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advertisements from 1976 to 1990**

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ROLE PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING:
A STUDY OF HOSIERY ADVERTISEMENTS
FROM 1976 TO 1990

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Journalism
and Mass Communications
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

By
Maureen M. McInaney
May, 1991

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ABSTRACT

ROLE PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING: A STUDY OF HOSIERY ADVERTISEMENTS FROM 1976 TO 1990

by Maureen M. McInaney

This study examines female role portrayal in the advertisements of four women's magazines for the years 1976, 1986, and 1990. Interpretive and denotative methods of content analysis are used to determine whether hosiery advertisements portray women more frequently in career roles than in the most common traditional roles of social companion, date, or model; and whether current advertisements portray women more frequently as independent human beings rather than decorative objects.

This research reveals that the portrayal of women was not significantly different in 1986 or 1990 than in 1976. In 1986 and 1990, women continued to be portrayed more often in the traditional roles of social companion, date, or model, rather than as career women; and women in 1986 and 1990 continued to be portrayed more often as decorative objects rather than as independent human beings. The lively moving female, who, in Goffman's (1976) terms "uses her entire body as a playful gesticulative device," persists as a predominant archetype in current advertising.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

There are more women working today than ever before. In 1950, less than 30% of the work force consisted of women; by 1979, it was more than 40%. The percentage has increased steadily since then. In 1986, 44.5% of the civilian labor force (16 years of age and over) were women; and, in 1989, 45.2% of the civilian labor force were women. The female labor force grew 4% per year from 1975 to 1979 and 2.3% per year from 1979 to 1985. Census statistics project that it will continue to grow from 1990 to 1995 at a rate of 0.6% per year.

One of the most striking findings of the 1990 Virginia Slims opinion poll (Townsend & O'Neil, 1990) is the degree of consensus among women's and men's attitudes about the changing roles of middle- and upper-income women in particular. Many of these women wear three hats concurrently--those of worker, mother, and wife--and the majority of these women get satisfaction from their jobs. When compared to 1976, more women today think of their work as a career, not just a job--thus the evolution of the term career woman. Women say they work for the same reasons men work: 55% need the money to support themselves and their families--up from 46% 10 years ago; 32% want to earn extra money.

According to Doyle (1988), women's current role models are strong, independent, in control, tough, smart, and command respect. They admire Madonna's self-determination, Claire Huxtable's professionalism and

motherhood, and Cher's style and dignity. The message is clear: Women of the 1980s and 1990s consider themselves more independent--women of action, substance, and intensity. Few U.S. women, according to Doyle, fantasize about finding Prince Charming and turning into Princess Di.

Today's women believe their career opportunities, salaries, and benefits have improved since the 1970s. They are calling, however, for more leadership opportunities; and women and media scholars alike are asking an important question: Are the changing roles of women accurately and honestly portrayed in current women's magazine advertising, particularly the advertising targeted toward middle- and upper-income women?

Advertising's role as a vehicle of cultural communication has long been acknowledged (Pease, 1985; Potter, 1954). As an instrument of marketing, advertising works to sell through persuasion and imagery. As social communication, advertising offers messages that symbolically link people, not as individuals, but as representations of social structures and processes (Pease, 1985). In Pease's view, the implicit and explicit social statements present in advertising offer social scientists a sensitive instrument for discerning the values and beliefs that are widely shared among the public.

The resurgence of the women's movement in the 1960s called attention to the role portrayals of women in the mass media (Rakow, 1985). Of particular concern were the portrayals of women in advertising. Feminist criticism of advertising content centered on unrealistic and limited portrayals of women--portrayals in which a woman's happiness was often connected to the use of products that ostensibly solve her problems. They

include depictions of women as sex objects, happy housewives, or incompetents; themes of women's dependence on men; and underrepresentation of women who work outside the home (Wasson, 1973). According to Tuchman (1979), inaccurate, offensive, and confining stereotypes have provided a limited arena for interaction and have encouraged people to think and speak of women in terms of their sexuality or their relationship to men and family.

Friedan (1963) was the first to study critically the role portrayal of women. An analysis of four major magazines--McCall's, Ladies' Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, and Women's Home Companion--revealed that although career women appeared in magazine fiction, the dominant image of women in advertising was that of housewife. Since 1963, researchers in mass communications and the social sciences have analyzed print media to determine the extent to which stereotypes of women have been maintained and reinforced. They have also sought to determine the degree of social change in women's roles as they are reflected in advertising.

