The Portrayal Of Gender In Print Advertisements

Nanette M. Vela

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THE PORTRAYAL OF GENDER IN PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS

BY

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Thesis Advisor

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication
Seton Hall University

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"We are each exposed to (an average of) over 2000 ads a day, constituting the most powerful educational force in society," (Purdy, 1991, p.13). Advertisements today are the mainstream in our society. People look at ads for answers to almost everything—from what to wear to what to eat. Consequently; however, ads also persuade people to think and act a certain way, having the most effect on women and children. Advertising has been putting women "in their place" for decades with images containing subtexts that perpetuate gender stereotypes. The mass media, which revolve around advertising, are the way that prescribed roles of a society get disseminated (Shields and Heinecken, p. 37). Shields and Heinecken (2002) state that throughout the history of advertising, messages detailing the perfect female—her beauty, her societal roles, and her sexuality—have occupied a central role. These images, used to sell a variety of products, tell women how they should look and be looked at, how they should feel and be made to feel, and how they should act. In other words, these messages prescribe particular gender identities to the aspirations of women and specific parameters on how men should relate to women and how women should relate to themselves (p. x). Basically, advertisements show and tell women how to "gender" themselves (Shields & Heinecken, 2002). Advertisements do this in two steps: 1.) They create a problem by tapping into an insecurity about fitting into the stereotype and 2.) They sell the product as the solution to this "problem." Women are easily influenced by these ads and therefore believe that by using the product, their "problem" will be fixed.
Studying gender and the construction of gender identities as a process that is culturally constructed instead of as a biological fact is important for gaining a clearer understanding of the complex relationship between gender representation in media and our own constructions of gender identities, (Shields & Heinecken, 2002 p. xi).

According to Judith Williamson (1978) in Shields and Heinecken (2002), advertising is a “currency of signs” which can help invest in commodities with value, not only utility value, but a value attached to an image or a look. She points out that, “Advertisers invest their products with value by differentiating the image of their product from the images of other products in the same marketing category. The value of the image, therefore, is dependent upon the viewers’ abilities to make references to other products in the category,” (p. 68). Williamson suggests that advertising feeds off our desire for coherence and meaning. She argues that advertisements attempt to represent to us the central object of our desire, the unified and perfect self, an “Ego-Ideal.” Ads suggest that one can become the perfect person in the ad if we only use the perfect product (make-up, car, etc). The major objectives of advertising are to make the person feel they are not a unified being, a complete entity unto themselves, but instead a work in progress made up of separate parts, each in need of continual improvement,” (p. 79). “The key, then, to understanding how gender is communicated through advertisements is to understand the notion that advertisements present to us familiar ritual-like displays. However, displays in real life or in the world of advertising can be, and usually are, polysemic, (containing myriad possible meanings.)
According to Goffman, advertisements are in a constant state of "Hyper-ritualization", where the human use of displays is complicated by the human capacity for re-framing behavior. He uses the example of a still photograph of a woman standing on the curb looking toward a parked taxicab with a man reaching toward the door of the cab. This invokes in our minds the entire sequence of a man opening a cab door for a woman (p. 37-38).

These ritual-like displays make it easy for the reader of the ads to relate to them and even find a familiarity with the events taking place in the picture. The reader can interpret the ads many different ways and each viewer will interpret it in a way that fits his or her life, making him or her feel as if buying this product would be perfect for him or her.

Research Problem

Do advertisements present an accurate portrayal of a woman's role in society? This examination will determine whether the portrayal of women in advertisements paralleled the woman's role in society throughout the past few decades. This thesis details how advertisements have depicted women since the 1920's, how these depictions have changed throughout the years, and whether they are changing at the same rates as women's roles in society. An interesting and intriguing study performed by Suzanne Pingree, Robert Parker Hawkins, Matilda Butler, and William Paisley in 1973 is given special attention. They conducted a simple and straightforward analysis of ads that ran in Ms., Time, Playboy, and Newsweek magazines. The ads were evaluated and categorized into a five-level "sexism" scale in order to measure the levels of stereotypes in these ads.
This thesis replicates that survey in an effort to compare and contrast the results from 30 years ago to today’s results.

Research Question

If one were to replicate the study done by Suzanne Pingree, Robert Parker Hawkins, Matilda Butler, and William Paisley using ads from the same magazines running in 2003, would the results be the same, or would the levels of stereotypes in these magazines have altered in the last 30 years?

Subsidiary Questions

In an effort to fully understand the implications of the results of the survey, the study will also devote time to answering the following questions:

1.) Has the depiction of women in advertisements altered as women’s role in society changed?

2.) Has the sexual content in the ads changed from 1973 to 2003?

3.) Do men and women interpret ads the same?

Purpose of the Study

We live in a society that is deluged by mass media. Sometimes, as in times of crisis, it is very evident. But on a day-to-day basis, the media and their messages to society can be very subtle. Seeing how greatly affected women have been by mainstream advertising, it is evident that advertising and the media play a major role in defining a woman’s place in society. Women have been transformed many times over in the last centuries. In studying and analyzing women’s portrayal in advertising and the stereotypical characteristics attributed to women in these ads, it is important to understand where these ideas originated. Our accepted ideas of how women should act
and behave, and what is natural and normal behavior for females and males are results of ideas created by society hundreds of years ago (Richmond-Abbott, 1979). It is important to understand where these stereotypes came from to get a better feel for why they are used today and why society should change these views.

History of Women’s Roles

Views of women originated with the ancient Greeks – women were equal to men or inferior. This view also extended into the Christian Era, where a woman’s soul was equal in worth as a man’s; however, there were still restrictions, for example, women could not be priests, which still holds true today. In the Middle Ages (twelfth through the fourteenth centuries), women gained more status when they were permitted to join guild and earn masterships in a variety of trades. Unfortunately, women’s status in society took a slight step back in some aspects of life during the Renaissance (fourteenth through sixteenth centuries). This is based upon the fact that there were more restrictions on women’s sexuality and political rights than there had been during the Middle Ages. Even though women were still educated and able to act as rulers, the declining status of working women increased the importance of women’s contribution to the family economy. During the Reformation women became more active in religious affairs and their status as wives was raised. However, because of restrictions in their religion, especially Protestant, women failed to become strong, cultural leaders.

The French Revolution brought upon a good change in women’s status in society. They participated in political activities, were given more rights, and were educated. Unfortunately, this was short lived and followed by the Napoleonic Era, which believed in male inheritance, cut women out of sharing family property, and made women
subservient to her husband. By 1815, there was no longer equality between men and women in France.

Although women in America had the same restrictions – they were under the control of their husbands, they could not appear in court, enter into a contract, or inherit without the approval of a male relative or guardian – the economic needs of the colonists encouraged women to participate in a wide variety of business and trades. They were innkeepers, peddlers, seamstresses, shoemakers, babysitters, cooks, teachers, pharmacists, barbers, blacksmiths, and gunsmiths.

