

CHAPTER 10

ADVERTISING AS MASS CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is also a form of communication diffused through various mass media. Because it is so ubiquitous in both the written and oral media it warrants a chapter devoted to its analysis. Advertising is closely linked to the mass media because they have mutually dependent economic objectives: advertising agencies provide the money that enable the mass media to operate, and the media give companies the required public exposure to stimulate sales of products or services. How do ad agencies use this exposure? What is the response of audiences? To answer these questions, it is important to first look at exactly what messages are transmitted. Also, because the advertising images sometimes closely resemble pornographic images, we believe it is also worthwhile to compare these two types of communication. This analysis will be made in the last section of the chapter, and it is our hope that it will stimulate interesting discussion on the subject. But first, let us look at some of the characteristics of advertising as a specific form of communication.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ADVERTISING INTO MASS CULTURE

Modern advertising was born at the advent of the Industrial Revolution, at the end of the nineteenth century. The development of technology and the division of labour led to the creation of mass production systems. Modern advertising was then developed in direct response to mass production. How else could the surplus of commodities resulting from the process of mass production be sold, if not by encouraging mass consumption?

It was necessary to develop a commercial system of persuasive and informative "devices for organizing and ensuring the market" (Williams, 1980b: 186). Advertising became a privileged sector of the modern enterprise because of its unique role in the process of mass distribution. In the words of Rutherford (1994), television advertising represents the "gospel of consumption." Indeed, with the establishment of the new order of mass consumption, it became necessary to accustom people to respond to the demands of production. The role of modern advertising was to condition labourers both culturally

and ideologically to adhere more closely to the values of the new mass consumption order (Breton and Proulx, 1993). To this end, markets needed to be restructured, national advertising systems developed and previously ignored markets—namely the working classes and the middle classes—tapped.

Without transforming the relations of power of labourers to ownership and use of the means of production, there was a gradual increase in wages and reduction in working hours—a change that was perceived as a qualitative improvement in people's lives. This extra time was to be used for mass consumption and, for industry, it became just as important as time allocated for production. Henceforth, it was necessary to correlate the aspirations of the workforce with those of capital. "Now priorities demanded that the worker spend his wages and leisure time on the consumer market" (Ewen, 1979: 235). While mass production controlled the factory workers, consumption began controlling and standardizing the consumer. Advertising, the bastion of the *establishment*, was given the task of creating desires and consumption habits for the consumer. Thus, advertising was slowly transformed into mass culture.

Advertising has changed considerably since its emergence at the end of the nineteenth century. As early as the 1920s it played an important socio-cultural role. Beyond selling goods and services, it developed the universal notions that defined the *consumer*. Stuart Ewen (1979), who has done a great deal of research on the phenomenon of advertising, has explained the important transformation of values that American society underwent as a result of advertising. Advertising evolved from promoting thriftiness, a value dearly embraced by the country's puritan fathers, to promoting spending, thereby establishing a new moral order: that of the consumer. Ewen noted that advertising served the interests of capitalists: "By transforming the notion of 'class' into 'mass,' business hoped to create an 'individual' who could locate needs and frustrations in terms of the consumption of goods rather than the quality and content of his life (work)" (Ewen, 1979: 239).

To develop these techniques of persuasion, the advertising industry turned to psychologists for help. Breton and Proulx (1993) point out that these advertising experts had favourite themes revolving around a personal fault which could be seen by others, but which could be corrected by consuming a particular product.¹ Detergent ads made at that time are good illustrations of this approach. Thanks to psychological concepts, it was possible to keep the critical eye of consumers focused on themselves instead of the product advertised, which, it was said, could resolve everyone's personal problems.

According to Ewen (1979), it is therefore impossible to examine the functioning of advertising without acknowledging that the product being plugged is only part of the message conveyed. The other, and probably most important, part of the message is the intent of the ad to create a uniform social image which even immigrants—who were then numerous—could identify with. Advertising was therefore one of the components of the "American Dream." Consequently, advertising can be seen as a form of communication that conveys values on behalf of mass culture. As was mentioned in Chapter 6, the concept of *modernity* transformed the properties of an object into human characteristics, so

¹ From this perspective, advertising has not changed greatly over time.

that in buying the object, one also buys social respect, health, beauty, success, and control over one's environment.