In 1979, Kerin, Lundstrom, and Sciglimpaglia reviewed the research on the portrayal of women in advertising. They observed that the use of decorative female models (i.e., nonfunctional models whose primary activity is to adorn products as a sexual or attractive stimulus) increased during the "feminist-active" 1970s. Further, they predicted sexual content and stereotyping would increase proportionately during the 1980s.

This follow-up study tries to determine whether the proportionate increase in sexual content and stereotyping in advertising actually occurred in the 1980s. Two specific questions will be explored:

1. Are women's changing career roles reflected in current advertisements?
2. Are women being portrayed more frequently as independent human beings rather than as objects in current advertising?

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

The Stereotyping of Women

This study should be interpreted in the context of a large body of research on advertising portrayals of women that arose from concerns voiced by the women's movement. Studies on women have approached the topic from many perspectives, including content analysis of television commercials (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974); critical essays (Cowie, 1977; Janus, 1977; Tuchman, 1978); and investigations of the reactions of traditional and modern women to advertisements. Most conclude that advertising effectiveness is enhanced when role portrayals are consistent with the orientations of the target markets (Duker & Tucker 1977; Leigh, Rethans, & Whitney, 1987; Wortzel & Frisbie, 1974).

Particularly relevant to this investigation are a number of content analyses conducted on the portrayal of women in magazines. Most often, these investigations have been "image studies" drawing conclusions based on denotative elements within the advertisements and counting the number of women shown in ads and the quality of those images. Courtney and Lockertz (1971) used general magazines to investigate female images and found the "dependency" image was strongly represented. They conducted a content analysis of 729 ads appearing in eight general interest and news magazines during 1970. They found few women shown in employment outside the home. Most employed women were entertainers, and none was

shown in a professional or executive role. This was true of ads showing women only and those showing men and women together. Although the frequency of employed women increased when men and women were shown together, women were rarely shown interacting with one another. The researchers concluded that stereotypical portrayals of women dominated advertising, and they cautioned advertisers to pay attention to women's goals and the more eclectic lifestyle they now lead.

Subsequent work by Wagner and Banos (1973) found fewer images of the housebound female but an increase in the decorative role of women. Wagner and Banos used ads from six 1972 general interest and news magazines. The number of employed women professionals, semi-professionals, salespeople, and other white-collar workers shown had increased from 9% to 21%. Fewer women were shown as entertainers or sports figures in 1972. More nonemployed women, however, were shown in decorative roles and fewer were shown in family or recreational roles. There was no change in the frequency of interaction between two or more women, in female involvement in major purchase decisions, and in their portrayal in institutional settings. This study presents a mixed picture. Employed women from all income levels were better represented, but this 21% representation was far lower than the 49% of U.S. women (from all income levels) between 15 and 65 employed in 1972 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1980).

Longitudinal studies (Sexton & Haberman 1974; Venkatesan & Losco, 1975) investigating general women's magazines over a 20-year period, concluded that, even though there was a diminution of ads portraying

women either materially or as homemakers, advertising continued to show them in limited roles. Furthermore, women were rarely shown in leadership roles.

Sexton and Haberman (1974) studied ads published during 1950-51, 1960-61, and 1970-71 in six product categories: cigarettes, beverages, automobiles, home appliances, office equipment, and airlines. They evaluated 1,827 ads on 11 dimensions, which encompassed the number of persons and types of role portrayals in the ads, their relationships to one another and to the product, and the setting of the ads. Although some variation existed in the findings from one product category to another, the results agree with earlier studies: The number of women shown in working roles increased some, and women portrayed in home and family-oriented situations decreased. The frequency with which women were shown as passive social companions of men, however, was large and stable. Sexton and Haberman did not find an increase in decorative portrayals, but instead found more women shown for their allure to men.

Venkatesan and Losco (1975) studied magazine ad role portrayal between 1959 and 1971. They confirmed the existence of sex-object, physical-beauty, and female-dependence stereotypes.

Similarly, Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) found the stereotypes that existed prior to the women's movement were being perpetuated in the mass media of the 1970s. This study found the stereotyping reported in 1970 and 1972 regarding employment status, occupational roles, and involvement in major purchase decisions also existed in 1958. The percentage of working women shown in ads was slightly higher in 1972 than in 1958; but, in the

years studied, the women featured were entertainment and sports personalities, or secretarial and clerical workers. The nonworking women were even more likely to be portrayed in decorative roles in 1972 and less likely to be shown in family roles.

