of American design and aesthetics. Regarded as a healthy mix between a women’s manual on American traditions and a carpenter’s guide, *The House Beautiful* developed a unique character and taste that would be enjoyed by an extensive middle-class white readership into the twenty-first century (Appendix A). A pioneering publication and authority on style for house building, interior decoration, and gardening, the magazine achieved especially high praise following the ends of each the First World War in 1918 and the Second World War in 1945. The study of *The House Beautiful*’s philosophy and formulaic view of the world from issue to issue has primarily focused on the famous editorial role that Elizabeth Gordon played during the mid-twentieth and post-war period in the United States. A staunch nationalist and promoter of the white middle-class American identity, Elizabeth Gordon’s editorial programs “reshaped ideas about American living, and by extension, what consumers bought, what designers made, and what manufacturers brought to the market.” Investigation into Gordon’s influence as an arbiter of domestic taste has brought forth an understanding of the cultures of consumption and American design identity after the Second World War when the magazine was a dominant feature of mass media. However, *The House Beautiful*’s acclamation began much earlier than 1945, during another time period when other

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women dominated the Editor in Chief role at the magazine.⁶ An examination of the articles published in *The House Beautiful* during the period directly following the end of the First World War offers another glimpse into the culture of consumption and the socio-economic conditions for which the magazine operated. Additionally, the demographic makeup of *The House Beautiful*’s readership raises important questions about how gender and socioeconomic status shaped popular and consumer culture and participation in American design during the early-twentieth century.

The media experience and visual culture of shelter magazines in the early-twentieth century built the mechanisms of modern consumer culture and marketing, escalating the demand for consumerism amongst white middle-class America.⁷ The power of objects, ideas, and images promoted in such magazines fundamentally gave women who aspired to the mainstream designs of the middle-class alternative forms of domestic labor. In other words, shelter magazines diverted married, middle-class, white women’s attention from burgeoning labor market opportunities back to designing their domestic spaces, taking care of their family, and continuing their traditional household responsibilities.⁸ In my examination, I will argue that with the expansion of consumerism and the emphasis on a retreat to the home, these magazines reinforced a conventional gender divide following the end of the First World War. Particularly, I examine

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⁸ Important changes both within and outside the household set the stage for an influx of married women into the labor market. Married women’s labor force participation rates remained quite low until 1940, when the stage was set for a rise by 1920, in terms of both women’s qualifications (the large number of female high school graduates) and their opportunities for employment (increased demand for clerical work), as well as changes in the household sphere that potential reduced their workload (reduced fertility rates, technological advances, and more market substitutes and household appliances). F. Blau and A. Winkler, *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*. 8th Ed. (Oxford University Press, 2017), p 30.
The House Beautiful between the years of 1919 and 1921 and the conceptions of the middle-class home and woman during a time of tremendous social and economic change. I look at The House Beautiful’s published articles and content to better understand and chronicle the moral and ideological prescriptions of family, gender, class, and race embedded in the magazine’s philosophy of taste and lifestyle following the end of World War I. Lastly, this work attempts to analyze how consumer culture is associated with and advertised to middle-class white women by conducting a content review on the following three themes: American Design and Taste, Parenting and Family Growth, and Household Operations.

Methods

The data for this paper is pulled from monthly The House Beautiful publications from 1919-1921 following the end of World War One in November 1918. The House Beautiful is a monthly shelter magazine that was founded by Chicago engineer Eugene Klapp, intellectual Henry Blodgett Harvey, and publisher Herbert Stuart Stone in 1896.9 A one-hundred-page magazine priced at $3.00 for a yearly subscription and ¢0.25 a month in 1919, The House Beautiful included advertisements spanning from new appliances to building companies and commentary pieces from a wide range of its authors.10 Many of the magazine’s staff writers and free-lance journalists appear to be non-specialists whose content arises from what I believe are social science and socio-economic trends at the time.11 Mabel Rollins and Charlotte Lewis held

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10 The cost of a yearly subscription for The House Beautiful at $3.00 in January 1919 has the same buying power as $48.00 in November 2020 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator (https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).
11 It should be noted that many of the authors of articles from The House Beautiful included in this paper had little biographic information available or accessible including their design background and authority on particular topics discussed. The magazine provided a platform for many of these individuals to produce ideas and inform cultural thought, which makes their expertise valuable. However, due to the time period and lack of library access many
the role of Editor in Chief between 1918-1920 and 1921, respectively, and each presided over an array of contributors and writers. *The House Beautiful*, which addressed female readers assumed to have the financial means to control and determine the internal and external character of their house, provides an opportunity for investigation into the American middle-class domestic milieu and the sociological relationship between the home and family during a period of immense societal transformation and disruption.\(^\text{12}\) Furthermore, by considering the racial demographics of the middle-class and wider American society in the early-to-mid twentieth century, this analysis provides an intersectional-feminist approach to understanding the role of shelter magazines in shaping hierarchies of power in consumer culture and design following the end of World War I.

I originally intended to analyze a wider range of *The House Beautiful’s* content in hopes of comparing the philosophical messaging and sociological commentary of the post-World War I and post-World War II eras. However, the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and restricted access to libraries and other archival locations strained material acquisitions and required a reevaluation of sourcing strategies and project objectives. Unable to access the would-be physical and in-person copies of *The House Beautiful* beyond the year of 1924, this study pulls exclusively from online scans and versions of the original magazine provided by the University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, and Harvard University libraries through the Hathi Trust Database to investigate the post-World War I subject matter. Focused on the years of 1919, 1920, and 1921, I conducted a deep content analysis of the commentary material provided in the pages of *The House Beautiful*. I thematically indexed each month beginning in January.

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1919 until December 1921 of *The House Beautiful* publications using a content analysis of the literary pieces. While advertisements offer a compelling resource for subliminal and visual messaging, I chose written articles for the following reasons: they communicate the philosophy of *The House Beautiful* without outsider influence whereas advertisements highlight the content choices of the featured corporations and businesses, messaging is performed in the literal rather than subliminal, advertisements are supplemental to support the written pieces of a magazine. Ignoring the majority of advertisements and images presented throughout each monthly article, I recorded topical linkages using a tabling method of the published matter. First, I scanned all articles for relevant information including subject matter associated with the following descriptive categorizations: Gender, Race, Class, Family, Societal Norms, Historically Reflective Commentary, and the Physical, Social and Economic Make-Up of the Home. Articles that did not fit within the descriptive categorizations were removed from the pool of content to be further investigated. Following that, I performed a secondary reading of the remaining articles and I sorted individually written pieces into manageable analytic code categories for deeper analysis. I established eight subcategories from the second content analysis: Time-Period Specific Commentary; Innovation, Transformation, or Automation of the Household; Parenting Style/s; Household Roles and Gendered Spheres; American Taste; Ideals of the Family; Accessibility to Design; and Importing Design (Appendix B). I siloed all relevant articles into these eight analytical subcategories based on word associations, subject matter, messaging, and ideas. Once fully siloed, I analyzed each of the eight analytical categorizations to find similarities and thematic underpinnings of *The House Beautiful* publications. Following the review of the eight subcategories, a final narrowing of codes concretely established a theorized editorial philosophy. The final content analysis resulted in three major groupings for which *The House Beautiful*
articles followed: American Design and Taste, Parenting and Family Growth, and Household Operations. Each of these major groupings effortlessly housed a large number of articles from different authors across the investigated timeline of 1919-1921. This paper particularly focuses on these concluding categorizations, or three prongs, of which I believe constitute the magazine’s ideologies of the gendered home and domestic interior within the larger societal ecosystem following the end of the First World War.