According to Wernick (1991), this multidimensional nature means that modern advertising has expanded into something larger, what he calls promotionalism and *promotional culture*. This has occurred because the distinction between the commodity being advertised for consumption and the signs that do the advertising has become increasingly blurred. He has traced the origins of this back to the advent of the mass market and advertising itself, and has noted that as the latter developed as a distinct form of communication and persuasion, the commodity was reconstructed as an advertisement for itself in the way that it was consciously designed, packaged, labelled, etc. The result is a kind of circularity in which it is no longer possible to identify one simple thing that is being urged on the consumer. When Michael Jackson appears in ads for Pepsi, Michael Jackson is himself being promoted as a musical performer and commodity, along with all the values of the modern, consumerist way of life.

Advertising in The Mass Media

The advertising industry developed at the same time that the mass media began to expand. Breton and Proulx (1993) have noted that the technical means of persuasion, combined with the means of mass communication (the press, radio, cinema, etc.), made it possible to organize the first nation-wide publicity campaigns during World War II, inciting men to enlist in the army, recruiting women for war factories, broadcasting national unity propaganda, etc. In short, advertising had become a veritable system of communication.

Today, advertising is the economic engine of the entire communication system, including all forms of communication, from the written press to the electronic press. As was mentioned earlier, advertising income is the principle means of financial support of the media industry and, therefore, plays a role in media production. In 1993, television broadcast licensees reported to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), a Federal government agency, that their earnings from advertising were more than \$1.6 billion.

The advertising industry, however, also generates profits by investing money in the media. This is especially true since television advertising activities are monopolized by a few powerful corporations which, until now, have managed to resist most regulations. In fact, the high level of profitability of television advertising enables advertisers to create expensive products with broad appeal, using, among other strategies, sophisticated technological means and well-known personalities (Yerza, 1995: 6).

According to Rutherford (1994), the English Canadian television advertising industry is now monopolized by a few of the biggest American multinationals such as Procter & Gamble, General Motors, Coca-Cola and Pepsi. The process of monopolization occurred mostly in the 1980s, with an increasing number of mergers of Canadian companies with American conglomerates. One serious consequence of this process, for the Canadian cultural industry, was the appropriation of Canada's best creators by foreign companies. Rutherford found that in 1968 only two American agencies had financial

investments in the Canadian advertising industry. The 1970s and early 1980s were the glory years of Canadian advertising, when such agencies as Jerry Goodis' and Graham Watt and Jim Burt's companies created outstanding advertisements with an authentic Canadian accent. By 1992, however, "only one top-ten agency remained fully owned and managed by Canadians: Cossette Communication Marketing," a Québec company (Rutherford, 1994: 88-9).

Within this economic and political context, Breton and Proulx (1993) have maintained that audiences act as consumers of both advertising and products, and are also used as bait for obtaining more advertising investment. How does advertising create a link between consumers and investors? By using the technical means of persuasion, advertising can artificially create "needs" in order to encourage consumption. In practice, these "needs" are social constructions adjusted to serve capitalist industries. Through an imagined "middleman," consumers are lured into purchasing a certain lifestyle that is said to improve their social status.

Would a baby-boomer consider going on a holiday without his or her American Express card? The card that lets you travel in security, without any financial worries, and that admits you to a select club, a privileged class for which honours are rights, and which gives you free access to previews of the best shows and exhibits? As a form of communication, however, advertising cannot create such "needs" on its own. This is why it is integrated into a much larger process: marketing, the creative and economic force behind the media industry. The unique goal of marketing is to sell commodities that are, or will be, produced. Thus, marketing encompasses three functions: sales promotion, public relations and advertising policy development.

Williams (1980b) has claimed that large firms have developed the marketing sector in order to ensure that products are commercialized more efficiently through enhanced communication between the sponsor, the broadcaster and the target audience. Marketing ensures the depersonalization of commercial relations between the producer and the consumer. Market research and polls contribute to extending control over the social environment and to guiding production according to the "needs" of consumers. In reality, as the marketing function expands, so does the power of the advertisers within the production system. In this context, the economic reality of the production system takes precedence over the socioeconomic reality of the individual consumer. Nevertheless, advertising is based on social "needs." How does advertising manage to conceal the economic reality behind the social reality?