Although they reported small variations over time, these studies have documented the existence of the stereotypes feminist critics find objectionable. These include the portrayal of women in a limited number of social roles, as sex objects, in decorative roles in relation to the product, or as dependent on men; the underrepresentation of women in working roles; and the persistence of the traditional happy housewife and keep-her-in-her-place stereotypes. (Courtney & Whipple, 1983)

Image Research

Outside the advertising discipline, image research has come under criticism, particularly from feminist scholars (Cowie, 1977; Janus, 1977; Tuchman, 1978, 1979) who suggest that sexism exists in a web of cultural meaning and cannot be "read off" images (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1986; Jhally, 1987; McCracken, 1988).

In modern advertising, gender is probably the social resource used most by advertisers. According to Jhally (1987), advertising seems to be obsessed with gender and sexuality. He found two reasons for this obsession. First, our understanding of ourselves as either male or female is the most important aspect of our definition of ourselves as individuals. Second, gender can be communicated at a glance because of our knowledge and use of conventional codes of gender display. Messages are about

gender and sexuality, according to Jhally, and falsity in advertising arises from the institutional context within which advertisements are produced.

According to Cowie (1977): "It is the development of new or different definitions and understandings of what men and women are and their roles in society which produce readings of images as sexist. . . . An image itself might be innocuous but its point and mode of presentation produces its reading as sexist" (p. 91).

Thus, to suggest that meaning lies in objective content camouflages the institutional depth of sexism in culture and society. McCracken (1988) contends that "sexist stereotypes are thoroughly grounded in even the subtlest details of everyday life" (p. 40).

These researchers suggest the adoption of more interpretive analytic methods, such as structuralism or semiotics (Williamson, 1978). In semiotics, meaning is dependent on the way signs are organized internally in an advertisement and on the relationship of the advertisement to external belief systems. Semiotics identifies the sign--anything that stands for something to somebody in some context--as the fundamental vehicle connecting objects and human reactions. It is the mechanism by which meaning is created, maintained, and altered by advertisers.

The concept that unifies the different elements of the process of meaning construction is that of code. A code is the store of experience that influences the advertisers and the audience in the construction of a product's meaning. Langholz-Leymore (1975) contends that advertising codes are the same as the codes of myth and reveal the "essential underlying unity of the symbolic function of the mind" (p. 61).

Semiotics and consumer research are particularly interrelated because consumer behavior is based on the meanings ascribed to marketplace stimuli. Instead of being identified with what they produce, people are made to identify themselves with what they consume.

Jhally (1987) explains it best:

Advertising absorbs and fuses a variety of symbolic practices and discourses. The substance and images woven into advertising messages are appropriated and distilled from an unbounded range of cultural references. Advertising borrows its ideas, its language, and its visual representations from literature and design, from other media content and forms, from history and the future, from its own experience, and also from the specific experiences and discourses of its particular targeted market; then it artfully recombines them around the theme of consumption. Through advertising, goods are knitted into the fabric of social life and cultural significance. The borrowed references are fused with products and returned to cultural discourse. Mass media advertising in the modern age presents us with a good opportunity to pinpoint in a concrete manner the relationship between the constructs of advertisers and the referent systems of the audience; that is, the codes of advertising. (p. 142)

The first reference to semiotics in consumer behavior appeared in Goffman (1976), who used "frame analysis" to assess shared social codes about gender in visual images of advertising photography. He begins his discussion of the content of advertisements by analyzing ceremony and display. Displays, like a photograph, provide proof of an actor's alignment

in a gathering. In advertisements, women are, as a general rule, positioned in attitudes of subordination to men. That subordination is manifested in the following ways: Women are shorter than men; women's hands do not grasp many objects firmly; men instruct women; women appear to be drifting in reverie while men's eyes are focused purposefully; women appear helpless; and partials of women's hands, faces, feet, legs, hips, and breasts often appear alone in the ad (p. viii). Furthermore, most media consumers do not perceive these pictures as unnatural (p. 19).

