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## ABSTRACT

Based on research findings that sex stereotyping used for product commercials is offensive and often ineffective, recommendations for change have been proposed to the advertising industry. Women, in particular, have been portrayed in advertising in traditional domestic roles, emphasizing the consumer role, especially in television advertising. Advertisers continue to show stereotyped roles because they believe that this sells products better. Findings indicate, however, that advertising using liberated roles is more effective and less irritating to consumers. A review of the advertising industry's self-regulation bodies in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain states that although the problem of sex stereotyping has been recognized and guidelines established, the subject is of low priority and regulation is not mandatory. Recommendations stress the need for use of improved measures to analyze the content of advertisements; use of social and economic indicators to measure impacts of sex stereotyping; and development of specific strategies aimed directly at advertisers. Included are reviews and recommendations of Canadian and United States advisory boards and a number of tables on the existence and criticisms of sex stereotyping in advertising. (BY)

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CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES  
ON  
SEX STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
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by

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1978

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INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

There has been growing concern in Canada during the last decade over the negative effects resulting from advertising, stereotyping. Advertising, in the process of selling products and services, tends to sell supplemental images as well, which may contribute to the maintenance of some undesirable aspects of the status quo in our society.

During the 1970's, concern over advertising stereotyping has focused on the portrayal of women and men. The concern has coincided with significant changes in the status of, and attitudes of, Canadian women. These numerous changes include: (1) changes in the life styles of women and men (increased labour force participation by women, declining family sizes); (2) changes in societal organization (emergence of women's groups, greater political role being assumed by women); and (3) changes in national strategies (equal pay legislation, affirmative action programmes, recognition of International Women's Year), to mention just a few.

In this climate, feminists and others have been concerned about advertising stereotyping because they view advertising as a mechanism which keeps women in their place and inhibits them from taking a full and equal role in society. For several years, they have charged that women are discriminated against and portrayed in an inaccurate and demeaning manner by the advertising industry.

However, the advertising industry, in a recently released report on the subject of advertising and women, took the position that major changes in the industry are not warranted at this time. Furthermore, the report made no recommendations for changes in regulatory procedures. Many concerned and informed people disagree with this industry position and believe that major needs



exist for improvement of advertising's portrayal of the sexes.

This position paper, for consideration by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, reviews the history and present state of Canadian advertising with respect to the portrayal of men and women. It examines the existence and effects of sex stereotyping, and other related problems and makes recommendations for consideration by the Advisory Council.

I. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

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A. Research on the Existence of Sex Stereotyping in Advertising

A large body of research shows that women are portrayed in extremely limited roles in advertising and that this portrayal has not changed significantly during the 1970's. Over thirty English language monitoring studies have been published since 1971, which document the portrayal of women and men in advertising. In addition, there are numerous unpublished studies, many conducted as university research projects or by local women's groups. The majority of these studies have examined magazine advertisements and television commercials. They have documented such factors as the presence of the sexes in advertising and the occupational roles portrayed by men and women.

One of the first monitoring studies analyzed women's depictions in advertisements in eight national U.S. magazines. Courtney and Lockeretz concluded that magazine advertisements portray women in very limited roles.<sup>1</sup> They stated that print advertisements imply that the woman's place is in the home, that women do not make important decisions or do important things and that women are dependent upon men and regarded primarily as sexual objects. Follow-up magazine advertisement monitoring studies corroborate these findings and report only minor changes during the last six years.<sup>2</sup> No monitoring studies of Canadian magazine advertising have been published to date.

Monitoring studies, which have examined the more difficult task of analyzing the portrayal of the sexes in television commercials report similar conclusions about the portrayal of men and women in TV ads. Courtney and Whipple<sup>3</sup> compared the results of one Canadian TV monitoring study<sup>4</sup> with three U.S. studies.<sup>5</sup> Commercial portrayals of males and females were investigated. It was found that: (1) men account for over 85% of voice-overs; (2) men dominate

as product representatives during prime-time hours; (3) women predominate as product representatives only in female cosmetic ads; (4) women are shown predominantly as housewives and mothers, while men are shown in at least twice as many occupations; (5) almost 40% of women shown are portrayed inside the Home, compared to about 15% of the men; (6) female product representatives are shown most often performing domestic duties, while male product representatives demonstrate product features but do not actually use the product; (7) men are seen as beneficiaries of products used by, and services performed by women; and (8) older, intelligent males tell younger, scatter-brained females what to do and why. Many other TV monitoring studies, conducted during the 1970's, report similar findings.<sup>6</sup>

The most recent Canadian TV monitoring study, completed in April 1977, found that there have been only slight changes during the last three years; however, all changes are not positive.<sup>7</sup> Most notably, the study found that male voice-overs have increased several percentage points to 94%. On the positive side, women today are as likely as men to be portrayed as product representatives, but still predominantly for household and personal hygiene products. Women are now portrayed equally with men in white collar occupations. However, men continue to predominate in all other occupational categories. Other representations of men and women in TV commercials have not changed. This research indicates that there is little evidence in the world of television commercials to show that family structure is changing. Commercials do not show that women are capable of performing independently and completing tasks other than those associated with family and home.

The overwhelming conclusion of the magazine and television studies is that advertising portrays the typical woman in a limited and

traditional role. Women's place in advertising is seen to be the same, while their labour force roles are underrepresented. Women are typically portrayed as housewives and mothers, dependent upon men and subservient. Housewives are shown as desperately in need of product benefits to satisfy and serve their husbands and families; it is from this service that they draw self-esteem. In addition, women often are portrayed as sexual objects. They are shown to have a great need for personal adornment in order to attract and hold men. In advertising addressed to men, women are used as decorative, attention-getting objects.

With respect to the presence of women in advertising, the most important finding is that women are rarely found in authority roles, as announcers or as the authoritative voice-over in a television commercial. While women are prominent in personal product advertising, they are underrepresented in ads for big ticket products and services.

In addition to general studies of sex stereotyping in mass media, there also have been special interest studies. The images of the sexes in advertising addressed to children have been studied,<sup>8</sup> as has the portrayal of women in prescription drug advertising addressed to physicians,<sup>9</sup> the level of physical activity engaged in by the men and women shown in advertising,<sup>10</sup> and the effects of advertising stereotyping on the self-images of the aging.<sup>11</sup> Advertising to doctors has been found to show women as passive, helpless and dependent. Active women and women in sports are rarely depicted in advertising. Older men and male members of minority groups are depicted, but older women and minority women are not often shown in advertising. There also are problems related to the belittling of the women's movement and with television advertising of women's personal products.

Table 1 on page 63 summarizes the findings of the large body of monitoring

research, organized according to three areas: how the sexes are portrayed, presence of the sexes in advertising, and special issues and problems.

In addition to the problems listed in Table 1, it has been shown that women are more prominent in television advertising than in television programming.<sup>12</sup> This finding has been taken by some critics to reflect the stereotype that a woman's major importance to our society is as a consumer. Other research has documented that, in programming, stereotyped roles exist that are similar to those found in advertising's portrayal of the sexes.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the fact that many of these problems were documented during the early 1970's, a review of more recent monitoring studies shows that there has been only minimal improvement in advertising's portrayal of the sexes. Women and men in society today are far more liberated than their portrayed images in advertising. As sex roles continue to change and expand at a faster rate than the advertiser's response, the image of the sexes in advertising falls farther behind reality. Because advertising is not keeping pace with change, it may in fact be helping to maintain the status quo.

