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### Visualizing Housewives: The Representation of Female Domesticity in Stock Imagery

#### Abstract

In today's digital age, photography is mass-produced and mass-consumed through digital channels. Stock images are used for advertising, design, and marketing and are influential in shaping consumer decisions and consumer culture. By defining images as cultural objects that are contingent, flexible, and changeable such as "black boxes", it can be possible to discuss how they continuously articulate meanings and shape the consumer culture. The use of the social science approach is limited in the academic discussions of stock photography. In this study, stock images are viewed as forms of visual representation that construct the perceptions of social phenomena through the articulation of meanings. In that regard, it is stressed that they may contribute to the social construction and negotiation of gender identities and roles. The aim of this paper is to interpret the gender representations of housewives in nine selected examples of stock images. The essay focuses on how the concept of housewives is depicted in stock photography and how socially constructed gender roles and stereotypes are materialized through it. Paul Frosh's methodology for surveying stock images, and Erving Goffman's theory of gender representation are used for the analysis. The essay finds essential features that communicate the happy housewife ideal. It is suggested that through the conjoint use of elements of domestic work and leisure time, the gendered position of the women is portrayed in a positive light in a way to commodify female domesticity. In addition, the representation of the housewife image in stock photography carries elements that place women into subordinated positions. The study highlights that ritualization of subordination is utilized in most images through the use of elements such as smile, physical lowering, body can't and head can't. The passive and dependent presentation of the housewife is also supported through the techniques of licensed withdrawal and feminine touch. As a result, stock images associate happiness with the role of the housewife and draw a representation of the housewife using passive and dependent elements. In this context, they reinforce the unequal gender roles by supporting the traditional happy housewife discourse.

**Keywords:** Stock photography, Housewives, Gender.

### Ev Kadınlarını Görselleştirmek: Stok Görsellerinde Kadının Evcilliğinin Temsili

#### Öz

Günümüz dijital çağında fotoğraflar ve diğer görsel ürünler, dijital kanallar aracılığıyla seri olarak üretilmekte ve tüketilmektedir. Geniş kitleler tarafından reklam, tasarım ve pazarlama için kullanılan stok görseller tüketici kararlarını ve tüketici kültürünü şekillendirmede oldukça etkili olmaktadır. Stok görselleri "kara kutular" gibi bağıl, esnek ve değişken kültürel nesnelere olarak tanımlayarak onların nasıl yeni anlamlar inşa ettiğini ve tüketim kültürünü nasıl şekillendirdiğini tartışmak mümkün olabilir. Bu çalışmada stok görüntüleri, anlamların eklenmesi yoluyla sosyal fenomenlerin algılarını oluşturan görsel temsil biçimleri olarak görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerinin ve rollerinin toplumsal inşasına ve müzakeresine katkıda bulunabilecekleri vurgulanmaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı, seçilmiş dokuz stok görüntü örneğinde ev kadınlarının cinsiyet temsillerini yorumlamaktır. Makale, stok fotoğraflarında ev kadını kavramının nasıl tasvir edildiğine ve toplumsal olarak inşa edilmiş cinsiyet rollerinin ve stereotiplerin stok fotoğrafları aracılığıyla nasıl somutlaştırıldığına odaklanmaktadır. Seçilmiş görsellerin Paul Frosh'un stok görüntüleri incelerken kullandığı metodolojisine ve Erving Goffman'ın toplumsal cinsiyet temsili teorisine dayanan bir analizi sonucunda mutlu ev kadını idealini ileten temel özellikler tespit edilmiştir. Ev işi ve boş zaman aktivitelerine dair öğelerin birlikte kullanılması yoluyla kadının cinsiyetlendirilmiş konumunun kadın evcilliğini metalaştıracak şekilde olumlu bir ışık altında tasvir edildiği ileri sürülmektedir. Buna ek olarak stok görsellerde ev kadını temsili kadınlara ikincil konumlara yerleştiren unsurları taşıdığı görülmektedir. Çalışma, boyun eğmenin ritüelleştirilmesinin çoğu görselde gülümseme, fiziksel alçalma, vücut eğme ve baş eğme gibi öğelerin kullanımı yoluyla kullanıldığını vurgulamaktadır. Ev kadınının pasif ve bağımlı tasviri, lisanslı geri çekilme ve kadınsı dokunuş teknikleriyle de desteklenmiştir. Sonuç olarak stok görselleri mutluluğu ev kadınlığı rolü ile ilişkilendirmekle beraber

ev kadını temsili pasif ve bağımlı öğeler kullanarak çizmektedir. Bu bağlamda geleneksel mutlu ev kadını söylemini destekleyerek eşitlik dışı toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Stok fotoğrafçılığı, Ev kadınları, Toplumsal cinsiyet.