Goffman's premise is that perception of pictures and of reality is a learned activity and that "this learning draws deeply and fallibly on past experience" (p. 13). By drawing on our own past experience with ritualized situations, the advertisers can speak to us without ambiguity. "We learn to decode small flat tracings [pictures] for large three-dimensional scenes in a manner somewhat corresponding to the way we have learned to interpret our visual images of real objects. Thus, we perceive and regard pictures and the reality to which they refer as roughly equivalent" (p. 19). In fact, advertisers create a fiction that is, in some respects, more real than reality. If we study the presentation of gender, the displays that are portrayed tell us what we ourselves might be engaged in.

Davis and Baran (1981) support the notion that media sources give us frames, sets of cues, that guide our unconscious thought processes and our perceptions. A frame tells us what we can expect or how we should behave. We buy products based on the cues provided by advertisers. Every product is positioned to be marketed based on cues that become part of the frames we have of a particular item. According to Davis and Baran, advertisements

simulate regular communication, but they are more accessible and easier to engage in. Therefore, they slowly displace everyday conversation. Importantly, the media content is gradually accepted as real; this, in turn, creates new frames to be used in everyday life.

Hypotheses

The literature acknowledges the powerful role advertising has in determining and reflecting cultural norms and questions the treatment of women in advertising nearly a generation past the second wave of the women's movement. Therefore, an inquiry into these issues appears to be warranted.

By examining hosiery advertisements in four women's magazines, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Compared to 1976, 1986 and 1990 advertisements will show women more often in career roles than in the most common traditional roles of social companion, date, or model.
2. Compared to 1976, 1986 and 1990 ads will portray women more frequently as independent human beings rather than as decorative objects.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Four nationally distributed magazines were selected for study: Glamour, Harper's Bazaar, New Woman, and Working Woman. All are targeted toward women between the ages of 18 and 34, with median household income ranging from \$25,000 to \$40,000. Depending on the publication, from 50% to 90% of the readership is employed full-time, and from 45% to 83% is college-educated.

Women's publications were selected because they ostensibly represent the best-case portrayal of contemporary women. Since role portrayals vary across product category (Sexton & Haberman, 1974), this study keeps the product category constant, so that role changes can be attributed, to some degree, to a change in the advertiser's perception of the market. Hosiery advertising was selected as the investigation vehicle because this gender-relevant category has become a shorthand expression of identity (Browne & Fishwick, 1978) and, like all fashion, a valued commodity--virtually indistinguishable from the human being, especially in the context of an ad. In addition, hosiery is a worst-case scenario for stereotyping because women's breasts and legs have long been symbols for the objectification of women in advertising (Key, 1981). Therefore, if positive role changes are indicated in the context of these worst-case hosiery ads, perhaps advertisers are portraying women more realistically in the 1990s.

Content Analysis

Recognizing the value of image research, this study uses interpretive measures of content analysis designed to tap the latent content of advertising messages--that is, the Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, and Paisley (1976) scale for sexism. It also uses traditional denotative measures of content analysis to record the appearances of the career woman and partials in ads (see Appendix).

The five-level consciousness scale for sexism developed by Pingree et al. (1976) classifies media portrayals of women into five conceptually driven categories that are believed to possess an ordinal relationship to one another.

The Level I woman is a two-dimensional, nonthinking decoration. This level is characterized as "put her down." The woman's image is interpreted as being less than a person and two-dimensional. Portrayal of women at this level shows them blatantly as sex objects and subtly as props or decorations.

The Level II woman's place is in traditional female activities, characterized as "keep her in her place." Women portrayed at this level are primarily found in traditional womanly occupations and are shown struggling with roles that are beyond them (business executives, doctors, editors, etc.) or in which they develop unwomanly traits.

The Level III woman may be a professional, but her first place is in traditional female activities. This level represents the consciousness level of many so-called progressive media images of women: "give her two places."

Women are portrayed in nontraditional activities only to the extent of taking responsibility for both career and traditional female roles.

At Level IV, women are acknowledged as full equals. It is important to note that Level IV images do not insist that traditional roles like housework and mothering are nonnegotiable women's work.

At Level V, women and men are individuals. This level is nonstereotypic. "Individual women and men are viewed as superior to each other in some respects, inferior in other respects." The idea of women being equal to men (as in Level IV) is not necessary here because at this level, individuals are not judged by gender.