What is Hidden Behind Advertising?

Advertising tries to adjust its notion of consumption to criticisms raised by oppositional forces. The existence of consumer protection groups is a clear indication of the gap that exists between consumer satisfaction and the promises made through advertisements. In Canada, women's groups were the first to lobby the CRTC against offensive gender portrayals through sexual stereotypes in different media (Timble in Yerza, 1995: 7). Modern advertising attempts to conceal this reality by adding to the object of consumption the

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notion of the desire for satisfaction, by polishing the ideal of success, social status, beauty, health, and so on.

Williams (1980b) has asserted that the model of advertising is the same as that used in so-called primitive societies, namely *magic*. When the values entertained by society cannot respond to the problems of solitude and frustration or to the need for identity and respect, the "magic system" is used as a means of enchanting the potential customer. The dream market must make the consumer believe that decisions about production, priorities, manufacturing methods and styles are made on the basis of consumer needs, not those of capital. However, as we have noted in the previous chapters, decision-making is a prerogative of the minority who determine the choices available to the majority. This majority is seen as "the masses," and even though capitalists take their opinions into account, they disregard the more specific opinions of groups or individuals that constitute "the masses." The reason, according to Williams (1980b), is that large firms are not interested in individuals: they do not aim at just one target audience, but all of society, namely the world. To put it more concretely, they do not simply want a full-page newspaper ad, but a whole corporation with information systems at their disposal to conduct their advertising.

To conquer the advertising industry and consumer markets, advertising firms produce messages using codes based on sexual differences. In her analysis of advertising, Denise Kervin (1990) has identified several types of codes—nonverbal codes (facial expression, body stance, etc.), codes referring to social roles (active/passive, in charge/subordinate, etc.), and aesthetic codes (colour, lighting, etc.)—which, depending on how they are used, give a message feminine or masculine connotations. For example, a feminine message would be a woman smoking a Capri cigarette in an obscure, hazy, pastel-coloured atmosphere, as opposed to a man smoking a Marlboro under the bright blue sky of a blazing desert landscape. But even without humans in the image, the codes can be used to suggest a feminine or masculine context, as is often the case in perfume advertisements.

The notions of masculinity and femininity that are developed during the process of socialization are taken to extremes in advertising. Kervin (1990) has claimed, however, that times have changed, and today female characters often appear more confident and more resistant than before, whereas advertising for men contains strong connotations of seduction that did not previously exist. Let us examine in greater detail the image of women and then the image of men in advertising.

THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

The image of women in advertising is similar to that in other mass production processes: it is constructed on the basis of feminine stereotypes, which, as we saw earlier, are instilled during the period of primary socialization, and maintained throughout our lives by values and images conveyed in society. As such, feminine stereotypes are reassuring and, as a result, are constantly repeated in an infinite number of ways to fit the fashion and context of the day.

By dint of repeatedly seeing images of women concerned with household chores, obsessed with being beautiful and able to manage both a career and family life (the super-woman), people gradually come to assume that this kind of behaviour is characteristic of all women. "It is true (if somewhat reductive) to say that in a patriarchal culture most representations of women are readable as connoting 'otherness' or difference—difference from the norm of patriarchy, that is" (Kuhn, 1985: 19). This difference is the creed of advertising: more often than not, it is images of women that promote the consumption of food, detergent and beauty products. Men, on the other hand, are used to sell cars, alcoholic beverages, insurance, credit cards, banking services, etc.

The Social Construction of Women in Advertising

In her study of the representation of women in advertising, Denise A. Yanni has contended that "the underlying identity of a culture is revealed through the positioning of goods in relation to each other and to people as well as through the institution designated for representing and influencing that relationship—advertising" (Yanni, 1990: 71). Because of their position in society, women play a different role in this relationship than do men in that they occupy both sides of the relationship as persons and objects. In advertising, the representation of women is based on a negative meaning of the word "woman," since the modern mediation of the person/object relationship perpetuates the ancient patriarchal system, which defines women as objects. Let us take a closer look at how women are represented in advertising.

