

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL
OF MEN AND WOMEN IN PRIME TIME TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Does your vision of the future feature you prepping yourself with baby shampoo, a soothing dishwashing liquid, Sugartwin, Fortified Grape Nuts and spray deodorant in order to achieve soft hair, smooth hands, a slim figure, the energy to go on a tennis date and the confidence that you won't smell afterward--all so that you will be able to trap a man who will ask you to spend the rest of your life with him working out a mutual obsession, attacking dirt and odors with Janitor in a Drum, Windex, Sani-Flush, Fab and k2r Spot Remover?

Does this summary sound like the commercials a woman hears on television? Is she really that excited about clean smells, shining floors, smooth hands and a slim figure?

Television commercials are not the best examples by which to make a definitive statement about the status of American women. In recent years women have become second-class citizens of TV commercial land.

Studies have been made by different groups to show how women are portrayed in TV commercials. Unfortunately, some of the studies have been financed by women's groups with a definite interest in showing a biased viewpoint of the findings. As a result of these studies, commercials have undergone changes to help correct this negative image of women. The important question is: has there been any significant change in the role of women in prime time television commercials in the last several years? This thesis will try to answer that question.

Purpose

This study is an analysis of the portrayal of women in prime time television commercials.

Answers to the following questions are sought: (1) In what roles are women portrayed in prime time television commercials? (2) How does that portrayal contrast with that of men who are shown in prime time television commercials? (3) To what extent do prime time television commercials show a traditional-stereotyped conceptualization of sex roles? (4) How often are females used for a television commercial voice-over? (5) How often is the job of on-camera selling in a prime time television commercial performed by a woman? (6) In what settings are women found in prime time television commercials? (7) In what occupations are women most likely to be found in prime time television commercials? (8) What age are women in prime time television commercials?

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to network commercials which were aired during the prime time hours of 6:30-10 p.m. Since this study is strictly limited to television commercials, conclusions must be limited to television advertising during those hours considered as prime time.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

DOMINICK AND RAUCH STUDY

In 1971 Joseph R. Dominick and Gail E. Rauch conducted a content analysis of prime time television commercials to determine how women were stereotyped in particular roles. Both researchers are members of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at Queens University. Their research revealed the following: After coding 986 commercials during a composite week of prime time television, Dominick and Rauch found several significant differences in sex roles. Females were over-represented in ads for female cosmetics and under-represented in ads for male cosmetics. They found that women were seven times more likely to appear in ads for personal hygiene products than not to appear. Women were less likely than men to be in ads for cars, trucks and related products, and less likely to be in ads for gas and oil. Further analysis revealed that 75 per cent of all ads using females were for products generally found in the kitchen or bathroom. Only 56 per cent of the ads without females were for products in this category.¹

One job in television commercials that was almost entirely dominated by males was the off-camera voice-over announcer. Of the 946 ads with a voice-over, only 6 per cent used a female voice. A male voice was heard on 87 per cent and 7 per cent used a chorus. Dominick and Rauch also found that on-camera selling was dominated by men. In all ads which used a person for on-camera selling, 32 per cent of the ads used a man, while only 21 per cent of the ads used a woman for the on-camera selling.

According to Dominick and Rauch's study, a woman in a TV ad will most likely be found in the home. In all ads, 38 per cent of the females

were shown inside the home compared to 14 per cent of the males. Men were more likely to be shown outdoors or in a business setting. Also, in more than twice as many cases women were shown with children, 15 per cent vs. 7 per cent.

Data collected on the occupations of women yielded similar results. Of the 230 females with an apparent occupation, 56 per cent were judged to be housewives. When this total was added to the stewardess, secretarial and co-domestic categories, it was found that more than 70 per cent of the women were portrayed in a subservient role. Of men with visible occupation, 14 per cent were in the husband/father category. The next largest category was professional athlete with 12 per cent. No other category accounted for more than 10 per cent of the male characters. In addition, 43 different occupations were coded for men, yet for females only 18 occupations were coded.

Older females were also less visible than older males in prime time commercials. The majority of women (71%) were coded to be in the 20-35 year-old category. For men, 43 per cent were in this category, while 41 per cent were judged to be in the 36-50 age group. Only 6 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men were coded to be over 50 years of age.²

Are women overly used as sex objects in commercials? Dominick and Rauch found that women generally were pictured as sex objects. Thirty-two per cent of the time most of the females appearing in the ads were judged to be dressed casually, while 7 per cent appeared in nightgown or other revealing clothing and 5 per cent in some stage of undress.

The researchers had some difficulty developing a reliable system of coding the primary role of the women in the commercials. They noted that the coder reliability was only 85 per cent.