Fashion Takes a Toll

Until well after the Revolution, fashion did not play a part in the role of women. There were few hairdressers and dressmakers, and even if they did have their hair done it was a great nuisance, especially because the need to work restricted fashion. This sensible attitude changed with the norms of society. These women of the eighteenth century who were active and responsible, became intellectually confined and domesticated in the nineteenth century. American women adopted English standards of feminine behavior, which included idleness, passivity, and gentility. Other aspects of economic life in America also caused social pressure, establishing the ideals of passivity, purity, domesticity, and piety for women. Shortly before the Civil War, the women's rights movement began, giving women a higher place in society. From the woman suffrage movement to the Civil War and post Civil War, women were gaining status in the United States. There were a growing number of women working in factories and sweatshops, but their entrance into organized labor came in 1909, followed shortly by the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, granting women suffrage. Although many women
entered universities in the 1920s and 30s, there was still much job discrimination in the 30s and the woman’s place was still primarily the home. In 1943 it became apparent that women were losing time at work to stay home and care for their children. This was having a direct effect in war efforts so child-care centers were opened. However, once the war was over the funding for child-care centers dropped and Congress reflected the nation’s belief in women’s traditional domestic role. Advertising began glamorizing the role of the housewife. Still, the percentage of women working rose from 25 percent to 36 percent of the labor force. While almost half of the women worked outside the home, society continued to picture the typical wife in the home, cooking, and making the house comfortable for the family. Most married women who worked identified themselves as housewives. By 1977, almost half of the female population worked, accounting for 41 percent of the total labor force (Richmond-Abbott, 1979).

**A Comparison of Women in the 1970s to Today**

In 1974, there were 35,892,000 women in the United States labor force as opposed to 57,349,000 men, making the total percent of women in the labor force 38% (Richmond-Abbott, 1979). Twelve percent of women aged sixteen to thirty-four were enrolled in college and 16.1 percent of men were. In 2001, 62,992,000 women in the United States were employed as opposed to 72,081,000 men, making the total percent of women employed 46.6% (U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau, 2001).

It is the goal of the author to help the reader have a broader understanding of the relationship between media, especially print advertising, and society.
Objectives

The intention of the study will be to observe women’s portrayals in advertisements throughout the twentieth century compared to the role they play in society, how they are influenced by these ads, how they interpret the ads, and how the ads portray women today. The main goal is to determine how a woman’s portrayal in advertisements has changed in the last thirty years.

Definition of Terms

1. **Advertising**: “Mass communication an advertiser pays for in order to convince a certain segment of the public to adopt ideas or take actions of benefit to the advertiser” (Davison, [www.such find-spezial.de/wissen-erleben/advertising/](http://www.such find-spezial.de/wissen-erleben/advertising/)).

2. **Gender**: “The cultural and social bases of roles assumed daily by men and women. It is the effect of and is constructed in our everyday involvement in culture” (Shields & Heinecken, 2002, p. x).

3. **Gender Role**: A set of behavioral, temperamental, emotional, intellectual, and attitudinal characteristics displayed by males and females that are identified as either “feminine” or “masculine” (Chafetz, 1978).

4. **Media**: The communication media are the different technological processes that facilitate (and are in the “middle” of) the sender of a message and the receiver of the message (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003).

5. **Perception**: The process by which people become aware of objects, events, and others through the senses of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. Perceptions result from what exists in the outside world and from an individual’s experiences, desires, needs, wants, loves, and hatreds (DeVito, 1999).
6. **Sex**: A classification all human beings and animals are born with and is clearly identifiable as male or female.

7. **Stereotype**: A rigidly conventional and formulaic concept, expression, idea, character, or image.

**Limitations**

One of the most important limitations in the study is the role that advertising plays in constructing gender. Although it is a fact that advertising depicts women in stereotypical ways, it is difficult to determine whether advertising is merely mirroring society or whether advertising creates these roles and persuades society to take upon the roles portrayed in the ads. It is an endless circle that would be almost impossible to determine. After reviewing many studies performed over the years, the author would conclude that it is a cross between both. Although there is a wealth of information on the topic, there is a lack of concluding information on it.

Secondly, the study mainly concentrated on observing the way the ads depicted women. Though the author slightly touched upon the depiction of men in advertisements, it was a very general overview, mainly because the purpose of the study was to observe the portrayal of women, but also because of the lack of literature pertaining to the portrayal of men in advertisements. It seems that the depiction of men in ads is not as largely an issue as the portrayal of women. This could be because most ads are targeted toward women since they are seen as the main consumer for the household. It would be interesting; however, to observe how ads depict men, teens, elderly, and children compared to their roles in society. Do ads present a misconstrued portrayal of them as they do with women or are their portrayals more on target?
Another factor that renders limitations to the study is the difficulty of retrieving ads from the 1970s. Several random ads were found and compared, but no enough to come to a conclusion. It would be interesting to see how the sexual content in ads from 30 years ago changed compared to the sexual content apparent in the ads from today, especially in the Level I ads where women are seen as a decoration. Although the results showed that the amount of Level I and II ads decreased while the Level IV and V ads increased, it is difficult to determine whether the difference results from a change in society’s perception of women in the ads or because the sexual content in the ads changed.
Chapter II

A HISTORY OF GENDER IN ADVERTISING

To get a complete understanding of the impact that advertising has on society, one must first acquaint themselves with the history of advertising and how gender has been portrayed in advertisements over the years. Advertisements were originated with the intent of persuading an audience to adapt certain ideas or products. Although advertising had emerged in the 1870s, in the 1920s it was implicit that “the advertising industry help shape popular notion of identity - and by extension, gender, race, and class.” (Davis, 2000, p. 1). Between 1916 and 1926 national magazine advertising grew by 600 percent (Davis, 2000). This chapter focuses on the portrayal of gender, especially women throughout a sixty-year span. It explores how women were seen throughout the decades, and in which areas, if any, have there been significant changes in the portrayal of stereotypes.

As advertising in the 1920s established itself as a component of business, three “metaphors for personhood”, were introduced. The three “metaphors” (which structured one’s thoughts about identity and their gender) were: the adman, who persuades the consumer. The adman “borrows influence from the domain of the feminine to create a new machismo of persuasion” (Davis, 2000, p. 2). Secondly, the consumer, conceived primarily of females, who select and purchase commodities. The consumer must be read, mimicked, and seduced, while at the same time advertising characteristics of her gender. Thirdly is the vehicle, the female model who sells the product to the consumer. She is the main vehicle between the adman and the consumer (Davis, 2000).
General Interest Magazines

Courtney and Whipple (1983) discuss a study done by Betty Friedman, an author and researcher who studied the way women in the United States were portrayed in magazines in the 1940s and 1950s. She found that although in the 1930s women were portrayed as independent heroines seeking to fulfill their own personal goals, in the 1940s, they were portrayed, praised, and even rewarded for their abilities to run their household and take care of the family (p. 3). Friedman concluded that “manufacturers had decided to make women better consumers of home products by reinforcing and rewarding the concept of women’s total fulfillment through the role of housewife and mother (Courtney & Whipple, 1983, p. 3).

Courtney and Whipple (1983) reported on a few studies all analyzing the roles portrayed by men and women in advertisements - the studies researched print advertisement from 1958 to 1980. Therefore, a detailed compilation of how these portrayals changed in one decade becomes apparent.

In 1976, Belkaoui and Belkaoui (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) studied advertisements in general interest magazines from 1958 in order to compare the results to studies done by Courtney and Lockeretz in 1970 and Wagner and Banos in 1972. They found that print advertisements did depict men and women differently in working occupations, nonworking roles, and in the nature of buying. The sample showed 13 percent of women in working roles, the predominant working role being secretarial clerical, and the predominant non-working role being a family
role (p. 7). They concluded that “advertising was not keeping up with the times in portraying the diversity of women’s roles” (Courtney & Whipple, 1983, p. 7).

