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Portrayals of motherhood in four women's magazines: 1985 and 2009.

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PORTRAYALS OF MOTHERHOOD IN FOUR WOMEN'S MAGAZINES:
1985 AND 2009

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Kristen A. Sato

December 2009

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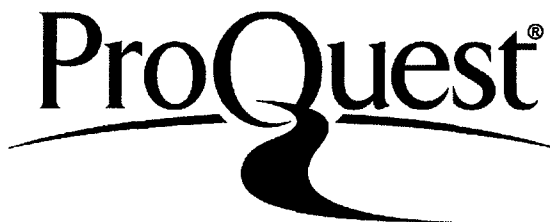
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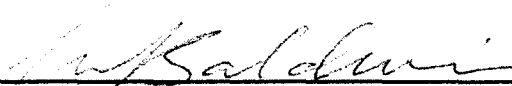
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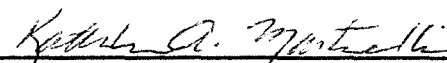
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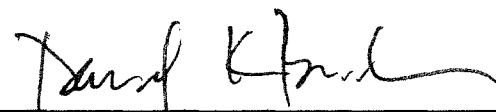


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ABSTRACT

PORTRAYALS OF MOTHERHOOD IN FOUR WOMEN'S MAGAZINES: 1985 AND 2009

by Kristen A. Sato

This thesis concerns representations of women as mothers in women's magazines during 1985 and 2009. It analyzes the images, symbols, and textual messages within the advertisements of these magazines. Gender roles and gender scripts for women during the respective years are then considered with the collected data, in order to contrast portrayals of mothers in the advertisements against aspects of actual motherhood.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods applied to the study present significant information on differences between portrayed motherhood in women's magazine advertisements and the reality of motherhood in 1985 and 2009. Some of these discrepancies were most obvious in the following categories of advertisements: Baby and Child Products, Household Products, Beauty and Cosmetics, and Health and Aging Products. The results of the study also reveal contrasts in women's magazine advertisements between the two years, 1985 and 2009.

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This thesis and all research efforts are in dedication and loving memory of Kay Ikeuye. Every trout on the line is for you.

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Introduction

Advertising as a medium has played a critical role in shaping American culture. While it seems that the main purpose of advertising is to stimulate a capitalist economy—an economy that centers itself around the buying, selling, and exchanging of goods and services – there are also other effects and consequences of advertising. Advertising is not simply an industry or a particular channel of media, but also a major contributor of the social, political, and cultural messages being relayed to the American people. For example, the results of abundant research document how television programming reflects and transmits the social values of the prevailing culture and has a socializing influence on viewers (Bryant & Zillman, 2002). Advertising in itself can limit objectivity, which is defined as an essential correspondence between knowledge of a thing and the thing itself (McDonald, 1978). Therefore, what does limited objectivity in advertising indicate in terms of perception, identity, and gender roles in the lives of American people?

In a society where buying, selling, and exchanging products and ideas are integral components of the culture, advertising finds itself deeply rooted in many aspects of daily life. It is difficult for any individual living in the United States to go anywhere or do anything on a typically average day without being exposed to, or, at the very least reminded of, an advertisement.

Advertising is a medium that reaches practically every citizen in some shape or form, whether through print media such as newspapers and magazines, or through the radio, television, Internet, and even billboards.

While the purpose of this study is to look specifically at print magazine advertisements, it is crucial to recognize the potency and versatility of all types of advertising. With the proliferation of interactive electronic media including radio and television talk shows, Internet chat rooms, news groups and other new media forms—talk as a mode of communication, rooted in dialogue or conversation, is changing the ways in which individuals communicate in society (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). Communications researchers have taken notice of the effects of advertising that spread quickly through a society. According to Petty, Priester, and Brinol (2002):

“The technological advances of the last century, from the first primitive radio broadcasts to today’s high-speed mobile Internet devices, have made it possible for individual communicators to have access to unprecedented numbers of potential message recipients.”

Furthermore, Stewart, Pavlou, and Ward (2002) discuss how advertising is virtually unavoidable:

“Advertising media have traditionally been characterized as “measured” media, to refer to the availability of quantitative information to assess the number of viewers or readers potentially exposed to advertising messages.”

Television in particular is described as the ultimate medium of sight and sound, with consideration to its huge audience reach (Van den Bulck & Van Gorp, 2008). The average television viewer is exposed to six hours of television commercials weekly (Ganahl, et al., 2003). Being such a visible type of media, advertising infiltrates the lives of nearly every individual. In this way, advertising can offer key insights to cultural and social values, beliefs, and even ethics.

Millions of dollars are spent each year in attempts to change people's attitudes about political candidates, consumer products, health and safety practices, and charitable causes (Petty, Priester, & Brinol, 2002). In most of these instances, the ultimate goal is to influence people's behavior so that they will vote for certain politicians or referenda; purchase specific goods; engage in safer driving, eating, and sexual activities; and donate money to various religious, environmental, and educational organizations and institutions (Petty, Priester, & Brinol, 2002).

Advertising has the unique ability to influence a society in subtle but powerful ways, offering social scripts, gender role behaviors, and stereotypes to its audience. More specifically, advertising suggests ways that one's physical and social demeanor ought to be through various means. This could be as detailed as drinking a certain brand of soft drink to promote one's social life, or wearing a certain perfume to attract the opposite sex. However, there are deeper, subliminal,

and often discreet messages that magazine ads and television commercials convey to their audience. The advertisement of products and services represents far more than satisfying a means to an end (selling and purchasing)—it can serve as a powerful industry that influences, maintains, and alters a society's culture over time.