An image, or a representation, is structured on the basis of the relationship between its spectator and its producer. In other words, the negative image of women conveyed in advertising is only the result of the system that produces these images. In this way, the social inequalities that exist in the cultural context are reflected in advertising.

In Chapter 5 we saw that in our patriarchal society women are defined in relation to men, in other words, as the "other." In identifying women as the "other," societies usurp the subjectivity of women by turning them into objects or things. In advertising, Yanni (1990) has told us, this concept is manifested by prostitution-like images: cars are sold using the body of a woman stretched out on a hood, or women's stockings are sold using a businessman turning around as he passes by a young woman with a shapely bottom. In advertising, the key is to make certain that the women are seen. Women are examined as objects. In a culture like ours, this "objectification" of women is, above all, concerned with women's sex.

Women are given a material and symbolic value, much like the value that is attached to commodities. And, as all commodities are transformed into a monetary value, the process of quantification applies to women also. "It is the functioning of advertising to be the synapse between goods and social meaning. Through this cultural institution, the economy of sexuality is perpetuated" (Yanni, 1990: 74). Women's bodies have sold cars, trips to sunny destinations, rock music and even hardware supplies (see Figure 10.1).²

² Figures can be found at the end of this chapter on pages 222–237.

Servant-woman, femme fatale, child-woman, woman-as-mother, loose woman and object-woman: these are the different facets of a unique model that is based on generally negative personality traits, Yanni (1990) has told us. Yet, this model appears to be natural, an inherent part of the object described in advertising instead of a construction based on the message system within a given social context. On their own, these different identities of women are meaningless; attached to these identities a symbol has been created, namely that of "woman."

According to Yanni, this symbol plays an important role in the construction of reality, and contributes to a distortion of awareness. The "woman-as-mother" is fostering, protective and caring; it is therefore easy to represent her next to her child's bed, rubbing his chest, at her husband's bedside, massaging his back, or, while we are at it, being woken up in the middle of the night by her cold-infected husband so that she may get him cough drops. One of the strategies of advertising is to attract the audience's attention by showing an easily recognizable symbol. Because modern society is in constant evolution, advertising must keep pace. However, regardless of society's evolution and the transformations it has brought about in the advertising industry, the representation of women remains stereotyped.

Representations of the "New" Woman

In the realm of advertising, there is an ongoing proliferation of new stereotypes revolving around the image of the "new woman." They join other well-established images of the submissive, considerate mother. As we saw in Chapter 4, the new or "modern" woman is characterized by her femininity and sexuality. She is fashionable, works outside the home and consumes many products to satisfy her "needs" and those of her family. Advertising creates the image of the perfect woman's body constructed to arouse the desire to consume. A number of feminist studies (Dyer, 1987; St-Jean, 1989) have shown that, more than ever, these images involve placing women under male scrutiny. The typical image is that of a beautiful, tall, slender, fit, somewhat provocative woman in her twenties, sometimes even younger. By itself, this image is not reprehensible. The problem lies elsewhere, in the fact that women's bodies are used as bait for commercial purposes. More than anything, this object-body is fragmented and depersonalized: the legs are used for selling shoes, the hair for shampoo, the bosom for perfume, the buttocks and belly-button for jeans, and so on. In fact, the use of only certain parts of women's bodies to sell products, which sometimes have nothing to do with each another, is the ultimate expression of the objectification of women. If, on top of it all, this fragmentation is accompanied with nudity, the object becomes blatantly sexual (see Figures 10.2a, b and c).

Without abandoning images of women in the kitchen, advertising also reflects women's integration into the labour market, showing them in every profession imaginable to sell just about anything. Advertising agencies have rapidly and clearly identified that the phenomenon of women's liberation represents a potential market to be exploited, and have done their best to capture it by creating the modern woman from scratch. For some researchers like Dyer (1987), appropriating this image is a process by which the

dominant ideology ensures its continuity. It neutralizes the threat of protest by adapting and absorbing, in an apparent show of tolerance, some of the elements of threatening ideologies. As we saw in Chapter 4, the dominant ideology is capable of *adapting* to, and using to its own ends, oppositional ideologies.