**American Design and Taste**

The late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries marked the installation of full-scale industrialization in the United States. Transforming the economy away from agricultural sectors and towards technologically advancing manufacturing sectors, the United States experienced a large internal migration of labor and capital. The development and expansion of industry, through innovation and new concepts of work, led to the phenomena of urbanization, capitalism, and incentivizing economic opportunities. As the late-nineteenth century approached, the transformative American economic and social reality encouraged a high influx of immigrants to migrate to the United States. With larger waves of immigrants settling in the U.S. at the close of the century, debates regarding the prevailing theories of national character and identity became paradigms for delineating the social and political boundaries of the nation-state. Emerging from the response to social change, immigration, and concepts of nation building, the terms “Americanization” and “Americanism” entered the English lexicon of the U.S. in the twentieth century to elucidate a national identity, ethos, and vernacular engendered with notions of what or

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who is meant to be American.\(^\text{14}\) A formulaic view of what constitutes “American” began to occupy space in popular culture and pulled from the ideology of dominant social groups, or rather more specifically the United States’ emerging white middle-class. Women’s magazines in particular, and the consumer culture which they mirrored at the dawn of the twentieth century, curated an optimal platform for discussing and devising conceptions of the “common” woman, the “average” woman, the “American” woman.\(^\text{15}\) With increased familial income and, in turn, increased leisure time and purchasing power for the bourgeois, the white middle-class woman became a focal point for cultivating and propagating newly developed commercialized American aesthetics by the end of the First World War in 1918. Historically situated in the “cult of domesticity”\(^\text{16}\) and intertwined with new economic possibilities for consumption, the middle-class white women became the consumer of goods deemed necessary for realizing the average American household featured in *The House Beautiful*.

*The House Beautiful* distinguishes the home as a distinctly American space through unwavering linkages to commercial capitalism and nationalism. In the rapidly changing post-World-War-I United States, *The House Beautiful’s* amalgamation of capitalism and the presentable house offers a material expression for American values and ethos. Building on the familiar cultural memory of the pre-war industrialized past, *The House Beautiful’s* display of consumption in the home circumscribes moral prescriptions embodied in concepts of family, gender, and social class, in the foundation of American design and taste. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the awakening of mainstream public consciousness to beauty and comfort in


home furnishings and buildings necessitated a tastemaker, a role *The House Beautiful* would assume.\(^\text{17}\) Aiding the shift from the traditional hierarchies of ‘taste’ towards a consumer-led definition of style, the magazine worked to democratize domestic aesthetics for its white audience. Insisting that its middle-class female readers can engage in and learn taste by acquiring and consuming their publication, *The House Beautiful* states: “good taste can be, and practically always is, cultivated by those who have it just as a gift for music is cultivated by study and practice.”\(^\text{18}\) With the study of its commentaries and features, white women engaging with *The House Beautiful* developed a sense of American style through its carefully curated presentations of design. With the oversight and management of *The House Beautiful*’s taste making, the average housewife is able to nourish a self-sufficient sense of ‘good taste’ while avoiding the controlling and costly grasp of the interior decorator.\(^\text{19}\) The magazine shifts interior beautification to a consumer-driven pastime and the home an important expression of identity that reaffirms class power, the nation, and gender.

Situating taste as an obtainable skill through dedication, the magazine attempts to democratize design, but only for women with financial and temporal luxuries during the post-war period. The middle-class white woman, whose identity sits at the privileged intersection of social and economic capital, was the premiere audience for *The House Beautiful*, for they had enough time to read commercial magazines and remodel their homes. This perfectly positioned reader was marketed to as the “average” American, although in reality she was highly differentiated by hierarchies of power and access from other women of dissimilar race, class, ethnicity, and immigration status. *The House Beautiful* preached the obtainability of style while making “the

\(^{18}\) Lee, p 28.
\(^{19}\) Lee, p 28.
middle-class home the stage on which the drama of social differentiation was enacted: organized to display material goods as well as the efficiency and propriety of the household, single-family houses not only concealed domestic labor and family intimacy, but reinforced hierarchies of power by controlling access to private spaces for entertaining and leisure.”20 Able to live in a single-family home and incorporate new furniture, materials, and arrangements into the domestic interior, the economic position of the middle-class white woman allowed her to freely engage with The House Beautiful’s philosophy of stylistic obsolescence. In keeping with the fast-paced production of goods and temporally evolving notions of style, the middle-class reader could afford to exchange out-of-fashion aspects of her home for the newest trends. The House Beautiful’s concept of taste as consumer-driven was engendered with meanings of lifestyle and wealth of the middle-class housewife. Therefore, while the magazine configured American taste as a democratic and obtainable practice, the female reader of The House Beautiful could only engage in fashionable or updated design if she could afford it.

In addition to tasking the housewife with the study and execution of design, The House Beautiful believed “that [as] America is taking her proper place as an international power, it is deeply significant that she should be developing a national art type.”21 Although the First World War distinguished the United States as an international superpower, with a robust military and economic presence, the country still required nation building on the societal front through developing an American cultural identity. With a newfound feeling of importance and world duty, The House Beautiful emphasized that the national spirit would and should be properly maintained in commercial life, relying on national art types and domestic motifs to bring the

20 Friedman.
United States to its full societal, industrial, and political potential. Attributing this lacking of artistic culture to the country’s colonial ancestors who were deemed “too busy settling towns and founding schools [...] and literally beating back wilderness, to have the leisure to develop many distinct, original art motifs of their own,” The House Beautiful used the momentum of war to fill the void in national aesthetics. The magazine used articles to promote objects that represented its idea of a distinct American identity. The fence, for example, became an indication of culture, proclaiming the individuality and independence of the American homeowner within its bounds. A physical barrier and gauge of privacy, the fence adds an attractive charm to one's property as it displays one ability to conquer land and power (Appendix C). A mechanism for exhibiting taste and informed design, the fence to The House Beautiful embellishes the outward-most aspect of the domestic exterior and reflects elements of American values including land ownership, individualism, and consumption. The fence positions the single-family house to maintain itself in isolation, unlike other U.S. urban housing arrangements, like apartment complexes where the community shared tools, infrastructure, and space. Fenced off, middle-class families were expected to purchase their own goods and services apart from the wider community, which also linked the middle-class lifestyle and identity to the private ownership of material goods. Design elements such as the fence did work beyond just adding to the tasteful exterior. The concrete division between one household and another both visually and physically distinguished those who own property from those who do not. In promoting items like the single-family home’s

22 Crawford, p 184.
fence as quintessential American design elements, the magazine makes fashionable American living a distinct middle-class phenomenon embedded in exclusivity and privilege.