One of the most interesting facets of advertising in the United States is its ability to serve as social commentary on who and what the American people are, or perhaps as just an indicator of what they should and/or should not be. Although there are many aspects of advertising through various means, this study seeks to focus specifically on the representations and portrayals of women as mothers in popular American advertisements in women's interest magazines during the years 1985 and 2009.

The purpose of the study is to examine the ways in which women are portrayed in modern American magazine advertisements—particularly women's interest magazines—of different product categories, to determine whether there are common stereotypes or gender roles that are reinforced and/or at the very least suggested, and if those representations of women are accurate or flawed. In addition, the study seeks to analyze the general framing of women in these advertisements by looking for both visual and textual patterns, and the meshing of both, in magazine advertisements in the given years. As the study falls under the

umbrella of cultural studies, it therefore does not seek to reduce human action to underlying causes or structures, but to interpret its significance, and does not attempt to predict human behavior, but to diagnose human meanings (Carey, 1975).

The research conducted in the study is important in learning how media frame and treat women through advertising and also in understanding the power that print ads in women's magazines have in influencing their target audience through textual and visual messages, however obvious or subtle they may be. The reinforcement of certain gender role stereotypes may have a mirror-effect on society; namely, women may or may not be accurately and fairly represented in television advertisements. Ultimately, media could alter how we view ourselves, our relationship to others, even the image that we have of our bodies (Baran & Davis, 2006). For example, it has been suggested that the mass media may be partly responsible for the increase in the prevalence of eating pathology (Anschutz, et al., 2008). Furthermore, the question is raised of whether advertising promotes and reinforces certain achievement scripts for women (Yoder, 2008). If we can understand how print advertising in popular magazines affects social attitudes, beliefs, and behavior, we can begin to understand its power, its utility, and its consequences for its audience.

The study relies on a content analysis and framing study of various women's interest magazines (such as *Good Housekeeping*) and a general content magazine (such as *Time*) for contrast purposes, during the years 1985 and 2009. The advertisements were selected from certain categories based on the products or services featured—food, household products, child medicine & baby products, and beauty aids advertisements—in order to provide a concentrated focus on the portrayals of women and the role as mothers they play within each. In addition to analyzing the salience and cultural manner in which women, specifically mothers, are represented, the content analysis applied to the study helps in providing quantitative data. This data draws upon the recognition and coding of common patterns, symbols, and/or themes present throughout the set of print advertisements that were chosen. Ideally, the presence of these themes promotes the findings and leads to conclusions about women's roles as mothers in print advertisements during the years 1985 and 2009. Thus, quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied in order to determine the total outcome of study. The social, cultural, and women's studies issues call for both quantitative and qualitative measures to provide well-rounded, accurate, and balanced findings.

The format of the research is organized so that the theoretical work is reviewed first, followed by reviews of more narrow research pertaining to advertising and portrayals of women. More specifically, 1) a review of the

relevant theoretical literature on framing, 2) a review of literature on the subject of advertising through the print medium, and 3) a review of relevant feminist literature on gender role portrayals of American women by the media. The literature review will also encompass the theoretical framework for the study followed by research questions. Following the literature review, the study will be discussed in detail; namely, the method of how the study will be conducted, as well as original data that will be drawn for the study.

Literature Review

The framing study of portrayals of motherhood in American magazine ads in the years 1980 and 2009 calls for a review of the prominent theoretical literature of the framing method itself. The literature review covers the research already established on the definition, process, and aspects of framing. Equally as crucial to the study are discussions of the literature pertinent to feminist studies and advertising, which reflect the academic community's already deep-seated concern with inequitable gender representations and sex role stereotyping (Stern, 2004). In total, the literature review will provide a solid foundation for the study of women in American magazine advertisements to take place.

Theoretical Research on Framing

The process of framing is a diverse notion with a wide variety of variances attached to it. One of the predominant discussions among scholars surrounds whether framing occupies its own domain or is more profitably subsumed under a broader umbrella (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001). However, generally, framing is the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed (McCombs, 1997). In other words, framing allows the media to select certain qualities or aspects of a particular object, news story, or in relation to this study, a product or service in a print advertisement. Women are no exception to the rule and can also

be framed within magazine advertisements, as this study is examining. In this way, framing gives the media a substantial amount of power in choosing which images, slogans, and other social symbols, or indicators, are delivered to the public.

Framing is also concerned with the salience of issues or attributes (Scheufele, 2000). Salience reflects the social power of journalism, which lies precisely in the inclusion of certain voices in normative social discourse and the exclusion of others (Durham, 2001). Thus, concepts or issues that are pre-selected are made more accessible to an individual's memory (Scheufele, 2000), which can prove to be an effective tool for advertisers. The more memorable or distinctly familiar an advertisement is to the viewer, the more likely the product or service being advertised will be as well. As far as women are concerned, framing characteristics could include compositional elements of the print ad, such as her dress, physical attributes, dialogue, positioning, and/or relation to the product or service. Framing has consequences for attitudes and, perhaps, even public behavior (McCombs, 1997).