Advertising relies on the "sure values" exemplified by the so-called traditional feminine trades to exploit the romantic model of the mother chiefly for the purpose of supporting sales of household products and medicine. "A woman is complete if her children have gleaming, white clothes and the dishes sparkle. She is shown in soft, dreamy focus in the bosom of the ideal family" (Dyer, 1987: 10).

Fashion magazines such as *Vogue*—which consists of almost 70% advertisements—have been one of the privileged means for defining the needs of the "new woman." Since the 1970s, *Vogue* has managed to reach middle-class women who have been at the forefront of the women's movement, and achieve a monopoly of the *baby-boomer* market. With these new markets, *Vogue* has tried to define modern femininity by representing the "new woman" as an androgynous and schizophrenic subject, in other words, caught between the desire for a home and the desire for a career, thereby wielding her ambiguous and sexualized power (an image closely resembling that offered in pornography: for instance, is there much difference between the pictures in Figures 10.2a and 10.3?). With new alternatives available, fashion magazines have assembled an image of what the new woman wants: "she wants everything" (Griggers, 1990: 96). In other words, a career, sex, a family, etc.

Women's aspirations have shifted from the traditional notion of a better life to that of social success, and finally to "megadesire": the desire to have everything. This desire irreparably binds them to the consumer society since, in their desire for everything, they are confronted with perpetual change. Moreover, the mass media thrive on the instability of the very notion of the "new woman" by constantly offering women new images: working woman, career woman, liberated woman, professional woman, university student, sporting woman, and so on, while preserving the images of the woman-as-mother, married woman, etc. All these images are created and exploited by the advertising machine of fashion magazines and newspapers, which profit by representing the fragmented desires and multiple social identities of their female readers. Given that women have multiple identities, Griggers (1990) has remarked, a number of markets have been created to respond to the multiplicity of their needs and desires. And only the mass media have the means to present the rich possibilities of consumption.

By looking at the pictures mentioned above, we can see that the degree of the objectification of women in advertising varies depending on the country where the ads are shown. France, for example, is especially liberal in this regard (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2a). In Canada, these excesses are controlled by municipal, provincial and federal laws. Let us take a closer look at the impact of these laws.

Is Advertising Sexist?

In 1979, the Council on the Status of Women defined sexist advertising as that which rigidly divides social roles and functions along gender lines. Such a division alienates the potential for individual development. One of its main consequences, according to Lord

(1979), is the oppression of women. What forms does sexism take in advertising? What are some of the discriminatory and degrading images shown in the Canadian marketplace?

First, here in Canada and elsewhere, women are portrayed as an entity called "woman," whose qualities, faults, aspirations and dispositions are defined on the basis of gender, with no differentiation made according to class. As Rutherford (1994: 26) has put it, "the most important source of definition of an ad is gender." Advertisements embody "a highly sexist view of men and women with roots that stretch back to the nineteenth century" which suggest to women that only two elements are of importance in their lives: "the pursuit of beauty and the cult of domesticity." In the 1950s, for instance, "woman" in ads was represented "as something of a domestic drudge," and was shown doing such domestic chores as shopping, cleaning, cooking and looking after others. At the same time, men were shown in activities such as sports, driving or repairing cars, drinking, relaxing, or entertaining. Although advertisements have changed over the years, Rutherford (1994: 26-8) has argued that gender remains their main subject of definition.

Lord (1979) reported on a 1978 study conducted by the Council on the Status of Women of 248 ads televised during a one-week period on Radio-Canada (the French CBC). The study revealed that 77% of ads for food, laundry, personal hygiene and household cleaning products starred women, while 73% of advertisements for alcoholic beverages, banks, real estate services, cars, transportation, communications, gasoline and government services featured men. The same study showed that only 14% of television ads depicted women working outside the home, although the real proportion of women in the labour market at the time was 35%. As for their roles, women were typically portrayed as objects of decoration or as being anxious about aging, worried about their shape or body odour, obsessed with the desire for beauty, desirous of a man's approval, jealous of other women and responsible for their families' health.

Rutherford reported his findings on ads in English Canada, which he drew from an analysis of the Bessie Collection. He found that, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, men and women in advertisements were not only represented as different, but were also "depicted in quite different ways. The man watches, the women display" (1994: 107). Moreover, men were more frequently represented than women: in all the ads examined, both men and women were represented together 540 times, men alone 415 times and women alone 113 times. The only ads where women outnumbered men were those with subjects considered to be typically feminine such as health, beauty and the like.