## 1. Introduction

In today's consumer society, people come across mass-produced photographic images that are used for advertisement every day. Frosh calls them the wallpaper of consumer culture because although they are part of everyday life, they are like wallpapers, everywhere and usually overlooked, such as the "obscure" industry that creates them; these images are the product of stock photography which produces most of the photographs that are used for advertising, design and marketing (Frosh, 2003, p. 1-7). The social identities of people are shaped in relation to consumption and thus media is one of the factors that shape those identities. Stock photography produces images as commodities and functions as a tool that promotes commodities. In other words, as well as it is a cultural practice, photography can be deeply oriented in shaping the consumer culture. How the image is interpreted by the consumer and its meaningfulness to the consumer is very important in terms of the advertisement of commodities (Ibid). It is possible to look at cultural objects such as images, content, and information as contingent, flexible and changeable entities which can be shaped by various factors (Frosh, 2003, p. 14). Latour (1987) calls these "black boxes". A black box refers to a setting that has become relatively stable and therefore its contents do not need to be discussed anymore and are considered as a fact. Until the box is reopened to be contested, its contents and structure are taken for granted. By trying to understand these "black boxes" which keep changing and continuously generating meaning it is possible to see how culture behaves as production (Frosh, 2003, p. 14).

"Housewives" has been chosen as a category for this essay, because of its widespread use in consumer advertising, and such as the concept "romantic couples", "housewives" is usually portrayed in stock photography. In this manner the socially constructed gender roles are also supported in photography (Hudgins, 2020, p. 3-4) and this reinforces the taken for granted power relations between men and women, demonstrating the essentialist ideas that specific gender roles for both genders as natural characteristics arising from their sex (Mottier, 2004, p. 277). In this essay, examples from stock photography are analyzed deriving from Frosh's methodology that he uses in his case study.

## 2. Relevant Literature

After the well-known sociologist Erving Goffman published *Gender Advertisements* (1979) which studied the gender representations of women in advertisements, more recent studies applied his theoretical underpinning to understand portrayals of gender in advertisements. For instance, by applying Goffman's theory as a basis; Belknap and Leonard (1991) analyzed gender relations focusing on images in magazine advertisements, Kang (1997) studied advertisements in American magazines, Holden (2000) studied Japanese television advertising, Bell and Milic (2002) looked at gender stereotypes in display advertisements in Australian magazines, Lindner (2004) analyzed images of women in fashion magazine advertisements, Chhabra et al. (2011) focused on gender images in the vacation guides from the US destination marketing organizations, Signoretti (2017) statistically measured gender patterns in Italian print advertisements. Lately these scholars have also begun to focus on gender displays in the digital media. Doring and Poschl (2006) looked at gender stereotypes in German mobile phone advertisements, while Doring et al. (2016) and Baker and Walsh (2018) investigated gender stereotyping and self-presentation of gender identities on Instagram respectively. Other prominent scholars who analyzed digital media within the framework of gender display were Butkowski et al (2019) who focused on Instagram selfies (self-photos) Kraus and Martins (2017) who explored street-style fashion blogs. To date most of the research that used the gender display

framework has been either focused on print media or digital social media outlets, conversely, the focus of this study's investigation is stock photographs available in image banks, which shall be analyzed as "cultural texts" (Milestone & Meyer, 2012, p.3) through Goffman's theoretical framework.