Framing and Advertising

It is easy to assume that advertisements, in many ways, are frames themselves. It is a view of communication that derives from one of the most ancient of human dreams: the desire to increase the speed and effect of messages

as they travel in space (Carey, 1989). After all, the images, text, and layout are all selected for the main purpose of promotion. Thus, a broad question is raised: does framed advertising influence consumer purchase decisions (Smith, 1996)?

Although this question is a workable and noteworthy starting point, this study seeks to keep the focus on the framing of women's gender role as mothers in women's magazine advertisements, rather than on advertising as a whole. In this section of the literature review, framing will be discussed in terms of its theoretical functions as applied to the world of advertising.

Advertising is a subcategory of promotion, which is defined as everything that is done to sell the product, and refers only to the paid media aspects of selling (Thorson, 1996). Furthermore, Thorson (1996) wrote that advertising involves information about a brand or idea, with additional involvement of images, music, and stories. Magazine advertising utilizes a combination of visuals, text, placement within a magazine, and other effects to convey a promotional message. Advertising's primary goal is to positively influence its audience, the consumers, and to persuade them to desire or purchase the product being advertised. Petty, Priester, and Brinol (2002) elaborate on this idea through the following:

The success of media campaigns depends in part on: (a) whether the transmitted communications are effective in changing the attitudes of the recipients in the desired direction, and (b) whether these modified attitudes in turn influence people's behaviors.

In order to be successful, a print advertisement must work within the limits of a page and attention span of the reader, often a matter of mere seconds, to influence the consumer. Otherwise, the commercial fails to accomplish its purpose. Persuasion is the key aspect of advertising, with the consumer as the ultimate power in the market, the advertiser as the dominant power in the market, and with the consumer open to manipulation (Christians, et al., 2005).

Magazine advertisements are complex, often framed by the media to incorporate persuasion both obviously and discreetly. Furthermore, advertising can presumably influence its audience, both directly and indirectly. The amount of power the advertising industry has draws from its ability to be influential. Advertising can be viewed as a shaper, selective reinforcer, and a socially influential force—at a fundamental philosophical level, practitioners and critics are seeing advertising from different sets of assumptions about human nature and where power resides in a society (Christians, et al., 2005).

The study incorporates the basic elements of framing theory and applies those elements to a specific study of the portrayals of women in magazine advertisements.

The Feminist Platform and Advertising

Feminist scholars have studied women's roles and representations in all forms of advertising, and offer gender-based critiques on various aspects of it.

Though there are different types of feminist critiques, some of which are quite specific, the purpose of this study seeks to analyze how women are framed within commercials to embody motherhood as a gender role from 1980—2005. Many feminist studies have focused on the sexual objectification and degradation of women. This study will not include those aspects of feminist critique, but recognizes that they are important and valid areas of research.

Most central to critical feminist analysis of media is probably the broad question (going beyond stereotypes) of how texts ‘position’ the female subject in narratives and textual interactions and in so doing contribute to a definition of femininity in collaboration with the ‘reader’ (McQuail, 2005). In other words, feminists want to examine how women are being presented to the audience by the media.

For the purpose of this study, this can be in terms of how the women in print advertisements are dressed, the manner in which they carry themselves, their attitudes, and expressions, or how they are positioned in the ad, either as the central role or as a supporting role. These factors become important when taking into consideration the influence these types of advertisements have - on men, women, boys, and girls who use media to communicate to each other attitudes toward the appropriateness of male and female behavior with respect to sex roles (Lull, 1980). The categories of women’s roles as mothers are also relevant in

order to make connections between the gender roles being portrayed by women and the product being advertised.

In this study, a particular gender role or representation of women is analyzed—the role of women as mothers, or primary caregivers within a family. These depictions are common points of interest for contemporary feminist scholars, and the study looks at the developments of each of these representations in 1985 and 2009. These years were chosen due to the influx of working mothers, starting around 1980. Many women who started working in the 1970s and postponed having children, decided in the 1980s to have kids (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Therefore, the amount and content of ads targeting mothers in 1980 should be insightful given this information. If an influx of women began having children in the 1980s, many of them working mothers, the researcher examines how advertising in women's magazines addresses this target audience. Also, 2000 through 2009 is considered a contemporary or currently relevant period, in which the researcher is most interested and familiar with. The researcher hopes to compare and contrast the content of ads targeting mothers through these chosen years, especially the year 1985 with the current year 2009. A review and context of motherhood in print advertisements will now be discussed.

Women sell different types of products on television, in magazines, and now on personal computer screens, in increasing numbers since the 1980s (Zimmerman, 2008). Although mass media have always objectified women, it has become increasingly provocative (Heldman, 2008). One of the reasons feminists take issue with portrayals of women in advertising is that it reinforces negative self-imaging in women, such as scrutiny over body image and weight, or instigates an impossible ideal, such as a beauty ideal, that cannot be attained. This is true of magazines geared toward teenage girls as well as magazines whose primary audience is mothers. Also, there is an increasingly likely outcome of repeated and ongoing exposure to thin, attractive women in the media to shape men's and boy's expectations and evaluations of women and girls (Hargreaves, 2003), which includes false ideals and images of women as mothers.