The magazine also promoted foreign objects in their American design philosophy. Given the international role assumed by the United States during and following the First World War, *The House Beautiful* claimed American design as a cross-cultural affair that enhanced middle-class sophistication and importance (Appendix D). The taking of motifs, artwork, and furniture from overseas and claiming them to be fundamental American design elements, allowed the magazine to associate the middle-class American identity to concepts of worldliness and globalized refinement. In particular, *The House Beautiful* heavily featured articles discussing Asian furniture and aesthetics in articles like “The Furniture of the Allies: Japanese Furniture” by Alice Van Leer Carrick or “Bringing Japan to America” by Alberta A. Smith and “A Chinese Dining Room: The Livable Side of Chinese Furnishings” (Appendix E). The appropriation of Asian decorative items in the American home was a performative way for white middle-class women and families to situate their economic, cultural, and racial elitism. Alice Van Leer Carrick highlights the way *The House Beautiful* and its array of writers worked to exoticize and commandeer Asian culture for the decorative benefit of the American middle-class home by stating:

> The obi of heavy brown and gold brocade, while a delightful bit against the wall, rouses the never-ending query of how little creatures so delicate and dainty as the Japanese women can wear these sashes of twenty-seven inches wide and four and a half yards long - with thick, soft linings - around their slender forms and still live. But wear them they do, from the narrow-printed cotton sash of the [Japanese] woman to the silks of varying colors and textures worn by the rich, which make such admirably decorative hangings.  

In poaching the obi, a belt worn with both traditional and martial-art-style Japanese clothing and uniforms, for decorative hanging in the American home, permits *The House Beautiful* readers to

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misuse the Japanese item for adornment purposes and cultural boasting (Appendix F). The appearance of cultural knowledge, sophistication, and appreciation of non-American design is accomplished through ornamenting the white middle-class home with Asian art, furniture, or goods like the Japanese obi, Korean chests, or Chinese embroideries. The magazine commodifies dignified Asian objects in the name of American elitism and whiteness, as Asian items provide *The House Beautiful* reader with a feeling of cultural power and authority expressed through the design of their homes. Asian items and Asian people, like the Japanese woman described above as a “little creature,” are objects for white middle-class amusement and used in the pursuit of decorative relevancy in America. The incorporation of Asian objects into the American design milieu highlights American commercial desire for foreign objects during a time of immense immigration restriction and exclusion in the United States. The racial dimensions of immigration restrictions during and immediately after World War I, continued a longstanding desire to exclude particularly Asian populations from the existing American one.²⁶ The magazine’s commodification and commercialization of Asian art, furniture, and textiles exposes a paradoxical relationship between the socio-political exclusion of Asian people in the U.S. and design inclusion of Asian objects in American Design. Therefore, the magazine’s centering of these objects allows white families to own elements of other non-white cultures without true interaction, understanding, or selfless appreciation, upholding American whiteness, nativism, and class power. In promoting Asian objects for decorative purposes, *The House Beautiful*

²⁶ While immigration into the U.S. was not constrained before World War I, the exclusion of Chinese and other Asian individuals beginning in 1882 was the exception to the rule of open immigration. The United States efforts to exclude and target the immigration of Asian people would continue into the twentieth century in legislation such as the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” of 1908, the Immigration Act of 1917, and the Johnson Reed Act of 1924. Mae M. Ngai, “Nationalism, Immigration Control, and the Ethnoracial Remapping of America in the 1920s,” *OAH Magazine of History*, Reinterpreting the 1920s, 21, no. 3 (2007), p 11–15.
communicates that foreign cultures can be bought, especially by women with the financial means to purchase *The House Beautiful* and participate in its American taste-making.

American taste according to *The House Beautiful* relies on the accumulation of items, spanning from objects imported from Asia to owning land big enough to support a single-family home. The magazine reaffirms the middle-class white woman as the new proprietor and connoisseur of American design through the purchasing of goods. Instructed to allocate a significant amount of time to engaging with American fashion through consumption, *The House Beautiful* refocuses the middle-class American housewife’s attention from the warfront to the home front. This transition to the domestic sphere following the end of World War I is detailed further in the following sections of this paper. In the next segments, I will discuss the use of social-science trends and the United States’ economic momentum to cultivate design and stimulate consumption inside the middle-class home. In particular, attention is payed to *The House Beautiful*’s commentary on parenting and household technology as topics for exploring gender, household labor, consumer culture, and the magazine’s role in facilitating a retreat to the home.

**Parenting: A Room of One’s Own**

Dramatic expansion and extension of capitalist markets and transformation of political life by the turn-of-the-twentieth century corresponded to a change in the American family. As the family farm and patrilineal businesses were replaced by the factory system, production migrated farther away from the household sphere where wage labor outpaced the family economy.\(^{27}\) With this transformation, domestic work of middle-class women became highly

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distinguished from men’s wage work, dividing the public sphere more from the private. Differentiated through the physical separation of home and work, the ideological connotations and prescriptions of gendered places was further emphasized in the capitalist economy. Married women experienced diminishing opportunities to help generate income, further limiting them to the domestic sphere where they would be tasked with taking care of children, nurturing their husbands, and maintaining the home.\textsuperscript{28} As a consequence, for the emerging American middle-class household, future prospects and prosperity was no longer determined by the collective production values of the household, but rather depended upon the husband’s wages and the wife's ability to rear competitive and capable children.\textsuperscript{29} Increasingly, childbearing and motherhood was valorized, and with one becoming synonymous with the other, mothering by the late-nineteenth century was defined by a national interest in the childhood of all Americans.\textsuperscript{30} Ideas of appropriate middle-class child-rearing also shifted dramatically as families, specifically mothers, were expected to provide children with the most updated version of modern parenting, discussed below. The industrialized middle-class woman bore fewer children and pursued more education than she had in earlier generations, positioning her well to understand and implement emerging parental pedagogies of the early-twentieth century featured in \textit{The House Beautiful}.\textsuperscript{31}