### 3. Theoretical Background

The study derives from the sociologist Erving Goffman's (1979) ideas in relation to the depiction of females in advertisements. Goffman argues that the portrayal of women in these images bear gender specific characteristics. His study shows that women's body postures, facial expressions, size and positioning relative to the male, head-eye aversion, touching a specific object or herself create a subordinated image of the female (Goffman, 1979, p. 28-84). This subordination is realized through the "infantilization" of women that could be classified by means of six dimensions: "relative size", "the feminine touch", "function ranking", "the family", "licensed withdrawal", "the ritualization of subordination" (Ibid). Goffman theorizes that women are portrayed in a "licensed withdrawal" as they are often "pictured in engagements which remove them psychologically from the social situation at large" and therefore they are portrayed as dependent on others who may be present or not present in the image (Goffman, 1979, p. 57). It can be argued that a woman in a licensed withdrawal seems weak and in a subordinate position to the men. Goffman adds that "the feminine touch" is also salient in the portrayals of females in advertisements; women are often presented "using their fingers and hands to trace the outlines of an object" or seem to "barely touch it". This is in contrast with the male images that seem to hold and manipulate the objects (Goffman, 1979, p. 29). "Ritualization of subordination", is another category that describes the positioning of the female body through techniques such as physical lowering, a body without a head, body can't, head can't, bashful knee bend, smiles, that portray the woman in a subordinated position in relation to men (Goffman, 1979, p. 40-56). "Relative size" refers to the tendency for men to be depicted as bigger or taller than women. Goffman also argues there is a "function ranking" between the male and female genders; whereas the man in the image is cast in the executive role, the woman is often cast in a supporting role. "The family" is another category that refers to the relationships represented among family members. Goffman emphasizes that when a family is portrayed, there is a special mother-daughter bond and a father-son bond that seems distant from it (Bell & Milic, 2002, p.204). This study uses only three of Goffman's categories ("the feminine touch", "licensed withdrawal", and "the ritualization of subordination") since the images used in the analysis depict housewives alone or with children and do not involve male adults. As Kang (1997, p.985) also argues, sometimes when other types of stereotyping such as "relative size" and "function ranking" are not present in the images, "body display" that is characterized by nudity or body revealing clothes can be an important way of stereotyping the female body. Therefore, "body display" has been included as another category for analyzing the housewife images.

### 4. Frosh's Methodology for Understanding Stock Photography

Paul Frosh (2003, p. 118) analyzes romantic couples as a case study because this concept is widely used in stock photography for consumer advertising and marketing. He (2003, p. 119) claims that romantic images aim at the consumer market and through the "commodification of leisure time" these images give the message of selling happiness by means of selling goods, as stock photography does in general.

Frosh (2003) defines the limits of his category of "romantic couples" by narrowing down his choices to the photographs of couples who engage in romantic behavior and determines the boundaries which characterize romantic couples as follows:

**Romantic Look:** In romantic images, couples may be gazing at each other or facing each other, kissing or gazing into the distance. The gaze of the couples is important according to Frosh because they represent romantic feelings. If the couple is looking at the camera rather than at each other it may represent or borrow from the typical exercise of posing for the camera for creating memories of intimate moments.

**Pose:** Frosh defines the pose of romantic couples as one which presents mental and physical intimacy, rather than only sexual intimacy.

**Setting:** Setting is also very important according to Frosh because it helps the viewer to create meaning while looking at the images. In the images that portray romantic couples either the setting usually makes it possible for the couple to isolate themselves or there is no physical setting. Especially avoiding the work environment as a setting is very important as it becomes difficult for the viewer to link it to the feelings of a romantic intimacy; romance is about leisure more than work. Also, the images that involve the bedroom as a setting are not considered in this category since they refer to the fulfillment of physical desires and they are difficult to associate with spiritual and mental intimacy.

**Conventional Symbols:** Frosh also looks at the role of objects in the image that can be associated with romance such as flower bouquets, candles, rings and wine.

#### 4.1. Applying Frosh's Methodology on Housewife Images

According to Frosh, stock photography materializes stereotypes. It is possible to see the social categories embedded in these images. He (2003) defines materialization as “the incessant emergence of an object from formlessness into physical distinctness and cultural intelligibility”. In the examples of stock photography that are chosen for this essay, stereotypes in relation to housewives are depicted. There exist many roles that can be associated with the stereotypes about the housewife. In the images selected, women are portrayed while they are cooking/preparing food, in close interaction with the kid or engaging in a cleaning activity.

It might be difficult to determine whether an image involves the depiction of a housewife as the image might be portraying a single woman who is busy with housework. So how is it possible for the viewer to think of the woman in the picture as a housewife? “Housewife” as a category can be defined by looking at some features in the image, as Frosh does. Although he focuses on these features in order to define the specific category of “romantic couples”, it could be fruitful to be inspired by the characteristics he looks at, because what he looks at are general components that demonstrate the emotion, interactions and the setting that are conveyed in the image. “Gaze” in the image gives us an idea about the emotion or the interaction. It stands to reason that “Pose”, “Setting” and “Conventional Symbols” in the housewife images would also be particular to the stereotypes of housewives. “Clothing” which is not involved in Frosh’s study is also added in this study as a category because it could represent the stereotypes that could be related to housewives. The following part explains the process that the housewife images were selected in relation to the five categories.

