



1984

## The portrayal of men's and women's occupational roles and the settings of the portrayals in magazine advertisements from 1958-1988

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The Portrayal of Men's and Women's  
Occupational Roles and the Settings of the  
Portrayals in Magazine Advertisements from 1958-1988

A Thesis

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Communication  
University of the Pacific

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

J. Carlos Velazquez

June, 1989

This thesis, written and submitted by

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Dated \_\_\_\_\_

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my extended family: a group of men who provide the support, affection, and means to live in an age in which we are challenged but determined. Thank you Don, Matt, Jason, Gary, Chris, Tom, Rick, and Jon.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Ken Day, Linda Nolan, supportive faculty members at the University of the Pacific, Cindy Boggs, who began the conceptualization of this research for me, and Judy Vasconcelos, a friend who continues to care. I would like to especially express my sincerest gratitude to Jon Schamber, my mentor and advisor, who acted in his fullest potential to generate a climate in which this research was accomplished.

Thank you Jon.

## Abstract

This study investigated the portrayal of men's and women's occupational roles and settings in magazine advertising from 1958-1988. A review of the literature revealed there was a need to update investigations focusing on women's working/nonworking roles. Moreover, there was a gap in the literature investigating the portrayal of men's roles. A content analysis of 240 randomly selected advertisements indicated there were no significant changes in the portrayal of occupational roles. However, the data suggest that the settings in which women were depicted changed more than the settings for men. The majority of the ads showed women in outside/recreational and no settings. Moreover, women were pictured in more varied settings than men including nontraditional portrayals. Although there was a slight increase in the portrayal of women in working roles, the increment was diminished in its significance by the high level of decorative role portrayals. According to past researchers, such a neutral portrayal may be a means of offending fewer consumers and avoiding making judgments about sex roles altogether.

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## Chapter I

In the human mind advertising takes on a life of its own. Printed pages with slogans such as, "You've come a long way, baby," seem to express something different for almost everybody at different times. The role of advertising is diverse, but crucial, because it exists to create a need, reflect a concern, or catch the attention of the masses. In fact, as a medium it can both reflect and mold a culture's beliefs, attitudes, and values. Thus, as a society changes one would expect the life of advertising to change as well.

Men and women in our society have in fact, "come a long way" in that both male and female roles have changed significantly in the past fifty years. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1984), 69.9 percent of women aged twenty-five to forty-four were in the labor force. The U.S. Census Bureau (1985) reported more men have the responsibility of rearing children as single fathers. In addition, the Department of Labor indicated that only about 10.7 percent of U.S. families conform to what many consider the traditional household of the "breadwinning father" and the "breadbaking mother." Such changes have developed for a variety of reasons including antidiscrimination legislation enacted at both the state and national levels. Given these empowering and equality enhancing changes, one could expect advertising to reflect the shifts that have occurred in sex role expectations and stereotypes. Moreover, one could question

whether ads portray men and women in as many different occupational roles as they now occupy.

#### The Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of men's and women's occupational roles in print advertising for the past four decades. Print media can offer a great deal of information about a society for as Andren (1978) notes, advertising "communicates directly and indirectly, evaluations, norms, and propositions about matters other than the products that are to be sold" (p. 113). It is difficult to determine to what extent advertising reflects or shapes a society's values, beliefs, or attitudes. Brown (1982), argues that advertising is reflective of a culture by stating that ads "tend to conform to rather than transform cultural values, they are thus useful and historical" (p. 175). Conversely, Buchanan (1977) holds that in fact advertising can shape or influence peoples' attitudes as an opinion giver.

The researcher recognizes the difficulty in settling the dispute regarding whether advertising reflects or molds a society's beliefs or attitudes especially with regard to sex role expectations. However, Busby (1975) clarifies the dispute by noting ads are a "projective-reflective mirror of our society: [they show] us what we are or what we ought to be" (p. 173). To deny the dual role that advertising plays is in fact to deny its effectiveness. Belk and Pollay (1985) simplify the dispute by

stating, "Even if advertising merely reflects the values of the culture and society of which it is a part, it has become an important enough reflection of ourselves that it must be regarded as a significant factor in reinforcing and strengthening the life it portrays" (p. 888).

#### Justification

Since advertising has a projective-reflective role, it can give some indication as to the image that is held by a society of both men's and women's roles at a given time. The goal of this study is to determine whether there has been a significant change in the distribution of men's and women's occupational roles and the settings in which either sex is portrayed.

Currently there is a need to update the research on the role portrayal of women in print advertising since the last comprehensive investigation was conducted on a sample of ads from the year 1983 (Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988). Moreover, according to Skelly and Lundstrom (1981), the study of men's roles in advertising has been rather limited. The majority of research on print advertising has focused on women in terms of their depictions as sex objects (Haskell, 1974); their portrayal as the victims of violence (Gerbner, 1972); and their working roles (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971, Courtney & Whipple, 1983, Sexton & Haberman, 1974, Wagner & Banos, 1973). Thus, there is a need to provide a complete analysis of women and men as portrayed in print media advertising.

### Literature Review

Before outlining the specific focus of the study, a number of articles that have examined the portrayal of men and women in advertising will be reviewed. The following review details studies which have examined: (1) images of women in print advertising, (2) images of men in print advertising, and (3) effects of sex stereotyping in print advertising.