#### B. Public Criticism about Advertising's Portrayal of the Sexes

In addition to being a subject of research, the question of sex stereotyping has received a great deal of public attention in the press, in books, and in public meetings. The public and press reaction to sex stereotyping in advertising has almost invariably been critical. The presence of articles critical of advertising's portrayal of the sexes in such media as Homemaker's Digest and Chatelaine, testifies to the high level of general interest and

concern among Canadian women.

The public critics of advertising report many of the problems already described in Section IA. In addition, they have cited new areas of complaint not covered by formal research. These areas of complaint are shown in Table 2 on page 67. They have been particularly critical of unfavourable personality styles of women as depicted in ads.

Also, they are concerned about advertising's condescending portrayal of women's intelligence and capabilities. Although some recent public comment has recognized minor improvement in advertising over the years, most writers state that much further improvement is needed.

Another measure of public concern comes from analysis of the complaints received by the Advertising Standards Council (ASC) of the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board. The ASC administers the Canadian Code of Advertising Practice, a code developed by the advertising industry for the purpose of self-regulation, particularly in the area of untruthful and misleading advertising. Most complaints reaching the Council concerning women and advertising deal with offensive sexual innuendo, and advertising of feminine hygiene, undergarment and deodorant products.<sup>14</sup> In 1977, the ASC received 325 complaints concerning television ads. Of these, approximately 8% concerned advertising of feminine hygiene products. Complaints about the way women are portrayed in television commercials accounted for an additional 8% of the total complaints received by the ASC. It is important to note that the Canadian Code of Advertising practice does not include reference to sex stereotyping nor to insulting or denigrating portrayals of the sexes. Such problems are considered by the Council to be matters of taste and opinion and are thus specifically excluded by the Code. Thus, complaints concerning sexual portrayals are not heard by the Advertising Standards Council and consumers would be discouraged from making such complaints to the Council.

A recent study investigated women who have complained to the ASC about

advertising's portrayal of women. Ninety-three women were studied and it was found that:

The women who complained about the advertising of personal feminine products were primarily married, aged forty-one or older, with a high school and some college or university education. About one-half of them were employed, mainly in secretarial or clerical positions, and had a total family income of \$10,000 per year or more. One-third belonged to a women's group with a church or community orientation.

The women who complained about the portrayal of women in advertising were younger (twenty-five to fifty-four years of age), single or married and more of them had completed college or university and done post-graduate work. Most of them were employed, and in conjunction with their higher education level, held more professional occupations than the other group of complainers. Their average family income was \$10,000 or more per year, and they belonged to women's groups more frequently. This group membership was weighted towards feminist-oriented organizations, 15

Recently, the ASC received a large number of complaints concerning television advertising for women's personal products. In March 1977, Nicole Strickland, a consumer reporter for the Vancouver Province, printed two columns protesting the presence of feminine hygiene advertising on television. The columns included a coupon which the reader could sign and send to Ms. Strickland; the coupon stated that the reader objected to such commercials and wished advertising for feminine hygiene products to be restricted to print media. The coupons received were forwarded to the ASC. The Council estimated that approximately 6,700 signatures were forwarded on or attached to the coupons, including 236 letters.<sup>16</sup> The ASC forwarded these coupons to the CRTC and informed the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and involved advertisers of the protest. However, because the matter was deemed to be in the area of taste and opinion, and because "it is well beyond the Council's purview to tell advertisers whether or not promotion of their products is permissible, or to



deny them access to any media of their choice," the ASC has taken no further action.<sup>17</sup>

Other evidence concerning the public's complaints about advertising's portrayal of women comes from a study sponsored by the Ontario Status of Women Council, About Face: Toward a Positive Image of Women in Advertising.<sup>18</sup> The study, conducted in 1974-5, requested organizations and individuals on the Council's mailing list to monitor advertising and to report instances of advertising that respondents found offensive to women. Approximately 500 individuals participated and just over one thousand monitoring forms were completed. Complaints were made about advertising in a wide variety of product categories, with laundry and dishwashing ads leading the list, followed by feminine hygiene product ads. Objectionable ads were found in all major media, but television received the brunt of the criticism. In general, women objected to stereotyping or demeaning of the female role in advertising, to intellectually patronizing portrayals and to portrayal of women as sex objects.

### C. Public Opinion Research on Sex Portrayals in Advertising

Beyond the content analysis studies of advertisements and the public statements of advocate organizations, little empirical research has been reported which examines the question of how the consumer in general and women consumers in particular view sex role portrayals in advertising. However, a 1971 poll of Good Housekeeping magazine readers found that 40% felt that television commercials were "insulting to women."<sup>19</sup>

A study prepared by the National Advertising Review Board in the U.S. reported that there are very strong feelings on the advertised

image of women.<sup>20</sup> Evidence referenced by the NARB panel suggests that women may vary markedly in their attitudes toward their role portrayals. That report indicates that the women who are the strongest critics are likely to be younger, more highly educated and more prone to be opinion leaders. The NARB report also noted that a United Nations report blames advertising for "perpetrating the derogatory image of women as sex symbols and as an inferior class of human being."

Only one published U.S. public opinion survey provides empirical evidence regarding consumers' attitudes toward sex role portrayals in advertising and the effect of role portrayal on company image and purchase intention.<sup>21</sup> The study showed that women generally hold more critical attitudes than do men. Women, more than men, found advertising to: (1) suggest that they don't do important things, (2) portray women offensively and (3) suggest that their place is in the home. Women felt that they are more sensitive than men to their role portrayals. However, women were less likely than men to agree that advertising treats women as sex objects. Women, more than men, believed that a company which portrays women offensively is likely to have discriminating employment practices and that the roles shown in advertising are extensions of that company's view of woman. The study findings suggest that even though advertisements may be perceived as offensive to men and women, both groups would continue to purchase the particular product.

These results led the authors to conclude that "the role portrayal of women is a real problem in that a sizable proportion of women appear critical." Many of those who are most critical are articulate and influential, younger, better educated, upper status women who have rejected the values and stereotypes of the more traditional role of the women's place in society. As more such women enter the workplace, the level of criticism will likely increase unless positive steps are taken.

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II. THE EFFECTS OF SEX STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING

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Concern about advertising stereotyping stems from the fact that advertising is an important force which reinforces perceptions of traditional, limited, and often demeaning stereotypes of women and men. While there has been much research documenting the fact of advertising stereotyping, unfortunately, there is very little evidence documenting its effects.<sup>22</sup> The lack of research in this area is caused, in part, by the enormous conceptual and methodological difficulties that are encountered in attempting to isolate the effects of advertising from the effects of all the other sources of stereotyping in our society.

There is agreement among psychologists that changes in behaviour can be brought about as a result of exposure to the symbolic models portrayed in books, films, television and advertising. The fact that children learn much about the world through such observational learning is well established.<sup>23</sup> Observational learning can have direct effects and may encompass a broad spectrum of indirect effects. In the case of sex stereotyping, one direct effect may cause the female to limit her own actions to conform to the stereotypic model. In addition, indirect effects may extend to increased willingness by observers of both sexes to approve role limitations for others, to lowered sensitivity to the problem and to expectations of sex discrimination. Thus, advertising is at least one contributing influence affecting the way men and women view their roles in society. Indeed, the importance of advertising in this regard has been recognized explicitly in the report of an advertising industry task force on sex stereotyping sponsored by the National Advertising Review Board in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

It is recognized, of course, that stereotypes in advertising can serve a useful function by conveying an image quickly and clearly,

and that there is nothing inherently wrong with using characterizations of roles that are easily identifiable. However, when limiting and demeaning stereotypes become as pervasive as those involved in advertising's portrayal of the sexes,<sup>26</sup> then those stereotypes may result in extremely negative and serious social consequences. The evidence from recent monitoring studies indicates that as long as the traditional, stereotyped approach is perceived by advertisers to be effective for selling products, little change can be expected. This situation continues to be true, although recent empirical research indicates that non-stereotyped, liberated advertising may be more effective with all segments of women consumers,<sup>25</sup> and that the use of sexual symbols as attention-getters in advertising may be unwarranted.<sup>26</sup>

One immediate effect that has been felt is that sex stereotyping in advertising has become a major source of irritation. The high level of irritation among women was shown in a recent study where sex stereotyping was found to rank third as a cause of complaint, after the intrusiveness of advertising and untruthful advertising.<sup>27</sup> Irritation about sex stereotyping in advertising also is evidenced by the active role played by women's groups in documentation of the problem; in lobbying with advertisers, agencies, and industry groups; in placing of stickers on offensive ads; and in occasional product boycotts. This level of discontent about an important business institution indicates not only a decline in the efficiency of that institution, but also a source of societal discontent and unrest.