One study suggests that these portrayals “may fuel women's perceptions of...offense, and force them to limit their movements” (Rosewarne, 2005). While certain aspects of advertisements—such as catchphrases, fads, and humor—may be advertising strategies used to present far from realistic scenarios on purpose (i.e. “the hip mom,” “the supermom,” or “Dr. Mom”), “what doesn't make us laugh is what's happening on a deeper level” (Abcarian, 1994). Far from being an example of reverse sexism, advertisements are business as usual: plain old-fashioned sexism in a new wrapper (Abcarian, 1994).

In a society that is exposed to nearly 3,000 advertisements daily (McAndrew, 2008), research is continually needed to analyze and dissect media messages that can be detrimental to women and young girls, not to mention damaging and misleading to men, if overexposed to them.

The Domestic Sphere: Women as Mothers and Nurturers

While sexually provocative portrayals of women may seem to inundate a vast number of television commercials between 1980 and today, another representation of American women is also present, quite opposite from sexual objectification. Women presented as mothers, primary caregivers in the family, and other classified “domestic” roles are another set of representations that call for feminist critique. In their book, *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Has Undermined All Women* (2005), authors Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels discuss the oppression of women, mothers or not, that derives from the social pressures and expectations of women to be mothers—and good mothers, at that. In two separate studies measuring women’s attitudes toward advertisements, working mothers were found to feel varying levels of guilt after viewing certain advertisements (Coulter, 1995; Pinto & Priest, 1991). With the media presenting magazine advertisements specifically designed to target working and non-working mothers, it seems that the contemporary woman is placed within a sphere of success, both at home and outside the home. Susan

Maushart, author of *The Mask of Motherhood: How Becoming a Mother Changes Our Lives and Why We Never Talk About It* (2000), describes contemporary pressures on women:

Professionally, financially, socially, and spiritually we are primed for achievement. The more we can do, the more we should do. But the more we do, the worse we feel. And the sillier we look. It is surely worthy of note that the word contemporary women use more than any other to describe the management of their lives is the verb “to juggle.” For women in the 1990s, by contrast, life is hyper-caffeinated; it’s going so fast we can’t assimilate it, let alone enjoy it. Yet when things slow down, we go into withdrawal, panicking that we must somehow be missing out. We are indeed the generation of “women who do too much.” (xii)

Women who feel societal pressure to be successful in all areas of life may also feel these constraints as mothers, as Maushart also writes:

Motherhood is, of course, one of the balls we are trying to keep in the air. Yet mothering is simply one of the things we do and suspect we are doing badly. For women who do become mothers...the responsibility and the commitment on every level are enormous and unprecedented. They are the non-negotiable terms of a biosocial contract into which one does not so much enter as tumble... (xii)

Maushart’s words suggest that further research must be done surrounding the social constructions and stratifications in American culture into which women are placed, both as mothers and non-mothers. While advertising and more specifically, print advertisements, may not be the sole factor of social pressure on fulfilling acceptable gender roles, it is a part of the media mosaic that can weigh heavily and influence culture. This study aims to examine how advertising through the magazine medium targets mothers, as well as how mothers are

represented and portrayed in a variety of commercial types. Mothers as a marketing group are targeted by many different types of commercial ads— children’s products, food, cleaning and household products, and even political ads. During Hilary Clinton’s campaign earlier this year, she featured an advertisement that aimed to appeal to mothers and families through the display of her own maternal relationships, according to *Mediaweek* writer Drew Westen (2008):

Clinton’s “Proud” ad, which focuses on her connections with her mother and daughter, is strong for multiple reasons. One of the primary negative narratives about Clinton is that she’s cold and uncaring, and this ad shows family is important to her. It also emphasizes a traditional aspect of her femininity – images of her as a proud mom book-end the spot while emphasizing that she’s just like many women: she works, and she loves her child. Voters want to be able to identify with their president, and this ad fosters that identification. (27)

While mothers who viewed this commercial may feel the same or differently in regards to the Clinton ad, the point is that advertising of various genres, including political, target mothers as an audience to be influenced and persuaded to meet the ends of advertisers’ needs. These ads may often use cultural values, social norms, or as Westen (2008) wrote, “traditional aspects of femininity,” (p. 27) such as domesticity, the caretaking of children, and obedience to one’s husband, in order to frame motherhood within the context of the ad, as well as utilize subliminal social pressure and influence to reach the target audience of mothers.

Overview of the Literature Reviewed

The key works of literature are crucial to building a foundation of knowledge for the study. The literature must be a complete, relevant, and substantial body of knowledge and research covering the basis of the following areas: framing theory, the general mechanics of advertising through television, sexual objectification of women in advertising, and the gender role stereotyping or typification of women as mothers in advertising.

Due to the cross-study nature of the topic, established research from various social science databases as well as some humanities sources may be incorporated in the study. Additionally, because the time period of the study is classified as contemporary or modern, current books that are considered pop culture-related and not necessarily academic in nature will supplement the academic seminal work, theoretical framework, scholarly journals, and other refereed sources available.

The literature reviewed for the purposes of this thesis has included examples of the representations of women in roles as mothers in modern American society. The study proposes to build upon a wide array of examples, therefore those presented in the literature review will be included but are not limited to their specific type and focus. The main purpose of the literature review is to provide a foundation for the study to establish itself on, while drawing connections between

the respective areas of aforementioned research. The literature review in its entirety reflects a clear, organized, and methodical approach to covering all research genres included in the study.