#### Images of Women

Several studies have investigated the roles of women in print media advertising. One of the earliest studies was conducted by Courtney and Lockeretz (1971). In their investigation the following magazines were analyzed for the published week of April 8, 1970: Life, Look, The New Yorker, Saturday Review, and U.S. News and World Report. The April 1970 issue of Reader's Digest was also analyzed in the study. The researchers selected general-interest magazines since such publications would more likely depict a greater variety of working roles. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the occupations of working men and women in the study. The data indicate that only about 9 percent of the sample depicted women in working situations, and none showed them in professional or management positions. Additionally, Courtney and Lockeretz suggested that within the ads four major sexual stereotypes were depicted:

- (1) A woman's place is in the home.
- (2) Important decisions are not made by women.

(3) Women are dependent on men's protection.

(4) Men view women as sex objects. (pp. 94-95)

Table 1: Occupations of Working Men and Women

	% of males	% of females
Proportions shown as workers	45	9
Occupational categories		
High level business executives	10	0
Professional	9	0
Entertainers and sports	20	58
Sales and mid-level business	7	8
Nonprofessional white collar	2	17
Blue collar	40	17
Soldiers, police	12	0
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
Number of workers shown	176	24

Wagner and Banos (1973) conducted a follow-up analysis of the Courtney and Lockeretz study by examining advertisements appearing in the January 1972 issue of the following seven general-interest magazines: Life, Newsweek, The New Yorker, Saturday Review, Time, U.S. News and World Report, Reader's Digest, and New York Times Magazine. Table 2 offers a comparison of the findings of the two studies. The results indicated that there was an improvement in the types of women's roles depicted

in advertising during the 20 month period after the Courtney and Lockeretz study. Wagner and Banos concluded that women in working roles were portrayed in more responsible working capacities. There were increases in the percentages of female workers shown in professional, sales, middle-level business, semi-professional, and in other white collar occupations. Overall the proportion of women shown working increased from 9 percent in 1970 to 21 percent in 1972.

Table 2: Comparison of Occupations of Working Women  
Shown in Advertisements from 1970-1972

	Percent of Females	
	1970	1972
Proportions shown as workers	9	21
Occupational categories		
High-level business executive	0	0
Professional	0	4
Entertainers, sports	58	23
Sales and mid-level business	8	15
Nonprofessional, white collar	17	46
Blue Collar	17	12
Total	100	100
Number shown as workers	24	79

More recent studies have not shown the same type of improvement of women in professional roles that Wagner and Banos reported. Venkatesan and Losco (1975) examined 14,000 ads from

the period 1959-1971. The researchers indicated that only a limited number of women's images had changed. For example, the number of portrayals of women as sex objects decreased but the image of women as dependent on men did not. The researchers concluded that overall the advertisements did not offer "the portrayal of women in roles which actually reflect their positive attributes and their individuality, and which reflect the changing role of women in our society" (p. 54).

Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) found similar results and concluded "mass media, as expressed by advertisements, have not adequately matched [the] manifestations of social change and, with few exceptions, tend to portray women in unrealistic settings and in under representative numbers" (p. 172).

The researchers offered some criticism of the Courtney and Lockeretz study and the Wagner and Banos follow-up study by pointing out that their findings did not assess the data statistically. Secondly, both studies only focused on a twenty month period rather than taking into consideration the historical context. Lastly, neither study offered a theoretical justification for their undertakings. Belkaoui and Belkaoui designed their study taking into consideration the latter limitations.

The researchers analyzed eight periodicals based on the same criteria established by Courtney and Lockeretz. Thus, the magazines selected were not family or female oriented since such



periodicals have a tendency to portray women in traditional and nonworking roles. The sample included 268 advertisements which portrayed two or more adults from the second week of January in 1958. Theoretically, the researchers maintained that if media content changes the society itself has undergone some alterations (i.e., the feminist movement). Consequently, Belkaoui and Belkaoui hold that "advertising functions primarily to uphold predispositions rather than to change attitudes" (p. 169). Thus, the year 1958 was chosen based on the fact that the feminist movement had not at that point had a strong historical impact. The findings could then be compared to the data of Courtney and Lockeretz and Wagner and Banos which incorporated 1970 and 1972 publications respectively.

Table 3 details a comparison of working women in the 1958, 1970, and 1972 studies. As can be observed in the table, only 13 percent of the women in 1958 were portrayed in working roles as compared to 21 percent in 1972. Moreover, not one ad in three samples showed women in high level business positions. The biggest difference between the studies was in the depiction of secretarial and clerical positions for women. In 1958, 74.4 percent of the women were portrayed in such nonprofessional white collar roles, in 1970 the figure dropped to 17 percent, and in 1972 the figure increased to 46 percent. The study indicated that the portrayal of women as nonworkers increased from a low of 31 percent in 1970 to a high of 56 percent in 1972.