Still, since the mid-1980s, gender stereotypes have changed. Women are now seen displaying their bodies in different ways, being preoccupied with turning themselves into a work of art, as well as caressing different objects: their bodies, their clothes, their legs, etc. (Rutherford, 1994). Men, in contrast, are seen caressing only their beautiful companions, as well as possessing the ability to do valued tasks efficiently, and mastering different obstacles that may stand in their way. However, they are also positioned as voyeur, capable of appreciating female beauty (Rutherford, 1994).

In the late 1980s, the Service d'action-femmes of the Council on the Status of Women believed that sexism still existed in advertising, but was manifesting in more subtle ways. It appeared that pressure groups set up during the intervening 10 years had successfully raised public awareness of this issue thus causing advertising agencies to

modify their approach somewhat. Lord (1989) reported on two cases which clearly illustrate the importance of developing a critical perspective within the population so that they will react to overly coarse sexist advertising.

In January 1988, Suzuki launched a nation-wide advertising campaign using billboard ads. The image on the billboards showed a motorcycle roaring at full speed along a valley road. A closer look revealed that the road traced the outline of a woman's chest: the motorcycle was shown leaning slightly to the left, as if ready to negotiate the curve of a breast. Women's groups from across the country raised such an outcry over this ad that the Canadian Advertising Foundation issued the most severe recommendation in its history: the interruption of the advertising campaign.

In the fall of 1989, the spotlight was on the Domicil ad scandal. The advertisement showed a young, innocent-looking girl with blond curls of about four or five years old sitting on the edge of a bed with a man at her side wearing an open shirt. The child wore over-sized women's lingerie which left her shoulders bare. She was shown tying his shoe laces while he read his newspaper. The petitions that followed the appearance of the ad denounced its incestuous nature and the erotic use of the child.

In Canada, a number of organizations are devoted to monitoring the advertising industry. Moreover, the influence of the *Désérites-Émérites* prize (which the Council on the Status of Women used to award), the increasing vigilance of women, and the evolution of the public's mentality have made it possible to reduce the number of sexist advertisements. In addition, pressure groups have managed to influence the CRTC to intervene with regard to the representation of women in advertising.

In 1969, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) wrote a report condemning the use of sexual stereotypes in media images of women, with the recommendation that men and women be portrayed accurately. Federal and provincial government agencies responded by imposing regulations on television advertising, restricting or prohibiting ads on diverse subjects, including birth control products, patent medicines and pharmaceutical products, commodity sex, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and certain food products. In addition, these laws placed limits on the types of claims that television advertisers could make about their product. It became unacceptable, for instance, to claim that a product could make a person stronger or younger without scientific proof. However, Yerza has noted that "the lack of gender portrayal regulations indicate that for many years the same governments were not concerned with sexism or truth in gender portrayals" (1995: 8).

Thus, in 1979, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) presented a plan advocating equality for both sexes, proposing that the CRTC address the Council's concerns towards sex-role portrayals in broadcasting. This intervention followed the United Nations' recommendation that a plan of action be developed regarding equality of women and sex-role stereotyping in the broadcast media. The Honourable Jeanne Sauvé, then Minister of Communication, acting on the CACSW's report, "charged the CRTC with 'the task of seeing that guidelines and standards were established to encourage the elimination of sex-role stereotyping from the media regulated by the CRTC'" (cited in Yerza, 1995: 10). Sauvé's successor, David MacDonald, even spoke of

the lack of women in various occupations in broadcasting organizations as a cause of negative and stereotyped television portrayals. The CRTC was "to set in place a monitoring program to ensure that the broadcasters were eliminating stereotyping, especially in advertising" (cited in Yerza, 1995: 10).

The federal government agency then announced the creation of the Task Force on Sex-Role Stereotyping in the Broadcast Media, a mitigating strategy to meet both the pressures coming from the governments and the opposition coming from the advertising industry. Let us look at the Task Force's action and influence in greater detail.