Research Questions

The study's primary goal of analyzing women's gender roles in popular American women's magazines in the years 1985 and 2009 has different research aspects. The following questions have been developed as a culmination of the theoretical and contemporary literature already researched on the topic, as well as being derived from this study's objective for original data on the topic. For the purpose of this study, the terms "gender role" in the research questions below refer specifically to the role of women as mothers and caregivers within a family.

- 1) What are the common symbols and characteristics in popular magazine advertisements in 1985 and 2009 that indicate women as domestic or mother figures, in relation to the product or service being sold?
- 2) What are the major stereotypes within a gender role (e.g., the working mother) present in popular magazine advertisements in 1985 and 2009?

- 3) What types of changes, contrasts, or adaptations to women's gender role as mothers are observed over time in magazine advertisements in 1985 and 2009, if any?
- 4) Do representations of women in magazine advertisements in 1985 and 2009 accurately represent the demographics (age, ethnicities, social/economic status) of real American women living in the society during the given time period?

Method

While there are different ways to approach content analysis and framing studies, this study relies on both quantitative and qualitative measures due to the nature of working with social and cultural values, beliefs, and pressures.

Specifically, a quantitative content analysis, involving the coding recognition of certain symbols, themes, and notations, was used for statistical purposes. The framing aspect of the study is qualitative in nature, not relying on statistical data but attempting to analyze the overall meanings raised in the research questions.

In their suggestions on how to conduct a framing study, Hertog and McLeod (2001) stress the importance of frames and framing in social process[es], especially in defining and channeling social controversy. They also acknowledge similar components of a content analysis and suggest the following series of steps in order to conduct a framing study surrounding social issues, which is pertinent to this study: 1) Identify the central concepts that make up varied frames, 2) seek a master narrative or organizing device throughout the frames, 3) Understand that each frame has its own vocabulary (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). They also stress the importance in recognizing the culturally determined nature of their analyses, which will be a necessary precaution throughout the study (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). These steps can be applied to the social and cultural analyses of women and their placement into the gender role of mothers. Further, Hertog and McLeod

suggest 1) a development of a list of symbols, language, usage, narratives, categories, and concepts in the content, and 2) a development of hypotheses about relations among culture, ideology, frames, issues, and narrative structures (2001).

In terms of this study, these suggestions can be translated to reference symbols, language, and content in the selected magazine advertisements, as well as hypotheses regarding the relationships and ideologies between women and American culture, women and television advertising, and social infrastructures such as patriarchy. With these theoretical concepts applied, the social and cultural context of the study can be handled with qualitative consideration and quantitative data.

Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses

The framing study is composed of quantitative and qualitative analyses, a combination of framing method and content analysis. The quantitative component involves identifying patterns through the presence of symbols, language, and other compositional characteristics of the magazine advertisements.

The qualitative component of the framing study resides in understanding and determining the social, cultural, and ethical factors of the quantitative data. Once symbols and characteristics of the gender roles were identified through the coding process, it was necessary to comprehend the data in terms of social forces such as patriarchal influence and gender role scripts.

This study analyzed four contemporary American women's interest magazines, including: *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook*, and *Working Mother*. In addition, one general interest magazine was included in the framing study and content analysis for purposes of contrast—that is, to observe the differences, if any, in frequency and portrayals of motherhood in general interest magazines in comparison to women's interest magazines. The general interest magazine used in this study was *Time*. A total of 600 advertisements were utilized from the combined five magazines. More advertisements were to be included if 600 didn't provide sufficient data for patterns of symbols and characteristics to be drawn. However, ultimately the total of 600 advertisements proved to be sufficient. This equates to 60 advertisements per magazine per year, or, 300 magazine advertisements from the year 1985 and 300 magazine advertisements from 2009. Each set of 300 ads included the same number of ads from women's interest magazines and general interest magazine ads. However, the majority of the sample utilizes advertisements from women's interest magazines, with the general interest magazine (*Time*) incorporated primarily for contrast purposes.

The overall collection of data, or coding of the data, was used to process overall statistical results. Symbols are vital in the process of unpacking meanings within each advertisement. Symbols may include attire that women perceived as mothers are wearing, as well as facial or emotional expressions the ads convey.

Language could derive from a textual analysis of words, slogans, or catchphrases spoken by mother figures in advertisements for housekeeping products. This type of data needs to be drawn from each magazine advertisement to establish either gender role stereotyping and misrepresentation, or an accurate representation of the motherhood demographic during the given years (1985, 2009). For the content analysis, the researcher was the primary coder with the assistance of another coder to reinforce and recognize common symbols and patterns in the ads. A test coding of 50 advertisements was performed before the actual coding to ensure commonalities between the two coders' comprehension of symbols and categories, and primarily to minimize the percentage for human error. After a series of categories and symbols were established, a methodical process of going through the magazines chosen during 1985 and 2009 with the assistant coder determined the outcome of the findings. The tables shown below represent statistical findings from the coding and framing processes.