Table 3: Comparison of Occupations of Working Women  
Shown in Advertisements, for 1958, 1970, and 1972

	% 1958	% 1970	% 1972
% Shown as workers	13	9	21
Occupational categories			
High level business	0	0	0
Professional	0	0	4
Entertainment, sports	11.1	58	23
Mid-level business	5.6	8	15
Secretarial. clerical	74.4	17	46
Blue collar	8.9	17	12
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of workers shown		128 males	18 females

In addition, Belkaoui and Belkaoui found the following stereotypes in the 1958 sample:

- (1) Women were predominantly in nonworking roles.
- (2) Women were portrayed as low income earners and subservient to male workers.
- (3) Women were largely shown in decorative positions.
- (4) Women have limited purchasing power with decisions for big ticket items to be made by men. (p. 170)

Moreover, Belkaoui and Belkaoui found that the portrayal of women as nonworkers increased from a low of 31 percent in 1970 to to a high of 56 percent in 1972. The researchers concluded:

Comparison of the 1958 ads with those of 1970 and 1972 suggests that some of the standards of expected behavior prevalent in 1958 have remained as the stereotypes of the present decade. The results [in Table 3] suggest that advertisements have kept up with the times in portraying women in the wide variety of roles they play in today's world. (p. 172)

Sullivan and O'Connor (1988) updated the Courtney and Lockeretz study and the follow-up investigation of Belkaoui and Belkaoui by focusing on advertisements in 1983. The researchers analyzed eight publications with a total sample of 364 ads using the same coding scheme developed by Courtney and Lockeretz. As had been true for previous studies, the researchers found more men (380) in the advertisements than women (240). However, of the 240 women depicted, 23 percent were portrayed as employed which was twice as many as in previous studies. With regard to the increase of women portrayed as employed, the researchers noted:

[T]he increases came at the expense of white-collar employment, which was clearly down in 1983, and to a lesser degree at the expense of entertainment and sports, which were also slightly lower than would be expected. Blue and gray-collar worker depictions have remained very stable over the time periods. (p. 186)

Sullivan and O'Connor also pointed out that advertising shifted toward portraying more women in working roles that require decision making skills and less dependence on men. Sullivan and O'Connor concluded, "It appears that those responsible for the creation of magazine advertising have begun to recognize the increasing economic and social status of women in America" (p. 188).

In reviewing the literature on women's images in print advertising, it appears that a greater percentage of women are portrayed in occupational roles during the early 1980's than in earlier periods. In addition, the most recent study suggests that women are more likely to be depicted in roles that require less dependence on men. An updated assessment is warranted to determine whether this trend has continued during the 1980's.

#### Images of Men

According to Skelly and Lundstrom (1981), the study of male roles in magazine advertising has been somewhat limited in contrast to studies investigating women's roles. The researchers argue that the gap may have occurred in response to the feminist movement which produced criticism of the portrayal of women in the mass media without giving much attention to men (p. 32). In order to correct the gap in research, Skelly and Lundstrom analyzed three categories of magazines--general interest,

male oriented, and female oriented. A total of nine magazines were analyzed for the month of November in 1959, 1969, and 1979, providing a sample of 660 advertisements. A consciousness scale designed to measure the degree of sexism within print media was used. The scale divided levels of sexism into three levels:

Level 1 may best be described as decorative.

Advertisements ranked at this level depict men as not engaged in any discernible activity or merely present to be attractive, rather than having a real relationship to the product.

Level 2 encompasses traditional masculine roles, such as businessmen, sportsmen, and authority and father figures.

Level 3 ads show men performing nonstereotypic roles capably, but portray their traditional roles as being primarily important.

Level 4 ads acknowledge that the sexes are fully equal and make no distinction between the two.

Level 5 ads are nonstereotypic; evaluations are made not on the basis of sex but in terms of capabilities. (p. 53)

Skelly and Lundstrom found that in the 1959 sample, 21.9 percent of the advertisements depicted men in decorative positions (Level 1); however, in the 1979 sample there was an

increase of decorative ads to 53.7 percent. Conversely, the percent of work-related (Level 2) depictions decreased from 76.1 percent in 1959 to 53.7 percent in 1979. The researchers pointed out that "the increase in decorative role portrayals came largely at the expense of traditional depictions and may reflect an attempt to avoid any comment on male sex roles" (p. 56). The researchers also suggested the "possibility that as women achieve sexual equality, advertisers may use portrayals of men in decorative roles to appeal to them, just as women have been the object of such appeals" (p. 56). Finally, Skelly and Lundstrom found that of the 660 ads in the study only 2 percent were at Level 3 or 4 (p. 88). The findings suggest that very little progress has been made in the circulation of nonsexist role depictions.

Similar conclusions were made by England and Gardner (1983) who argued that advertising is not reflective of the diverse occupational roles men and women now hold. The researchers conducted a content analysis of the first 25 advertisements appearing in January issues of Time, Vogue, Ladies' Home Journal, and Playboy between 1960 and 1979 with a total sample of 2,000. The researchers found that the amount of sex segregation in ad portrayals was greater than in the U.S. labor force. It is quite common for men and women to work together within the workplace despite what advertising suggests. Table 4 provides a summary of the England and Gardner findings.

Table 4: Occupational Distribution of Men and Women in  
Magazine Ads and in the U.S. Labor Force

	% of male in ads	% of females in ads	% of males in U.S.	% of females in U.S.
Professional	21.6	24.4	13.7	14.5
Managers	32.7	22.0	13.1	4.5
Retail Sales	1.2	0.0	2.4	6.1
Nonretail Sales	.6	0.0	3.8	1.0
Clerical	1.9	24.4	6.9	34.7
Blue Collar Male Job	40.7	0.0	55.2	20.6
Blue Collar Female Job	1.2	29.3	5.0	18.5
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

As can be seen in the table, 21.6 percent of the ads depicted men in professional occupations even though only 13.7 percent occupy such positions in the U.S. labor force. The ads depicted men as managers in 32.7 percent of the sample although only 13.7 percent actually hold such positions in the labor force. A plurality of the ads depicted women in low earning blue collar jobs (29.3%), although, women tend to occupy a much smaller percentage (18.5%) of such jobs. Although, in the actual labor force most women (34.7%) are employed in clerical positions, the sample of ads depicted only 24.4% of women in such positions (p. 261).

