

# Gender Roles in the 1950's Compared to Gender Roles Portrayed in Rebel Without a Cause

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Many parts of history show that the 1950's was a time of great turbulence and unrest in both politics and social life. All this unrest was caused by major historical events, including the Red Scare/McCarthyism and the Cold War. However, although many aspects of life in the 50's were in such disarray, gender roles were not one of those aspects. In fact, there was a very narrow, strict idea of what it meant to be a male and a female during this time. The following discusses what was considered proper gender roles in the 1950's and how these roles vary compared to the gender roles portrayed in the 1955 movie, *Rebel Without a Cause*. Gender roles in the 1950's are nothing like the ones we see in society today. To fully understand the differences of gender roles during that time period, you need to know exactly what they are. The definition of gender is "the state of being male or female" (The New International Webster's Dictionary). The definitions of role are 1. The character played by an actor, 2. A part that someone or something has in a particular activity or situation, and 3. The part that someone has in a family, society, or other group (The New International Webster's Dictionary). The particular definition of role that really fits in with the definition of gender role is "the part that someone has in a family, society, or other group". This definition is the most accurate because gender roles are basically guidelines

or behaviors for a particular gender that are deemed acceptable by society. Like stated earlier, gender roles in the 50's were very strict and narrow-minded. That being said, women were extremely limited in their role in society. First of all, women were expected to be homemakers. By homemaker, I mean the women w..... middle of paper .....ay." Trinity College. Jack Dougherty, 2 May 2012. Web. 20 Oct. 2013. "Gender." The New International Webster's Dictionary. 2002. Print. Laski, Marghanita. "What Every Woman Knows by Now." Women's Magazines 1940-1960. Ed. Katherine E. Kurzman, Kate Sheehan Roach, and Stasia Zomkowski. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 1998. 242,243. Print. More, Elizabeth Singer. "'The Necessary Factfinding Has Only Just Begun': Women, Social Science, And The Reinvention Of The 'Working Mother' In The 1950s." Women's Studies (2011): 974-1005. Academic Search Premier. Web. 21 Oct. 2013. Rebel Without a Cause. Dir. Nicholas Ray. Perf. James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, and Jim Backus. Warner Bros., 1955. DVD. "Role." The New International Webster's Dictionary. 2002. Print. "When the Movies Moved to the Suburbs." The New York Times. Janet Maslin, 29 Oct. 2011. Web. 2 Nov. 2013.

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