Courtney and Lockeretz (as reported in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) sampled advertisements in April 1970. They found that 45 percent of men as opposed to nine percent of women were shown working outside the home. Interestingly, the percent of women in working roles had gone down from 1958. Of the nine percent of working women, 58 percent were entertainers (as opposed to the 1958 study, where the majority of working women were secretarial clericals), the rest were depicted in low-status jobs, with none being depicted as a high-level executive or professional. When the men and women were depicted in non-working activities (90 percent women in comparison to just a little over a half of the men), 23 percent of women and 22 percent of men were in family roles, 46 percent of women and 56 percent of men were in recreational settings, and 31 percent of women and 22 percent of men were in non-active or decorative roles. Also, women were shown purchasing cleaning aids and cosmetics, while men purchased cars, bank services and industrial goods (p. 6). Courtney and Lockeretz concluded that “four major general stereotypes of women were shown in print advertisements: a women’s place is the home; women do not make important decisions or do important things; women are dependent and need men’s protection; and men regard women primarily as sexual objects” (Courtney & Whipple, p. 7).

Two years later, Wagner and Banos (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) replicated the Courtney and Lockeretz study. In their comparison, they found that the percentage of women in working roles had gone up to 21 percent (compared to 9 percent in 1970 and even further, the 13 percent in 1958) and that these roles were more
responsible jobs. In non-working roles they were shown less in family settings than in
the 1970 study and more often in decorative or non-active ones. Wagner and Banos
concluded that "the changes observed reflected a cautious response to social change on
the part of advertisers, but that a large enough percentage of women in society still
worked exclusively in the home to at least partially warrant their depiction there in
advertisements" (Courtney & Whipple, 1983, p. 7).

A few years later, Wolheter and Lammers (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983)
examined these same issues in 1958, 1968, and 1978 advertisements from the male
standpoint, closely modeling the Belkaoui and Belkaoui study. They discovered that
between 1958 and 1978, male working roles moved from the big-business leaders and
military men to entertainment and sports figures, and that it became more common to see
men in nonworking roles (42 percent in 1958; 57 percent in 1968; 54 percent in 1978).
The percentage of men portrayed in working roles decreased from 58 percent in 1958 to
46 percent in 1978. Men in decorative roles increased from 27 percent in 1958 to 54
percent in 1978. The male and female portrayal in family roles changed very little (p. 7-
8).

All studies show that men and women are portrayed stereotypically in general
interest magazines, with women being shown in the home, and the men working outside
the home. Both sexes are likely to be shown in nonactive roles and as decorative objects
in print magazines.
Special Interest Magazines

This section looks at the history of studies done on the portrayal of gender in specialized magazines.

In 1974, Sexton and Hagerman (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) studied 2000 ads from three time periods: 1950-1951, 1960-1961, and 1970-1971 that appeared in *Good Housekeeping, Look, Newsweek, Sports Illustrated*, and *TV Guide*. The study showed that the portrayal of women had not changed much over the two decades, with only 16 percent of advertisements presenting women in non-traditional situations. Over the twenty years, women were shown more and more for their decorative capacity rather than being portrayed in a wider range of roles and situations. Females were seen as an allurement or decoration in ads for cigarettes, beverages, automobiles and airlines, while rarely being depicted in a leadership capacity, with working tasks remaining traditional (p. 9).

A year later, Venkatesan and Losco (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) compared the portrayal of women in advertising among three times periods: 1959-1963 (pre-women's movement period); 1964-1968 (active civil-rights, equal-rights period); and 1969-1971 (awareness period). More than 14,000 ads from general interest magazines, women's magazines and men's magazines were studied. Venkatesan and Losco found that the three most common images were "women as sexual objects, women as physically beautiful, and women as dependent on man" (Courtney & Whipple, 1983, p. 9). Although the portrayal of women as sexual objects was still prevalent in men's
magazines and general interest magazines, it had decreased since 1961 and the theme of
women as dependent on men remained stable throughout the three time periods. They
concluded that although there was a decline in the portrayals of women stereotypes in the
magazines, the advertisements still did not represent women accurately (p. 9).

An interesting study was done in 1973 by four Scandinavian authors examining
the portrayal of the sexes in 300 advertisements appearing in fourteen US magazines.
Their findings on the portrayal of women’s roles were similar to the previous studies.
They found that women are eleven times more likely to be associated with household
work than men, and men are three times more likely than women to be associated with
work outside the home. Also, women are more likely than men to seek for personal
beauty, implying that they must be “strong, tough, independent, and beautiful” (Courtney
& Whipple, 1983).

A study measuring the portrayal of the sexes in advertisements in 1973-1974, was
conducted by Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, and Paisley (as cited in Courtney & Whipple,
1983). The study used a five-level sexism scale running from most stereotypical to non-
stereotypical: Level I showing women as sex objects; Level II in traditional roles; Level
III as professionals in the home; Level IV as equal to men; and Level V in non-
stereotypical roles. The study, which examined ads in Time, Newsweek, Playboy, and
Ms., showed that in Ms. magazine, women were portrayed in the two most stereotypical
levels and that 56 percent of the time, the women were portrayed as housewives. In
Playboy, 54 percent were at Level I and 34 percent at Level II. Time had 73 percent of
the advertisements in Levels I and II, and Newsweek had 78 percent. The authors
concluded that print advertisements are not an accurate representation of reality, even
though the ads influence a woman’s perception of herself, and that men are also stereotyped; however, seen more typically in the work place and not competent at home care (p. 10).

Sports magazines have also been examined for the portrayal of women. One study was done in 1971 by Slatton. Slatton (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) traced the role of women in sports as depicted in five major magazines from 1900 to 1968. Slatton found that “advertisements portraying women in sport show only a recreational interest with little acceptance of sport’s competitive aspects” (p. 10). Another study by Poe (as cited in Courtney & Whipple, 1983) similarly found that women in sports advertisements were portrayed more sexual than athletic and that they were shown in recreational rather than competitive situations (p. 10).

Courtney and Whipple (1983) in an effort to thoroughly report on a variety of specialized magazines, also recounted on a 1974 study done by McKnight, which examines 130 engineering and trade magazines. It was found that 35 percent of the periodicals contained at least one sexist advertisement, nine percent contained at least two, and many contained more than two. Further, “in addition to showing women as passive, silly, or incompetent, some of the advertisements used semi clad or naked female bodies to attract attention to equipment” (Courtney & Whipple, 1983, p. 11).

In conclusion, all the studies in this section resulted in similar findings. They all found that women are seen as decorative or alluring figures, they are still portrayed in the home, and when they were represented in roles outside the home, it was rarely a leadership or executive role. The studies thoroughly covered a vast period of time, and
though there were slight changes in the stereotypical roles, the portrayals were far from being accurate.
Chapter III

HOW MEN AND WOMEN INTERPRET ADS

Advertisements, whether society wants to believe it or not, affect society in many ways. The function of an ad is to influence people to believe in something or to persuade them to purchase a product. Advertisements were meant to make people feel a certain way or make them feel like they need the product advertised. Marketers have fine-tuned to a science the art of targeting particular demographics groups to position a product; therefore, whether consciously or subconsciously, advertisements are influencing people everyday. Representations of idealized bodies and gender roles always have been available through advertisements, and they are influencing men and women. This proof of influence is apparent in trend advertisements. The last century alone has witnessed the following changes in ideal female body types: the cinched-waist ideal of 1900, the flat chested and straight bodied flapper of the 1920s, the full chested hour glass figure of the 1950s, the skinny waif of the 1970s, and the muscular, tanned breast-implanted aerobicized body of the 1980s that continues today (Shields and Heinecken, 2002).