England and Gardner provided the following generalizations concerning the portrayal of men and women in print media advertisements:

- (1) Ads show men and women in very different activities. Women are more apt than men to be shown modeling fashions and cosmetics or doing domestic work.
- (2) Men are more often shown on the job, in outdoor recreation, or at leisure indoors.
- (3) The extent of sex-typing activities in ads did not lessen between 1960-1979. Ads did not increase in their portrayal of employed women during the period. This was unrealistic given the dramatic increase in American women's employment during the 1960's and 1970's.
- (4) When ads showed people on the job, the occupational portrayals were more sex-segregated than the U.S. workforce, and the ads showed no reduction in occupational segregation between 1960-1970. (p. 265)

The two studies which have detailed role portrayals of men in print advertisements indicate that men, like women, are increasingly likely to be portrayed in decorative roles. In addition, when men are portrayed as employed, advertisers distort their roles in occupations which are not necessarily



representative of the actual labor force. Given the limited amount of research on male roles in print media advertisements and the dated samples of the studies, an updated assessment of males in such ads is clearly warranted.

#### Effects of Stereotyping

The effects of stereotyping in print advertising have been studied in terms of desirability of the product (Wortzel & Frisbie, 1974); communication effectiveness (Buchanan & Reid, 1977, Ducker & Tucker, 1977, and Courtney & Whipple, 1983); and buying intentions (Mazis & Beuttenmuller, 1972). Some studies have also investigated the potential that mass media have for influencing the development of sex roles (Gerbner, 1972 and Tuchman, 1978). This section provides a brief summary of the research on communication effectiveness of print media advertisements and the potential effects of such ads on molding sex roles.

Communication effectiveness is the degree of persuasive impact advertising may hold. Courtney and Whipple (1985) have argued that communication effectiveness is a function of the interaction of the following factors: (1) the appropriate match between the gender images of the product, (2) the setting of the portrayal, and (3) the portrayal's "liberatedness" and realism (p.4).

According to the Courtney and Whipple, assessing the impact of communication effectiveness has been rather difficult in that past studies have used a variety of methodologies (p. 5). Nonetheless, the researchers have pointed out that "with respect to role portrayal issues, advertisers have argued that affective measures, particularly liking/disliking of the advertisements, are predictive of sales-effectiveness in the marketplace" (p. 5). Courtney and Whipple cite a study by Hamilton (1982) employing affective measurements that found "the treatment which incorporated a less restricted, modern female role-portrayal was consistently found to enhance the marketing effectiveness of the brand's advertising" (p. 1). Thus it appears that in presenting women in less restricted roles, print media ads can increase their communication effectiveness.

Ironically, most research indicates that advertising continues to present traditional roles for both men and women, despite the persuasive impact such ads could have if more liberated portrayals were employed. Such traditional practices have the potential to negatively influence the development of sex roles. Researchers (Gerbner, 1972 and Tuchman, 1978) have argued that mass media do in fact have the power to mold sex roles. This effect of print media advertising on behavior would occur through the presentation of images that reflect what is considered the norm in a given society. Tuchman reminds

researchers that "the influence of specific messages is inevitably mediated by such variables as age, social class, religion, ethnicity, and education" (p.538). Tuchman summarizes research findings with regards to sex roles and media effects by offering the following generalizations:

1. Boys and girls pay particular attention to children of their own gender performing gender-typed tasks;
2. They can reproduce these tasks;
3. Sex-stereotyped content prompts from children traditional responses about women's roles;
4. Content contradicting dominant stereotypes prompts less traditional views; and
5. The greater the mass media exposure of girls, the more traditional are their attitudes and aspirations.

(p. 539)

The implications of these findings may serve as a reminder for advertisers to change the role portrayal of both men and women. On the whole past research has indicated the portrayal of sex roles continues to be traditional within advertising despite what a couple of investigations have noted. By updating the study of men's and women's role depictions it is quite possible to address the question as to whether advertising has changed to reflect what may be encountered in the next decade. If changes

are found, it is possible to counter what Courtney and Whipple (1983) concluded when they posited a few years ago, "The evidence is that the improvement is minimal and stereotypical portrayals continue to be the norm" (p. 11).

#### Research Questions

This study seeks to provide an updated assessment of the occupational roles of women in print advertising. An updated assessment is necessary given that the 1988 study completed by Sullivan and O'Connor examined data from a 1983 sample. Moreover, the study will update an assessment of male occupational roles as prior research has been extremely limited on such roles in print media advertisements.

Criticisms of prior research were addressed in this study. For example, Courtney and Whipple (1983) pointed out that many content analysis studies of print media ads included homemakers under the category of "nonworking." The researchers argued that such a classification denies that people work within the home--a position which is untenable. Another criticism of prior research is the argument that historical context must be included within an analysis of print media advertising (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976). Thus, this study will offer an analysis over four decades.

This study also investigated the setting in which men and women appeared in print advertising. Settings can often present stereotypes at a different level. By cross-tabulating context

with year and occupational roles it is possible to make some observations about the diversity of sex roles for men and women within varied work and nonwork related settings. This study aims to address whether there has been a significant change in the settings in which men and women are depicted.