#### 4.2. Image Selection Process

The websites pixabay.com and pexels.com and unsplash.com were used for image search. To make sure that the research complied with academic ethics and copyright rules, the criteria for selecting the websites were determined as follows: the website had a license that allowed free commercial and non-commercial use of all images and did not require permission from the content creators.

The term “housewife” is described in the dictionary (Collins, n.d.) as “a married woman who does not have a paid job, but instead looks after her home and children.” Relevantly, the keywords “housewife” and “mom and child” were used on the mentioned websites to find

images that would portray the image of a married woman who looks after her home and children. Images which were suitable for analyzing the concept of housewife within the categories of gaze, pose, setting, conventional symbols and clothing were finally selected.

**Gaze:** While analyzing couples, Frosh looks at “romantic look” as it is suitable in terms of his concept. In “housewife” images, the woman in the picture usually has a smiling or happy facial expression and is also usually accompanied by a child. In those pictures she has a smiling face and considerate eyes while she looks at who are thought to represent her children in the image. If the image portrayed a woman who was looking at a child with a furious gaze, it could be more difficult to think of her as the mother since the idea of “mother” has traditionally been constructed as nurturing, caregiving, protecting due to the traditional gender roles associated with women (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 101, 363). Although a woman who is staring at the kid with angry eyes would be difficult to associate with the concept of “mother” and thus housewife, the interpretation and understanding of the image is also related to the setting involved. For instance, if the kitchen was used as the setting, the female with a furious gaze could be considered as a mother who is angry with her child. On the other hand, if streets were used as the setting, she could be regarded as a stranger. This should also make us consider the importance of the pose; for instance, if the woman is holding the baby in her hands, or on her lap, it makes the viewer think that she is the mother. In the images with a child, the female usually has a protective look, and holds a smiling face while she is looking at the child. The housewife hardly has an angry or sad face while she is in the same scene with the child, as the image tries to convey a happy feeling.

**Pose:** If the housewife is with the child, she is either posing with the child or looking at the camera together. In some photos they are doing housework together. It is interesting that in Western based photography, the gender roles are not the case for children; it is possible to see a little boy helping her mother cook. In the images which portray the housewife with a child, she gives a pose that demonstrates her as caring and playful. When the housewife is depicted alone, she is often smiling and seems happy to be engaging in house chores.

**Setting:** The setting for the housewife is usually the kitchen and it is possible to see that images portray a housewife engaging in activities other than cooking in the same setting, such as cleaning and ironing. The kitchen is a setting that is highly associated with the housewife concept. Moreover, it can be noticed that the images portray housework as a fun activity that sometimes involves children.

**Conventional Symbols:** There are many objects that are used to portray a housewife; she mostly uses kitchen utensils, and food as she is usually cooking, if she is not cooking, she is usually doing other house chores. In those images, the housewife is accompanied by conventional symbols such as a table, food, tableware, stove, cleaning appliances and sometimes a child. The objects used for cooking or cleaning might not be direct symbols of housewives, but they are associated with the traditionally constructed roles of women/housewives inside the domestic sphere.

**Clothing:** Clothing is another category that is not involved in Frosh’s analysis, but it has been added for the analysis of “housewife” images. Clothing always symbolizes people’s place and role in a society; it must be the same for the housewife as well. If a male person was portrayed as a househusband, it would be appropriate to shoot his photo while wearing an apron, because if he is not wearing it but, cooking in the image, it is possible for the viewer to think that he is a single guy living by himself, but being a “housewife” or “househusband” is different. It involves the idea of division of labor, the viewer of the image would think if the man were a “househusband” then probably his wife would be working outside as the “breadwinner”.