Findings

Tables 1 and 2 below represent sample frames that were conclusive in finding major differences between the two years, 1985 and 2009, in two categories of ads (cigarette ads and child/baby product ads). It is important to note that only two categories were chosen for the sample frames, but more than ten categories existed in the actual coding process, which are shown in the tables below. The categories used to separate ads are as follows: 1) Food & Beverage, 2) Household Cleaners, 3) Household Other, 4) Baby Products, 5) Child Products, 6) Teen Products, 7) Beauty & Cosmetics, 8) Media (television, Web sites, books, video games), 9) Services (Education, Travel), 10) Health Products, 11) Pet Products, 12) Clothing/Retail, 13) Cigarettes, 14) Cars & Automotive. Tables 1 and 2 are representative of the differences in social norms and beliefs portrayed in the magazines, and in 1985 and 2009 respectively. Due to the fact that these two categories—cigarettes and child/baby products—showed significant results between years 1985 and 2009, they will be analyzed first.

Table 1

Cigarette Ads and Child/Baby Product Ads (1985)

Magazine	Title	Year	Number of Cigarette Ads	Number of Child/ Baby Product Ads	Number Of Advertise ments Coded
<i>n</i> = 5					<i>n</i> = 300
1	Good Housekeeping	1985	0	13	60
2	Redbook	1985	15	5	60
3	Ladies' Home Journal	1985	14	6	60
4	Working Mother	1985	8	22	60
5	Time	1985	15	0	60

Table 2

Cigarette Ads and Child/Baby Product Ads (2009)

Magazine	Title	Year	Number of Cigarette Ads	Number of Child/ Baby Product Ads	Number Of Advertise ments Coded
<i>n</i> = 5					<i>n</i> = 300
1	Good Housekeeping	2009	0	6	60
2	Redbook	2009	0	2	60
3	Ladies' Home Journal	2009	0	3	60
4	Working Mother	2009	0	7	60
5	Time	2009	2	0	60

Motherhood, Morals and Cigarettes

Table 1 indicates that *Good Housekeeping* has zero cigarette ads present out of 60 ads total during the year 1985, whereas *Redbook* and *Time* have more than a dozen each in their coding sample within the same year. *Good Housekeeping*, a

magazine known for giving certain advertisers and products its “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval,” has a long-standing policy of not accepting cigarette companies among its chosen advertisers (Hesterman, 1987). The magazine officially banned cigarette advertisements in 1952, 12 years before the Surgeon General of the United States issued a report on the hazards of smoking cigarettes (Arond, 2009). This demonstrates strong feelings of antagonism toward the social habit of smoking cigarettes in earlier years, particularly for women, before it was a major health concern by the 1950s. The refusal to publish cigarette ads in the magazine relays a strong message to its target audience (women, including mothers) about the magazine’s moral beliefs: *Good Housekeeping* believes that for women, smoking is not only unhealthy, but unnecessary and socially discouraged. These same standards have continued to be held by *Good Housekeeping* in modern times, with a zero tolerance policy for cigarette ads.

In contrast, *Redbook* and *Working Mother*, two magazines who embrace the independent, modern working woman, not only include cigarette advertisers in their 1985 issues but offer a significantly high number of cigarette ads within their pages. Virginia Slims, a cigarette advertiser whose ads were frequently found throughout the pages of *Redbook*, specifically, feature a series of ads that use the slogan “You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby,” that equates feminism and the 1985 modern woman’s independence with smoking cigarettes. In the series, one that

features a two-page spread, a photo montage is presented comparing two eras. One is an old-fashioned, outdated black-and-white era where the female is in a submissive or passive role, waiting on a man or serving him in some fashion. This image lies in direct opposition to a modern woman, fashionably dressed in provocative ensembles and high heel pumps, smoking a Virginia Slim cigarette and smiling confidently under the text slogan, “Virginia Slims remembers when a man had his place and a woman knew hers. You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby.” Virginia Slims, in 1985 ads, uses cigarettes to insinuate that a woman in control has the choice to do whatever a man can do. Smoking, at one time in history viewed as a “man’s activity,” is transformed in these ads as the modern woman’s claim to power, vitality, and freedom of choice.

The differences between *Good Housekeeping* and *Redbook* in Table 1 are just one example of a binary found within the social scripts for women that are reinforced and distributed via magazine advertisements. *Good Housekeeping*, which has a notably higher statistic of child/baby product ads than *Redbook*, supports a more conservative and morally upstanding mother who centers life around her children, whereas *Redbook* and *Working Mother* encourage self-sufficiency and free will of the mother figure; namely, that a mother has a life outside the family. However, it is also key to note that *Working Mother* is different than both *Good Housekeeping* and *Redbook*, as it offers a significant

number of cigarette ads and child/baby product ads alike, settling somewhere in between the two binaries. Further, *Time*, as the general interest title, doesn't cater to an audience of mothers. Therefore, the findings report a high number of cigarette ads and zero child/baby product ads. These gender role ideals continue to differentiate in the grander scheme of comparing years (Table 1 and Table 2). The following tables present the findings from all other categories involved in the study.