Four research questions were formulated in order to investigate the potential changing role portrayals of men's and women's occupations and their contexts:

- RQ #1: Has there been a significant change in the distribution of occupational roles of men in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988?
- RQ #2: Has there been a significant change in the distribution of occupational roles of women in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988?
- RQ #3: Has there been a significant change in the distribution of settings in which men are portrayed in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988?
- RQ #4: Has there been a significant change in the distribution of settings in which women are portrayed in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988?

## CHAPTER II

## The Method

This chapter details the methodology used for answering the research questions of the study. Specifically, the following sections are discussed in turn: (1) sampling frame, (2) content analysis procedures, and (3) statistical techniques.

Sampling Frame

The data were analyzed from magazine print advertisements from 1958, 1968, 1978 and 1988. The advertisements were randomly selected from three magazines: Playboy, Cosmopolitan, and Newsweek. The magazines were chosen for three reasons. First of all, Playboy and Cosmopolitan both offer insight into the way the sexes may present each other to themselves. Second, Newsweek is a general-interest magazine that may give an insight into the way men and women may present themselves to each other. Finally, all three publications were in print during the four decades of the study.

Advertisements were randomly selected from the eighth year of each decade. Each month for each year (1958, 1968, 1978, and 1988) was randomly selected using a table of random numbers. Since Newsweek is published weekly, each issue for each month was also randomly selected. Using systematic sampling with  $k=5$ , twenty advertisements were sampled from each magazine per year yielding a sample of 60 ads per decade. The total sample size was 240 advertisements.

### Content Analysis Procedures

This section details the procedures used to collect the data for the study. The following areas are covered: (1) inclusion criteria, (2) content categories, and (3) coder training.

#### Inclusion Criteria

In order for an ad to be coded the following criteria had to be met:

1. The ad had to be a photographic representation.  
Thus, no cartoons, art work, or computer generated graphics were allowed.
2. The ad had to be at least 1/6 of a page in size.
3. The ad could contain no more than two adults. Adult status was determined by setting, products, and occupational role portrayed.
4. The focus of the ad had to be on two adults, but other people in the background were acceptable.
5. Children in the ad were accepted, but the focus had to be on adults.

#### Content Categories

The following variables were coded for the study:

1. Magazine title
2. Magazine year
3. Role portrayal
4. Setting

Since the study focuses on potential change over time, the variable "magazine year" was used for cross-tabulations. The years used for this variable were 1958, 1968, 1978, and 1988. Occupational roles had to be delineated in order to determine whether a shift has occurred in the portrayal of men's and women's roles in advertisements. As mentioned earlier, criticism has been directed at some researchers with regard to the way "roles" have been defined and operationalized in assessing occupational portrayals. For example, Courtney and Whipple (1983) argued:

The terms stereotype and role are subject to unconscious or unintended bias even in the most rigorous studies. For example, in many of the early studies of print advertising, the woman's role is characterized as working or nonworking. Home settings in advertisements are placed in a category with nonworking portrayals.

[This] view has become the subject of considerable feminist criticism over the last decade. (p. 5)

This study sought to operationalize occupational roles through categories which removed such biases.

Men's and women's roles were measured through coding the variable into the following categories:

1. Home-related: Wo/men are in home setting with role of mother/father, homemaker or as a senior citizen.



2. Manual occupations: Wo/men are involved in physical labor or sports activity.
3. Cerebral occupation: Wo/men are in a position requiring a high level of mental activity.
4. Celebrity role: Wo/men shown are famous or well known.
5. Dual role: Wo/men are shown in two occupational roles at the same time.
6. No occupational role: Wo/men are in a decorative role.

The context of the advertisements were coded in order to attain some indication of the settings in which men and women appear. The following categories were developed:

1. Kitchen/laundry room.
2. Living/family room.
3. Bathroom.
4. Bedroom.
5. Yard.
6. Garage.
7. Dining room.
8. Patio/porch.
9. Office
10. Outside/recreational.
11. Shopping/recreational.

12. Health related.
13. Indoor/recreational.
14. No setting.
15. Other/specify.

#### Coder Training

Three coders were trained during a three hour session that included a discussion of the content analysis procedures. Interrater reliability was established by determining rate of agreement per category on a pretest of 50 ads which were not a part of the sample in the study. Rate of agreement per variable between the coders was not lower than 80 percent. Interrater reliability was established for a portion of the actual sample as well. Five randomly selected ads from the sample for each publication per year were independently coded by all three coders. Thus, a third of the sample was subjected to a check of reliability yielding a rate of 85 percent agreement amongst the coders.

#### Statistical Technique

The statistical technique used to answer the research questions was Chi-Square. Chi-Square was used to determine if a relationship was present among the variables year, occupation and setting. Alpha was set at .05.

## CHAPTER III

## The Results

This section will detail the results of the research. Data will be provided on each of the research questions.

Research Question #1

This first research question examined whether there has been a significant change in the distribution of occupational roles of men in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988. A statistical analysis of men's occupational roles depicted by year yielded no significant difference (Chi Square = .12902;  $df = 12$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Table 5 displays the frequency of the occupational roles for men for each decade.