### 5. Analysis: Housewife as a Gendered Role

The housewives in stock photography can be related to strong representations of gender distinctions related to power relations between men and women. According to Connell (2005, p. 77) there is a power relationship between men and women which is constructed around the patriarchal structure that is characterized by the dominant position of men and subordination of women. Goffman looks at this domination and subordination that can be portrayed in the romantic images (Frosh, 2003, p. 133). Goffman (1976, p. 77) also states that the affectional gestures between males and females represent “protector and protected, embracer and embraced, comforter and comforted, supporter and supported, extender of affection and recipient thereof” and therefore the male domination and female subordination occur in the gentlest way through gestures of affection.

The images of housewives which are selected in this study do not involve a male adult, but by looking at the activity of the women in the images it is possible to see that they are in a subordinated position; the viewer who interprets the image takes for granted the role of the housewife to engage in activities such as housework and child rearing, as well as socialization with the child. This subordinated position of women is historically rooted in capitalism. Mies (1988, p. 89) argues, with the sexual division of labor under capitalism: “The house and the family were defined “into nature” - “private, domesticated nature” where labor power was produced, and the factory was defined as the place for public, social (human) production”. In that sense, capitalism “housewifized” women by assigning them to the domestic space, while granting men more privileged positions in the public space. Stock photography also portrays the notion of domestic space being traditionally linked with housewives. In the images of romance photography that Frosh chooses, the settings do not specify an identifiable location (Frosh, 2003, p. 138), in order to eliminate the broader social existence, other people and objects. It signifies an entry into “a euphoric realm of leisure with no space” (Ibid, p. 139). The images of housewives are different in that sense; they involve the house -specifically, the kitchen- as the space and the place for “work”. Nevertheless, in these images, the activities of housework and childcare are also portrayed as leisure time. In the figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 the housewife and children are either baking, preparing food or cooking together. These are depicted as fun activities and leisure time that the housewife shares with children. Although the act of spending time with the child is depicted as a fun activity, it is also the “responsibility” of the housewife, it is the “work” that the housewife should do. However paradoxical the coexistence of the impressions of work and leisure time may seem, the portrayal of the housewife’s work as a leisure time activity contributes to the commodification of happiness through these images, and in that sense, to the strengthening of the traditional housewife discourse as well as the hierarchical gender structure.

Indeed, the depictions of a happy housewife have been salient in the media for a long time; Friedan criticizes the “happy housewife heroine” that is an idealized but unrealistic construction of the housewife that is included in the media as happy, educated, married with a successful husband and with many children. She asserts, this image of housewife was constructed in relation to the “feminine mystique” that has come to define the boundaries of what a housewife should comply with and necessitates them to maintain domestic roles in order to meet the standards of domestic femininity, and maintain an identity (Friedan, 2001, p. 15, 39). It is therefore that in these images, women are depicted with smiles on their faces, as part of the ritualization of subordination. They are not portrayed in relation to males, but their portrayals are likely to smile, look passive, and have tilted heads or bodies (see Goffman 1979).

Based on the idea that happiness is learned and maintained through discourse, Drew *et al.* (2016) assert “happiness is something that is achieved by striving towards certain subjecthoods” which happiness is discursively associated with. In figure 7, a woman is smiling and looking at

children affectionately while they are preparing sandwiches together. The two children are also smiling and look playful, as they are also having snacks. The woman is not only helping them feed but also seems to be spending a fun time with them. Such an image posits the idea that nurturing and showing affection to a child is desirable and worthy for a woman. In figure 8, the woman and child are portrayed as a mother and daughter who are preparing baking ingredients together, and they both seem to have a great time. The mother's gaze is directed downwards and she is smiling, enjoying the task. Figures 5 and 6 also portray women and children who enjoy cooking together. In figure 6, the woman is helping the child climb up to the stove and put sauce on the pan, as he has an impish smile on his face. Figure 5 which has a similar theme, portrays mother-daughter time together making pizza as a leisure activity, meanwhile the daughter is portrayed goofing around and making funny gestures. In another picture (Figure 2), a woman is sitting in front of a table and seems to enjoy baking. The housewife images in that sense, are part of the discourse that associates happiness with the traditional role of the housewife and in that manner, portray the subjecthood of the housewife as valuable and acceptable.