The most frequent role recorded was that of sex object/decoration, with some 32 per cent fitting this role. The frequency with which women were portrayed as sex objects, or for decorative purposes varied according to what sex generally buys the advertised product. In ads for products usually bought by men, 54 per cent of the females were in the sex object/decoration role. In ads for products bought generally by females or bought equally by both sexes, 25 per cent of the females were in the sex object/decoration category. The wife/mother role had 20 per cent.³

NOW Studies

The National Organization of Women conducted a study of all television programming on WABC-TV in New York City in late 1970 and in the following year.⁴ In a content analysis of 1,241 commercials, NOW found that almost all commercials showed women inside the home. In 42 per cent of the commercials, women were involved in household tasks, in 37.5 per cent women were domestic adjuncts to men and in 16.7 per cent they were shown as sex objects. Only 0.3 per cent of the women in the NOW study could be coded as autonomous people, leading independent lives. In 54.4 per cent of the food commercials and in 81.2 per cent of the cleaning commercials, men were the beneficiaries. In addition, 22.7 per cent showed women as demeaned housekeepers, 33.9 per cent showed a dependence on men, 24.3 showed a great degree of submissiveness and 17.1 per cent showed women who acted and who were treated as though all intelligence had fled.⁵

In May 1972, the National Capital Area Chapter of the National Organization of Women conducted three weeks of television commercial content analysis. After viewing and coding 2,750 commercials, researchers found that 53 per cent of the on-camera selling was done by men, while 47 per cent was done by women. An analysis of on-camera selling by time

of day showed that during the hours of 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 54 per cent of the ads had a women as the product representative, while men accounted for 46 per cent. From 4:30 p.m. to signoff, men were seen 67 per cent of the time, while women served as product representatives only 33 per cent of the time. Categorizing of occupations portrayed by males and females showed that 78 per cent of the women were found in the family/home occupation, while men accounted for only 5 per cent of the same category. Men, with 47 per cent of the total, were more likely to be seen in the media/celebrity occupation. Women were found in that category 13 per cent of the time. Women were least likely to be found in the business/sales/management category as only 2 per cent fit this description. Tasks and activities were also analyzed. It was noted that women were found in various kinds of domestic duties 71 per cent of the time, while men were found there 31 per cent of the time. Age was also analyzed by the NOW chapter. They found that the commercials favor younger males and females. Eighty-two per cent of the women were classified as under 40 years of age, while fifty-six per cent of the men were under 40.⁶

Toronto Study

Four hundred and thirty four commercials were cross-tabulated by the Toronto Women's Media Committee in January and February of 1973. During a three day period they found that the on-camera selling was evenly split between men and women. On-camera selling by time of day showed that from 1 to 3 p.m. 58 per cent of the product representatives were women. However, from 8-10 p.m., men accounted for 65 per cent of the product representatives. An analysis of the product categories found that 29 per cent of the women could be found in ads pertaining to some kind of household product. Men were found in 29 per cent of the ads for food

and beverages. As in other studies, occupations of male and female characters showed that women comprised 56 per cent of the total for the family/home occupation, while men had only 12 per cent of the total. The largest occupation category for men was media/celebrity with 25 per cent of the total. Tasks and activities performed by the product representatives were also analyzed. Women were shown 32 per cent of the time doing some kind of domestic task, while men were shown at such tasks during only 9 per cent. The largest task and activity category for men, with 53 per cent, was the demonstrator category. As with the other studies, age is an important factor; 84 per cent of the women analyzed were under age 40, while 66 per cent of the men were under age 40.⁷

In compiling this review of the literature, articles and publications were found which were indirectly related but helpful to the pursuit of this study.⁸

FOOTNOTES

¹Peter R. Dominick and Gail E. Rauch, "The Image of Women in Network TV Commercials," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 16, No. 3, (Summer, 1972), p. 260.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Judith Alder Hennessee and Joan Nicholson, "NOW Says: TV Commercials Insult Women," New York Times Magazine, May 28, 1972, p. 46.

⁵Ibid.

⁶"National Capital Area Chapter, National Organization for Women Study," Journal of Communication, Vol. 24, No. 2, (Spring, 1974), p. 110-118.

⁷"Toronto Women's Media Committee," Journal of Communication, Vol. 24, No. 2, (Spring, 1974), p. 11-118.

The following publications were also helpful:

⁸Clickner, Patricia Ann. "Working Women as a Market Segment: A Study of Trends in Advertising to Women Utilizing a Content Analysis 1948-1968," Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1970.

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Santi, Tina. "Commercials are Changing," Advertising Age, Vol. 45, No. 33, (August 16, 1974), p. 49-54.

Sexton, Donald and Phyllis Haberman. "Women in Magazine Advertisements," Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 14, No. 41, (August, 1974), p. 41-46.

Simmons, Marcia Kay. "The Portrayal of Adult Sex Roles: A Content Analysis of Advertising Pictures in Six Women's Magazines," Unpublished Master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1974.

Wagner, Louis C. and Janis B. Banos. "A Woman's Place: A Follow-Up Analysis of the Roles Portrayed by Women in Magazine Advertisements," Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 63, (October, 1971), p. 549-51.

Willett, Rosalyn. "Do Not Stereotype Women--An Appeal to Advertising," Journal of Home Economics, Vol. 63, (October, 1971), P. 549-51.

Winnick, Charles. "Sex and Advertising," Mass Media: The Invisible Environment, Chicago, Palo Alto, Toronto, Hemley-on-Thames, Sidney, Paris, Science Research Associates, Inc., 1973.

"Everything you Ever Wanted to Know About Advertising and Were Not Afraid to Ask," Ms., Vol. 3, No. 5, (November, 1974), p. 68-73.

"Are TV Commercials Insulting to Women?," Good Housekeeping, Vol. 172,, (May, 1972), p. 68-72.