The CRTC Task Force, composed of six public representatives appointed by the Department of Communication, developed four recommendations regarding guidelines for advertising: 1) "sex-role stereotyping was to be considered nothing less than a problem of inequality and injustice"; 2) priority was to be given to advertising because it was considered as "the most blatantly offensive"; 3) emphasis was to be placed on sex-role stereotyping of women; 4) the existing body of evidence was to be considered sufficient to prevent delays in implementation on the pretext of requiring new research (Yerza, 1995: 11-2).

The Task Force, which had to recommend how to implement its guidelines, "opted for CRTC monitored industry self-regulation for a trial period of two years" (cited in Yerza, 1995: 12). In 1984, the Erin Research organization was commissioned to conduct a content analysis to verify the progress brought about by the guidelines. The organization reported "that little, if any, improvement in the portrayal of gender had occurred during the period of voluntary self-regulation" (Yerza, 1995: 13). Following these findings, in 1986 the CRTC made "self-regulation a condition of licensing" (cited in Yerza, 1995: 13). Two years later, the Erin Research organization again conducted another content analysis. One year prior to its 1990 Report, the CRTC was already declaring that "important progress has been made to eliminate the most offensive forms of sex-role stereotyping" (cited in Yerza, 1995: 13). Then, shortly after the publication of the report, the CRTC declared "that most of the concerns about sex-role stereotyping had been largely satisfied" (cited in Yerza, 1995: 13), and then disbanded the Task Force on Sex-Role Stereotyping.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that sex-role stereotyping was, and still is, part of the advertising industry's strategy, though ads such as the ones by Suzuki and Domicil are no longer part of the sophisticated means employed by most advertising agencies to mark gender differences. In cultural discourse, the inequality of the social relations between men and women has a detrimental effect on women's self-image, as well as their public image. To be sure, women are not alone in terms of having a negative image reflected through advertising. For some years now, advertising has also begun to treat men's bodies as objects.

THE IMAGE OF MEN IN ADVERTISING

In a study conducted on the image of men in advertising, Jacques Primeau (1989) has largely refuted the argument that media advertising degrades women only. Many analyses on this theme, Primeau has argued, are based on a biased interpretation of sexism in which

most men have dominating, exploitative or manipulative roles from which they profit. But the real question is, who imposes or controls this sexist advertising, and who reaps the benefits? Primeau says it is doubtful that whomever controls advertising is also its target.

For Primeau, the classic image of a woman stretched out across the hood of a car is completely disrespectful to men, for it suggests that ad agencies believe they can trap men into making mindless purchases. While it is true that advertising clearly exploits gender relations to the benefit of one gender, not every member of the privileged gender enjoys this advantage. According to Primeau, some men object to the dominant image that advertising generally attributes to them. In this sense, one can detect a divergence or resistance among men with respect to the values conveyed by the dominant ideology. Does this divergence apply to the "new" image of men in advertising as well?

In his study, Primeau (1989) revealed that not only are more and more men appearing in ads, but these men are clearly set up as objects. He claims that advertising uses men's bodies in the same way that it uses women's, namely for the purpose of promoting commodities. Primeau has called this new form of sexism "neo-sexism." The concept refers to the fact that men are portrayed in four major roles: man as an object of desire, man as lovemaker, man as a phallic object and man as an erotic object. In these roles, men appear partially or completely nude in order to advertise hair salons, potato chips, perfume, underwear, wine, etc.

One of the most obvious signs of the objectification of men in advertising is that they are now being shown "in pieces" (a close-up of a man's feet, head, naked chest, genitalia, etc.), as has long been the case with women. This phenomenon, however, is new and still not widespread. Until recently, in contrast with women, men had always been shown in full in advertising. Even more important, Kastner (1991) has pointed out that the silhouette of a fragmented male body has never been used, whereas the female figure has always been clearly exploited. Men were portrayed in whole, as individuals with distinct personalities, choosing to get together to talk in their underwear!

Today, advertisements aimed at men are much more sexual than, for example, 10 years ago—even those in which they are shown in full. Ad agencies use codes (discussed earlier) to emphasize this sexuality. Below are Kervin's (1990) comments on a male advertisement run by Calvin Klein which depicts a man with a washboard stomach wearing only close-fitting Calvin Klein briefs. He is leaning against a distinctly phallic form in a cocky pose.