Another example of how advertising influences, as discussed in Shields and Heinecken (2002) is the woman’s body. Images of women in advertisements idealize how women should look. Advertisements have “told society” what a woman’s perfect body should look like. In the case of art form, a woman’s body is looked at as art; however, if it was natural to look at a woman’s body and the ideal of the female form were a “Timeless, inevitable fact outside cultural politics, trends, and tastes, then the
plump, alabaster-skinned, inactive European aristocrat female would remain our society’s ideal female” (p. xii). Obviously, the ideal female has transformed many times over in the last couple of centuries.

According to Shields and Heinecken (2002) advertisements make a women feel bad about herself, incomplete or lacking. However, advertising creates this problem for women and then offers itself as a solution by telling women that if they buy the advertised product, their problems will be solved. “It promises that if we buy the product we will move closer to the unified self, and as a consequence be happy” (Shields & Heinecken, 2002). Buying the product will help a woman move closer to her goal of self-perfection. Ever since a woman is a young girl, images of what the perfect woman looks like - a flawless beauty - has been presented to her in all types of magazines. Women spend their whole lives working toward that goal.

Courtney and Whipple (1983) give evidence in their book that advertising stereotypes influence men, women, and children and that they reinforce and perhaps shape society’s view of their own capabilities and achievements, of appropriate sex roles, and of career aspiration. They point out that advertising is an important force that reinforces perceptions of traditional, limited, and often demanding stereotypes of women and men.

Society assigns gender not only to themselves, so that they might convey information about their gender identities to others, but also genders others as well. A lot of times, personal gender identity is something that a person struggles with their whole life. For example, a young girl might only perceive herself as pretty if she is the right
weight, has the right hairstyle, and is wearing her make-up. As she gets older and reaches her twenties, she might perceive herself as attractive, if she is smart, humorous, and a good friend. It works for boys also. A boy who grew up thinking that domestic chores were for women, might end up believing this stereotype his whole life (Shields & Heinecken, 2002).

“Trends in ways of seeing the female body are cultural. They are closely tied to the gender politics, economic conditions, and popular culture of an era. The mass media continue to play a pivotal role in reflecting and promoting gender ideals” (Shields & Heinecken, p. xii).

Shields and Heinecken (2002) interviewed men and women to explore how they perceived the images of women in advertising. The men and women interviewed by Shields and Heinecken (2002) agree that sexual stereotypes serve as guidelines for lived behaviors (p. 22). However, they found that “while both men and women recognize the pervasiveness of advertising images in their daily viewing experiences, sharp gender differences arose in response to whether advertising is seen as a powerful organizing social structure of values and behaviors in society” (Shields & Heinecken, 2002, p. 23). Most men thought that the dominant messages in advertising barely affected the way they saw themselves, their values, emotions and behaviors; whereas, most women considered these messages in advertising, especially pertaining to gender identity and gender relations, to have influenced them greatly on how they view themselves, how they behave, how they perceive others as viewing them, and how others behave (p. 28). Most men that Shields and Heinecken interviewed were adamant that the content of an ad
had very little to do with what they purchased. Some men said that advertising might help them choose between name brands, but beyond that, advertising had little influence on purchasing decisions. On the other hand, when speaking of purchasing decisions, women were more likely to allude to times when advertising did affect their buying habits, than when it did not (p. 29-31).

According to Shields and Heinecken (2002), many of the definitions or signs of ideal femininity offered by advertisers are enduring, such as thinness, youth, and flawlessness, while other definitions are refined and recirculated cyclically, like body type (e.g., curvaceous versus muscular, versus, ultra-thin), skin tone (tan versus pale) and style and adornment (natural versus made-up, long hair versus short hair, curly hair versus straight hair), and so on (p. 75). In addition, their study also found that "men and women were more likely to link these enduring definitions of ideal femininity in advertising to individuals' struggles to measure up to these externally imposed prescriptions" (p. 75).

After researching and comparing many studies, two ways in which advertising signs work to influence people, became apparent. One is in the visual and the other is in the language used in the advertisements.

**Visual**

"Women in advertising are very often signified in a fragmented way, by their lips, legs, hair, eyes or hands. The "bit" represents the whole: the sexualized woman. Men, on the other hand, are less likely to be dismembered in this way in advertisements" (Shield & Heinecken, 2002, p. 40). According to Janice Winship as stated in Shields and Heinecken (2002), male and female hands are part of an entire message system of
social representation signifying appropriate gender behavior. "Winship juxtaposes an ad of a man's hand holding an open pack of Rothman's cigarettes, the 'world leader' and a woman's hand pouring a pitcher of Bird's custard over a dessert, the caption reading, 'home-made goodness.' If the hands were switched, it would disrupt the meanings with which each gender imbues in the ad" (p. 40). This shows how men and women have predetermined ideas of what a man's role and woman's role is. It isn't until the hands in the ads are switched that most people would even notice the stereotypical images.

Courtney and Whipple (1983) reported on a study done on visual imagery of sexual messages explicit and implicit in print advertising. The study classified the contents into four major categories: facial expression, setting, body language, and clothing. The study found that advertising portrays women as sexually available, as seductresses or witches, and that advertising often uses crudely erotic imagery to sell products. It also analyzed the macho image of men in advertising and its sexual implications (p. 13).

Language

According to Artz, Munger, and Purdy (1999), every piece of text can be categorized as gender-neutral, gender-specific, or gender-biased. Gender neutral language either has no reference to gender (for example "someone") or it simultaneously refers to both gender (women and men, his and her). Gender-specific language refers to one of two genders in a non-biased way (a male referred to as "he"). Gender-biased can exclude one gender (the average man when used to refer to people) or contain irrelevant evaluation of gender (the little women.) Likewise advertising language incorporates
gender in gender-neutral, gender-specific, or gender-biased manner. There are a few reasons why advertisers would use gender biased language. Advertisers want to reflect natural speech patterns, and it is well documented that people use gender-biased language in their everyday speech patterns. Also avoiding gender-biased language can seem awkward because aspects of biased language are embedded in the English language in words with masculine generics and gender-based suffixes like ‘waitress’ (p. 1).

In conclusion, advertising and the way that men and women interpret and are influenced by the advertisements seem to go in a circle. To an extent advertisements serve to catch the attention of the consumer by making it easy for the consumer to identify with the characters and situations in the ads. The depictions are often exaggerated; however, people still identify with them and then think that they should look or act like the characters in the advertisements and by attaining the product or services offered in the ads, they believe that they can become a better person. In addition, in terms of gender, when viewing an ad, the audience can identify with the ritual bits of familiar gender relations in the ad at the same time they are “processing highly structured and ‘hyper ritualized’ images of gender” (Shields and Heinecken, 2002, p. 61). Men and women bring their own lives into the viewing, comparing and contrasting to the ads they see.
Chapter IV

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: HOW ADVERTISEMENTS PORTRAY MEN AND WOMEN DIFFERENTLY

Background

The review of literature in this study focused on four major themes: the significance and impact of a photograph in an advertisement, how advertising portrays women in relation to existing stereotypes, how it portrays men in relation to existing stereotypes, and the relationship between a man and a woman when portrayed together. The objective of this chapter is to discover how ads depict the gender stereotypes that currently exist in the United States and whether they truly reflect real life. From the literature, it was discovered that many authors believe that the messages and images people see everyday through mass media, impact a person’s attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. The question is how it is accomplished and to what degree. Currently, advertisements in the United States still stereotype the roles that women and men play in this society. The stereotypes have altered slightly in the past few decades; however, they still have a long way to go before they realistically reflect society.
Photographs