The entry of the United States into the First World War in 1917 only intensified the role and importance placed on motherhood and child-rearing. A disruption of existing American life, the war and its aftermath changed the conditions under which children grew up.\textsuperscript{32} Among the

\textsuperscript{28} F. Blau and A. Winkler, p 27.
\textsuperscript{29} Hays, p 33.
\textsuperscript{31} Scanlon, p 54
white middle-class, mothers found themselves the sole caregivers to their children as domestic workers migrated out of household-related work and into better-paying factory positions left available by enlisted men.\(^{33}\) During the war, the migration of domestic workers out of middle-class homes left it nearly servantless by 1918, making the post-war generation of middle-class children the first Americans of their class to be raised almost exclusively by their mothers.\(^{34}\) Shifts in the labor market and new child-rearing responsibility heightened the need for parenting models and philosophies to guide the white middle-class mother following the end of the First World War in 1919. Commercial publications such as *The House Beautiful* offered a mainstream avenue for popularized ideas regarding parenting to be disseminated to large swaths of American white women. During the immediate post-war period, *The House Beautiful’s* articles refocused the middle-class female consciousness from the soldiers abroad to the next generation of Americans, their children.

A key development in the United States following the end of the First World War in 1919 was the rise of social psychology with regard to childhood.\(^{35}\) One such development, discussed by historian Peter Stearns, was the move away from thinking of children as sturdy creatures who relied on good moral education to become respectable citizens, towards understanding children as vulnerable persons in need of protection and scientifically-grounded care in order to grow up well adjusted.\(^{36}\) These intellectual philosophies on how mothers should raise their children and

\(^{33}\) According to Dumeniel, due to the hierarchical segmented nature of the labor market by sex, race, class, and ethnicity, it is important to note that jobs in domestic labor declined for all women between 1910 and 1920. However, among black women the percentage who entered this work increased from 42.4% to 50.3%; still *The House Beautiful* assumed that the mothers had a more hands-on role in child-care and rearing than before the First World War. Lynn Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p 160-201.

\(^{34}\) Hays, p 33.; Scanlon, p 123


\(^{36}\) Schumann, p 10.
America’s future citizenry was disseminated through popular culture and mainstream publications such as *The House Beautiful*. Incorporating the booming post-war American economy into the lives of children and parenting, *The House Beautiful* and its cohort of editors promoted consumption as an integral part of childhood development. To the magazine, the pedigree of the middle-class white child depends on the family as a consumption unit where the embellishment of kids’ spaces and environments with American products fundamentally contributes to proper development (Appendix G). Far from being considered self-indulgent, the maternal reader of *The House Beautiful* is encouraged to introduce new goods into their domestic interior as a form of punctilious parenting. Just as every room in one’s domestic interior should be sculpted under consideration; the children’s realm demands as much attentive design thought as the rest of the house. *The House Beautiful* places heavy significance on emulating the personality of the child throughout the youngster’s interior, so much so that “the tendencies and tastes of each child should be studied, so that in time the room will begin to express his own particular likes.”37 Therefore, the mother is encouraged to be attentive to tastes, preferences, and desires of their offspring which turns parenting into a materialistic pursuit and children into a mode of consumption.

A child’s environment and domestic vernacular informs and influences their internal character development according to *The House Beautiful* and its writers. Tasteful decoration and design determine the essence of the child’s future self, so much so that “environment [as] a potent factor in the formation of character is no longer a mooted question, it is an accepted fact. The room of a child is its earliest and habitual environment.”38 Positioned as “accepted fact,” *The House Beautiful*’s Lacy Embury Hubbell introduces interior decoration as an important factor of

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good parenting, appealing to the desire for child-rearing advice grounded in psychology and the science of childhood at the time.³⁹ As the child's earliest and habitual environment, their room requires attentive consumption and energy to orchestrate for “which no mother can afford to ignore.”⁴⁰ According to The House Beautiful, neglect of the child’s interior is developmentally costly; however, attentiveness to and consideration of a youngster’s room also levied a fee of its own. The tailored decoration of a child's environment advertised by The House Beautiful’s pages, insinuated that this style of decorous parenting was class dependent. Fundamentally, only families with the financial means, social access, and/or political power to own a single-family home where children had their own rooms or individualized spaces could fulfil this praxis. The dedication of an entire area for a child was unquestionably expensive and mainly a privilege of middle- or upper-class families living in newly developing, class-segregated residential suburbs on the outskirts of urban centers.⁴¹ A parenting philosophy that mandated expansive domestic space equally demanded enough disposable income to dedicate towards consumption on behalf of the children. Curated furniture to match the desired temperament of the specific child meant updated and choreographed goods to adorn the room. Time and money to seek and contemplate adequate items for the youth’s bedroom or personalized space was an economic pleasure many in American lower-class households did not have. The House Beautiful’s promulgation of parenting circumscribed by good taste reaffirmed class power while also profoundly making furnishings and decor a determinant of childhood demeanor and development. In pushing consumption in parenting, the magazine also used accompanying advertisements and other visuals within its

³⁹ The academic, personal, and writing background of Lacy Embury Hubbell are unknown despite inquiry. No other articles are attributed to her authorship in other publications beyond The House Beautiful during the 1920s time-period.
⁴⁰ Hubbell, p 384.
pages to encourage the purchasing of goods (Appendix H). Furthermore, the childhood room and its furnishings become a molding environment for America’s future citizenry. The magazine continues this sentiment by stating:

So, the child’s room after all is not merely a room filled with bits of wood and cloth, a bed and curtains, a spot to sleep and dress in, though undeniably that is its first function; it is also - if it is the right sort of room - a place of rest, a place of stimulation, whose spirit silently creeps into the childish spirit and so plays it part in the shaping of a finer future race.  

Although unclear about what demographics constitute or make-up the “finer future race,” the female reader grasps the conceptual underpinnings that the child’s room will undoubtedly sculpt and contribute to the individual and communal prospects of their offspring.

*The House Beautiful* also constructs the childhood space as a modus operandi for socialization and the learning of cultural norms. In particular the magazine and its staff embed already existing expectations of gender into the child’s environment. Gendered modes of consumption, material goods, and the aesthetic atmosphere are described to the mother through magazine pieces discussing color, temperament, furniture and other character-shaping design techniques. An article written by Hanna Tachau, a magazine writer of interior decoration and antiques, details the introduction of gendered parenting and childhood design by comparing the curation of boys and girls rooms (Appendix I).  