Table 3 on page 68 shows some additional effects of sex stereotyping in advertising.

### A. How the Sexes are Portrayed

Advertisements show clearly a limited view of the occupational roles of men and women, particularly in relegating women's existence entirely to the home. Along with other sources of stereotyping, advertising thus produces a negative effect, working to limit the aspirations of men and women and encouraging them to have a stereotyped view of occupational roles. In this way, advertising becomes one of the factors that causes individual women to limit their access to various occupations and influences society, itself, to limit women's access to those occupations.<sup>28</sup> This phenomenon has both social and economic effects, including the 'ghettoization' of female work, with its related effect on salaries for women. Such stereotyping also contributes to the view that all household work is woman's work. This view effects working wives who often find themselves fully responsible for two occupations. It also may profoundly effect those men who might otherwise aspire to participate fully in caring for family and home.

There is no research that has examined directly the effects of advertising's stereotyped and often demeaning depiction of housewives. Evidence does exist, however, to show that the mass media are an important source of our conceptions of society; for example, of our racial stereotypes. In addition, there is evidence that stereotyping of sex roles affects individual perceptions. For example, it has been shown that women with less traditional, less stereotyped views tend to have fewer children.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it appears certain that advertising depictions help to influence the way housewives perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Advertising stereotyping likely contributes to the view that housewives are low in intelligence, unable to make decisions, dependent on men, super-servants for their husbands and families, competitive with other women, neurotic about cleanliness, and

acquisitive for material things. Additional indirect effects of the stereotyping of housewives might range from inducing low self-esteem in individuals, to effects on the structure of family and divorce law, to contributing to the difficulties of women in organizing together and working cooperatively.

The effect of stereotyping on children is the best researched of any of the areas of stereotyping. There is evidence that the aspirations and levels of achievement of boys and girls are influenced by their perceptions of the roles of the sexes.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, one recent study showed that for both sexes, at grade levels ranging from kindergarten to grade six, high television watchers show significantly higher identification with traditional sex roles than do low watchers.<sup>31</sup> Finally, there is evidence to show that advertising is a contributor to the sex role perceptions held by children.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it has been documented that television and the advertising it carries influence the sexual socialization of children and contribute to the determination of their life styles, and educational and occupational choices.

There has been much controversy about the effects of sexuality stereotyping by the media, but, to our knowledge, no research has been conducted concerning its effects. Sexuality stereotyping, it has been contended, contributes to the female preoccupation with appearance which keeps women from devoting attention to more important individual and societal matters. It also may be linked to what many describe as the depersonalization of women as sexual objects, with resultant negative consequences both for individuals and for the society as a whole.

#### B. Presence of the Sexes in Advertising

The low level of female presence in authoritative roles in

Advertising clearly has some immediate economic effects on the employment of female announcers and actors. Although there is no evidence to be brought to bear, it has been contended that this kind of stereotyping also contributes to more far-reaching effects, including the difficulties experienced by women in aspiring to, and being accepted in, managerial and other authoritative positions.

### C. Special Problems

There is some research data to link health stereotyping with societal effects. Health professionals have contended that stereotyped advertising may cause doctors to mis-diagnose and over-prescribe for women. Furthermore, such advertising may cause doctors to treat a woman's symptoms with tranquilizers while ignoring the real cause of her difficulties.<sup>33</sup> There also is evidence to indicate that passive images of women in advertising may contribute to the low levels of physical fitness among women.<sup>34</sup> Other research shows that the absence of a portrayal of older people of both sexes may lead to feelings of alienation among the elderly.<sup>35</sup>

It would, of course, be a gross exaggeration to claim or to imply that advertising sex stereotyping is the sole, or even a major cause of all the societal problems discussed above. However, there is mounting evidence to indicate that sex stereotyping in advertising does play a role in reflecting these ills and helping to sustain their existence.



III. SEX STEREOTYPING AND ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

### III. SEX STEREOTYPING AND ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

Advertisers, for the most part, continue to show stereotyped portrayals of the sexes because they believe that traditional advertisements are most effective in selling products. One way to convince advertisers to use more liberated portrayals of men and women in television commercials is to demonstrate to them that liberated portrayals are equally or more effective than the approaches they are currently using. Thus, to achieve change in the portrayal of the sexes, it is necessary to show advertisers that more liberated advertising can be an effective selling tool.

#### A. Research Evaluation of More Liberated Advertising

Measurement of the relative efficiency of different styles of advertising has been examined. Two recent Canadian studies have evaluated the marketing efficiency of traditional versus liberated commercials. Courtney and Whipple had two matched samples of female consumers evaluate television ads on the basis of: (1) playback of selling points, (2) an advertising effectiveness score and (3) an advertising irritation score.<sup>36</sup> Product managers and advertising practitioners evaluated the same ads in a parallel study.<sup>37</sup> The studies attempted to gather the action-oriented information that advertisers desire in order to make creative decisions concerning the portrayal of women in their commercials.

Two control and four test commercials were used in the study. Each subsample rated the two control ads, but only two of the test ads. The experimental design is depicted in Table 4 on page 70.

The control commercials are Canadian TV ads which had been prepared by Spitzer, Mills and Bates Advertising for its clients. They were

chosen by the agency as being representative of the extremes of traditional and liberated advertising styles currently being shown on television.

The agency also produced four test commercials especially for the studies. Two product categories, food and household cleaner, were chosen because ads for these products have received many complaints regarding the way they portray women. Two versions of a breakfast food ad and a floor cleaner ad, one considered traditional and the other judged to be liberated by the agency, were designed to measure the combined effect of differences in the sex of the voice-over and product representatives, the product representative's occupation, and the tasks and activities performed by the product representative.

The traditional breakfast food ad portrayed a full-time housewife preparing and serving breakfast for her husband and children. A male voice-over was used. The liberated version for the same product showed the same family cooperating in breakfast preparations as the mother was preparing to go to work. A female voice-over was used. The traditional version of the floor cleaner ad showed two women competing in a male-conducted mopping contest. The liberated counterpart showed a husband and wife competing in the same contest, with a female product representative and a female voice-over.

The ads were prepared for showing on a La Belle Courier, a portable audio-video player that is commonly used for advertising testing purposes. The commercials were recorded on an audio-video tape which contained art work main frames for each commercial, coordinated with recorded audio.

Both consumers and practitioners were able to recall very well the advertising message in each of the six commercials. Unaided play-

back of the main selling points of each ad was given by at least four-fifths of the consumer and practitioner respondents. The style of the ad (traditional versus liberated) did not seem to affect consumers' recall of major selling points. However, practitioners recalled the liberated test ads better.