In making an ad, print advertisers must make their point using a limited medium. In other words, they must present an ad that is meaningful, even though they might only have one or two still photographs, without much text assistance, to create a complete idea of what is happening in the picture. A still photograph must capture figures in an act which stereotypically epitomizes the sequence from which they are taken, assuming that these acts can only happen as part of an extended action (Goffman, 1984). The photograph in an ad must make it seem as if something had happened before and after the picture was taken, almost as if the audience were seeing a single frame from a movie. This creates a story in the audience’s mind. For example, a still photograph of a woman about to walk through a door with a man reaching toward the door, invokes in a person’s mind the entire sequence of a man opening a door for a woman. This process is called “hyper-ritualization,” where the human use of displays is complicated by the human capacity for re-framing behavior” (Goffman, 1979, p. 3). Therefore, advertisements are, “Ritual-like bits of behavior which portray an ideal conception of two sexes and their structural relationship to each other” (p. 84). Advertising presents familiar, ritual-like displays that the consumer can easily relate to. According to Shields and Heinecken (2002) gender displays in advertisements are familiar to the consumer because they show rituals in which the consumer engages in real life.

Many researchers have studied photographs in advertisements in the past to discover gender patterns depicted in the ads. Although there have been noticeable changes in recent years, research concludes that advertisements still portray an inaccurate reflection of gender roles in today’s society.
Women in advertising

According to Purdy (1991), advertisers continue to present the stereotype of women as the physically weaker sex. The practice of positioning women below and behind men makes them appear to be subservient to their partners, and denies them rightful equality. Purdy discusses four major categories that describe how women are depicted in advertising:

Dismemberment. Rather than full body shots, advertising often chooses to dismember women's bodies and market their separate parts. The cumulative effect of this constant and conscious objectification of women's bodies - the attitude that women are no more than the sum of their parts - teaches society to disregard the full humanity of women. Women also learn to be dissatisfied with their bodies if their parts are not perfect.

Clowning and exaggeration. Often in the media, you see women in contorted positions, looking extremely foolish. Images of women which makes them look silly persist despite women's efforts to eliminate them. Men, on the other hand, are portrayed as serious, often brooding and introspective - forces to be reckoned with.

Covish behavior. Direct and blunt behavior is admired in men, abhorred in women. Clear thinking, direct women are often labeled strident and pushy. Representations of women, which show some women blushing, looking away and covering their faces, teach women to be indirect and also reinforce the cultural attitude that women lack substance.

Irrelevant sexualization of women and girls. Advertisers always try to use sex to sell products, even when the product being advertised has nothing to do with sex. Car, alcohol, soft drinks, and jean ads often market women's bodies as well as the actual product being advertised (p. 14).
Saatchi and Saatchi’s study on *Women on Advertising* identified several major advertising images of women:

**Face Value/Body Beautiful.** A traditional advertising image based on women’s physical appearance. Ads with this theme focus women’s anxiety on whether they are thin enough, young enough, or good looking enough.

**Free Women.** Based on women’s freedom, independence, and sexuality.

**Strong Women.** A very, positive powerful image. Athletic images of women are being used for products as diverse as cars, financial services, and credit cards because their images symbolize emotional strength as well as physical strength.

**Maidens and Mothers.** Based on traditional views of women seen in terms of their family relationships.

**Female Bonding.** A new take on women’s friendships is emerging in which friendships are seen as more than just a source of fun and companionship.

Similarly, Courtney and Whipple (1983) reported on a study done by Dispenza, which found that there are six major themes of how women are depicted in print advertisements: facial beauty, domestic matters, and women’s relationship to their homes; the progression from early romance and courtship through engagement and marriage; to motherhood; women’s shapes and fashion; the spare parts attitude toward women (the focus of their body parts in isolation - dismemberment); and health and health products (p. 12).

Clearly, results from many studies done on how advertisements depict women, all overlap in their findings. Women are still seen as the domestic homemaker and as decorative objects. Women are depicted in the decorative role for products ranging from
personal-care items to otherwise unglamorous products, however, one of the most blatant uses of females in the decorative role is in industrial advertising. In these ads, women are employed to call attention to parts and equipment by lounging near machine tools or electronic equipment wearing little clothing, such as a bikini (Courtney & Whipple, 1983). Ads portraying sexual promise that the product will make the purchaser sexier or offer some other sort of sexually oriented reward, are targeted to both men and women. Many ads targeted to men using partial or complete female nudity, sexual suggestiveness, and innuendo are used to imply that the sexy female in the ad is the man’s reward for using the advertised product (Courtney and Whipple, 1983). Many times, men and women are both portrayed in an ad, implying a sexual relationship between the male product user and his female companion, promising that the product will increase his appeal to her. This type of advertising is most often seen for products whose benefits are hard to describe, such as fragrance, and alcohol. Advertisements aimed at women, especially cosmetic, fashion, and personal care advertising, also employ sexual appeal, showing women scantily clad, nude and sexually provocative. Often, the main purpose of the product is to improve the user’s appeal to men, the underlying message being that the ultimate benefit of the product is to give men pleasure (p. 104). Another common approach used in ads targeted to women is to imply that the product increases female sexuality and that a woman’s sexuality is a definite statement of her personality. The product makes her free, uninhibited, and sexually adventurous (Courtney & Whipple, 1983).
Men in advertising

For the past few decades, researchers have focused much attention on the media’s role in shaping attitudes about gender and behavior. However, as seen from results of many surveys, much of the analyses has focused on women. In fact, men and masculinity are treated as normal and men’s portrayals in the media is seen as unproblematic and exemplary (Durkin, 1985 as quoted in Craig, 1992). In order to completely understand the social forces involved in the concept of gender, the gendering of men needs to be further analyzed. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few scholars who have published work on the media and their relationship to men, not much research has been done on the topic. In Craig’s (1992) book “Men, Masculinity, and the Media”, author Barthel breaks down prevalent images of men in advertisements and how men are sold.

The corporate game. A successful man’s clothes must speak for him before he opens his mouth. The men on the make are in the fast lane and don’t have time for quiet contemplation, therefore the ads show that a successful man has to dress for success and beat the time.

Back to nature. Time off on the weekends is time that men have to become one with nature and with themselves. According to advertisements, a whole set of consumer goods are necessary for a man to make the transition from work to weekend style. In order for a man to go one on one with nature, he needs the right pair of “rugged shoes.” These men don’t sit in an office shuffling paper with polished shoes, they wear Timberland boots like the outdoorsmen in the advertisements.

Power and perfection. The male mode of power and perfection is found in a wide variety of advertisements. This appeal is most evident in car advertisements, where they sell
"power, precision, and performance" to men (p. 144). A man is attracted to a car’s sexy streamlined body, its pure shape, power, and the fact that he can handle it better than any woman with a mind of her own. The car is an extension of the owner. The car must have the right masculine attitude and drive faster and better than the competition. This is a man who breaks loose from the family structure. At a certain point he grows up, begins valuing his father, and eventually becomes one himself, creating a father-son relationship that fits perfectly into society’s stereotypes, and of this has a new role model: the New Man.

The new man. Traditionally, old stereotypes created expectations of a strong, silent male, who kept his feelings inside, had a hard time expressing deep emotion, and never told their sons they loved them. Today, advertisements are breaking through these old stereotypes. The “new father” wants to spend quality time with his children, is free to express himself, can be artistic and still considered a “real man.”