"NOW Attacks National Ads as Deceptive," Advertising Age, Vol. 46, No. 48, (February 10, 1975), p. 48.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Study Design

Content analysis is utilized in this study. This particular method will also allow for a comparison with other research similar in scope. Since it was impossible to use video taping equipment for the coding of the commercials, this method was chosen. The content analysis form used in this study contained several areas of interest. They included:

Setting

The coding instrument contained the following settings for the purpose of placing the commercial actors in a specific place: kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, bedroom, house/combination, garage, outdoors, restaurant, airplane, school, office, tavern/bar, combination of the above, not apparent and an 'other' category. These settings were coded by male, female, other or both. After a one week pre-test period, these settings were judged to be adequate for use in the coding instrument.

Occupations

The following occupations were included as part of the coding instrument: Female: housewife/mother, stewardess, model, celebrity, cook/maid, secretary/clerical, businesswoman, professional, athlete, sales clerk, waitress, retired, 'other' and codeless. Male: husband/father, athlete, celebrity, salesman, construction worker, businessman, mechanic, professional, oil worker, waiter, retired, sales clerk, 'other' and codeless. These categories were found to be adequate following a one week pre-test period with the coding instrument.

Roles

The following roles were coded for both male and female characters: wife/family and father/family, recreational, sex object/decoration, self-care and a codeless category. These categories were found to be adequate following a one week pre-test period with the coding instrument.

Product Categories

The coding instrument contained the following product categories: female cosmetics/beauty aids, male cosmetics/beauty aids, clothes, food, cars/related products, health products, pest control/insecticides, pet products, wine/liquor/beer, detergents/cleansers/softeners, gasoline/related products, tobacco, appliances, air/train/bus travel, banks/savings and loan/insurance/utilities and an 'other' category. These categories were arrived at following a one week pre-test period.

The Coding Sheet

A commercial content analysis form was used to record data for this study. An example can be found in Appendix A. As a television commercial was viewed, all pertinent data were marked on the coding instrument. The forms were color coded to differentiate between the two weeks of the study.

If a commercial contained one or more codable females, the following variables were coded: product advertised, voice-over, whether the prime purchaser of the product was male or female, or purchased equally by both; the setting in which the female appeared, apparent occupation, whether women did the on-camera selling and the primary role of the female in the ad.

In order to compare portrayals of males and females, data about men appearing in prime time commercials were also gathered. The same criteria used for the females were applied in determining a codable male character.

If one or more men appeared in the ad, the following variables were coded for each: product advertised, setting, occupation and whether or not the man did the on-camera selling.

The Pre-Test

In order to insure an accurate coding instrument, extensive time was spent developing a series of informal pre-test coding sheets. Each sheet was used for a period of five days. During that period, approximately 100 commercials were coded. At the end of three weeks of informal pre-testing, a suitable instrument was achieved to begin the formal task of pre-testing the instrument.

One-hundred commercials were used to determine the accuracy and the usability of the coding instrument. Two trained coders viewed identical commercials. Following the marking of the 100 commercials, the formally tested instrument was evaluated. In all categories, 90 per cent coder reliability was reached. It was felt that with this degree of accuracy, the coding instrument was reliable and would fit the needs of the study.

The Sample

During the week of July 28 to August 1 and the week of August 4 to August 8, two independent coders observed all prime television commercials. Using the pre-tested coding sheets, they coded the specific areas for each commercial. A total of 759 commercials were coded. The television stations viewed for this study and in the Hastings, Nebraska viewing area were KHAS-TV, KHOL-TV and KHGI-TV. Local station break commercials and network commercials for the promotion of the new fall season were not considered in the sample.

The analysis was limited to female and male characters who appeared on screen for at least three seconds, or (2) had at least one line of dialogue within the structure of the commercial. If an ad contained no codable female, the product advertised and whether the voice-over was a male, female, combination or a chorus were recorded.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS

A total of 759 commercials were coded during this study. As was indicated in Chapter III, station break commercials and network promotional commercials were not coded.

A total of 170 men and 218 women were counted in the commercials. Men and women together in a commercial were counted 249 times, while children and animated characters accounted for 122 commercials.

Tabulations

Table I indicates how often a male or female was used in the commercial voice-over. Percentages are based on the total number of commercials using a voice-over, not on the number of commercials in the study.

TABLE I
PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF VOICE-OVERS
IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS, BY VOICE SOURCE

Voice-over	Per Cent	Number
Male	63.8	(401)
Male/with chorus	24.3	(153)
Female	4.3	(27)
Chorus	4.1	(26)
Female/with chorus	3.2	(20)
Both male and female/with chorus	<u>.03</u>	<u>(2)</u>
Total	100.0	629

It can be observed from Table I that 64 per cent of the prime time television commercials utilizing a single voice-over featured a male voice, while only 4.3 per cent featured a female voice-over. The use of chorus alone or with a male or female accounted for little over 30 per cent. It can be concluded from Table I that the use of the male voice-over, either alone or in conjunction with a chorus clearly dominated the sample with nearly 90 per cent of the total commercials with a voice-over.

Table II shows how often a male or female was used as the on-camera product representative in prime time television commercials. The 'other' category in Table II includes children and/or any type of animation or animated characters.

TABLE II
PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF MEN AND WOMEN
AS ON-CAMERA PRODUCT REPRESENTATIVES
IN TV COMMERCIALS

On-camera selling	Per Cent	Number
Female	49.1	(199)
Male	40.5	(164)
Other	<u>10.4</u>	<u>(42)</u>
Total	100.0	(405)

Table II shows that women are used nearly 50 per cent of the time as the on-camera product representative, while men are used nearly 40 per cent of the time. Children and animation account for only 10 per cent of the total number of commercials that have an on-camera product representative. During the time period analyzed, women were more likely to be used for on-camera selling than were men.