Procedure

In order to examine the hypotheses, coders were instructed to assess advertising content in three time periods: 1976, recognized as the approximate height of the women's movement (Lysonski, 1985); 1986; and 1990. A total of 244 hosiery ads were coded. Coders were instructed to avoid duplications of ads appearing more than once in the same year and to consider men present in the ads only for their contribution to knowledge of the female subject's role. If more than one woman appeared in an ad, coders were instructed to randomly select the most prominent woman for observation. Only half-page or larger ads were selected for analysis. Ads showing women's legs alone in the ad were coded as partials and were not coded in any other denotative category, nor were they coded using the interpretive categories of the Pingree et al. (1976) scale for sexism.

Coder Reliability

Two female coders were trained to recognize the definitions of manifest and latent content variables. In a recent study of commercial content, Wilkes and Valencia (1989) noted that ethnicity or race of coders may be a significant factor biasing their observations. These findings, seen in light of Bruner's (1957) earlier work, suggest that coders should be members of the medium's natural audience. Since over 90% of the readership of these magazines is white female, the use of white female coders seemed most appropriate. Had one of the coders been male, however, it is logical to assume the reliability might have been lower.

A pilot test was conducted with 20 ads. The pi index of reliability (Scott, 1955) was calculated for each latent variable of the Pingree et al. (1976) scale for sexism, as well as for the manifest content variables shown on the coding form in the Appendix. The pi for the Pingree et al. (1976) scale for sexism was 89, which was acceptable considering the complexity of each scale level. The two female coders achieved a pi index of at least 90 on the manifest content variables for career role portrayal and for partial portrayal. However, many of the manifest content variables had an unacceptably low pi index and, therefore, were not used in the quantitative analysis. More appropriately, they were used to analyze the qualitative results from a semiotic perspective.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This study has examined the portrayal of women in hosiery ads in four selected publications targeted toward middle- and upper-class women during 1976, 1986, and 1990. Hypothesis 1 stated that, compared to 1976, women in 1986 and 1990 ads would be shown more often in career roles, than in the most common traditional roles of social companion, date, or model. Table 1 shows the distribution of these data by year.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution by Number and Percentage: Women's Roles in Hosiery Ads
n = 168

Portrayal	1976		1986		1990	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Housewife/ mother	—	—	—	—	2	3.5
Social companion/date	23	42.0	19	40.2	23	34.7
Career woman	4	6.4	4	8.8	9	13.5
Ideal woman	4	8.7	4	7.4	6	8.6
Celebrity	4	7.5	1	2.0	2	3.0
Model	19	35.4	20	41.6	24	36.7
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	54	100.0	48	100.0	66	100.0

The sample size was too small to use a chi square analysis; therefore, a comparison of proportions from 1976 and 1986 and from 1976 and 1990 were used to determine significant change from one decade to another. Although the figures show some gains in career portrayal, women were more often portrayed as social companions, dates, and models in all three time periods. As shown in Tables 2, the results indicate there was no significant difference in career portrayal between 1976 and 1986 or between 1976 and 1990.

Table 2

Comparison of Career Portrayal: 1976 to 1986

Variable	Number of Ads	Standard Error	p	z	Significance Level
1976	54				
		.075	.37	1.46	.01
1986	48				

Comparison of Career Portrayal: 1976 to 1990

Variable	Number of Ads	Standard Error	p	z	Significance Level
1976	54				
		.055	.10	1.29	.01
1990	66				

Note. p = the best possible estimate of the proportion hypothesized to be common to both populations that can be derived from the data.

Hypothesis 2 stated that, compared to 1976, 1986 and 1990 ads would portray women more frequently as independent beings than as decorative objects, in accordance with the Pingree et al. (1976) scale for sexism. Table 3 shows the distribution of these data by year.

Table 3

Mean Scores on Scale for Sexism: 1976, 1986, and 1990

Variable	Number of Ads	Mean Consciousness Level	Variance
1976	54	1.86	.371
1986	48	1.91	.364
1990	66	2.01	.427

Note. Scores on the consciousness scale ranged from 1-5, where 1 = women as sex objects and 5 = women as independent human beings.

As shown in Table 4, the results indicate there was no significant improvement in the portrayal of women in hosiery ads from 1976 through 1990, with regard to the Pingree et al. (1976) scale for sexism .