According to *The House Beautiful*, proper decoration for the male child included more natural toned and grainier woods like oak which “is more suggestive of masculine comfort and solidity than mahogany, which seem to demand greater elegance and daintier things,” bookshelves for his favorite volumes, and plenty of space

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42 Hubbell, p 388.
43 Hanna Tachau was a writer on interior decoration and antiques for various shelter magazines including *The House Beautiful, Parents’ Magazine*, and *Arts and Decoration*. She studied at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women and was a charter member of the Early American Industries Association and a member of the Women’s Conference of the New York Ethical Culture Society. "Bliss Hanna Tachau." 1942. *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, p 21.
as to not impede his freedom. Significant attention is paid to ensuring that the boy’s room avoids delicacy, daintiness, and idleness, nurturing the idea that boys deserve freedom of movement and mind as well as furniture that centers on masculine characteristics like “solidity” or “comfort.” Books and educational material are a necessity for the boy’s development while also adding a decorative touch of color and pattern to the mantels or shelves. A small corner of the room might even operate as a refined gymnasium, with a few pieces of playful furniture or apparatuses, “for there is nothing so beneficial to a growing boy as his early morning exercise.”

Purchasing furniture built to stand a rough-and-ready tumble is consequential, for the boy’s room fosters a sense of sovereignty and leeway for mental exploration and physical activity.

The female child’s room is quite different, decoratively and psychologically speaking. In the girl’s bedroom, “she can express her love for frills and dainty colorings” unlike any other room in the house. Although curtains and dressing-tables can be “as frilly as her heart desires,” the female child must learn and value the importance of simplicity through the absence of knick-knacks and dust-collecting souvenirs. According to the magazine, “almost every very young girl passes through the stage of caring intensely for pale blues and pinks, for displaying photographs of intimate friends and of enjoying the proprietorship of her own desk.” An emphasis on softness, paleness, and cleanliness informs the space in addition to characteristics for which the girl must learn. The dressing-table, a mirrored stand traditionally used for applying cosmetics or jewelry, is important for teaching the female child lessons on beauty, appearance, and reflection. Unlike the male child, the girl is expected to reduce the visibility of personal items or souvenirs that are not as presentable as a framed photograph and take responsibility in the proprietorship of

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44 Tachau, p 204.
45 Tachau, p 230.
46 Tachau, p 204.
47 Tachau, p 204.
her material objects. Caring intensely for pale blues and pinks frames the girl child as having an early affiliation with design and natural inclination for interior decoration. Socialized to be presentable, palatable, and frilly, the girl child is responsible for the upkeep of her environment and its pristine maintenance, characteristics that she is encouraged to uphold as she grows up. So, while *The House Beautiful* believes in the importance of providing a suitable environment for the child, “for it may influence its whole development both physically and aesthetically,” the appropriate furnishings and consumption patterns differ for the child by gender. The boy’s space demands more robust furniture that stimulates play and curiosity, while girls must have delicate items that cultivate a sense of responsibility, poise, and simplicity. In short, the child’s room is not just plainly about paint colors or items kids need, but about the instillment of socially acceptable values and gendered characteristics. Efforts to sculpt and manufacture the proper design environment for children then becomes a significant part of the middle-class families parenting milieu and practice. While simply reiterating traditional gendered ideas is not revolutionary, *The House Beautiful* reconfigures and embeds them into modernizing commercial culture and parenting pedagogies of the early-twentieth century.

The transformation of parenting structures including the migration of domestic servants into the workforce during the First World War and the allocation of time, money, and effort towards soldiers abroad rather than kids at home, created the opportunity for the magazine to refocus the middle-class woman on child-rearing in the post-war period. Integrating social science and the psychology of childhood into its commentaries allowed *The House Beautiful* to appeal and market to the modern mother. As an environment for childhood development and proper socialization, the middle-class child’s bedroom offered the perfect opportunity to push the

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48 Tachau, p 230.
consumption of goods in a socially acceptable way. The mother had the responsibility to purchase adequate furnishings and implement gendered characteristics from an early age in order to ensure her child’s future prospects and prosperity. Returning her focus to the home, family, and kids, *The House Beautiful* made post-war purchasing a moral obligation of the white middle-class mother.

**Household Operations**

As new industries also surged to the forefront of the market following the First World War, the U.S. economy became organized on efficient production through economies of scale and on the consistent purchasing of goods by consumers.\(^\text{49}\) So while corporate capitalism was rearranging the country’s business models and reorganizing labor divisions, its industries brought new infrastructure and modern technology into the home. The American household witnessed changes in the technology of plumbing, heating, refrigeration, electricity, and more, all of which had a profound impact on domestic life. Incorporating the external market-capitalism’s ingenuity into the makeup of the residential interior changed the manner and mechanisms for which labor inside the household was conducted. Technology replaced the domestic servant, who previously conducted large amounts of household duties and child-raising responsibilities in the middle-class home. Transforming the middle-class single-family household into a servantless residence fundamentally changed labor relations and the distribution of household activities. While industrial progress replaced human servants with the mechanical, services such as water, gas, and electricity organized under the guidance of national corporations were also incorporated into

\(^{49}\) Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro, “‘House Beautiful’: Style and Consumption in the Home,” *Sociology* 30, no. 1 (February 1996): p 44.
scaffolding of the middle-class domestic reality. Encouraged to make use of the newest technology, housewives engaged fully with the force of American industry hoping it would provide them with higher standards of comfort and utility. Advertisers and mass publications, like *The House Beautiful*, became facilitators for the circulation of goods and promoting the national marketplace to female heads of households. As a result, the magazine utilized its pages to encourage the middle-class woman to modernize her house by purchasing emerging technology and adopting more efficient home-planning models.

In a monthly commentary collection titled “Electricity in the Home,” the magazine worked to introduce the latest labor-saving innovations to their middle-class, white, female readership. The disruptive nature of the First World War provided *The House Beautiful* with an opportunity to reimagine and optimize household operations of the American home in ways it was not allowed to do previously. Industrial innovation translated commercial technologies to the domestic sphere, bringing to the market new equipment that could do housework better, quicker, easier, and cleaner. The “Electricity in the Home” feature written by either Clara H. Zillessen or Earl E. Whitehorn, depending on the month, was the magazine’s premiere avenue for getting the middle-class housewife accustomed to new innovations (Appendix J). Using digestible topics like heating, lighting, cleaning, and plumbing, the collection of articles looked at typical problems of the household and provided twentieth-century answers. Dish-washing for example was the topic of *The House Beautiful*’s January 1920 “Electricity in the Home” article, which detailed the labor-saving role of the electric dish-washing machine - “a simple piece of

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52 Clara H. Zillessen appears to be a seasoned writer who published an array of works on various topics across shelter magazines such as *The House Beautiful*, *Ladies’ Home Journals*, and *Good Housekeeping*. No identifiable information could be found on the background of Earl E. Whitehorn.
mechanism which is all but human” that “revolutionizes the old system of washing dishes three
times a day.” Simple technological updates like adding a dish-washing machine, vacuum, or
new stove promoted both efficiency and comfort to the middle-class woman who was now left
with more household responsibilities as domestic servants moved to new industries. The
magazine uses new household challenges of the middle-class white woman to promote changing
technology as a way to revolutionize her gendered role while in actuality still upholding and
conforming to middle-class mores and gendered divisions of labor.