In gender research, the term "gaze" has been studied in relation to the attributes of masculinity or femininity. As Bartky (2020, p. 451) also argues "Under male scrutiny, women will avert their eyes or cast them downward", in patriarchal societies female gaze is often directed downward or into the void (Nakkouch, 2016, p. 267). Similarly in the media, the female image is often controlled, objectified, and sexualized by the male gaze. Women are presented as sexual objects which exist for the pleased viewing of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1999, p. 62-63). Therefore, the female gaze depicts passiveness, weakness, and softness in order to fulfill the expectations of the male-gaze in a self-objectifying manner. It is possible to notice that the female gaze is directed downward, either looking at children or the kitchen task at hand in most of the figures included in this study. Moreover, in the housewife imagery it is possible to notice what Goffman (1979, p. 57) calls "Licensed Withdrawal". This is when the female is portrayed while she is gazing off, as if her attention has drifted somewhere else, in this way they give the impression that the woman is passive and dependent. It implies a situation where she requires protection and compassion from others (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000). Licensed withdrawal is salient in figures 1, 3, 9 and 6. Goffman (Ibid, p. 68) argues that the licensed withdrawal shows that "a woman - like a child with an ice cream cone - can find some sort of final satisfaction in goals that can be fully realized in the present". Figure 1 is similar in that, a woman is portrayed smiling, cleaning in the kitchen. Proudly representing the happy housewife heroine, she is gazing into the void and seems to have drifted into her daydreams. Through the task of cleaning, she withdraws herself from the current situation and finds a final satisfaction. Licensed withdrawal also takes place through snuggling with children (Ibid, p. 75); this act, too symbolizes a withdrawal from the current situation. In Figure 6 the woman is depicted snuggling with the child.

In addition to Goffman's theoretical definitions, Kang (1997, p. 985) comes up with the concept of "Body Display" asserting that the female body is commonly focalized in advertisements as a way of stereotyping. Kang asserts women may wear "body-revealing clothes" such as miniskirts, evening gowns or dresses with cleavages or may show "nudity" by wearing nothing or only lingerie. Such stereotyping can be noticed in the housewife stock imagery, too. In the stock images of housewives, it is possible to see the use of body-revealing clothes as a way of body display. Figure 4 portrays a woman who is wearing a pink morning gown, high heels, and transparent socks while baking in the kitchen. This is an image that addresses the male gaze (Mulvey, 1999, p. 57-68); through an emphasis on the female sexuality the female is portrayed as the object of male desire. Because of her apparel, the center of attention in the image becomes her body and sexuality, the image makes the viewer imagine the woman as a housewife who is not only nurturing to her husband but also is ready to provide sexual fulfillment.

It can be noticed that what Goffman (1979, p. 29) calls “Feminine Touch” is also evident in stock imagery. He asserts that women are portrayed while using a softer touch -compared to men- using their fingers and hands in a way to caress its surface. The feminine touch is soft and in that it is distinguished from that of the male, which can be manipulative and therefore dominant. It gives the idea that the female is sexually available (Signoretti, 2017, p. 4). The use of “feminine touch” in the imagery of the housewife (Figure 3) holding a bowl strengthens such boundary between the two sexes, constructing the “ideal” characteristics of the housewife discursively.

The ritualization of subordination is salient in all the housewife images included in this study as they present women in inferior positions and poses (Bell & Milic, 2002). The housewife is depicted smiling in most of the images. Goffman (1979, p. 48) states that a smile in the advertisements is an action of the inferior rather than the superior, symbolizing that “the other is approved and appreciated”. It is therefore understandable that women in the images are portrayed smiling. Head and body can't or physical lowering are also featured in all images except figures 5 and 8; Lowering the head or body relative to others, including the viewer, can be understood as an acceptance of subordination and submissiveness. Physical lowering is another element of ritualization of subordination. Goffman argues that “floors provide places in social situations where incumbent persons are put in a lower position”. Floors are associated with less clean, less pure parts of the room where baskets of soiled clothes are put, and women and children are pictured on floors more than men (Ibid, p. 41). Figure 9 is in line with Goffman's findings, as the female figure is positioned resting on the floor after cleaning the room, she is gazing up into the ceiling, in a state of licensed withdrawal. All in all, it can be argued that the housewife images carry the element of ritualization of subordination through the use of the aforementioned techniques.