Table 4

Comparison of Mean Scores on Scale for Sexism: 1976 to 1986

Variable	Number of Ads	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	t	df	p (2-tail)
1976	54	1.86	.61	.03	.412	118	.01
1986	48	1.91	.60	.03			

Comparison of Mean Scores on Scale for Sexism: 1976 to 1990

Variable	Number of Ads	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	t	df	p (2-tail)
1976	54	1.86	.61	.03	1.27	118	.01
1990	66	2.01	.65	.03			

Additional Analysis

Of the 244 ads analyzed, 29.7% were partials (i.e., legs pictured alone in the ad). Table 5 shows the distribution of these data by year.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution by Number and Percentage: Partial Portrayals in Hosiery Ads
n = 244

Portrayal	1976		1986		1990	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Full-body	54	79.8	48	68.7	66	62.2
Partial	14	20.2	22	31.3	40	37.8
Total	68	100.0	70	100.0	106	100.0

As shown in Table 6, there was no significant difference in partial portrayal between 1976 and 1986. There was a significant difference in partial portrayals, however, between 1976 and 1990. Partial portrayals increased significantly in 1990.

Table 6

Comparison of Partial Portrayals: 1976 and 1986

Variable	Number of Ads	Standard Error	p	z	Significance Level
1976	68				
		.075	.37	1.46	.01
1986	70				

Comparison of Partial Portrayals: 1976 and 1990

Variable	Number of Ads	Standard Error	p	z	Significance Level
1976	68				
		.081	.26	3.15	.01
1990	106				

Note. p = the best possible estimate of the proportion hypothesized to be common to both populations that can be derived from the data.

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion of Quantitative Results

The intent of this study was to examine the hosiery advertisements in Glamour, Harper's Bazaar, New Woman, and Working Woman (all targeted toward middle- and upper-income women) to determine if the roles of women changed in the years following 1976, the approximate height of the women's movement.

A review of the literature showed that magazines tended to portray women in decorative roles. Therefore, a primary question posed was whether advertising in women's magazines was influenced by the women's movement. If this social event were influential, the portrayal of women should reflect women's changing roles--particularly in the work force. In addition, if the women's movement were influential, the portrayal of women should show a significant difference by registering higher on the Pingree et al. (1976) scale for sexism, one definition of more positive treatment of women.

The findings of the study do not support the hypothesis that, compared to 1976, women in 1986 and 1990 were portrayed more often as career women and less often in the most common traditional roles of social companion, date, or model. In the 1980s and into 1990, women continued to be portrayed more often in traditional roles. In addition, the significant increase in partial portrayal in 1990 advertisements suggests the

continuing portrayal of women in the subordinate roles cited by Goffman (1976).

The findings of the study do not support the hypothesis that, compared to 1976, women in 1987 and 1990 advertisements were portrayed more often as independent human beings rather than decorative objects. The decorative object archetype remained stable in 1986 and 1990.

Figure 1, a 1989 ad, exemplifies the results of this study. The lively female with one or both feet kicking in the air, who, in Goffman's (1976) terms "uses her entire body as a playful gesticulative device" (p. 50), persists as an advertising archetype even into the 1990s. There has not been much change in the portrayal of women in advertising, perhaps because advertising has this powerful role: to depict men and women not necessarily how they actually behave, but rather, how we think men and women behave. Furthermore, according to Goffman, this depiction serves the social purpose of convincing us that this is how men and women are, or want to be, or should be. "That orientation accomplishes the task a society has of maintaining an essential order, an undisturbed on-goingness, regardless of the actual experience of the participants. . . . [Advertising and society have the same job], to transform otherwise opaque goings-on into easily readable form" (p. vii).

By far, too much of the data from this study point in a negative direction. Advertising has not changed significantly since Friedan (1963) asserted that magazines, "mirror and create the identity of women in America" (p. 29).

Discussion of Coding Methods

One premise of this study was the assumption that the measures used can be reliably coded and are consensually valid. Although evidence was presented regarding reliability, the results of the study do raise questions regarding the ability of the measures to capture accurately all the nuances of the dynamic sexism construct. It is clear that simply counting manifest content elements in an advertisement fails to tap the subtlety and complexity of sexism. This argues strongly for the inclusion of interpretive measures of latent content such as the Pingree et al. scale for sexism (1976) used in this study. But these measures also raise questions.

Inasmuch as stereotypes derive meaning from culture, advertisers who rely on stereotypical role portrayals to reach their audience and researchers who evaluate those portrayals must be aware of cultural change that affects the interpretation of meaning.