Understanding and capitalizing on the disappearance of the domestic servant from the
middle-class American home, *The House Beautiful* used other writing pieces to frame modern
updates to the middle-class white household as an ideal replacement for hired hands. Given the
difficulty of obtaining servants and economic costs of commanding them, commentary in the
magazine became interested in the mechanics of the servantless house. To supplement the
deficiencies of the wife and house, *The House Beautiful’s* method of house constructions needed
to include both better layouts, which is described in the following paragraph, and more efficient
technologies. Work ordinarily done in the house by servants was classified into four different
groups: cleaning, serving, cooking, and heating and lighting. In order to prepare for the future
conditions and alleviate the white middle-class women’s newfound anxiety of the servantless
home, the magazine promoted machines that had already been invented to replace the domestic
laborer in four classifications. For the first category of cleaning, which included dusting,
sweeping, mopping, the care of clothing, tidying up, and washing, the magazine proposed the
housewife must consider the vacuum machine, tile-floors, implementing a dressing-closet, and

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washers and dryers. Serving could be resolved by purchasing a kitchen or tea-table on rollers or “there are innumerable kinds of patent ice-boxes, or iceless refrigerators, kitchen cabinets, garbage receivers, gas and electric stoves, fireless cookers, revolving service doors between kitchen and pantry or dining-room, delivery doors through which packages may be delivered, and a thousand and one other devices and shortcuts” (Appendix K). 55 The remaining two classifications were also solved from buying the newest technology or home arrangement that supplemented the tedious and daunting tasks of domestic labor. Understanding the shifts and new household duties assumed by their white middle-class female readers, *The House Beautiful* nurtured and advertised the consumption of items such as stoves, tile-floors, and tea-tables. For the magazine, technology offers a solution for the evolving socio-economic conditions of the post-First World War era and is a financially obtainable solution for replacing servants in the middle-class white home.

The last aspect of *The House Beautiful*’s modernization of the house centered heavily on the wife's role in reconstructing the kitchen into a more calibrated and efficient room. Set as the optimal time for an “honest-to-goodness practical revision of [the] household,” the end of the war created a new world order that Americans desperately demanded to lead. 56 The middle-class family and home became the arena for Americans to display and implement progressive values that championed scientific advancement, ingenuity, and capitalism. So while the middle-class family may have been efficient in its accustomed manner for the past decade, the post-war discarded old mechanical ways for new products and systems of thought. 57 According to *The House Beautiful* writer Helen Irene Weed, the process of this reconstruction should begin at the

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55 Devereux, p 59.
57 Weed, “Reconstruction!” p 41.
heart of the home and arguably the most gendered room, the kitchen, where there is a great opportunity for intensive planning and introducing new domestic techniques and technologies. Weed explains that with the return of the man, who left months ago for overseas battle in the First World War, housewives must mold the household that once conserved charm, coziness, and modesty into a local of future prosperity, ingenuity, and efficiency. The magazine details that since most patriots acquiesced their domestic affairs for the demands of the war, the American home required much more attention, practical revision, and the return of the housewife. The devastated wartime kitchen no longer sufficed after 1918 because everything new awaited the middle-class woman’s kitchen, everything “from fireless gas ranges to a wee little mustard spoon.” The House Beautiful’s advertisements displayed dazzling new cooking items while its articles communicated how to cohesively pair them with concepts of innovative kitchen organization to ensure the utmost efficiency of the white middle-class household. Pulling from studies conducted by the Home Economics Department at the University of Wisconsin, The House Beautiful’s scientific arrangement of the kitchen instructed the “average woman” of efficient processes for designing her modern American cookery. A proper kitchen arrangement according to the magazine had the opportunity to cut down by half the average mileage of the housewife (Appendix L). The schema’s secret was simply grouping kitchen furniture into the following order: “first, the cupboard; second, the ice-box; third, the worktable; fourth, the stove; and fifth, the serving-table. The serving-table must be near the door leading to the dining-room.

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59 Weed, “Reconstruction!” p 41.

60 Helen Irene Weed, “Keeping Up with the Procession,” The House Beautiful, August 1919, HathiTrust. p 115.
Take this as your starting point and work backwards.”

Placing both equipment and their respective tools together, like a stove and cooking utensils, connected the tasks of cooking, plating, and presenting a meal. Although the expectation of housewives to perform the cooking and preparation of food persisted, the promotion of energy-saving techniques and arrangements in the kitchen made the inefficiencies of domestic work somewhat visible amongst the mainstream consciousness. *The House Beautiful’s* lessons on scientific arrangement of the kitchen revolutionized the middle-class home by streamlining cooking and reconstructing the processes of domestic labor while retaining and maintaining traditional gender roles.

The middle-class woman is encouraged to maximize comfort, minimize time, and keep up with evolving economic and household conditions by overtly consuming innumerable kinds of goods, services, and household plans. The push to frame products as a modern solution to post-war labor patterns in private and public spheres highlights the relationship between consumerism and the middle-class home. Addressing the change in domestic labor of the household, *The House Beautiful* illustrates broad cultural and economic shifts and the changing roles of women following the First World War. Technology then brings the middle-class family into the modern world of industry and consumption by refocusing the female gaze back onto household operations and its consistent upkeep and updating. This homecoming, facilitated by *The House Beautiful*, is a commercial pursuit that champions comfortability, new conceptualizations of domestic labor and technological efficiency.