The two control ads were each rated similarly on 14 evaluative items by the two consumer subsamples. The two subsamples of practitioners also were consistent in their evaluations of both control commercials.

The test ads, on the other hand, elicited significantly different ratings among both consumers and practitioners. Table 5 on page 71 shows that the consumers rated the liberated breakfast food commercial significantly better than its traditional counterpart on three items. The floor cleaner commercials were evaluated to be more similar, as the liberated ad was found to be significantly better on only one item. The practitioners judged the liberated breakfast food ad to be significantly better on five items, but gave the floor cleaner ads a mixed evaluation (Table 6 on page 72). Both consumers and practitioners considered the liberated breakfast food ad to be more original and more likely to make the consumer want to buy the product.

The practitioners interviewed came from both advertisers and agencies. When the two groups are considered separately, it is apparent that the more favourable evaluations of the liberated ads are due to the better ratings from the advertisers. For both test ads, the advertisers agreed that the liberated version was more suitable for persons in the target group, more original, less irritating and less insulting to women.

Further analysis of the ad ratings resulted in the development of two advertising evaluation dimensions from the 14 items: effectiveness

and irritation. An advertising effectiveness score for each ad was derived for each respondent by summing the ratings on the eight items labelled with (E) in Tables 5 and 6. An irritation score was computed in a similar manner for each respondent by summing the scores in the three items labeled with (I). Comparison of the commercials on the basis of the two advertising evaluation dimensions is shown in Table 7 on page 73.

Both consumers and advertisers evaluated the liberated breakfast food ad significantly more effective than its traditional counterpart. Practitioners, especially the advertisers, also considered the liberated version to be significantly less irritating. The two versions of the floor cleaner were rated as equally effective by both consumers and practitioners. The advertisers judged the traditional version to be significantly more irritating. Overall, the liberated advertising style was rated at least equal to, if not superior to the traditional style by both consumers and practitioners.

Although most consumers considered the liberated commercials to be more effective than their traditional counterparts, the liberated ads appealed especially to certain segments of women. The liberated breakfast food ad was rated significantly more effective by women under 35, women who completed high school or less, married women, full-time housewives, women who are in the labour force full-time and women who rate themselves as more liberated and self-confident than their peers. The liberated floor cleaner ad was rated significantly more effective by one group of women, part-time labour force participants.

Irritation scores across the consumer segments are more similar for the liberated and traditional versions of the two test ads. However, single, divorced, and separated women and women who are

full-time in the labour force considered the traditional breakfast food ad significantly more irritating than the liberated version. On the other hand, women with a family income of \$15,000 or more and unmarried women rated the liberated floor cleaner ad more irritating than its traditional counterpart.

The practitioners also were asked if they would expect any opposition if they decided to run each ad. The liberated version of the breakfast food commercial received the least opposition, followed closely by the liberated control ad. Generally, the practitioners expected greater opposition to the traditional ads. Of the three reasons given for expecting opposition from fellow practitioners, execution problems were mentioned much more frequently than improper target appeal or social issues.

The results of these two studies indicate that liberated advertising approaches are at least equal to, and possibly more effective than more traditional advertising. While liberated may be better, it is apparent from the findings that some kinds of liberated commercials are more effective than others. The real issue from the advertising effectiveness point of view is not whether to be liberated, but rather how to be liberated and creative without being irritating.

In addition to the two Canadian studies, there are two U.S. studies that investigate the effectiveness of more liberated sex role depictions. Both U.S. studies were conducted in laboratory settings and deal with print advertising. Wortzel and Frisbie examined female reactions to different female roles associated with various product advertising situations.<sup>38</sup> They had 100 female subjects "construct" advertisements from portfolios containing pictures of seven different products and pictures of women occupying five different roles (neutral, career, family, fashion and sex object). The

researchers concluded that the appropriate role type depended on the nature of the product being advertised. Advertisements may portray women in household roles if these roles provide an appropriate usage environment. If the product is one that women use personally, then nontraditional roles are preferred. The most realistic conclusion from this study is that women are both reasonable and rational in their preference with respect to role portrayals in advertising. They select role preferences on the basis of the product's usage and end benefits, rather than on the basis of ideology.

Duker and Tucker followed up the work of Wortzel and Frisbie by using actual print advertisements rather than relying on the "construction of advertisement" technique.<sup>39</sup> Their study showed that holding of profeminist opinions does not significantly affect the subjects' regard for the roles assigned to women in advertisements. Seven ads were measured, featuring different role portrayals (mother, sex object, glamour girl, housewife, working mother, modern woman and professional). All roles, except mother, were liked by more of the 104 female student respondents than disliked. These findings corroborate Wortzel and Frisbie's earlier results. In both studies, role portrayal preferences depend on the product advertised rather than on profeminism orientation.

The findings from these four studies show that effective advertising does reflect current values. Today's woman has been shown to be more liberated, both in her attitude toward herself and toward other women, than advertisers have portrayed in advertising. Women identify best with advertising that portrays the sexes as they are now in society. But, at the same time, women become irritated by advertising that portrays that reality in an exaggerated way, by showing people and products in unreal settings or by showing unrealistic men and women. For maximum effectiveness, the advertiser must not only be

more liberated in the portrayal of the sexes, but also be accurate and realistic in the portrayal of both men and women as they demonstrate a product's usage and benefits to potential consumers.

#### B. The Effectiveness of Sexual Portrayals and Innuendo in Advertising

For many years there has been concern about the use of sexual innuendo and nudity (particularly female nudity) in advertising. A related, although less serious problem has been the use of female models as decorative figures; for instance, use of an attractive and sexy woman to stand beside an automobile being advertised. Protests about such sexual portrayals have been largely ineffective. One reason is that, for the most part, the protests have been directed against advertising addressed to men appearing in fringe media, for questionable products, and by shady firms. For example, a recent media review sponsored by the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board reported suggestive headlines and scantily clad women as a common phenomenon in automotive trade and sporting goods publications.<sup>40</sup>

The persistence of the use of sexual appeals in advertising stems from the widely held belief that sexual appeals are effective in calling attention to the ad itself and in creating interest in the product advertised. Indeed, research evidence shows that men and women both like to look at advertisements that show attractive models, and that both prefer models of the opposite sex.<sup>41</sup> This research gives some justification to the use of decorative models of both sexes. On the other hand, overtly sexual stimuli, such as nude models, have been shown to be ineffective selling techniques for both men and women. A 1969 study by Steadman indicated that the use of a sexy photograph does not facilitate recall of the advertised brand name<sup>42</sup> and a 1976 study by LaChance, Chestnut and



Lubitz found that the use of sexy female models does not enhance advertising effectiveness.<sup>43</sup>

A recent study in this area of sexual portrayals deals directly with the question of female nudity in advertising and its effectiveness with men and women.<sup>44</sup> The authors, Peterson and Kerin, note an increase in recent years in the intensity of erotic appeals and an increasing number and variety of products being marketed with sexual overtones, including cosmetics, ski equipment, clothing, and industrial products. In their study, Peterson and Kerin show that advertisements containing seductive and nude models are consistently perceived, by both sexes, to be less appealing than ads using no models or demure models. Moreover, when seductive or nude models are used, the associated product and manufacturer are perceived as low in quality and not reputable. The authors conclude:

While there appears to be a trend toward increasing nudity in advertisements, albeit "functional" or "tasteful" nudity, in the present study use of a nude model resulted in the least favourable perceptions. Hence, at this time it is perhaps appropriate to question whether marketers are making a fundamental mistake by employing nudity in their advertisements. Rather than appearing as innovative (fashionable?), the use of nudity may ultimately produce deleterious effects, not only regarding perceptions toward the firm's advertisements, but even toward its products and corporate image. <sup>45</sup>

The studies discussed indicate that the use of overtly sexual stimuli by advertisers does little or nothing to enhance the effectiveness of the ad. On the contrary, such appeals may actually lessen advertising effectiveness.