Table 5: Occupational Distribution of Roles of Men in  
Print Media Ads by Decade

Occupational Role	Percent of Males			
	1958	1968	1978	1988
Home-related	4	25	4	8
Manual-related	29	12	29	12
Cerebral-related	16	10	13	4
Celebrity-related	2	5	9	16
Dual-related	0	0	0	0
No occupational role	49	48	45	90

The results indicate that a majority of the occupational portrayals of men in the ads were in the no occupational

category. There appears to be a slight increase in the distribution of men depicted in the no role (decorative) category from 1968 to 1988. This finding is consistent with the Skelly and Lundstrom (1981) results which indicated that there had been an increase in the portrayal of men in decorative roles.

As noted above, the statistical analysis yielded non-significant results in changes of men's roles over the four decade period. Given the small number of cases within the five working role categories as compared to the decorative category, a secondary analysis was conducted on the data. The secondary analysis collapsed data into two role categories: working and nonworking roles. Included in the category of working roles were the following: (1) home related, (2) manual occupation, (3) cerebral occupation, (4) celebrity role and (5) dual role. In addition, decades were collapsed to the categories of 50's/60's and 70's/80's. Table 6 offers a frequency distribution of the secondary analysis.

Table 6: Distribution for Working vs Non-working Men in  
Ads by the 50's/60's and and the 70/80's

Roles of Men	Percent of Males	
	50's/60's	70's/80's
Working Role	45	48
Non-working Role	55	52

The results from the secondary analysis yielded no statistical significance (Chi Square = 2.64;  $df = 1$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Despite an effort to reduce the error attributed to the small  $n$  within the five working role categories, no significant differences were yielded by the secondary analysis.

#### Research Question #2

The second research question examined whether there has been a significant change in the distribution of occupational roles of women in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988. An analysis of the data showed no significant change in the portrayal of women's occupational roles within the four decades (Chi Square = .48259;  $df = 12$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Table 7 offers a breakdown for each decade by occupational roles.

Table 7: Occupational Distribution of Women's Roles in  
Print Media Ads by Decade

Occupational Roles	Percentage of Females			
	1958	1968	1978	1988
Home-related	9	4	7	9
Manual-related	7	11	17	15
Cerebral-related	12	11	4	17
Celebrity-related	5	0	7	7
Dual-related	0	0	0	0
No occupational role	67	74	65	52

The results do indicate, however, that women were less likely than men to be portrayed in an occupational role. The results also indicate a slight decrease in the portrayal of women in the no role (decorative) category from 1968 to 1978 and 1988.

As noted above, the statistical analysis yielded non significant results in changes of women's roles over the four decade period. A secondary analysis was conducted on the data collapsing the categories in the same manner in which the secondary analysis was performed for men.

Table 8 offers a frequency distribution of the secondary analysis for the occupational roles of women for the collapsed decades of the 50's/60's and the 70's/80's.

Table 8: Distribution for Working vs Non-working

Women in Ads by the 50's/60's and the 70's/80's

Role of Women	Percentage of Females	
	50's/60's	70's/80's
Working Role	29	40
Non-working Role	71	60

The secondary analysis yielded no statistical significance in the differences in the distribution of occupational roles of women in working and non-working roles (Chi Square = 0.108;  $df = 1$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

The secondary analysis also allowed for some indication of whether there were significant differences between men versus

women with regards to occupational role portrayal. The analysis showed no significant difference (Chi Square = .25973;  $df = 1$ ;  $p > .05$ ). Of the 169 men portrayed, 62.1 percent had no occupational role. Of the 192 females depicted, 69.7 percent were shown in nonworking positions. Thus, 37.9 percent and 30.3 percent of the men and women, respectively, were depicted in working roles.

It is interesting to note that the representation of men and women in the sample investigated was inconsistent with past research findings. In this study, 47 percent of the individuals portrayed were men and 53 percent were women. In past research such as the Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) study, men made up 63 percent of the individuals portrayed and women 37 percent. In the Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) investigation, there were comparable percentages of 59 percent men and 41 percent women.

### Research Question #3

The third research question addressed in this study was whether there had been a significant change in the settings in which men are portrayed in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988. Table 9 details the frequency of settings in which men were portrayed by each decade. An analysis of the data indicated a significant change in the distribution of settings for men in the four decades (Chi Square = .01309;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .05$ ). As can be seen in the table the changes occurred strongly in the portrayal of men in outdoor/recreational and no settings.

Table 9: Distribution Percentage of Settings for  
Men by Decades

Settings	1958	1968	1978	1988
Kitchen/ laundry room	0	0	0	0
Living/family room	0	3	4	4
Bathroom	0	0	0	2
Bedroom	0	0	0	0
Yard	2	3	0	0
Garage	0	0	4	2
Dining room	2	0	0	0
Patio/porch	0	0	0	4
Office	4	6	0	0
Outside/recreational	46	18	45	21
Shopping	0	3	0	2
Health-related	4	0	0	0
Indoor/recreational	13	0	11	4
No setting	25	61	30	55
Other/specify	4	6	6	6

By examining the occupations in which men were portrayed by settings, it is possible to determine whether stereotypes were depicted. For example, a traditional stereotype would involve a man in an outdoor setting engaged in a sports activity; 12 percent of the ads depicted such a portrayal. A nontraditional depiction would be a man in the kitchen, dining room, living room



in a home-related occupation. Only five ads in the total sample pictured such nontraditional roles for men. So it seems, that although there were some changes in the settings in which men were portrayed, there was not a decrease in portrayal of traditional images.