Wives and lovers. Wives are seen in ads appealing to a man’s sense of responsibility and protectiveness. For example, ads for life insurances mean that the man has to protect his wife and children to live up to his promise to protect them. On the other hand, ads for fashion and status goods are filled with beautiful, young women dressed in provocative clothes. Using these products will help the man attain one of these beautiful women.

Masculine nostalgia. There are many ways ads capture a man’s attention, one being intriguing him with all things that define what it is to be a man. “Sports serves as a metaphor for the male: a special arena free of life’s contradictions and contaminations, where a man can test himself and be tested (p. 150). Sports terms and icons are used to sell all types of goods and again, the quality of the product transfers over to the
consumer. Another one being the love of cars (as discussed earlier), and finally, their infatuation with flight. He dreams of escape, where he travels far for adventure, leaving behind the pressures of everyday life.

The new role models. It used to be that ads were full of movie stars, athletes, and heroes selling products. Today, there still are plenty; however, a new trend has come forth, a new role model has been added to the picture: the ordinary person. These ads show that ordinary people can do extraordinary things and offers men someone that they can relate to (p. 137 - 153).

As we can see from Barthel's research, it is up to the consumers to interpret these ads and unravel the meanings in the messages to see how their image of masculinity in the ads exist not to promote gender identity but to promote corporate profit. Masculinity is not only something that comes from within males, but something that society creates to its advantage. The meaning of masculinity in ads is not predetermined, it is out there in society and can be altered, shaped, and molded. It is out there for society to do with it as it pleases.

Portrayal of Men and Women

There are many ways in which advertising portrays men and women differently. Artz, Munger, and Purdy (1999) list some of these differences. Women are more often portrayed as young and concerned with physical attractiveness than their male counterparts. Women are less likely than men to be portrayed as authority figures and more likely to be shown as product users. In addition, there is a tendency for women to be shown as subordinate to men, as decorative objects, or alluring sex objects (p. 20).
Products of the same category are sold differently to men and women.

**Cigarette Ads.** For example, cigarette ads for women are sold as "slims" to appeal to body weight concerns or the paradox of equating women's liberation - You've come a long way, Baby! Cigarettes for men promote being cool, independent, and in control.

**Fragrance.** Ad couples are invariably portrayed as sexually voracious, but messages also confirm who has power. A good example, according to Davison, is an ad for Escape cologne featuring a model towering over a naked woman looking up at him while pressed against his chest. The ad ran in Mademoiselle with a message for women: expectations of male power and control are normal and desirable (Artz, Munger, & Purdy, p. 4).

**Soft Drinks.** Less blatant suggestions of sexual acts are used for products designed to improve physical attractiveness, such as diet soft drinks. One good example is a commercial for Diet Pepsi. The ad shows how drinking Diet Pepsi can make you thinner. An ad shows about five female shots to only one male. Such advertisements offering the promise of slender, sexually attractive bodies, are aimed almost exclusively at women (Courtney and Whipple, 1983, p. 4).

Courtney and Whipple (1983) analyzed studies using general interest magazines that were performed over a couple of decades and discovered that men and women are definitely stereotyped in advertisements and that over a twenty-year period there were only minor changes. The studies confirmed that not only was a woman's place in the home, but that women are primarily concerned with household tasks and personal beauty. It showed that men are more likely to be shown working outside the home and to be involved in the purchase of more expensive goods and services. Both sexes were shown in non-active, decorative roles in print advertisements (p 8).
One of the most important researchers whose work and study is still used today is Ervin Goffman. In his book *Gender Advertisements*, Goffman detailed the results of his study on the portrayal of men and women in print advertising. He asked two very important questions: Do advertisements provide us a fair picture of real life and do they have a social effect on the lives pictured in them? He split his findings into seven categories: relative size, the feminine touch, function ranking, the family, the ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal. For the purpose and relevancy to this thesis only the ten major gender stereotypes found are reported:

1.) Ads show that males’ usual superiority of status over the female will be expressed in his greater girth and height.

2.) Women, more than men, are pictured using their fingers and hands to trace the outlines of an object or to cradle it or caress its surface or to effect a “just barely touching” of the kind.

3.) When a man and a woman collaborate face to face, the man is more likely to perform the executive role.

4.) When a man is pictured in the domains of an area that women usually have authority or competence over (such as the kitchen) he engages in a non-contributing role or he is presented as unrealistically ludicrous or childlike. Another way the male is presented is as an alien in his surroundings, under the direct scrutiny of the woman.

5.) Elevation in our society symbolizes high social place. In advertisements, men tend to be located higher than women, with women pictured on floors and beds more often than men.
6.) Women are often posed using canting postures or the "bashful knee bend." The knee bend can be read as a preparation because it adds a moment in a current social situation to any effort to flight or flee.

7.) Women smile more, make more facial expressions, and also are often pictured as unserious through the use of the entire body as a playful gesticulate device, a sort of body clowning.

8.) Men play mock assault games with women, with women collaborating through a display of attempts to escape, and through cries of alarm, fear, and appeasement.

9.) There are four main behavioral arrangements of pairs of persons which provide what is taken to be a physical expression that the two are "with" each other. First is sitting close or alongside each other without touching. This arrangement is symmetrical in physical character and no differentiation of role or rank is conveyed. The "arm-lock" is the basic tie-sign in western societies for marking that a woman is under the protection of a man. No sexual or legal link is necessarily tied with this. This sign is asymmetrical because the woman shows herself as receiving support and both the man's hands are free. The "shoulder-hold" is an asymmetrical configuration, usually requiring the person holding to be taller than the person held. Finally, there is hand holding. When done by adults male and female, it usually indicates a sexually potential, exclusive relationship. This sign is asymmetrical because there is a tendency for the male to hold the female hand, allowing him to let go quickly should a situation arise that he needs to guide and direct. The back of the male hand is usually facing what is coming on, symbolizing protectiveness.
10. It is more common for women to snuggle into men in advertisements for a few reasons: the understanding that he will be able to bear her weight much more easily than she his, and a woman is less likely to have sexual intent than a man.

After analyzing results from many studies, it can be inferred that advertisements and the images pictured in them are just ritual-like bits of behavior, which portray a concept of what two sexes and their relationship toward each other is. These displays are an attempt to reflect the natural expressions of gender; however, how natural and realistic can they be interpreted? Society has to remember that these advertisements are carefully constructed pieces of information to sell a product. If a person is completely satisfied with what they have and how they feel about themselves, then no one would purchase the product. Therefore, an advertisement’s goal is to tell people that they will be a better person, look better, and attain certain things, if they use the products advertised in the ads.