It is possible that the very nature of what is considered sexist has changed over time and that the latent content measures used here were also unable to accurately reflect that change. For instance, the construct of sex object, once seen to be one-dimensional and negative, may now have assumed a number of dimensions. Furthermore, in light of increased interest in fitness and health, greater acceptance of intimacy in persuasive appeals, and greater tolerance of nudity, one can no longer assume negative stereotypes characterize advertisements that focus on the body. And, in fact, such advertisements may now be seen as positive. This raises a question as to the validity of the assumption that Level I in Pingree et al.'s scale for sexism (1976) is, in fact, the most sexist of the levels.

Similar questions might also be raised about the other scale levels as well. It could be argued that Level II ("keep her in her place") is really the most damaging sexist dimension because of its subtlety. Finally, recent criticism of the early feminist ideal of the superwoman (Davis & Baran, 1981; Doyle, 1988; Tuchman, 1979) questions the assumption that Level III ("multiple roles") remains nonsexist in its present connotation.

Because the coding methods had inadequacies, the quantitative analysis did not indicate changes that have occurred in advertising from 1976 to the present. However, some positive qualitative changes can be observed by using semiotics as an analytic perspective.

Discussion of Qualitative Results

The most important change in 1990 was the introduction of the testimonial ad, which portrays real women (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). Subjects of these ads, all leaders in their respective fields, are portrayed in career contexts. The three testimonial ads use yellow and black for props and wardrobe--yellow suggesting warmth and aggressiveness, and black suggesting power and stability, according to the photography literature (Pfeiffer, 1980). The woman in Figure 2 appears in front of the car she helped design. She has a strong vertical stance enhanced by the fact that she was photographed from the ground up. Her weight is evenly distributed on feet planted directly beneath her shoulders, she looks directly at the camera, and she is portrayed in clear focus--all contributing to her stability and predominance in the ad. The woman in Figure 3 firmly grasps fabric she might use in her job as a costume designer. Though she is sitting, she has a strong vertical posture, anchored by her right foot and

her left hand. She also looks directly at the camera and is portrayed in clear focus--all contributing to her predominance and stability. Figure 3 can be compared to Figures 5 and 6 in which the women are portrayed in postures that lend them less stability. In addition, these subjects are shown in token careers (complete with token artifacts like the shiny and colorful cannister, hard hat, and pumps; and the fashion sketches).

The 1990s woman in Figure 7 shows positive change because she appears to interact more in the social setting, without being focused on as an object with archetypal legs. She is positioned at eye level to the male participants and, thus, is an active participant in the conversation. Figure 7 can be compared to earlier ads in Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11 in which the women are objectified and detached from the gathering because their legs are the center of attention. In Figure 11, the woman's legs are as much an icon as the trophy she is holding.

The 1990s woman in Figure 12 is quite different from any preceding image. The hosiery serves as a garment for an active lifestyle, rather than as a way to expose her body. This more androgynous portrayal of women in hosiery ads debuted in 1987, with the Hanes campaign seen in Figures 13-16. The women in these ads have imperfections that make them more realistic and human. Furthermore, as suggested by the copy, they are women of intelligence, not mere objects or models.

Future Research

Although the use of quantitative content analysis and the introduction of qualitative tools like semiotics are a beginning, researchers in this area would do well to consider the adoption of still other methodologies--such as values analysis, narrative analysis, and psychoanalytic criticism (Sillars, 1991)--in their efforts to further understand the nature of sexism in advertising.

These methods should consider the relationship of stereotypes to the legitimation of social power and should address the descriptive and evaluative aspects of those stereotypes, as well as their grounding in the social structure (Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkham, 1990).

Even using both manifest and latent content measures, any content analysis is inherently descriptive and can provide only limited insight into why significant relationships or trends are observed (Kassarjian, 1977).

Another possible avenue of inquiry might explore economic influences more fully. An economic analysis would require data at the organization and industry levels (see Norris, 1982, 1984).

Melody (1973) has suggested that our entire media system may be "fundamentally responsive to the advertiser" (p. 52). In fact, Melody suggests that, in weighing audience needs against advertiser needs, the media give priority to the advertiser. Specialized media tend to be successful only insofar as they are able to lure an audience segment sought by advertisers.

Clearly, women's magazines have emerged as specialized publications. In order to survive, these publications have had to make advertisers as well as readers happy. Ms. is an example of a publication that failed in the traditional media market because it could not retain feminist content while also keeping advertisers satisfied. It has returned in 1991 as a solely reader-supported periodical.