There are, of course, cases where the use of overtly sexual appeals is clearly effective. These are cases where sexuality is related to the advertised product; advertising of sexually-related products

in magazines such as Penthouse and Playboy is an example.

Advertising for 'adult' or sex films is a related case. However, sex film advertising often appears in newspapers with a wide reach among the general public, many of whom are not in the market for the advertised product. The New York Times recently announced that advertisements for X-rated films would in future be restricted to one column, one inch in depth, with no illustrations. The San Diego Union and the Tribune, which at one time totally banned advertising for such films, returned them when a reader survey showed more than half in favour of such advertising.<sup>46</sup>

#### C. The Effectiveness of Sexual and Sexist Humour in Advertising

The use of humour as an advertising technique can also occasion serious problems. In recent years there has been a growing concern among a variety of ethnic, religious, age and other groups when it has been felt that advertising humour is not entertaining, but rather is demeaning and offensive. Sensitivity to humorous portrayals of the sexes also has been increasing. Because of this growing sensitivity, the same commercial can be found amusing by some in its audience, and offensive by others. For example, a recent oven cleaner commercial was found by some to be a demeaning depiction of woman as slave to her husband and kitchen; others considered the ad a humorous spoof of the same situation. These differences in our approaches to humour have caused serious problems for advertisers who sincerely wish to create 'new' and 'liberated' advertising, but whose attempts to laugh with men and women in their changing roles are interpreted as attempts to laugh at them.

Research literature exists documenting the differences in appreciation of humour by the two sexes. Some of the basic findings of importance

to advertisers are:

- 1) Studies of sex differences in appreciation of humour have found that while aggressive humour is rated as funnier by males, women consistently prefer humour arising from absurd situations.<sup>47</sup>
- 2) People tend to find jokes in which members of their own group disparage members of other groups more amusing than jokes in which an alien group disparages their own. However, two experiments were conducted which told jokes two ways -- in one, the man was the butt of the joke; in the other, the woman was the butt of the joke. In these experiments, both women and men found the identical joke funnier when women were the butt.<sup>48</sup>
- 3) Despite this, evidence from other research indicates that pro-feminist men and women and younger men and women laugh less at anti-female jokes. In one study, female students found anti-male jokes funnier than anti-female jokes.<sup>49</sup>
- 4) Both sexes enjoy sexual humour, but women do not enjoy sexist humour.

Sexual humor is enjoyed more by men when the humor is sexist and the status of men is not under threat. In relative terms, women do not enjoy sexist sexual humor, but there are no sexual differences in appreciation of different types of sexual humor which are not sexist. 50

These findings show that while both sexes have good senses of humour, men and women vary in their appreciation of different

styles of humour. Moreover, different groups of women vary in their reactions to humour; while some women appear to appreciate jokes where women are the victims, younger and more liberated women do not like them. In addition, women do not appreciate sexist sexual humour.

The recent CAAB Task Force Report on advertising and women suggested that as a guide in the use of humour the advertiser might use the question, "Would it offend me to be portrayed in that way?"<sup>51</sup> The research data discussed above show that this question is not an adequate predictor of response to humorous advertising, since it is not obvious what the reaction of women versus men will be, nor is it obvious what the reactions of different segments of women will be. Sexist humour in advertising will not take care of itself with only industry goodwill. The advertiser who wishes to be both effective and non-sexist in the use of humour should make efforts to learn about the literature concerning humour and should exercise extreme caution in the use of humorous approaches which might be perceived as offensive. Clearly, with changing consciousness about sexual and sexist humour, a change that is affecting both men and women, advertisers also should be alerted to the absolute necessity for pretesting of humorous advertising approaches among both sexes.

#### D. Effectiveness of Female Voice-Overs

A major stumbling block to the creation of non-stereotyped advertising is the fact that female voice-overs are used in fewer than one out of ten television commercials. Some advertisers have cited unpublished research which, they say, shows that women and men find the male voice more authoritative than the female. That

belief among advertisers, together with their contention that there is a lack of women trained as announcers, accounts for the predominance of male voice-overs.

There is no published research to document the belief that women and men find the male voice more effective. However, the liberated versus the traditional ad studies discussed in Section IIIA compared, among other variables, the use of male versus female voice-overs. The studies found that ads using female voice-overs are as effective as ads with male voice-overs, at least with female audiences. There is ample evidence from advertising research to indicate that any new and unfamiliar creative technique is initially viewed with suspicion and caution by consumers. Later when the technique becomes more common, it is often accepted with enthusiasm. The indication may be that female consumers are learning to be familiar with and to accept the use of female voices in authoritative roles.

#### E. Advertising Effectiveness and Female Acting Styles

While there has been ample research attention paid to verbal content and role portrayals in advertising, only scant attention has been given to the acting styles which are used to depict women in television commercials. Critics of advertising's portrayal of women have noted that the female as shown in commercials is stereotyped often as a giggling, flirtatious girl with a thin, high voice or, in the contrasting stereotype, as a nasty shrew with a whining voice. Many have noted that women are often shown to be almost ecstatic in their reactions to products -- their voices rise in joy over a new household product, they literally run to tell their neighbours about it, they wilt and almost cry in embarrassment over faults in their housekeeping, they exult

in having cleaner washes than their neighbours. While such criticisms may sound exaggerated, it is significant that a Canadian Advertising Advisory Board Task Force on Advertising and Women recognized the problem of such stereotypical acting styles. It noted:

... when a selection of ... storyboards was viewed in an on-air setting, many commercials considered to be totally acceptable in storyboard form seemed to be much less acceptable in complete form ... the script seemed totally appropriate but execution gave a sexist tone to the commercial.

Thus, the problem in the commercial was often not blatant but subtle, arising from details in execution -- stereotypical acting, the quality of the women's voices, the general style of the commercial. 52

There are no research data to indicate that such stylistic stereotyping contributes to more effective advertising and we do not know why stereotypical acting styles remain so common a feature of television commercials in Canada. It may be that those involved in production of television commercials fail to understand how creatively to respond to changing sexual roles and behaviours.

#### F. Stereotyping and Advertising Creativity

Advertising messages employ stereotypes because stereotypes convey ideas and images quickly and clearly. Within the constraints of an advertising message, particularly the constraints of a 30-second television commercial, the images used must conform closely to what the viewer will quickly recognize and accept as true.

The use of stereotypes is particularly useful to the advertiser

when there is no important functional information to be conveyed about the product. Much advertising, particularly television advertising of packaged goods, is for products that are very similar to those of competitors in functional ways. In such cases, advertising tends to depend very heavily on stereotyped creative formulae. In the absence of important functional information about the brand, the ad can show the psychological rewards of product usage ("The Advertised Brand makes me feel like a good wife and mother"). The ad can attempt to relieve fears ("The Advertised Brand keeps me looking young and makes my husband love me"; "The Advertised Brand keeps me dry all day"). Or, the ad can convince the viewer of the product's merits by the use of an authority figure who endorses use ("The Advertised Brand is the finest in the world" says Mr. X, famed actor).