Table III shows the various product categories defined and analyzed in this study. More than 29 per cent of the commercials dealt with food, while 19 per cent of the commercials were for health related products. This latter category included any type of laxative, toothpaste or health-related products. The food category included any food or beverage which was advertised.

TABLE III
PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF PRIME TIME TELEVISION
COMMERCIALS BY PRODUCTS

Products	Per Cent	Number
Food	28.5	(216)
Health Products	19.8	(150)
Cars/related products	10.4	(79)
Female cosmetics/beauty aids	9.1	(69)
Other	9.1	(69)
Detergents/cleansers	7.7	(59)
Wine/liquor/beer	3.8	(29)
Clothes	2.8	(21)
Male cosmetics/beauty aids	2.8	(21)
Pet products	2.1	(16)
Banks/insurance/utilities	2.1	(16)
Pest control/insecticides	0.8	(6)
Appliances	0.4	(3)
Air/train/bus travel	0.3	(2)
Gasoline/related products	0.3	(2)
Tobacco	<u>0.1</u>	<u>(1)</u>
Total	100.0	759

Cars/related products, female cosmetics/beauty aids, the 'other' category and detergents/cleansers each accounted for more than 5 per cent of the total. Approximately half of the prime time television commercials are concerned with food and health products.

The next phase of the study attempted to show if there was any relationship between the type of product advertised and whether a male or female was used as the voice-over. The total number of commercials for Table IV is 544. The totals were taken from Table I and do not include the 'chorus' or 'both/chorus' categories.

TABLE IV

THE FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN IN
PRIME TIME TELEVISION COMMERCIAL VOICE-OVERS,
BY PRODUCT ADVERTISED

Product	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>	
	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number
Food	35.1	(19)	30.1	(164)
Female cosmetics	26.0	(14)	6.7	(36)
Other	16.7	(9)	8.6	(47)
Detergents/cleansers	11.0	(6)	2.6	(14)
Pet products	3.7	(2)	2.2	(12)
Wine/liquor/beer	3.7	(2)	5.1	(28)
Clothes	1.9	(1)	2.6	(14)
Health products	1.9	(1)	21.9	(119)
Air/train/bus travel	0.0	(0)	0.4	(2)
Cars/related products	0.0	(0)	12.3	(67)
Pest control	0.0	(0)	0.9	(5)

TABLE IV (continued)

Product	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>	
	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number
Gasoline	0.0	(0)	0.2	(1)
Tobacco	0.0	(0)	0.2	(1)
Appliances	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)
Banks/savings/insurance	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>
Total	100.0	54	100.0	544

The food, health products and cars/related products categories were the most heavily advertised products which used a male voice-over.

Table IV also shows which products used a female voice-over a greater percentage of the time. Food, female cosmetics, 'other' and detergents/cleansers categories were used most often with a female voice-over. Perhaps the most significant finding shown in Table IV is the large number of commercials which use a male voice-over, with regard to product.

While women were out-numbered in the voice-over category relative to the product advertised, women fared better as the on-camera product representatives as Table V indicates.

TABLE V
THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF WOMEN AND MEN
AS ON-CAMERA PRODUCT REPRESENTATIVE
RELATIVE TO PRODUCTS ADVERTISED

Products	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>	
	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number
Female cosmetics	25.1	(50)	3.1	(5)
Food	21.1	(42)	24.4	(40)
Health products	17.1	(34)	20.2	(34)
Detergents/cleansers	14.1	(28)	7.4	(12)
Other	12.6	(25)	12.3	(20)
Clothes	3.5	(7)	1.8	(3)
Cars/related products	2.0	(4)	11.0	(18)
Wine/liquor/beer	2.0	(4)	4.9	(8)
Male cosmetics	0.5	(1)	9.2	(15)
Pet products	0.5	(1)	0.0	(0)
Gasoline/related products	0.5	(1)	0.0	(0)
Tobacco	0.5	(1)	0.0	(0)
Appliances	0.5	(1)	0.0	(0)
Pest control/insecticides	0.0	(0)	0.6	(1)
Air/train/bus travel	0.0	(0)	1.3	(2)
Banks/savings and loan	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>(6)</u>
Total	100.0	199	100.0	164

Table V shows that food, health products, 'other' and cars/related products categories had the heaviest use of men as the on-camera product representative.

The most advertised product with a female as the on-camera product representative, as shown in Table V, were female cosmetics, food, health products and detergents/cleansers.

Table V seems to indicate that the sex of the product representative is clearly defined in certain product categories. Male cosmetics and cars/related products are dominated by men, while female cosmetics and detergent are dominated by women as the on-camera product representative. There appears to be about an equal number of men and women in the areas of food and health products.

The setting where men and women are shown in commercials was also analyzed in this study. Table VI shows the settings alone, while Table VII shows the setting relative to men and women.