A secondary analysis of settings by year was also performed for research question #3. For the initial analysis there were many empty or near empty cells as can be noted in Table 9. The categories were collapsed in the following settings: (1) traditional masculine settings (yard, garage, office, outside/recreational); (2) traditional feminine settings (living/family room, dining room, shopping, bathroom, and health related); (3) neutral settings (indoor recreational, patio/porch and other); (4) and no setting. Table 10 offers a distribution of the settings for men by decade.

Table 10: A Secondary Analysis: Distribution Percentage of Men in Settings by Decade

Settings	1958	1968	1978	1988
Traditional Masculine	39	32	44	30
Traditional Feminine	7	7	4	13
Neutral Setting	15	7	18	15
No Setting	39	54	34	42

The secondary analysis yielded no significant differences (Chi Square = 8.57;  $df = 9$ ;  $p > .05$ ) in the distribution of men in traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine settings by each decade.

#### Research Question #4

The last research question addressed in this study was whether there had been a significant change in the settings in which women are portrayed in magazine advertisements from 1958 to 1988. Table 11 is a frequency count of the settings in which women were portrayed for all four decades.

As can be noted from the table, the majority of the ads showed women in outside/recreational and no settings. There were significant changes in the portrayal of settings for women (Chi Square = .01198;  $df = 42$ ;  $p < .05$ ). However the changes were limited to the latter categories. Moreover, women were pictured in more varied settings including nontraditional portrayals than men; this finding is based on a comparison of settings and occupational roles. For example, a nontraditional portrayal would involve a woman in an outdoor setting in a manual occupation or an office setting in a cerebral role. A total of 16 ads of the total 192 depicted such a nontraditional image. Traditional portrayals of women in home settings as homemakers continued to be pictured throughout the four decades.

Table 11: Distribution Percentage of Settings for  
Women by Decades

Settings	1958	1968	1978	1988
Kitchen/laundryroom	0	2	0	0
Living/familyroom	0	4	2	6
Bathroom	0	2	2	6
Bedroom	9	0	4	0
Yard	2	2	0	0
Garage	0	0	0	2
Diningroom	2	0	0	0
Patio/porch	0	0	0	4
Office	12	2	0	6
Outside/recreational	25	27	41	21
Shopping	0	0	0	6
Health-related	4	4	2	0
Indoor/recreational	11	2	11	4
No setting	33	50	31	39
Other	2	5	7	6

A secondary analysis was conducted for settings by year for women. As can be noted in Table 11 there were many empty or near empty cells in the initial analysis. The categories were collapsed in the same way that the secondary analysis was conducted for men. Table 12 offers a distribution of women in

settings by years for the secondary analysis. The analysis indicated a statistically significant change (Chi Square = 19.65;  $df = 9$ ;  $p < .05$ ) in the distribution of settings with a notable increase in the portrayal of women in no settings. The portrayal of women in traditionally feminine settings remained at a rather consistent level. However, again, it should be noted that women were portrayed in more varied settings than men. Moreover, women were more likely to be portrayed in traditionally masculine settings as opposed to men being portrayed in traditionally feminine settings.

Table 12: A Secondary Analysis: Distribution Percentage of Settings for Women by Decades

Settings	1958	1968	1978	1988
Traditional Masculine	53	28	49	24
Traditional Feminine	7	6	4	8
Neutral Setting	17	6	18	14
No Setting	25	60	29	54

#### CHAPTER IV

##### Conclusion

This section addresses the implications of the study, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and concluding remarks regarding the research effort.

### Discussion and Implications

The results of this study indicate that there was no significant change in the distribution of men's and women's occupational roles across the four decades. Moreover, the roles were not necessarily different for either sex. An analysis of men's versus women's occupational roles showed no significant difference. For example, 69.7 percent of the women had no occupational roles as compared to 62.1 percent of the men. The plurality of the ads pictured men and women in decorative positions. So it seems that there were misrepresentations in portrayals regardless of gender. This finding is consistent with earlier research (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976, Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971, Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988, Wagner & Banos, 1973) and is inconsistent with current demographic labor divisions as provided by England and Gardner (1983). Not one single ad depicted either men or women in a dual role despite the fact that there has been an increase in women managing a household and a career (Astrachan, 1981). Just as important is the increase of men who have taken on the responsibility of rearing the children and managing a career (U.S. Census Bureau, 1985).

The findings in this study indicate that overall there was a small increase in the depictions of women in working roles (30%) as compared to earlier studies. For example, Courtney and Lockeretz (1971), who conducted one of the earliest studies

on the portrayal of women's occupational roles in print media, found 9 percent of women characters pictured in working roles. Sullivan and O'Connor (1988), who conducted one of the most recent studies found 23 percent of the ads to portray women in working roles. However, despite the small increase noted in this study, the majority of the advertisements still portray women in decorative roles void of making a contribution to important decisions or occupying positions of power.

The findings for the portrayal of male roles is not much better considering that there seems to be an increase in the depiction of decorative roles. Skelly and Lundstrom (1981) found that in 1979 there was an increase in advertisements showing men in decorative positions to 53.7 percent, and in this study there was a parallel increase to 61.1 percent in 1988. The researchers argued that decorative roles may be a means for advertisers to avoid making judgments on male roles (p. 56). Another implication of the high portrayal of decorative roles can relate to the alienating effect that stereotypical depictions may have on consumers. Advertisers may use decorative portrayals as a way of avoiding offending consumers; however, such an implication would have to be tested in a study using different methodologies.