**Conclusion**

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A reflection of the post-World-War-I era, *The House Beautiful* shows the manifestation of socio-economic and cultural conditions on the middle-class family and home. The retreat to the home and new household labor conditions became key to stimulating the economy and promoting consumer culture by *The House Beautiful* during this time period. New nation-building practices and desire for a national design identity promoted the consumption of objects and stylistic obsolescence. Wartime changes in childrearing practices and the anxiety of raising children misdirected women’s attention from production and employment outside the home to reproduction or the world inside the home. *The House Beautiful* and its content highlighted the complex relationship between reproduction (at home, in the family) and production (in the economy and workplace) on the white middle-class woman during the period of evolving capitalism following the First World War.\(^{62}\)

A content analysis of *The House Beautiful* publications from 1919 to 1921 spotlights important links between gender, popular and consumer culture, and changes in socio-economic circumstances succeeding the First World War. *The House Beautiful*’s philosophy and conception of American design and taste propagate notions of consumption, nation, class, and gender. Targeted to a reader with social positioning and economic means, the middle-class white woman is directed to purchase goods and services in order to have good taste. The single-family home is the foundation of the magazine’s fashionable design, for it encompasses the white nuclear family and displays its identity through goods like the fence, foreign objects, or modern

\(^{62}\) According to Hertz, “production (in the workplace) and reproduction (at home, in the family) may be structurally and even spatially distinct from one another, but both are linked by virtue of their essentialness to capitalism” and “reproduction and production have a complex relationship that affects women of all intersectionalities in capitalist societies.” Rosanna Hertz, Jane Mattes, and Alexandria Shook, “When Paid Work Invades the Family: Single Mothers in the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Journal of Family Issues*, October 2020, p 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X20961420.
kitchen. The single-family home also houses everyday activity, domestic labor, leisure and childcare, all activities for which the wife is expected to design and consume. Parenting in particular is given significant attention throughout *The House Beautiful*’s monthly editions because, to the magazine, design is one of the most influential mechanisms for proper childhood development. An important concept for both the future of the middle-class family and the nation as a whole, the stylized kid environment is a way mothers can influence development on a subconscious and physical level. Anything ranging from the gendering of children to having an early affiliation with tasteful living, the decoration of childhood spaces in the single-family home is fundamental. Furthermore, the raising of kids and the operations of the household within the middle-class household become a newfound responsibility of the post-war woman due to the migration of domestic servants into the formalized labor force. In short, the magazine encourages the housewife to consume technology and design in order to manage, stabilize, and modernize her day-to-day activities.

The middle-class female reader of *The House Beautiful* both purchased the shelter magazine’s content in addition to the goods it promoted and advertised within its pages. The promotion of market goods and consumer-driven design by *The House Beautiful* instilled a need in its readership to buy products that maintain a middle-class lifestyle. The power of the magazine in appealing to class structures, parenting anxieties, and more-difficult household management lies in its ability to embed objective mechanisms in a world of consumption. Therefore, consumer culture, a concept often associated with mid-twentieth century and post-war America can be seen manifesting in shelter publications like *The House Beautiful* around the time of the First World War. While this paper conducts a content analysis on *The House Beautiful* magazine over a truncated timeline spanning just three years between 1919 and 1921,
further investigation into the connections between family, gender, and consumer culture over longer time periods may prove fruitful. *The House Beautiful’s* cultural prominence as a shelter magazine after both World Wars could provide a better understanding of consumer cultures continuation and manifestation in the middle-class woman and family. Furthermore, a cross-media comparison of *The House Beautiful* to other shelter magazines in the post-First World War era could provide a better analysis of wider socio-economic circumstances and concepts of design and taste.
Appendix

Appendix A: Various Covers of *The House Beautiful*. Source: *The House Beautiful* v. 45, February 1919; v. 47, January 1920; v. 47, March 1920; v. 48, July 1920; v. 48, October 1920; v. 49, April 1921; v. 50, September 1921; v. 50, October 1921.
## Appendix B: Indexing of *The House Beautiful* Articles.

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<td>A Chinese Dining Room: The Lovely Side of Chinese Furnishings By Virginia Nobile (411)</td>
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the next arrivals.” Nor are these mats expensive; they can be easily replaced, though a longer life is guaranteed to them than they would have with us on account of the gentle Japanese custom of removing one’s shoes before entering a house. Tonight I am writing these words with the bitter knowledge that out-of-doors it is muddy, muddy March, and how I wish I might awake tomorrow and have the headlines greet me with the news that this pleasant Oriental habit had been made a nation-wide law in America.

“Upon these mats the people eat, sleep and die. They represent the bed, chair, lounge, and sometimes table, combined.” Observe my little engaging gentleman sitting cosily in the miniature house. Before him is his lacquered tray with its multitude of dishes, lacquer and porcelain bowls and cups for sake and tea. The details are perfect even to a pair of tiny ivory chopsticks. Really, this small room is an excellent model to study. It is the type commonly known as a guest-room. General rooms, family rooms, rarely have either angles or projections; they are almost always unvaryingly square. This, on the contrary, has a sort of cutting-bay effect that is divided into two parts: the left-hand one known as the chigai-dana (different shelves) holding a small closet or press and various shelves, the other called the tokonoma (bed space), a clear recess where the shakemono or picture is hung. Usually, too, there is some other decoration—in this case a miniature thousand-year-old pine—but frequently a rare vase of beautiful flowers, an incense burner or a figure in pottery on a stand of lacquer. Individual taste in these ornaments plays its part, of course, and the adjoining objects and pictures are changed frequently to avoid monotony, but in general effect these rooms can vary but little since they are destined to the high honor of the tea ceremonial. I suppose that tea-drinking in Japan will always have a quasi-religious aspect. You know it was brought to these islands over a thousand years ago by Buddhist priests, not as a beverage, but as a medicine to keep themselves awake while reciting their interminable sutras. “Afterwards it was given to the congregations for a like pur-

pose.” Which eloquent phrase makes me regret that this habit, also, has not been adopted in rural New England. The ceremonial itself is too long, too complex for me to attempt to explain, but it is both impressive and effective, for the most precious porcelains are invariably used, and the tea-bowls and water-jars are lovely enough to rack a collector with sharpest envy.