TABLE VI

THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF PRIME TIME
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS, BY SETTING

Settings	Per Cent	Number
Outdoors	24.5	(186)
Not Apparent	23.1	(175)
Combination	15.8	(120)
House/combination	8.8	(67)
Other	7.4	(56)
Kitchen	6.1	(46)
Restaurant	3.7	(28)
Bathroom	3.2	(24)
Office	2.8	(21)
Tavern/bar	1.7	(13)

TABLE VI (continued)

Settings	Per Cent	Number
School	1.5	(11)
Bedroom	0.8	(6)
Laundry room	0.5	(4)
Airplane	0.3	(2)
Garage	<u>0.0</u>	(0)
Total	100.0	759

Table VI shows that television commercials are set in a variety of places. One out of four commercials is set in an outdoor or natural setting. Twenty-three percent of the commercials have a setting that is not apparent, while twenty per cent take place in some room or rooms of a house. No other setting in this study was used as often as the home or outdoors.

Another aspect of this analysis of the settings of the commercials was observed when men and women were used in the commercials. Table VII deals with this part of the study. Of the 759 commercials coded, 122 contained animated characters, thus the total for Table VII is 637 commercial.

TABLE VIII
THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS, BY SETTING

Settings	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>		<u>Both</u>	
	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number
Outdoors	22.9	(50)	24.7	(42)	28.1	(70)
Not apparent	20.7	(45)	18.2	(31)	6.4	(16)
House/combination	17.4	(38)	6.5	(11)	5.2	(13)
Combination	14.2	(31)	8.2	(14)	28.9	(72)
Kitchen	10.6	(23)	5.9	(10)	4.0	(10)
Other	7.3	(16)	11.2	(19)	6.4	(16)
Office	1.8	(4)	9.4	(16)	0.8	(2)
Bathroom	1.8	(4)	4.1	(7)	4.8	(12)
Bedroom	0.9	(2)	0.0	(0)	2.0	(5)
Airplane	0.9	(2)	0.6	(1)	0.0	(0)
Laundry	0.9	(2)	0.0	(0)	0.8	(2)
School	0.5	(1)	6.5	(11)	2.0	(5)
Tavern	0.0	(0)	1.2	(2)	1.6	(4)
Restaurant	0.0	(0)	3.5	(6)	8.8	(22)
Garage	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>
Total	100.0	218	100.0	170	100.0	249

Table VII indicates that men in television commercials were found more often outdoors. The next largest category for setting was not apparent. Men were found less often in the home or any particular room

of the home. No men were found in the laundry room, bedroom or garage.

Women were found most often in an outdoor setting in the commercial. More than 30 per cent of the women coded were found in some room or rooms of a home. More than 10 per cent of the women were shown in the kitchen. Women were least likely to be found in the bedroom, in an airplane, in the laundry room, or in a school. No women were found in taverns, restaurants or garages.

Table VII shows that with both men and women together in a commercial, the most used setting is outdoors. Table VII also reveals that more than 30 per cent of the women were found in some part of the home, (while only 20 per cent of the men were found in some part of the home). Men and women together were found 17 per cent of the time in some part of the home. More than 30 per cent of the commercials showed men and women in a variety of settings: e.g. home/outdoors, office/outdoors, restaurant/outdoors, and office/home. Only 6 per cent of the commercials found men and women together in a setting that was not apparent.

Prime purchasers of the products advertised on prime time television commercials were also analyzed. It was found that nearly 50 per cent of the commercials were designed for the female purchaser. Table VIII also indicates that nearly 40 per cent of the commercials are designed for both female and male purchasers. Only 13 per cent of the commercials analyzed were for men as the prime purchaser.

TABLE VIII

THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF TELEVISION
COMMERCIALS RELATIVE TO MEN AND WOMEN
AS PRIME PURCHASERS

Purchaser	Per Cent	Number
Female	46.9	(356)
Equal Purchaser	39.8	(302)
Male	<u>13.3</u>	<u>(101)</u>
Total	100.00	759

Occupations of men and women portrayed in prime time television commercials were studied. Tables IX and X show that more than 50 per cent of the women were shown in a codeless occupation. Codeless was defined as a commercial which gives no direct or indirect clues as to the occupation of the men or women.

Men were codeless in 55 per cent of the commercials. Women were found in the housewife/mother category 32 per cent of the time, while men were judged to be in the husband/father category in only 14 per cent of the commercials.

TABLE IX

THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF OCCUPATIONS
RELATIVE TO WOMEN IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Occupations	Per Cent	Number
Codeless	52.5	(257)
Housewife/mother	32.4	(159)

TABLE IX (continued)

Occupations	Per Cent	Number
Businesswoman	2.9	(14)
Athlete	2.9	(14)
Waitress	2.0	(10)
Other	2.0	(10)
Celebrity	2.0	(10)
Professional	1.3	(6)
Stewardess	0.6	(3)
Sales clerk	0.6	(3)
Secretary/clerical	0.4	(2)
Model	0.4	(2)
Cook/maid	0.0	(0)
Retired	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>
Total	100.0	490

Of the 14 occupations listed on the coding sheet, 12 of the occupations accounted for less than 5 per cent of the total for each occupation.

Table X shows how men were analyzed for occupations.