Jerry Della Femina, a well-known advertising practitioner, wrote about the problems of the creative person who has little to say about the advertised brand:

The quality of most advertising really depends on what has to be said. You're writing ads on insurance, it's easy. It's great to do ads on the stock market. It's simple to do ads on a camera that gives you a picture sixty seconds after you shoot it. The big problem is the guy who has to do an ad for soap. Some poor son of a bitch is sitting in his office at Compton right this minute trying to figure out what to say about Ivory Soap that hasn't been said maybe twenty thousand times before. I mean, what do you say? Where do you go? No matter what you say, it's still soap. ... If you're a guy doing an ad for Tide, what do you say? What do you do about Axion? Well, you go out and get Arthur Godfrey or Eddie Albert to say a few kind words about Axion, or whatever enzyme you're hustling. 53

Given such difficulties, and they are real difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that the old stereotypes about the sexes have proved so enduring. Here are some recent examples:

- the woman who begs the male announcer not to take away her coffee or her bleach
- the male announcer who convinces the hapless housewife that the peanut butter (or detergent, or deodorant, or soap ...) she's been buying for ten years is not as good as ... The Advertised Brand
- the woman whose self-confidence is shattered by spotty glasses
- the women who scrub away in mopping contests as the male announcer looks on
- the woman who cannot read a pet food label
- the woman who feels more like a woman because she is wearing the right bra

It is perhaps not surprising either that attempts to develop new images often seem to create new and equally offensive stereotypes. Many of the attempts to portray the sexes in a more modern way result in advertising that is self-conscious, heavy-handed and patronizing, as in the following recent examples:

- the female school bus driver who is an expert on choosing detergents
- the working mother who has had a terrible day and must make dinner anyway, but who gets a helping hand from The Advertised Brand - (she does not get a helping hand from her husband or children)
- the woman who uses The Advertised Brand, gets a clean oven, and is rewarded by a walk in the park with her husband
- the woman who colours her gray hair, gets a job, and finds self-actualization
- the husband who does laundry -- but only because his wife is in hospital



- the microbiologist who serves her family imitation orange juice
- the woman who likes her men to wear The Advertised Brand or nothing at all

Common sense suggests that effective, nonstereotyped, non-irritating ads will come from those agencies and companies that have truly understood, internalized, and accepted the changes in our society. When advertising accepts change, without apologizing for it or explaining it away or manipulating it, ads begin to be simultaneously liberated, creative, and effective. Two current ads make this attempt:

- the ad for a throat remedy that shows a man with a sore throat and uses a female voice-over to explain how The Advertised Brand will help (and does not apologize for or explain the reason for a voice that is both female and authoritative)
- the ad for a cookie dough that shows boys and girls participating in preparation (and avoids self-conscious explanation about the presence of the boys)

While there are some ads emerging that are both effective and non-stereotyped, many agencies and advertisers still need to re-educate themselves, to do more creative thinking, experimentation, and consumer testing to determine how to communicate with today's women and men. Still, the evidence shows that liberated advertising is both attainable and effective.

IV. THE INDUSTRY VIEW

## IV. THE INDUSTRY VIEW

A. Industry Defenses of Sex Stereotyping

Advertisers have consistently defended their good intentions with respect to women and have offered a number of defenses of the current portrayals. The most common argument in defense of advertising is that if women did not like the way they are portrayed, they would immediately react by not buying the product. A related defense is that business is business and advertisers need not be concerned about societal effects. Advertisers typically express their arguments as follows:

No advertiser wishes to offend the public. If ads offended, they wouldn't sell.

My advertising is selling my product; therefore, my advertising must please the housewife.

Rosemary Scott, author of The Female Consumer, has pointed out that there are some major fallacies in the advertising argument:

1. The argument denies any understanding of cumulative media effects on the woman which have both defined her and continually reinforce this definition, so that she can no longer see that the image is an abrogation of her reality.
2. The argument also denies the fact that, for the most part, women do not have sufficient mass consciousness to either see that their discomfort is a mass phenomenon or that boycotting a product will affect anyone except themselves.

The advertiser or the marketer who presents arguments which rest on maintenance of the status quo, or the 'If she only protested, we would change' variety, is attempting to absolve himself of any responsibility for the images and stereotypes that he projects, which, in the absence of legal measures is not difficult to do, and to imply lack of understanding of the power of mass media to mold the individual consciousness. 54

A second important refutation to the advertiser argument comes from Henry Karpus, President, Ronalds-Reynolds, who has been

quoted as follows:

Traditionally, advertising people have argued that consumers can't be offended by the advertisements if they're buying the products. But Ronalds-Reynolds president Henry Karpus says that assumption is probably no longer valid because there are many other things that make people buy. Those include good displays, prominence on the shelves, wide-ranging distribution, and price. "However, an intelligent, attractive ad will probably do more to increase familiarity with a product than anything else," he says. 55

In some product categories it is difficult, if not impossible, to find an advertised brand which does not represent women in a stereotyped way. Consequently, the buyer who wishes to boycott brands with offensive advertising, is forced either to buy unadvertised brands or to do without the product.

A second group of justifications of advertising's portrayal deals with the contention that only a few radicals object to the portrayal of the sexes. The arguments take the following forms:

We do a lot of consumer research. If our advertising, didn't reflect the realities of the consumer, we wouldn't run it.

We haven't had any complains about our advertising. You protesters are out of touch with 'real' women.

If you object to our advertising, write to us. If enough people write to us, we'll take our ad off the air.

We researched this ad before we ran it. Nobody complained.

These kinds of arguments are among the most frustrating because they seem to reflect an almost ostrich-like view. To contend that old-fashioned advertising reflects consumer realities in a world where change in the roles of the sexes has been so well and so

objectively documented, can be seen as nothing more than a total unwillingness to recognize change. To claim that advertising research does not elicit complaint when, in fact, the research has not been designed to measure complaint, is equally closed-minded. Finally, the contention that feminist protesters are not "real" women, is not only personally insulting to the protesters, but also ignores the research concerning the opinions and complaints of the public at large. (A professional woman was told by an executive in a detergent company that her views of detergent ads were of no interest. The executive wished to hear only from women who did four or more washes per week. When the woman protested that she did indeed do four or more washes per week, the executive stared at her blankly and then withdrew from the discussion.) These kinds of attitudes make one, albeit reluctantly, agree with the observation of an advertising executive quoted by Scott:

Gartner ... vice president for research at Daniel and Charles ... suggests that advertising men [\*] actually avoid the notion that current images may be stereotyping and demeaning, and that other approaches could work as well or better, because the current approach is ultimately a reinforcement of their own prejudices. To change the method would need a counter-change, a reformulation of their own attitudes which would be cognitively discomfoting. 56

As Section III of this paper indicates, there is a growing body of research to show that Gartner is correct in contending that liberated advertising is effective. That research also indicates that most women prefer more liberated advertising approaches. While women often find it appropriate to see advertising showing housewives,

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[\*] We wish to note that while we agree, for the most part, with Gartner's observation, we do take exception to her use of the phrase "advertising men". We see no evidence to suggest that "advertising women" are in any way more perceptive and more open to change than "advertising men". It has been our experience that people of both sexes can be obtuse and that other people of both sexes can be responsive and forward thinking.

they expect the housewives to be portrayed as intelligent, capable, and self-reliant.

Finally, there are some defenses of advertising that say both that "it's the other guy's fault" and also that the industry would be more responsive if only it could figure out how to do so. The defenses typically are expressed as follows:

Our agency would like to make more liberated ads; but we can't get the client to accept them.

Our company would like to run more liberated ads; but we can't get the agency to produce them.

We've tried to produce less stereotyped ads; but our new ads also were criticized.

Clearly, both client and agency must make commitments to more liberated and fair advertising if change is to be effected. Both must re-examine basic assumptions, be forward-looking, and invest time, research dollars, and creative effort if they are to produce advertising that shows the sexes in more acceptable ways. To date, those commitments have been made by only a few.