In the Klein advertisement the rich skin colour contrasting with the bright white of the underwear emphasize (sic) the near-nakedness of the male model. Similarly, the tactile cues from the strategic shadowing on the underwear suggest the feel of the material against the skin, creating a sensuousness usually associated with representations of women. However, elements of the advertisement do strongly mark the male (and by extension, the underwear) as masculine. For example, shadows are used to emphasize bulging muscles, a conventional sign of masculinity. The model withholds contact with the viewer through his raised head and closed eyes; the connotation, as Richard Dyer (1982) argues, is that the model does not care that he is being surveyed. . . . Perhaps the strongest, and almost self-parodying, "masculinizing" element of the advertisement is the

combination of the phallic monument, against which the model leans, and the camera's extreme low angle, an aesthetic choice that places the viewer in the position of worship (Kervin, 1990: 67).

Male Advertising: Neo-sexism?

Primeau (1989) has attributed the emergence of men as objects—an important development, he has claimed—to the fact that more and more women work in advertising agencies. He refers to this development in advertising as reversed sexism or neo-sexism. Not everyone, however, agrees with this hypothesis. For instance, some adwomen claim that men still control much of the decision-making power in agencies; it is men who generally choose to present men as objects because they believe it is profitable. In a newspaper article (*La Presse*, January 12, 1991), Claire Bowé, of the Montréal-based agency Publi-Mix, even suggested that men began using men in this way to justify the exploitation of women's bodies. Bowé claimed that the exploitation of women is as rampant as ever.

Spokeswomen at the Council on the Status of Women add that it is not because men are portrayed as objects in advertising that there is necessarily such a thing as reversed sexism. The situation is much more complex. Of course, men are portrayed as objects in some ads, for example, the Man from Glad (or the boy who sometimes replaces him), who ensures that our garbage makes it to the roadside thanks to his green plastic bags. Thus, ad agencies do maintain the structure of institutionalized representation based on sexual stereotypes. However, in a patriarchal society, the image of men as objects is still not a widespread problem and does not represent a symbolic identity. The use of male models has no bearing on the structure of representation, no more than it challenges the fact that women are perceived as objects in the cultural discourse transmitted by advertising. Figures 10.4a to 10.4f clearly show this reality. This "story" of a couple features a man always completely dressed and in a constant *pensive* state, while the woman is always partially undressed and constantly suggesting her *abandonment*—she is photographed in sexually suggestive positions, as if offering her body shamelessly. The same attitude is reflected in Figure 10.5a, where a saucy woman sells jeans by exposing part of her chest, while the men in Figure 10.5b, confident and smiling, are each wearing a jacket and tie. Such sexist representations abound in advertising.

The advent of advertising involving the use of men as bait cannot be perceived as compensation for sexism against women. If the image of men as objects in advertising is said to be symbolic of the new distribution of male and female roles in society, this illusion can only benefit those people who manipulate consumption habits. Far from creating a new order in the distribution of roles in society, this neo-sexist image, Primeau (1989) has argued, has played a role in masking or camouflaging social reality. It has helped ridicule ancient social practices without presenting new realities or roles for men and women.

In fact, because society is in transition, the content of today's advertising is often ambiguous: the idea of the new man is not as well defined as that of the new woman. Faced with women's affirmation and increasing unemployment in general, today's consumer can no longer identify with a dominating male model. As a result, modern

advertising is attempting to define new social realities—with limited success. According to Primeau (1989), the image of men in “neo-sexist” advertising does not suggest equality of the sexes. Instead, it reveals the ambiguity of men’s role in current social structures. New advertising no longer appeals to men’s virility, and men are sometimes portrayed as being insecure, worried, immobile and often inactive. In addition, they are sometimes unapologetically substituted for women models: they are portrayed as men who have managed to reconcile their masculinity with traditionally female tasks. From this perspective, there does not yet appear to be a coherent male counterpart to the feminist ideology.

Advertising, therefore, does not do justice either to men or women. Both are exploited as objects for the sole purpose of generating sales of the commodities advertised. Let us now see if the same phenomenon occurs regarding racial representations.

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