An initial analysis of the distribution of settings in which both men and women were depicted indicated that there have been some significant changes in the past four decades. The changes occurred predominantly in the depiction of men and women in no

settings. The portrayal of men and women in no settings reached a high of 53 percent in 1978 and a low of 24 percent in 1968. The shift is quite dramatic within the span of ten years. During these years, the feminist movement reached a peak with demands for equality and nonsexist representation within the mass media. This study, however, did not investigate a link between the feminist movement and the portrayal of men and women in print advertising.

A secondary analysis of the frequency distribution of setting for both men and women by decade indicates a contradiction with regards to the findings for men's settings. The secondary analysis yielded non-significant results with regard to the changes in the portrayal of men in neutral, traditionally feminine, traditionally masculine, and no settings. Women, however, were likely to be portrayed in more traditionally masculine contexts as opposed to men in traditionally feminine settings.

In addition, the portrayal of both men and women in no settings and decorative positions suggest that advertising aims to attract the attention of its target audience by showing attractive men and women without a given purpose or career orientation. Such portrayals fail to depict men and women in a way that best reflects the many roles they now occupy. For example, ideally some ads should show a man as a homemaker preparing a meal for children and a working wife. Ads should

also depict female CEO's surrounded by top executives waiting for her decision. Such portrayals have the potential of not only more accurately depicting what is so but may instill positive images of what can be.

#### Limitations

In reviewing the results of this study it is important to note that there are several weaknesses that limit any generalizations and conclusions. The total sample only consisted of 240 advertisements. As a result of the small sample, a thorough test of the distribution of occupational roles could not be conducted. Thus, categories were collapsed to decrease the effect of empty cells on statistical results. Criticism of past research was considered with regards to collapsing categories to working roles and nonworking roles; thus, there is some theoretical justification for condensing categories.

Another weakness in the study encompassed the types of magazines used. Two publications were selected as they offered views on how each sex presented males or females to each other-- Playboy and Cosmopolitan. The third magazine, Newsweek, was chosen for its general-interest readership. However, at least two additional magazines from the categories female oriented, male oriented, and general-interest should have been analyzed. In addition, the sample could have included three randomly selected years from each decade rather than one year. Such changes in the sample would have strengthened the study results.



Finally, the study did not examine the objectives of the advertising. Communication effectiveness was addressed as an issue, but the study did not incorporate a measure of this variable. Whipple and Courtney (1958) argued that communication effectiveness is a function of the interaction of factors such as settings and realism of the advertising. In order for advertising to be effective of its ultimate goal is to have consumers buy the given product. Consumer behavior and communication effectiveness were not addressed in this study.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

The results for this study have generated several questions: (1) What effect do stereotypes have on the buying behavior of consumers? (2) What stereotypes are predominantly portrayed in advertising? (3) Are there particular target audiences who may not find traditional or decorative portrayals offensive? (4) What is the nature of the relationship between men's and women's roles within advertising? (5) How do settings and occupational roles interact within advertising? Such questions would need to employ methodologies that considered qualitative and quantitative indicators in order for the investigation to be considered thorough.

Additional research could continue to consider home-related roles as working roles if feminist criticism is to be consistently upheld. Moreover, further studies investigating the roles of men are needed in order to obtain a clearer perspective

of the depiction of male sex roles. A study focusing on the portrayal of men in women's magazines published throughout the development of the feminist movement could give some indication of the potential shift of male roles.

Additional research could be carried out taking into account the weaknesses of this study. The following can be considered as possible suggestions: (1) using more varied publications, (2) a qualitative indicator of sexism, (3) samples from at least two randomly selected years for each decade, and (4) incorporating a measurement of communication effectiveness on consumer buying decisions and affective impacts.

Such suggestions for research, although varied, still carry the implications of the ever-present debate of the role of print media as a shaping or reflecting force in the development of sex roles. This study did not settle this dispute nor did it consider such an objective. Instead, there was a simple aim to present updated information with regards to the occupational role portrayal of men and women in print advertisement.

#### Conclusion

This study suggests that the portrayal of occupational roles and settings have not changed dramatically from 1958-1988. Although there were no significant differences found between men versus women with regards to occupational roles, it was found that neither sex was represented in a realistic manner. Instead,

both men and women were primarily depicted in decorative and nonworking roles.

Men appeared consistently in traditional roles and settings as well as decorative roles even though they have more flexibility with regard to sex role expectations. The days of men acting solely as the "breadwinner" are long gone; instead, men must now know how to balance a career and household responsibilities including rearing the children. Conversely, even though women were pictured in slightly more working roles as compared to past research, the decorative role portrayal was so overwhelming that the small shift seemed anticlimatic.

The slogan for a popular ad boasts, "You've come a long way, baby." Men and women have in fact come a long way making progress toward a liberation of restricting sex roles and challenging traditional career choices. To what extent advertising has progressed in reflecting the liberation and the challenges men and women have experienced is a question to be determined. This question also carries with it a strong ethical burden for advertisers. Regardless of the debate between the role of advertising as either reflecting or molding sex roles, advertisers should hold themselves responsible for presenting honest and unharmed messages. It should be considered reasonable that advertising should meet its goal of influencing consumer behavior. However, the potential influence such print

may have on attitudes toward sex roles should not be ignored.

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