Recently, new rival magazines such as Savvy and editorial changes in established magazines such as Good Housekeeping have increased competition for this specialized audience segment. Within this context, the women's publications in this study have changed their look, their editorial/advertising content, and how they describe their audiences to potential advertisers. These changes have occurred because the women's movement is not as militant as it once was. Both the world and women have changed. Using Melody's (1973) model, one might suggest that the changes observed in these magazines indicate they now place much greater emphasis on the financial bottom line than they do on content that is particularly relevant to women of the 1990s. It has become an advertiser-driven rather than an audience-driven market. Some insightful analysis in this area might contribute to the literature.

The following are some additional suggestions for future research:

1. A more comprehensive analysis of how women perceive themselves should be examined and compared to the roles actually portrayed in ads.
2. Similar research might examine men in advertisements. Do males display certain archetypal roles in ads as well? How has this changed since the women's movement?
3. An analysis of the superwoman archetype, and how this has developed and changed since the height of the woman's movement, is also a relevant area for study.

Figures

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Appendix

Coding Categories

Publication_____

Date_____

Coder_____

1. Hosiery ad presentation:

- ___(1) Women's legs as partials
- ___(2) Woman alone/no setting (skip to #3)
- ___(3) Woman alone/in a setting (skip to #3)
- ___(4) Woman/no setting/relationship
- ___(5) Woman in a setting/relationship
- ___(6) Other

2. Relationship to others:

- ___(7) Family context
- ___(8) Social context
- ___(9) Business context
- ___(10) Impersonal context
- ___(11) Other

3. Woman's face position:

- ___(12) Directly to camera
- ___(13) Away from camera
- ___(14) Side angle
- ___(15) Down to other person in ad
- ___(16) Up to other person in ad
- ___(17) Straight to other person in ad
- ___(18) Other

4. Most prominent value conveyed:

- ___(19) Leisure/fun: social, relaxation, active adventure, excitement, recreation, sport
- ___(20) Family: family love, motherhood, tradition
- ___(21) Friendship: males/females, mixed, nonsexual
- ___(22) Individuality: freedom, independence, eccentricity, uniqueness
- ___(23) Sexual/romantic love: male/female attraction
- ___(24) Beauty: sophistication, grace, elegance
- ___(25) Status: desirable, classy, enviable, showing wealth and power
- ___(26) Quality: desire for superior workmanship or service in product and lifestyle choices

Coding Categories--2

5. Visual presentation:

- ☐ (27) Black and white
- ☐ (28) Black and white with product in full color
- ☐ (29) Cooler colors (black, blue, and green--tranquil)
- ☐ (30) Bright colors (red, yellow--strong/aggressive)
- ☐ (31) Neutral colors (browns and grays--neutral)
- ☐ (32) Soft subtle colors
- ☐ (33) Art or drawing--not realistic color photography
- ☐ (34) Other

6. Predominant composition:

- ☐ (35) Vertical (strength and power)
- ☐ (36) Horizontal (tranquility and rest)
- ☐ (37) Diagonal (movement)
- ☐ (38) "S" curves (contemplative/sedentary)
- ☐ (39) Other

7. Photographic angle:

- ☐ (40) From ground up
- ☐ (41) Down upon
- ☐ (42) Straight on
- ☐ (43) Other

8. Focus:

- ☐ (44) Clear
- ☐ (45) Soft
- ☐ (46) Other

Coding Categories--3

9. Posture:

- ☐ (47) Standing
 - ☐ (48) Leaning more on one leg/one leg in front of other
 - ☐ (49) Weight evenly on both legs/both legs under shoulders
 - ☐ (50) Weight totally on one leg/other leg bent or stretched out
 - ☐ (51) Other
- ☐ (52) Sitting
 - ☐ (53) Legs crossed
 - ☐ (54) Legs uncrossed/ both feet on ground and parallel
 - ☐ (55) Legs uncrossed/both feet on ground/one leg in front of other
 - ☐ (56) Legs uncrossed/one leg bent/one leg straight or straighter
 - ☐ (57) Other

10. Market position:

- ☐ (58) Housewife/mother
- ☐ (59) Social companion/date
- ☐ (60) Career woman
- ☐ (61) Ideal woman
- ☐ (62) Celebrity
- ☐ (63) Cannot determine (woman in ad functions just as a model)
- ☐ (64) Other