#### B. Industry Self-Regulation and Sex Stereotyping

The current industry attitude toward sex stereotyping is shown in the efforts that industry organizations have made toward self-regulation of the problem.

The advertising industries of Britain, the United States and Canada have each established self-regulatory bodies to administer codes of advertising practice designed to protect the industry and the consumer from misuse of advertising. In Britain, the agency is the Advertising Standards Authority; in the United States, the National Advertising Review Board; and in Canada, the Canadian

Advertising Advisory Board. None of the three agencies has given sufficient attention to sex stereotyping. The next sections of this paper review industry self-regulation in the three countries as it applies to advertising's portrayal of women. First, however, it is necessary to digress briefly to describe how self-regulation typically works. Canada is used as the example.

The Canadian Advertising Advisory Board (CAAB) is a voluntary organization funded by advertisers, agencies and media. It administers a series of advertising codes: The Canadian Code of Advertising Practice; the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children; the Canadian Code of Advertising Practice for Non-Prescription Medicines; and the Canadian Code of Advertising Practice for Cosmetics, Toiletries and Fragrances. In order to deal with complaints about advertising from the public, business or government, the CAAB has established the Advertising Standards Council (ASC). When the ASC hears and sustains a complaint against an advertisement, the usual practice is to request that the advertiser concerned voluntarily remove the advertisement from the media. In those unusual cases where voluntary compliance is not obtained, the ASC requires the media organizations in its membership to refuse to run the offending ad. Although the self-regulatory agencies in the United States and Britain function somewhat differently from the Canadian one, for purposes of this report the three may be treated as similar.

### C. Advertising Self-Regulation in Britain

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in Britain has taken no action to develop regulations or to hear complaints concerning women and advertising. Its views concerning the question were published in the 1974-5 annual report:

... it seemed to us that the nature of advertising -- a selling tool for the manufacturer, a source of information to the consumer -- is such that it is ill-suited for use as a lever to shift social attitudes. Unless an advertisement achieves rapport with its audience it cannot perform its task of selling effectively, and unless the information it contains is seen as relevant, it is likely to be ignored by the consumer. We cannot agree with the view ... that to represent an attractive woman in an advertisement was tantamount to "a promise of sexual gratification", while to represent a woman in the role of housewife amounted to a restriction of women's opportunities. If advertising still largely reflects a traditional view of women's role, this is because that is how the majority of those to whom it is speaking see themselves -- either as they are or wish to be. If a substantial change in attitudes takes place -- advertising will surely reflect the change. But, if advertising is ineffective as an engine of social change, it is highly effective in its true role, that of laying before women a far wider choice of goods and services than would be available without it. 57

In December 1975, a sex discrimination act came into effect in England, requiring nearly all recruitment advertising to be sexually non-discriminatory. As a result of the Act, the Director of the Advertising Standards Authority stated: "... it is no longer clear whether we shall be able to maintain the position as set out in the report."<sup>58</sup> However, to date, no further action has been taken by the ASA.

Scott has commented on the unwillingness of the Advertising Standards Authority to deal with problems of sex stereotyping:

By no means is the female consumer protected from media exploitation by existing provisions in the various media codes. The benign powers of the ASA seem to be far more concerned with the misrepresentation of objects than of people.

We may not, for example, claim that a product performs better or differently than it is capable. We



may not mislead by use of certain emotive terms, or harass by the depiction of fearful or embarrassing situations. Yet the advertiser/marketer is still almost totally free to depict women and men in roles and actions that may not reflect truthfully their potential or ability.

All advertising says the ... code, should be 'legal, decent, honest and truthful' yet most advertising which depicts women is in direct contravention of any standard of honesty and even the marketers standards of truth. Yet the ASA (chiefly a male board) has cheerfully passed all these demeaning media images of women for years, despite the fact that the cumulative effect has probably been far more damaging to female morale and expectations than any number of 'woollen' blankets of nylon. ...59

#### D. Advertising Self-Regulation in the United States

The National Advertising Review Board (NARB), the American self-regulatory agency, has taken a somewhat more active role than its British counterpart on the question of advertising and women. The original scope of the NARB was to deal only with truth and accuracy in advertising. (As in Britain, truth and accuracy with respect to the presentation of women are not considered relevant.) However, under pressure to include matters of taste and social responsibility in its mandate, the NARB has appointed several consultative panels from its membership. These panels review various areas of public concern and release position papers. In 1975, one such panel produced a report on women and advertising.<sup>60</sup>

The report, Advertising and Women, is noteworthy because it was an early (by industry standards) statement explicitly recognizing that there is justification in complaints about the portrayal of women in advertising. The report states:

The problem is real.

To deny the problem exists, in fact, is to deny the effectiveness of advertising. For what the critics are saying is that advertising, in selling a product, often sells a supplementary image as well. Sometimes, in women-related advertising, that image is negative and depreciatory. Unfortunately, such images may be accepted as true to life by many men, women, and children, especially when they reinforce stereotypes of a time gone by. ...

... advertising is neglecting its responsibility to be fair, accurate, and truthful, not only in the presentation of products and services, but also in the presentation of men and women. 61

In this statement of the reality of the problem and of advertising's responsibility, the NARB report represents a major step forward by the industry. In addition, the report offers some creative guidelines that advertisers and agencies might follow in the development and approval of advertisements. Those guidelines, reproduced in Appendix A, describe portrayals that might be considered to be destructive and negative versus constructive and positive. For example, a destructive portrayal would be one which depicted women as silly and weak; a constructive portrayal, one which reflected the fact that girls may aspire to careers in business and the professions.

However, the NARB report is simply a position paper. It does not have the force of regulation, and the guidelines and checklists produced are in no way binding on the advertising industry. Promulgation of the report did not result in extension of the NARB's mandate to include questions of truth in presentation of the sexes, nor did the report in any other way change regulatory practice in the United States. Consequently, in many critical areas the report is impotent. As one example, the report advises

against double entendre and the improper use of women's bodies in ads. Realistically, such advice does nothing to change the attitudes and practices of those advertisers who are using sexuality to sell such products as 'adult' films, sexual aids, lingerie, and automotive parts.

#### E. Advertising Self-Regulation in Canada

The Canadian advertising self-regulatory agency, the CAAB, has consistently maintained that issues concerning the portrayal of women in advertising fall into the category of taste and opinion. In this same category, the CAAB also includes such concerns as the display of violence, the encouragement of materialism, the parading of sex, the insulting of minorities and encouragement of smoking and drinking.<sup>62</sup> The rationale for the omission of personal opinion matters is contained in a footnote to the Canadian Code of Advertising Practice which states: "the foregoing Code embraces those areas in which it is possible to make an objective appraisal of advertising content. It avoids entry into the subjective area of taste, which is difficult to pinpoint, and in which personal judgment plays an important part."<sup>63</sup>

Robert E. Oliver, the President of the CAAB, has further explained the CAAB position as follows:

... censorship of advertising communications would be just as abhorrent to many as censorship of news, information and program content. ... Taste varies from person to person, from region to region and from time to time. 64

He also has written:

Consumers should let advertisers know when they are offended by their messages. Whether, however, we have the automatic right to deny to others the

freedom to view, read, promote, or behave in patterns that differ from our own is quite another matter. Tolerance is woven deeply into the democratic fabric. 65

Despite that rationale, there are many in Canada who feel that, in failing to consider the truthfulness and fairness in the representation of men and women, the Canadian advertising industry is abrogating a basic responsibility. In addition, it has been noted that CAAB does already regulate matters of taste and opinion, most obviously in the regulation of advertising addressed to children as covered by the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children. Prof. Mel S. Moyer and John C. Banks, of York University and the University of Waterloo respectively, have investigated the operations of the Advertising Standards Council. They have concluded:

It is difficult to believe that the council can make "an objective appraisal" as to whether an ad "would result in ... moral [damage] to children," this being in the code, but cannot judge whether a commercial for a personal product is being aired at an inappropriate hour, this being "an entry into the subjective area of taste." It seems more accurate to say that judgements of most advertising must be subjective to some extent, and that some of the issues that the code still sidesteps are no more subjective than others that it already tackles.