Taking this into consideration, it is quite evident that although advertisements do reflect gender in our society to the extent that the consumer can easily relate to the models in the ads, it also persuades us into thinking that our relationships with ourselves and others are similar to the ones portrayed in the ads, so that we will buy the product, although the ads do not accurately reflect gender.
Chapter V

A SURVEY MEASURING THE LEVEL OF STEREOTYPE IN ADS FROM FOUR MAGAZINES

Description of the Survey

The survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 89 full-page ads that were pulled from four magazines — Ms., Time, Playboy, and Newsweek. To ensure that the ads were unbiased, every ad featuring a woman was used. The goal was to pull 25 ads from each of the four magazines in order to have a total of 100 ads; however, because of limited ads in Ms., the author was only able to pull 14 ads from Ms.; 25 ads were still pulled from each of the other three magazines. The ads were sorted alternately, numbered and placed in a binder. Each of the ads were then analyzed and measured on the basis of the Likert scale: a survey system using a five-point scale. The scale ranged from Levels one to five - one being the most stereotypical and five being the least. The description of each level of the scale was thoroughly described to the individuals and a brief description was explained on the questionnaire for reference as follows:

(1) Woman is a two-dimensional, non-thinking decoration;
(2) Woman’s place is in the home or in womanly occupations;
(3) Woman may be a professional, but first place is home;
(4) Women and men must be equal;
(5) Women and men as individuals.
Purpose of the Survey

The intent of this survey was to replicate a survey conducted 30 years ago by Suzanne Pingree, Robert Parker Hawkins, Matilda Butler, and William Paisley based on a consciousness scale that concentrated on how women presented in the media were limited to special roles and relationships. They pulled ads from Ms., Time, Playboy, and Newsweek and had them coded by the sexism scale.

The goal of this study replicates their study in order to compare and contrast women’s place in society as portrayed by these magazines. It would be interesting to see if society has changed their views on women in the last 30 years.

Sample

In order to get a gender-balanced result in the coding process, 15 surveys were handed out. Five were coded by females, five were coded by males, and five were coded by a two-person team consisting of a male and female. The sample was randomly selected in order to have a broad sample composed of people from a variety of different backgrounds, education level, income level, age, and race. The main purpose of this survey focuses on gender only, so breakdowns of demographics were not pertinent for the goal of this survey.

Analyzing the Results

In two months, the author had 20 individuals fill out the survey for a total of 15 surveys – five were filled out by females, five by males, and five were filled out by a team of male/female. Each of the surveys was filled out in the presence of the author. This allowed for the author to describe in detail the sexism scale (Levels of Consciousness) and assure that there were no uncertainties as to the meaning of each
level of the scale. Each of the individuals answered 89 questions, placing each ad in one level of the sexism scale. The five teams that consisted of a male/female pair had to answer individually, compare their answers and record any questions if they answered differently.

After collecting all the results, the author entered the answers into Excel – a spreadsheet program that can tabulate answers.

Interpretation of Data

Direct Comparison of 1973 Results to 2003

For this comparison (see Table 1, 2, and Figure 1, Appendix B), only the results of the teams were used to replicate the study from 1973, where teams analyzed the ads.

Playboy: Although the amount of level I ads increased by 13%, the amount of Level IV and V ads also increased by 18% and 4% respectively, leaving Level II and III ads at 0%. This is a very interesting find. Interestingly, however, the ads that were not placed in the magazine solely for a man’s viewing pleasure, but also to sell a product, depicted women as equals or individuals eliminating ads that portrayed them in stereotypical ways.

Time: Although the ads in Level I and III only altered slightly from the 1973 study, there was a dramatic drop in Level II and IV ads, almost doubling the amount of Level V ads. This is an amazing discovery, showing that the amount of stereotype has greatly decreased and ads showing women as individuals have taken their place.

Newsweek: The amount of Level I ads decreased by 10%, with the amount of Level II ads decreasing by 31%. Level III ads remained the same at 5% while Level IV and V ads increased by 24% and 26% respectively. These were the expected results due to the change of women’s role in society.
As with Newsweek, Ms shows a decrease in Level I and II ads, and an increase in Level III and V ads. Strangely enough, however, Level IV had a significant drop of 26%.

Analysis of the data shows that this change in results could be because either, there are more ads that make it evident that a women is a professional, making the transition from Level IV to III, or ads depict the women more as individuals. Further studies would need to be done to decipher the change in results.

Comparison of the Teams’, Males’, and Females’ Answers

In comparing the results of the teams, males and females (see Tables 2, 3, 4, and Figure 2, Appendix C), it was found that there was a very slight difference among the answers. Men and women answered similarly for the total of the magazines in each of the levels. Interestingly, the teams and the males unanimously agreed more often on an answer than did the females. As the author analyzed the data, a pattern became apparent in the answers of the team, females, and males. Out of 89 ads, each with a possibility of five answers, the five teams all answered the same in 33 of the ads, followed by the males who answered unanimously in 29 of the ads. However, the females only answered unanimously 13 times.

Comparison of Results for each Magazine

After tabulating the results of the teams, men, and women, their results were all combined to acquire the total percentage for each consciousness level per magazine (see Table 5 and Figure 3, Appendix D). With only 3%, Ms had the least amount of Level I ads, followed by Newsweek (7%), and Time (15%). Playboy had the highest percentage of Level I ads with 66%, the highest percentage for any of the levels in any of the magazines. Playboy only had 1% for Level II ads, followed by Ms (13%), Time (20%)
and *Newsweek* with the most at 25%. Interestingly, *Playboy* didn’t have any Level I
ads, followed by only 7% and 9% in *Newsweek* and *Time* respectively, and 19% in *Ms.*
For Level IV, *Ms* and *Time* were similar with 12% and 9%, and *Playboy* and *Newsweek*
were similar with 27% and 26%. Level V was the highest Level for each of the
magazines, except for *Playboy* (5%), with *Newsweek* at 34%, *Time* at 45%, and *Ms*
having the most at 53%, the second highest percent for any Level in all magazines,
second to *Playboy* (66% for Level I).

Looking at the results per each magazine, more than half of *Ms*’ ads fell under
Level 5 with 53% and only 3% were level I. Almost half of *Time*’s ads were Level V
(45%) and Level III, being the least at 9%. *Playboy* had 66% Level I, and none in Level
III with only 1% in Level II. The highest percentage in *Newsweek* was 34% for Level V.
Level I and Level III tied for the least amount at 7%.

Overall, with all answers and all four magazines combined, 25% were Level I,
15% Level II, 8% Level III, and 32% Level V (see Table 6, Figure 4, Appendix E).

Additional Findings

After all the answers were tallied, the author thought it would be interesting to
comepare the ads from 1973 to the ads from 2003. She decided to compare ads from
*Playboy* because it had a significant increase in Level I ads, even though the role of
women in society has changed since 1973 with women breaking out of the stereotypical
roles. Analyses of the ads shows that there is great difference in the amount of sexual
content within ads advertising liquor or cigarettes. In 1973, women were hardly featured
in these ads and when they were, there was an equal representation of men and women in
the ads. In 2003, the sexuality of a woman is used to sell the product, with the main
focus of the ad being the woman, not the product. As for the rest of the ads, most of the products advertised in 1973 didn’t feature women in the ads, whereas the ads in the 2003 magazine do.

Next, ads from the 1973 January issues of Time were looked at to compare the representation of women in those ads to the ads from 2003 Time. Most of the ads in the magazine advertised liquor, cigarettes, and cars. The ads usually did not feature people, and the few that did, featured a man and a woman equally. Also, the ads that were advertising companies, were targeted at men and featured a man in the ad, usually using words as “father” or “son” to clearly show it is targeted at males. Likewise, ads for cleaning products and household appliances were clearly targeted at women, by implying that the product would be great for “Mrs. so and so.”