Giving the example of “bikini mom” in a commercial for Alabama, Jean Marie Kauth (2012, p. 50) mentions the use of “children as accessories” in advertisements. The portrayals of the mother and look-alike daughter who smile happily at each other, according to her, show that the mother is being pulled into the realm of childhood herself. If one looks at Figure 5, one can derive similar ideas. The woman portrayed as a mother/housewife is having a fun time, through the daughter who resembles her and mirrors her true self. Kauth (Ibid) argues that the life imagined for the woman in an image can be enhanced through kids. In that sense, in Figure 5, cooking, which is a task traditionally assigned to the females is shared by both and is enhanced through sharing, being transformed into a leisure activity. In other words, it can be argued that the use of kids as accessories in stock imagery, transforms the images of housework into the images of leisure time.

## 6. Conclusion

In this essay, stock images are viewed as forms of visual representation that construct the perceptions of social phenomena through the articulation of meanings. In that regard, it is stressed that they may contribute to the social construction and negotiation of gender identities and roles. The essay focuses on how the concept of housewives is depicted in stock photography and how socially constructed gender roles and stereotypes are materialized through it.

In order to analyze housewives as a concept in stock photography a concept-specific methodology is created by deriving from Frosh's general framework. For example, Frosh looks at the interaction of people, and in couples, the gaze is very significant, and he focuses on it, also by looking at the pose, setting and objects he defines the framework of the romantic couple images because these are the general components which convey the meaning of “being romantic or intimate” in the image. In a similar sense, this essay adds the category of “clothing” considering the stereotypical portrayal of housewife in visual culture.



In this analysis, the essential parts that communicate the housewife stereotype are touched upon. Differently from the images depicting “romantic couples”, the setting does not seem to be isolated and is an important factor in housewife images. The kitchen is mostly used as a setting to strengthen the housewife stereotypes, in conjunction with gendered clothing such as apron, dress, high-heeled shoes, morning gown, and hairballs.

The findings of the analysis demonstrate that the attributes of the housewife stock images can be understood in two ways. Firstly, the findings of the study support the ideas of Goffman about the female image in advertisements; the representation of the housewife image in stock photography carries elements that place women into subordinated positions. The study emphasizes that ritualization of subordination is utilized in most images through the use of elements such as smile, physical lowering, body can’t and head can’t. The passive and dependent presentation of the housewife is also supported through the techniques of licensed withdrawal and feminine touch. Female subordination that is controlled, objectified, and sexualized by the male gaze is imagined through the photography which portrays body display as well as gendered clothing and actions such as cleaning and cooking that are stereotypical of the females. Secondly, the study emphasizes that this representation of the housewife image is further supported by the construction of the housework as leisure time. The images which involve the housewife with the child, or the happy housewife alone present the commodification of happiness. Although what the housewife does can be seen as “work”, it is also portrayed as “leisure time”, as can be seen in the images of the women who enjoy cooking with their children, and the image of a woman who seems to enjoy baking.

Lastly, it can be argued that the two discursive constructions in these images; housework as leisure time and the passive and dependent presentation of the female are two sides of the same coin. They together reinforce the happy housewife discourse and strengthen the unequal gender roles. It can be therefore argued that the stock images employ the message that happiness can be achieved by striving towards the role of the housewife, and only through actions such as nurturing the children and fulfilling other tasks that are expected from the housewife, women could achieve happiness. This kind of presentation also shapes the consumer culture and society’s views on gender by portraying the stereotypes about housewives in a positive light.

## Appendix

Table 1

Figure Number	Gaze	Pose	Setting	Conventional Symbols	Clothing
1	Withdrawn	Smile, body display, body cant, leaning on a mop	Kitchen	Kitchen appliances, mop	Dress, high heels, hair balls, earrings
2	Downwards	Smile, head cant	Kitchen	Baking ingredients, appliances	Casual, apron
3	Withdrawn	Feminine touch, head and body cant	Kitchen	Kitchen appliances, bowl, egg beater	Dress, jewelry, high heels
4	Downwards	Feminine touch, body display smile, body cant	Kitchen	Oven	Morning gown, head band, high heels, transparent socks

5	Directly at the daughter figure	Smile	Kitchen	Baking appliances, oven, ingredients	Apron
6	Downwards towards the task	Smile, head and body cant, snuggle	Kitchen	Cooking appliances, ingredients	Casual
7	Downwards towards the children	Smile, head cant	Kitchen	Kitchen appliances, food	Casual dress
8	Downward towards the task	Smile	Kitchen	Baking appliances, ingredients	Casual
9	Withdrawn	On the floor, physical lowering	Living room	Cleaning appliances, mop	Casual

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3





Figure 4



Figure 5





Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8





Figure 9





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