TABLE X

THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF OCCUPATIONS
RELATIVE TO MEN IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Occupations	Per Cent	Number
Codeless	55.8	(240)
Other	14.4	(62)
Husband/father	13.8	(59)
Celebrity	7.2	(31)
Businessman	4.2	(18)
Athlete	2.1	(9)
Salesman	1.2	(5)
Mechanic	0.5	(2)
Professional	0.5	(2)
Waiter	0.2	(1)
Sales clerk	0.2	(1)
Retired	0.0	(0)
Construction worker	<u>0.0</u>	<u>(0)</u>
Total	100.0	430

The age of men and women in television commercials was also coded for this study. Women and youth seem to be synonymous for the commercials coded. More than 50 per cent of the women were found to be in the 21-35 age group, while 20 per cent of the men fit this age group. Table XI shows that 14 per cent of the women were between 36-50 and 26 per cent of the men were in this category. Only 2 per cent of the women and 11 per cent of the men were coded as over 50 years of age. A combination of

ages accounted for 32 per cent of the men in the commercials, while 26 per cent of the women were in the age combination area. Apparently advertisers want youth for the women and the wisdom of middle age for the men in their commercials.

TABLE XI
THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF MEN
AND WOMEN IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS
RELATIVE TO AGE

Age	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>	
	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number
Newborn - 12	3.6	(17)	6.3	(25)
13 - 20	2.1	(10)	5.0	(20)
21 - 35	52.0	(242)	19.5	(78)
36 - 50	14.4	(67)	25.8	(103)
Over 50	1.7	(8)	11.3	(45)
Combination	<u>26.2</u>	<u>(122)</u>	<u>32.1</u>	<u>(128)</u>
Total	100.0	466	100.0	399

The roles in which men and women are portrayed were also analyzed for this study. More than 32 per cent of the females and more than 60 per cent of the males were classified as codeless relative to roles. Codeless can be defined as the lack of indication, either visually or orally, as to the probable role of the male or female. Table XII indicates that 25 per cent of the women and only 12 per cent of the men were coded in the wife/family and father/family area.

TABLE XII
THE PERCENTAGE AND FREQUENCY OF MEN AND WOMEN
IN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS RELATIVE
TO SEX STEREOTYPE ROLES

Roles	<u>Women</u>		<u>Men</u>	
	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number
Father/family			11.9	(51)
Wife/family	25.5	(125)		
Recreational	6.7	(33)	9.3	(40)
Sex object/deco	11.2	(55)	1.4	(6)
Self-care	23.9	(117)	14.4	(62)
Codeless	<u>32.7</u>	<u>(160)</u>	<u>63.0</u>	<u>(271)</u>
Total	100.0	490	100.0	430

Table XII also showed that 25 per cent of the women and 15 per cent of the men fit the self-care role. The sex object/decoration role accounted for only 1.4 per cent of the men in this area and more than ten times that percentage of women in the same role with more than 11 per cent.

The final area for this study is a comparison of findings with those of Dominick and Rauch in 1971 with those of this study. For future references, this research will be known as the Rea study. Not all areas of this study are comparable with the Dominick and Rauch research. Table XIII shows the areas in which the two studies are similar and attempts to show any changes between 1971 and 1975.

Both studies used a two week period for the content analysis, with Dominick and Rauch coding all three networks, while this researcher also coded three networks. Dominick and Rauch coded 986 commercials compared to 759 in this study.

The area of voice-overs in both studies was quite similar. Men dominated in both studies, 87 per cent in the Dominick and Rauch and 88 per cent in this study.

On-camera selling for men had similar percentages, while for women the percentages were quite different. Dominick and Rauch reported 21 per cent women for voice-overs, while this study found the percentage to be 50 per cent.

Both studies found similar results in the area of settings for the commercials. Men appeared more often in outdoor settings in the Dominick and Rauch study than in this research.

The Rea study had a smaller percentage of women in the housewife/mother occupation than the other research, while the husband/father occupation percentages were similar for both studies.

The Dominick and Rauch study coded more younger men than the Rea study, while older men in the 36-50 age category were found more often in the Dominick and Rauch study than in the Rea study.

TABLE XIII

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE DOMINICK AND RAUCH
AND REA STUDIES OF TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Areas compared	Dominick & Rauch Study 1971	Rea Study 1975
Number of commercials	986--2 weeks all networks	759--2 weeks all networks
Voice-overs	Male-87% Female-6% Chorus-7%	Male-88% Female-7.5% Chorus-4.2%
On-camera selling	Male-32% Female-21% Other-47%	Male-39.6% Female-49.6% Other-10.8%
Setting/home	Male-14% Female-38%	Male-16% Female-32.3%
Setting/outdoors	Male-44% Female-19%	Male-25.8% Female-22.4%
Setting/combination	Male-2% Female-7%	Male-7.9% Female-14.5%
Occupation/housewife	Female-56%	Female-32.4%
Occupation/husband	Male-12%	Male-13.8%
Age/20-35	Male-43% Female-71%	Male-19.5% Female-52%
Age/36-50	Male-41% Female-23%	Male-25.8% Female-14.4%
Age/over 50	Male-16% Female-6%	Male-11.3% Female-1.7%
Roles/sex object	Female-32%	Female-11.3%
Roles/wife and mother	Female-20%	Female-25.7%

The studies showed differing percentages in the over 50 age group.

Dominick and Rauch coded 6 per cent of the women as over 50, while the

Rea study coded only 1.7 per cent to be over 50 years of age. Dominick and Rauch found 13 per cent of the men over 50, while the Rea study coded 11 per cent.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine how men and women are portrayed in prime time television commercials. It is hoped the results will be of some benefit to advertisers and advertising agencies in determining how women are now portrayed in commercials. Also the study might furnish empirical evidence about how women are portrayed in television commercials.