Table 3

Food/Beverage Ads and Household Product Ads (1985)

Magazine	Title	Year	Number of Food/ Beverage Ads	Number of Household Cleaner/ Household Other Ads	Number Of Advertise ments Coded <i>n</i> = 300
<i>n</i> = 5					
1	Good Housekeeping	1985	17	10	60
2	Redbook	1985	14	5	60
3	Ladies' Home Journal	1985	9	10	60
4	Working Mother	1985	13	6	60
5	Time	1985	4	2	60

Table 4

Food/Beverage Ads and Household Product Ads (2009)

Magazine <i>n</i> = 5	Title	Year	Number of Food/ Beverage Ads	Number of Household Cleaner/ Household Other Ads	Number Of Advertise ments Coded <i>n</i> = 300
1	Good Housekeeping	2009	13	14	60
2	Redbook	2009	11	3	60
3	Ladies' Home Journal	2009	21	8	60
4	Working Mother	2009	16	8	60
5	Time	2009	5	3	60

Healthy, Tidy, Wholesome: The American Family

Out of 600 ads from 1985 and 2009 that were coded, most of them landed in the categories of Food/Beverage and Household Cleaner/Household Other. However, what is most interesting to note within these two categories is the subcategory of Activity Level of the Mother within each, which is not shown in the above tables. The activity level, or degree of participation, of the mother or female figure was graded on a 5–point Likert scale, with 1 representing an Inactive mother figure and 5 representing a Very Active mother figure within an advertisement. The numbers between 1 and 5 were representative of a mother’s activity level that ranged somewhere between “Inactive” and “Very Active.”

In the respective categories of Food/Beverage and Household Cleaner/Household Other, the mother’s activity level was marked as “Very Active” more frequently than in any other categories in the study. These findings are indicative about gender scripts for women as mothers in American homes, both in 1985 and 2009.

Tables 3 and 4 both show a strong presence of Food/Beverage ads in women’s magazines, which proves that a mother’s activity surrounding notions of food, hospitality, and providing comfort and necessities for her family is a highly active, and important, role for her in the American home. 1985 and 2009 prove to have similar numbers and activity levels for Food/Beverage ads, with 2009 having

a slightly higher frequency of “5-Very Active” mothers as opposed to “4-Active.” In terms of time progression, there is not a distinctive increase or decrease in a) the amount of Food/Beverage and Household Cleaner/Other ads in women’s magazines, or b) the activity level of mothers within Food/Beverage and Household Cleaner/Other ads in women’s magazines. This demonstrates a steady continuum of domestic duties attached to the mother figure in the American household.

Time magazine is the only magazine title that stands apart from the women’s magazines in that it has significantly less Food/Beverage and Household Cleaner/Other advertisements throughout its pages. *Time*, the general interest magazine used for contrast purposes in this study, doesn’t cater to a specific audience of women and mothers, but rather the general public (both men and women).

Therefore, the research findings produce a possible explanation in regards to why Food/Beverage ads and Household Cleaner/Other ads are more commonly aimed toward women in women’s magazines than toward both sexes equally. The statistical findings, which present far more ads from these two categories in women’s magazines than in the general interest title, indicate that household responsibilities such as cooking, cleanliness, and their sentimental attachments to “home” are still commonly associated with women rather than men, from 1985 to

present day. Outside of the numbers of ads present, the activity level of mothers within Food/Beverage ads and Household Cleaner/Other were unusually high, drawing a literal and physical connection between women practicing with and making use of, cooking and cleaning products.

Beauty and Cosmetics

Feminist studies rarely exclude the analysis of women in relation to physical appearance, particularly sex appeal and beauty standards. While this study does not specifically target this area of feminist concern, beauty products and cosmetics ads were notably present in the magazines.

As shown in Table 6 below, 2009 magazines have a higher number of beauty and cosmetic ads than in 1985 (Table 5). Additionally, the nature and content of the 2009 beauty ads themselves contrast with those gathered in the study from 1985, based on subcategories used in the data coding. These subcategories include perceived age range and ethnicity of women featured in beauty ads. However, *Working Mother* and *Time* magazines both have the lowest numbers of beauty and cosmetic ads in both years.

Table 5

Cosmetics Ads and Health Products Ads (1985)

Magazine	Title	Year	Number of Beauty/ Cosmetics Ads	Number of Health Product Ads	Number Of Advertise ments Coded
<i>n = 5</i>					<i>n = 300</i>
1	Good Housekeeping	1985	8	5	60
2	Redbook	1985	8	6	60
3	Ladies' Home Journal	1985	8	8	60
4	Working Mother	1985	4	3	60
5	Time	1985	1	3	60

Table 6

Cosmetics Ads and Health Products Ads (2009)

Magazine	Title	Year	Number of Beauty/ Cosmetics Ads	Number of Health Product Ads	Number Of Advertise ments Coded
<i>n</i> = 5					<i>n</i> = 300
1	Good Housekeeping	2009	8	15	60
2	Redbook	2009	14	19	60
3	Ladies' Home Journal	2009	10	13	60
4	Working Mother	2009	2	7	60
5	Time	2009	2	17	60

Adult Aging and Health Concerns

Table 1 and Table 2 as sample frames differentiate by year. Table 1 is representative of 1985 and Table 2 is representative of 2009. In viewing the results of these two tables, the difference in the number of ads for both categories (cigarettes and child/baby products) in Table 2 is considerably lower. Due to an

apparent increase in concern for health, there is a sharp decline in cigarette ads in all five magazines in 2009 compared to 1985, with similar ratios—although less in number—of child/baby product ads present.

Although health products are not a category in either Table 1 or Table 2, 25% of all ads coded in 2009 belonged to this category (Category 10). Health products, such as pharmaceuticals like Zyrtec, Mucinex, Viagra, Abilify, and Amgen, are the most advertised category in all five magazines in 2009. What this indicates is a sharp rise in interest among mothers toward aging and health concerns. It is important to note that in the study, health products for children and infants were not included in Category 10, and were instead grouped under Baby Products (Category 4) or Child Products (Category 5), due to the fact that there were so few. All the health products in Category 10 are either medical products prescribed by a physician, over-the-counter medications (Tylenol, Advil, Benadryl, etc.) or health aids (Depends, hearing aids, vision aids) for adult men and/or women.