Conclusions

The fact that Playboy’s Level I ads increased significantly could be due to the fact that Playboy is a sexual magazine targeted at males. The amount of sexual content has increased in the last 30 years. When the author compared ads from the 1973 magazine to today’s magazines, it became apparent that not only did the 2003 ads feature women more than in the 1973, but the ads also contained a much more sexually explicit portrayal of women than did the 1973 ads. Another reason that the Level I ads increased could be that as time goes by, society seems to be more tolerant of sexually explicit ads. Each decade the limit pushes a little further, so the content of these ads has become more sexual in the last few decades. Consequently, there was a shift in Level II and Level III ads, wiping any ads in this level. It seems that the ads in Level I and Level II shifted to
Levels I, IV, and V. This is an interesting find. It shows that although women are depicted as an object of decoration in the majority of the ads, the ads that don't depict them in this way are on the other side of the spectrum, portraying them as either equals or individuals. Again, because of the nature of Playboy, its purpose to target males for their viewing pleasure, and because of society's increased tolerance for sexual ads, it is evident, why the increase in Level I would occur. In addition, women's change of role in society would also attribute to the shift of Level II and III ads to IV and V.

*Time* magazine showed a dramatic change in its numbers from the 1973 study to today's study. Although Level I and III ads slightly changed, the shift in percentages among the Level II, IV, and V ads says a lot about how women's portrayals have changed. Women are seen much less as housewives, and for that matter, they are not even depicted as equals to a man, but as individuals with the percentage of Level V ads going from 1% in 1973 to 46% in 2003. *Time* seems to be moving along with society's changing roles and the shift in the portrayal of women in these ads shows that society is aware of these changes and ready to finally move along with it.

Not surprisingly, *Newsweek* had an increase in IV and V ads with a decrease in Level I and II. Just like *Time*, these numbers show that the magazine is also moving along with the times.

Like *Newsweek*, *Ms.* also had a significant decrease in Level II ads, but even more so an increase in Level 5 ads. Again this is an example of how women's portrayals are changing and as they are becoming less identified as housewives, they are becoming more identified as individuals.
Overall, the averaged results from all four magazines of the 1973 ads compared to today’s showed that Level I remained the same, and Levels III and IV remaining similar. The most significant and important change was the decrease of Level II ads from 48% to 17% followed by an increase in Level V of 2% to 30%. This shows that the ads that were portraying women as housewives have now shifted to portraying women as individuals.

In comparing the answers of the teams, males and females, the results showed a very slight difference in the numbers. This was a positive outcome for the author because it proved to her that the consciousness levels do work and have a clear definition for each level. If there had been a significant difference among the results, it would have lead to further research on whether the levels of consciousness did not have clearly defined elements causing a discrepancy in the interpretation of the ads. If research proved that the levels were clearly defined than further research would have been necessary to determine why males, teams, and females interpreted the content of the ads differently. However, all the answers corresponded, signifying that they all interpreted the ads similarly.

When the answers of the teams, males, and females were all combined for a total percentage for each consciousness level per magazine, it was found that with 66%, *Playboy* had the highest percentage of Level I ads (possibly due to the nature of the magazine) and also had the lowest percentage of Level V ads, with 5%. On the contrary, *Ms.* had the lowest percentage of Level I ads (3%) and the highest percentage of Level V ads (53%). The author expected these results since *Playboy* is targeted at males and *Ms.* targeted at females. *Time* and *Newsweek*, both targeted at both genders, fell in between these numbers, each having fewer Level I ads than Level V.
Overall, when the answers of the teams, males, and females were combined and
the magazines were combined, the results showed that the greatest percentage of ads were
Level V, followed by Level I. It is interesting to see that the two highest levels are on
either side of the spectrum. It shows that ads today are either blatantly using a woman as
a decoration for the sole purpose of selling an ad, or are fairly portraying her as an
individual.
Chapter VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was done in an effort to discover whether stereotypical characteristics that are attributed to women have changed over the years. It seems as if even though women’s roles in society have changed, stereotypes about them still remain. In reviewing the literature and reporting on studies that had been done in the past, the author came across an interesting survey that would work for the purpose of the study. Suzanne Pingree, Robert Parker Hawkins, Matilda Butler, and William Paisley had the same idea when they performed their study. Their purpose was to quantify the amount and level of stereotypes attributed to women in various magazines. Replicating this study worked perfectly for the goal of this paper, because the results would show if women were still portrayed in the same stereotypical way that they had been in 1973.

Advertisers can use this information to target women more accurately. If they want to capture their attention to sell them a product, they need to know who their market is today. Even though women’s roles have changed advertisers are still approaching them using pitches that worked twenty years ago. Researching the “American Woman” of 2003 will show that there are not that many women who see themselves or would like to see themselves portrayed as an object used for decoration or solely as a housewife. They want to be seen and spoken to as individuals.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Survey
This survey is being conducted for a Thesis Project in order to receive a Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communications. The research topic explores advertisements' portrayal of gender in ads and how they target gender based on characteristics attributed to them by society.

All survey responses will be kept confidential. If you wish to know the results of this survey, a presentation of research will be given on April 29, 2003 in the Walsh Library at Seton Hall University. Please let me know if you are interested in attending. If you are unable to attend, please contact me and I will send you a copy of the Thesis to you.

Please participate fully by completing the form thoughtfully and in its entirety and then returning it. Thank you very much for your assistance. Your participation in this project is very much appreciated!

Please return complete forms to:

Nanette Vela
80 Ascension St.
Passaic, NJ 07055
Fax: 201-568-9610 or email nanettevela@yahoo.com
For each of the following sets, please rate the ads on a sexism scale of 1-5, 1 being the most stereotypically sexist portrayal of women and five being the least. The sexism scale is described in detail below:

(1) Woman is a two-dimensional, non-thinking decoration
(2) Woman’s place is in the home or in womanly occupations
(3) Woman may be a professional, but first place is home
(4) Women and men must be equal
(5) Women and men as individuals

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Secondary Questions:

Please let me know more information about yourself:

Participant #1

1.) Male_______ Female_______

2.) Your age (circle one):
   
   18-24 years of age
   25-35 years of age
   36-45 years of age
   46-55 years of age
   56-65 years of age
   66+ years of age

3.) You education (Please circle one):

   High School  College  Graduate School

4.) Race (circle one):

   White
   Black/African American
   Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
   American Indian/Alaskan
   Asian
   Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Secondary Questions:

Please let me know more information about yourself:

Participant #2

1.) Male ________ Female ________

2.) Your age (circle one):
    18-24 years of age
    25-35 years of age
    36-45 years of age
    46-55 years of age
    56-65 years of age
    66+ years of age

3.) You education (Please circle one):
    High School  College  Graduate School

4.) Race (circle one):
    White
    Black/African American
    Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
    American Indian/Alaskan
    Asian
    Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Appendix B

Comparison of 1973 Results to 2003
### Table 1: 1973 Study – Teams’ Consciousness Levels of Ads

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### Table 2: 2003 Study – Teams’ Consciousness Levels of Ads

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Figure 1:
Comparison of 1973 vs. 2003
Levels of Consciousness

Levels of Consciousness

Percentage of Responses

- 2003 Study
- 1973 Study
Appendix C

Comparison of Teams’, Males’, and Females’ 2003 Results
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Figure 2:
Comparison of Teams', Male, and Female Levels of Consciousness

- Team's Responses
- Male's Responses
- Female's Responses

Levels of Consciousness

Percentage of Responses

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40%
Appendix D

2003 Total Response for Individual Magazines
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Figure 3: Combined Results for Each Magazine

![Chart showing combined results for each magazine by level of consciousness.]
Appendix E

Overall Results
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Figure 4:
2003 - Overall Results

Levels of Consciousness

Percentage of Total

0%  5%  10%  15%  20%  25%  30%  35%
I    II   III  IV   V