Evidently the quaint little scene depicted by some long-ago potter in the old Satsuka jar represents a tea ceremonial: two gentle pinky-blue ladies and a little child enjoying the glory of gilded cups and the stately, green-tufted pine tree without. Apparently, too, a guest-room in the house of prosperity, for the decorations are elaborate, and the round window cunningly latticed with bamboo. Like the unconscious testimony of these old pottery pieces, these revealing prints, as accurately truthful as some record in an old diary. For instance, the girl before her dressing-mirror, her little, low table of vanities, the loveliest color-study of subtle blues and greens, if only you could see it, really! In her flowing draperies does she resemble the ladies Wistaria Blossom, Cloth-of-Silkand Deep Snow who went with their attendants to Asakusa to gaze at peonies? She is very charming, and they say that the reflected face in the looking-glass is not her own, but—the like one of our American Hallowee’en beliefs—the countenance of the man that she is to marry. They say, too, you know, that “The soul of a man is his sword. The soul of a woman is her mirror.” Therefore I am showing you the symbol of the feminine Japanese spirit both inside and out. The mirror and case are about eight years old, and even in Japan this type is disappearing and growing harder to get. The case is brown lacquer with a delicate yet florid gold design of the conventionalized peony as decoration. The mirror itself is smooth and polished metal on one side; on the other are engraved “The Seven Treasures of the Gods of Good Luck.” The halls in the centre are the treasure; the storks signify congratulation and long life, the hammer of Good Luck when pounded would pour forth any amount of money; the cape and hat rendered the wearer
invisible; there are the sacred tortoises with the many tails; the accompaniments of gifts; the key to the sacred treasure; the sacred rolls; and the inscription, “That you may have all happiness.” With such elaboration of design, can we wonder that these mirrors are cherished heirlooms? The dressing-table is, perhaps, as much of a piece of furniture as one is likely to come across; as for the cabinet or Hitsu, it comes from the Pennsylvania Museum, that is extremely rare. Marcus Baum mentions three that were given in 1637 by the third Shogun to his daughter as a wedding present, and they seem no finer than this one with its Tsuishu, Rito, and gold lacquer work; its inlays of jade, malaclishi, ivory, tortoise-shell and pearl. Fit for a princess, too, you see, but here in America for all of us to admire.

So much in art we owe to the Japanese: they have taught us a new way to look at life; the beauty of simplification and elimination; the fineness of a great deal that Otherwise (Continued on page 353)
Appendix F: Images of interiors included in the article “Bringing Japan to America.” Source: Alberta A. Smith, “Bringing Japan to America,” The House Beautiful, May 1920, HathiTrust.
Quite a Korean group is made by the low screen (it is high enough for people who sit on the low floor mats of that country) and the beautiful little Korean chests beyond the small door. The beautiful engraving of the brasses, with which their chests are always embellished, shows this art at its best.

WHERE is the kiddie who does not delight in a hoop? These can be bought in birch, painted in four bright colors, and in round-edged mahogany finish with a stick to match. The first sells for 25 cents and the mahogany for $1.75 to $2, depending on the size.

NEAR the sewing-machine we found, freshly imported, millinery sets for dolls. These sets include nine hats of different shapes and styles, all to be trimmed, and the array of trimming material is indeed bewildering. For $5, these sets would solve the question of many a day when it is too rainy for a little girl to play out-of-doors.

A SECOND imported set contains instructions and materials for modeling, bead work, basketry, weaving, and marble mosaic work. This outfit is very complete and the variety makes its appeal to boys as well as girls. Price $12.50.

BAGS of marbles for $1 and bags of jack straws for 15 cents are cheery forerunners of spring!

BATH-TUBS for dolls, in models patterned after full-size tubs, come at $1.25. They are 5 inches deep and 11 inches long; blue on the outside and painted white inside.

AIRPLANES ‘guaranteed to fly’ can be bought unassembled with all parts included and instructions for building. These cost from $6 for a ‘Bleriot’ type to $10 for a ‘Curtiss’ naval seaplane. They are surely wonderful toys for a boy, with a real lesson in the background.
he delights, and which he can change and re-adjust as his taste develops.

Pictures and books are companions that should be cultivated early in life, so that they may become friendlier and more clear as the years go on. It is our duty to see that the child meets worthy book and picture friends, and all unconsciously he will develop standards of good taste from which he will never depart.

Some of the greatest artists throughout the ages have depicted child life or scenes that would interest him, not only sympathetically, but with rare grace and skill, and reproductions of these masterpieces can be had for little cost. There are portraits of children in quaint costumes by Velasquez, Reynolds and Van Dyke, cherub heads and angels by a number of the old masters, spirited presentments of a young David, and the busts of children by Donatello. From the lesser lights, but very charming, are the colored prints of Maxfield Parrish, the more intimate scenes of childhood by Jessie Wilcox Smith, and many delightful Japanese prints of animals and flowers. A fine reproduction of the head of Washington or Lincoln, as a permanent thing to live with, is an inspiration for a child. As he grows older, he will want to hang upon his walls decorations that meet with his changing tastes so that many of his pictures will necessarily be but transient visitors.

It is not desirable to show too many pictures at a time. Bare walls are very restful, and good things are better known and appreciated when few are seen at a time. The pictures should be carefully hung with an eye to color and composition, and not disposed of in a haphazard way without giving serious thought to their arrangement. Pictures find their way into a child's room, not only as wall decorations, but as illustrative matter as well, so that the selection of books as an educational art factor is of great importance. Instead of the many trivial picture books that we see so prominentely displayed with blatant covers and crude pictures, why not seek the charming reprints of Kate Greenaway, books illustrated by Walter Crane, the delightful drawings of childhood by Bousset de Monval and those fascinating conceptions of Arthur Rackham, that make fairy tales and poems take on a new glamour? There are many other delightfully illustrated books too numerous to mention.

I also want to say a few words about the furnishing of a room for older boys and girls. Very often a boy's room is at the top of the house where there are dormer windows and a sloping roof; but unless the ceiling is very low, this is not objectionable, for he probably has greater space here to work and exercise in, and certainly more privacy than if he occupied a downstairs apartment. Generally one large room has to do duty as bedroom, study, workroom and gymnasium, and when this is so, the quantity of furniture must be very limited. A bed, table and chest of drawers are all that are required. They should be substantially built (Continued on page 47).
The electric ironing-machine itself is a very simple, understandable and easy-to-use device. A polished hardwood table is mounted on iron legs, and on this table stand the two working parts of the ironer—the padded roll and the shoe—with a narrow feeding table above, as the pictures show. There is a little electric motor below, with a belt that drives the gears at the end of the roll, which controls its speed and direction. The padded roll revolves, with its surface in contact with the hot ironing-shoe, and as you feed the clothes onto the roll, it carries them around over the concave surface of the shoe and drops them upon the table, ironed smooth and dry. The shoe is usually heated by gas, but where gas is not available, it can be heated electrically. Gas, however, is more economical and quite as convenient and satisfactory, and, therefore, is generally preferred.

There are a number of electric ironing-machines on the market, all very similar in general design and in their use. Some of them have special refinements, however, which are of distinct advantage and should be considered in selecting. One feature of particular convenience is the wide-opening shoe, for it greatly facilitates the waxing of the ironing surface. For of course, the surface of the shoe must be kept from rust, just as the surface of a flatiron must also be protected, and the way is easy. When the ironing is done, and while the shoe is still hot, simply (continued on page 199)
Appendix K: Advertisement offering to solve the problem of the servant-less house. Source: “Solving the Servant Problem,” The House Beautiful, August 1920, HathiTrust.
References