In 1985, only 8.3% of the 300 ads in the study were from Health ads from Category 10. In the same year, 17% of the 300 ads in the study were cigarette ads, displaying a significantly lower concern for health across the board in 1985. Also significant to note were the very few advertisements in 1985 for prescribed medications, and instead a high number of over-the-counter medicines such as

Tylenol, Advil, and Robitussin. In 2009, the majority of ads coded in the same category were drugs that must be physician prescribed.

Review of Research Questions

In reference to the Research Questions presented in the Literature Review section of the thesis, the discussed findings reveal insight gained within each area. For review purposes, the findings will be summarized below.

In regards to RQ1, common symbols and characteristics linking the advertisements to domestic or mother roles were apparent in the woman's demeanor, emotion, and activity level in relation to the product being advertised. Some of these characteristics include working versus non-working mothers, age of the women in the ads, and the presence of children in the ads. Furthermore, categories of ads such as Household Products, Beauty & Cosmetics, and Baby Products, demonstrate the target audience these women's magazines are attempting to reach.

RQ2 addresses stereotypes within motherhood that are present in the magazine ads in 1985 and 2009. A few of these stereotypes include the working mother, the stay-at-home mother, the young mother and the middle-aged mother. The mothers portrayed in 1985 ads, for example, were young, almost always Caucasian, and commonly found carrying a briefcase, wearing a suit, and often, smoking a cigarette. Cigarettes, as found in the *Virginia Slims* ads, equates to a

woman's independence and a "new age feminism" of sorts in 1985. The easiest, fastest, more convenient products for mothers were featured more frequently in women's magazine ads of 1985, putting into effect a stereotype of a young, Caucasian, working mother who chooses to put herself first. In advertisements from 2009, however, there is less of one particular stereotype and a greater and more diverse range of motherhood portrayals in ads. Rather than a young, predominantly Caucasian, working mother, 2009 ads feature racially diverse, often middle-aged mothers, working and non-working alike, who stress personal happiness and the happiness of their families.

The findings in response to RQ3 are linked to the findings for RQ2. RQ3 specifically addresses the advertisement contrasts between years. In other words, does time reveal significant differences in portrayals of motherhood? As touched upon in RQ2, there is a shift in a mother's personal independence and relation to family between 1985 ads and 2009 ads. In the year 1985, working mothers and personal independence was the more predominant image of motherhood in women's magazine ads. In 2009, that attitude transforms itself into a health-conscious mother (working or stay-at-home) who wants to have the latest breaking technology in household products and also wants to provide her family with wholesome nutrition. There is a push for mothers to embrace technology within the home, and yet also return to domestic or traditional values of cooking,

cleaning, and finding leisure within the family. While time, efficiency, and convenience are still prominent in 2009 ads for mothers, there is a heavy influence on “doing the best a mother can.” This includes the multitasking efforts of buying the most technically advanced washing machine, staying on top of her beauty regimen (specifically anti-aging products) to impress a man, and raising happy, healthy children by spending quality time with them (working and non-working alike). One of the common threads for women in 2009 is the pressure to “do it all,” linking the domestic activities of cooking, cleaning, and maintaining a feminine appearance with also maintaining a successful career and/or life outside the family. Women’s magazine advertisements in 1985 place more emphasis on a mother’s career, independence, and personal happiness in addition to having a family. Further differences, including a mother’s highly increased interest in health and aging, and a significantly decreased presence of cigarette ads, are notable changes from 1985 to 2009. Minor differences in the ads from 1985 and 2009 were not listed in the Tables due to inconsistency and irrelevance, but include characteristics such as fashion, style, and textual differences within the ads.

Lastly, RQ4 is concerned with accuracy in representation of the demographics of real American women and mothers in 1985 and 2009. As previously stated, the majority of women in the 1985 ads were Caucasian, and

were young (between their twenties and thirties in age). On the national average, women were starting families at a younger age in 1985, however there was not an accurate representation in race or ethnicity of these women. As time progresses, images of American mothers are becoming more accurate representations of who they are in actuality. The 2009 ads in this study show high numbers of non-Caucasian women in addition to Caucasian women, with different skin colors, hair textures, and facial structures. Mothers in the 2009 advertisements were also older on average than mothers in 1985 ads, accompanied by the presence of ads featuring fertility options and anti-aging products. While the stress on women to use anti-aging cosmetics indicates pressure to stay young, the sheer presence of these ads, and other health-related ads for women, in the very least acknowledges that older mothers do currently exist in the United States.

Contributions and Future Studies

The original findings from this study will contribute to mass communications studies, cultural studies, and women's studies. While the findings from this study may not apply to all women's magazine titles, the findings provide a foundation for further discussion and analysis of the topic. The collaboration of mass communication theory on framing in advertising and female gender roles will formulate new conclusions about contemporary advertising through the magazine medium. It will also offer insights to the current social infrastructure in the United States, and may even indicate where women fall within its stratification. In the given time period, women and their representations in magazine advertisements bring to light a direction in which both advertising and social expectations of women have moved since 1980, and may offer additional insights to where the future may lead women in television advertising.

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