Summary

The data collected in this study suggest that the manner in which women are portrayed in television commercials does not give an accurate or realistic view of women. Few of the 759 commercials coded showed a woman in a professional role, in fact only six. Yet, 257 commercials showed women in codeless occupations. Perhaps this suggests that advertisers would rather neuter the role of women instead of coming to grips with the real world of women. The same thinking can be applied to men since 55 per cent of the men coded in this study were found to have codeless occupations.

The roles portrayed by women also had some interesting aspects. Again the largest percentage for any category for women and roles was the codeless category, while the men, at 63 per cent, were even more codeless. In the wife/family role, women accounted for more than 25 per cent of the total, while men in the father/family role accounted for only 12 per cent. In some recent studies, a great percentage of women were found to be in the sex object/decoration area. This study found 11 per cent of the total in the sex object/decoration area.

More than one-half of the women coded in this study were in the 21-35 age group, with men at 20 per cent. Advertisers seem to prefer the middle aged man for some commercials. More than 25 per cent of the men coded were in the 36-50 age group. Advertisers seem to agree that older people have no place in many of their commercials. Only one per cent of the women and eleven per cent of the men coded in this study were found to be over 50 years of age. Children and teenagers account for a small percentage of the commercials coded in this study.

It was noted that most commercials aired in prime time were coded for both male and female as the purchaser on an equal basis. And yet, men dominated the commercials in several areas.

Women have not made a significant impact on the voice-over of television commercials. This technical aspect of advertising is controlled by men. Only 47 commercials out of 759 used a female voice-over, either alone or with a chorus. However, more women were coded as product representatives than men.

In the introduction to this study eight questions were posed. Based on the data reported in the previous chapter, the questions can be answered as follows:

(1) In what roles are women portrayed in prime time television commercials? It was found that 25 per cent of the women coded were in the wife/family category, while 24 per cent were in the self-care area. Thirty-two per cent of the women analyzed were codeless by role and only eleven per cent were in the sex object/decoration category.

(2) How does that portrayal contrast with that of men who are shown in prime time television commercials? It was found that nearly 30 per cent of the men coded were in the father/family and self-care categories. More than 60 per cent of the men were found to be codeless and only one per cent of the men could be considered as sex objects or decorations.

(3) To what extent do prime time television commercials show a traditional stereotyped conceptualization of sex roles? It is apparent that a majority of the commercials coded do not stereotype all men and women in the convenient sex-stereotype roles. The codeless categories of the study tend to support this statement to a greater degree for men than for women.

(4) How often are females used for a television commercial voice-over? Only 8 per cent of the commercials with a voice-over used a female. Men clearly dominated this part of the study.

(5) How often is the job of on-camera selling in a prime time television commercial performed by a woman? It was found that one-half of the on-camera selling was performed by women, while men performed this task nearly 40 per cent of the time.

(6) In what settings are women found in prime time television commercials? More than 30 per cent of the commercials showed the women in either a specific room of a house or in a combination of rooms. Twenty-two per cent portrayed the women in outdoor settings and twenty per cent of the commercials showed women in not apparent settings.

(7) In what occupations are women most likely to be found in prime time television commercials? More than 50 per cent of the commercials coded found the woman in a codeless occupation, while 32 per cent of the commercials showed a woman in the housewife/mother occupation. Few women were found in the professional fields or in the clerical areas.

(8) What age are women in prime time television commercials? More than 50 per cent of the women in the commercials were between the ages of 21 and 35, while only 15 per cent were over 36 years of age.

Discussion

When comparisons are made between the Dominick and Rauch and the Rea study, there are several areas which show a great disparity in percentages and some areas where the percentages are nearly identical.

This research found nearly identical percentages with Dominick and Rauch for male voice-overs, while there was 1.5 per cent increase for the female voice-over. On-camera selling for both male and female showed an increase over the Dominick and Rauch study, with females making the greater percentage increase.

The settings category displayed a variety of changes between the two studies. Perhaps one of the more significant changes was the decrease in women in a home setting, with the Rea study showing 6 per cent fewer women in the home than Dominick and Rauch.

Another decrease was found in the housewife occupation category. This study showed 32 per cent of the women as housewives, while in 1971, Dominick and Rauch found 56 per cent in the same area.

The age of males and females in this study showed differences in percentages in all age categories. The 20-35 age group for both males and females showed lower percentages than the Dominick and Rauch research. There were 19 per cent of the males in the Rea study, with 43 per cent of the males in the Dominick and Rauch, while female percentages decreased from 71 per cent to 52 per cent in the Rea study. The 36-50 age group also displayed decreases in percentages. Males decreased from 41 per cent to 25 per cent and females from 23 per cent to 14 per cent. Over 50 showed a slight decrease for males, from 13 per cent to 11 per cent. Females decreased from 6 per cent to 1 per cent.

The sex object/decoration role for females also changed. This study found 11 per cent of the females to fit this category, while

Dominick and Rauch coded 32 per cent. The Rea study found more females in the housewife/mother role with 25 per cent compared to Dominick and Rauch at 20 per cent.

It is obvious that a study of this nature will not answer all the criticisms leveled at television commercials, especially by women's rights organizations. However, it does lend a certain amount of tangible evidence that women in general aren't necessarily being unfairly treated by the image makers in the advertising market. Perhaps more research needs to be done that will give a clearer definition of how women really see themselves in their lives as compared with what is portrayed on the television screen.

Lastly, it is obvious that one study is not the answer to the charges made by various women's organizations. More studies should be undertaken to more accurately determine how both women as well as men are portrayed in television commercials. The task of defining the roles of both men and women is continuous and elusive.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FINAL CODING SHEET

(1) <u>Voice-over</u> <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> chorus <input type="checkbox"/> male/chorus <input type="checkbox"/> female/chorus <input type="checkbox"/> both/chorus	(2) <u>On-camera selling</u> <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> other	(7) <u>Occupations</u> Female <input type="checkbox"/> housewife/mother <input type="checkbox"/> stewardess <input type="checkbox"/> model <input type="checkbox"/> celebrity <input type="checkbox"/> cook/maid <input type="checkbox"/> secretary/clerical <input type="checkbox"/> businesswoman <input type="checkbox"/> professional <input type="checkbox"/> athlete <input type="checkbox"/> sales clerk <input type="checkbox"/> waitress <input type="checkbox"/> retired <input type="checkbox"/> other (_____) <input type="checkbox"/> codeless Male <input type="checkbox"/> husband/father <input type="checkbox"/> athlete <input type="checkbox"/> celebrity <input type="checkbox"/> salesman <input type="checkbox"/> construction worker <input type="checkbox"/> businessman <input type="checkbox"/> mechanic <input type="checkbox"/> professional <input type="checkbox"/> oil worker <input type="checkbox"/> waiter <input type="checkbox"/> retired <input type="checkbox"/> sales clerk <input type="checkbox"/> other (_____) <input type="checkbox"/> codeless
(3) <u>Products</u> <input type="checkbox"/> female cosmetics/beauty aids <input type="checkbox"/> male cosmetics/beauty aids <input type="checkbox"/> clothes <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> cars/related products <input type="checkbox"/> health products <input type="checkbox"/> pest control/insecticides <input type="checkbox"/> pet products <input type="checkbox"/> wine/liquor/beer <input type="checkbox"/> detergents/cleansers/softeners <input type="checkbox"/> gasoline/related products <input type="checkbox"/> tobacco <input type="checkbox"/> appliances <input type="checkbox"/> air/train/bus travel <input type="checkbox"/> banks/savings and loan/ <input type="checkbox"/> insurance/utilities <input type="checkbox"/> other (_____)		
(4) <u>Setting</u> <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> both <input type="checkbox"/> other		
(5) <input type="checkbox"/> kitchen <input type="checkbox"/> restaurant <input type="checkbox"/> bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> airplane <input type="checkbox"/> laundry room <input type="checkbox"/> school <input type="checkbox"/> bedroom <input type="checkbox"/> office <input type="checkbox"/> house/combination <input type="checkbox"/> tavern/bar <input type="checkbox"/> garage <input type="checkbox"/> not apparent <input type="checkbox"/> outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> other (_____) <input type="checkbox"/> combination of above		(9) (10) <u>Age-female</u> <u>Age-male</u> <input type="checkbox"/> newborn - 12 <input type="checkbox"/> newborn - 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 13 - 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 13 - 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 - 35 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 - 35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36 - 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 36 - 50 <input type="checkbox"/> over 50 <input type="checkbox"/> over 50 <input type="checkbox"/> combination <input type="checkbox"/> combination <input type="checkbox"/> codeless <input type="checkbox"/> codeless
(6) <u>Prime purchasers</u> <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> equal purchasers		(11) (12) <u>Roles-female</u> <u>Roles-male</u> <input type="checkbox"/> wife/family <input type="checkbox"/> father/family <input type="checkbox"/> recreational <input type="checkbox"/> recreational <input type="checkbox"/> sex object/deco. <input type="checkbox"/> sex object/deco. <input type="checkbox"/> self-care <input type="checkbox"/> self-care <input type="checkbox"/> codeless <input type="checkbox"/> codeless
Date: _____ Time: _____		
Product: _____ Network: _____		

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL
OF MEN AND WOMEN IN PRIME TIME TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

by

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In recent years various women's rights organizations have loudly complained that advertising in general and television advertising in particular was guilty of not showing women as they really are. This study, a content analysis of prime time television commercials, should be of some value to both advertisers and the critics of television commercials with regard to the portrayal of women in those commercials.

A content analysis of prime time television commercials was conducted the last week of July and the first week of August 1975. During that two week period 759 commercials were coded. The following areas were coded: voice-overs, on-camera selling, products advertised, settings, prime purchasers, occupations of male and female, age of male and female and the roles of male and female.

This study indicated that men clearly dominate the area of commercial voice-overs. The job of on-camera selling was nearly even with women doing 49 per cent of the commercials and men doing 40 per cent. Food and health products were the most heavily advertised products in the study. Settings for the commercials were mainly in an outdoor setting with the home or various rooms in the home being the second most popular. The study found that the products advertised were designed for women being the prime purchasers, while nearly 40 per cent of the commercials were aimed for an equal purchasership.

For both men and women, the study indicated that the greatest number of occupations were rated codeless. Housewife/mother and husband/father were both the second largest category. Youth predominated the women, with 42 per cent between 21-35, while more men were in the 36-50 age group. The roles for both men and women were judged to be codeless a majority of the time.

It was concluded that on some areas women are clearly dominated by men, while some areas of the study showed that women were in the majority.