Similarly, it challenges one's sense of relevance to observe that the council is willing to eliminate an ad that "unfairly disparages the products ... of other advertisers," but is not willing to consider an ad that unfairly disparages women. It seems more reasonable to say that what is covered by the code should be governed by the consumer's concerns rather than by the council's convenience, and that some of the issues that the code still ignores are at least as relevant as others that it already acknowledges. 66

#### F. CAAB Task Force on Women and Advertising

Despite its stand that the portrayal of women does not come under its mandate, approximately two years ago the CAAB convened a Task Force to examine how the sexes are portrayed in Canadian advertising. The Task Force made its report in November 1977 with a document entitled, Women and Advertising: Today's Message-Yesterday's Images?<sup>67</sup> The Summary and Highlights of that report are included as Appendix B and its recommendations are included as Appendix C.

The Task Force concluded that there was little justification for some of the sweeping indictments that have been made of the advertising process. The report stated that many advertisers are aware of the changes among men and women in Canada and, although the report stated that real problems still persist, these problems were treated as relatively minor. The remaining problems in the portrayal of the sexes were seen to lie primarily with the cumulative effect of many ads, rather than with any one ad. The elimination of sexism was viewed primarily as a matter of fine tuning of the creative effort.

5 One principal recommendation of the report was that national advertisers should undertake extensive research to determine whether 'liberated' messages could be effective selling tools. In addition, the report recommended that women should be depicted as equals, that people should be depicted as intelligent, and that 'good' rather than destructive stereotypes be employed by advertisers.

There are constructive aspects to the Task Force report. First, the industry considered the problem of women's portrayal sufficiently important to establish a Task Force. Second, the Task Force admitted to the existence of problems and to the need for correction. In

addition, the CAAB, through the Task Force, funded research into the investigation of the effectiveness of more 'liberated' advertising. Also, the existence of the Task Force and the promulgation of its report undoubtedly have increased industry attention to some of the issues of sex stereotyping.

Despite these positives, however, the CAAB Task Force report fails on several counts. Most important, the report is merely a position paper and has no force whatsoever in terms of regulation. The Task Force report does not recommend any amendment to the codes of Canadian advertising practice. Indeed, by implying that sex stereotyping problems are minor and by omitting entirely to mention the issue of code amendment, the Task Force report suggests that such amendment is unnecessary. [\*]

The CAAB Task Force report also can be criticized on other important counts. The review of Canadian media which led the Task Force to conclude that there were few problems in portrayal of women was inadequate in many respects; these include: sample size, representativeness of sample, representation of French-language media, competence and training of observers, and biases of observers. In addition, the report failed to consider in any depth the range of criticisms that have been made about advertising's portrayal of women, and failed to discuss the serious social dysfunctions arising from inaccuracies in portrayals of the sexes.

Although the report was apparently addressed primarily to large,

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[\*] Inclusion of the portrayal of the sexes in advertising codes would be desirable to help quicken the pace of change among large, national advertisers. Revision of the codes is essential in the case of some fringe advertisers and some fringe media; without code amendment or other legislative action there is little recourse with such advertisers.

national advertisers, the Task Force did a less than complete job in giving advice to those advertisers. For example, the report discusses the difficulties in developing liberated creative approaches, yet fails to offer any concrete, constructive guidelines for advertisers. (For an example of one such creative failure, see discussion of Humour in Advertising in Section IIIC of this report.)

Finally, the tone and emphasis of the report have led some critics to contend that the CAAB Task Force limited the scope of its concern about the depiction of women to the possibilities for creating more effective advertising. The critic of the report is forced to the conclusion that for the advertising industry of Canada, as for the industries of Britain and the United States, the question of the social rights involved in the portrayal of women is of relatively low interest and priority.

V. IMPLEMENTING CHANGE: MEASURES, CHANNELS AND STRATEGIES



## V. IMPLEMENTING CHANGE: MEASURES, CHANNELS AND STRATEGIES

Sex stereotyping in advertising has been shown to have direct impacts on individuals and society and, together with other sources of stereotyping, to contribute to longer range societal effects. Effective monitoring of strategies to reduce the negative consequences of sex stereotyping in advertising requires development of performance evaluation measures for the content and impacts of stereotyping.

### A. Content Analysis Measures

There is need for improvement in measures for conducting content analysis of advertising. Although the research studies reported in this paper provide benchmark measures for some components of stereotyping, there remains a need to develop standard measures for body language, style and other sources of individual stereotyping. There also needs to be further examination in cases where judgments of value and taste are important in the evaluation of sex stereotyping. Evaluation of a female model, evaluation of sexist innuendo, comparison between the depiction of a doctor versus a nurse, and evaluation of the personality characteristics of the sexes, are four such cases. Measures of these kinds of stereotyping are, of course, "soft" as compared to content analysis measures previously used by researchers. Nevertheless, soft measures are important if objective benchmarks of stereotyping are to be developed.

### B. Economic and Social Welfare Impact Measures

Social indicators serve as excellent measures of the social welfare impacts of sex stereotyping. In Canada, governments provide

employment figures, data on occupation levels and types, expenditures for childcare, information on changes in family and divorce laws and measures of mental and physical welfare. The major measurement difficulty is to factor out the effect of advertising from that of all other sexual stereotyping. This presents extremely difficult problems because of the difficulty associated with isolating advertising effects. Controlled experimentation similar to that used in recent studies of consumer socialization<sup>68</sup> and media violence<sup>69</sup> might be used to examine the degree of advertising contribution.

There needs to be examination of the impact of stereotyping on the advertising environment. Since stereotyping is a source of irritation with advertising, it contributes to consumer concern over clutter and general advertising pollution. Measures of environmental impact are needed.

Economic indicators of advertising performance, such as market share, revenue and profit may be measured at the industry, company or product level. However, such summary performance measures do not isolate the effects due to advertising from those due to other marketing factors.

Reductions in sex stereotyping may have different kinds of, and degrees of, impact on various consumer segments. Consequently, an analysis of the effects of sex stereotyping should be conducted among various segments that differ on the basis of sex, marital and work status, age, education and income. Recent studies report that differences in attitudes toward the women's liberation movement,<sup>70</sup> self-confidence<sup>71</sup> and independence of judgment<sup>72</sup> may not be as important as common demographic descriptors in predicting role portrayal preferences.

Although there has been only limited work completed in the measurement of sex stereotyping in advertising, preliminary indications are that measurement, while difficult, is feasible. To measure accurately any progress in the reduction of sex stereotyping and its consequences, further work in the development of standardized measures of content and impact are required.

### C. Channels and Strategies for Change

There are three major channels available for changing the way advertising portrays the sexes: (1) education and persuasion of individual advertisers and agencies, (2) development of relevant codes of industry and media self-regulation and (3) legislation. Table 8 on page 74 shows various strategies for change classified according to the most appropriate channel for achieving change. Strategies for change are shown for the three major areas of concern: how the sexes are portrayed, presence of the sexes and special problems.

For most areas of concern, education and persuasion of industry practitioners should be continued. There is new research evidence available that documents the incidence and impact of sex stereotyping in advertising. The effectiveness of more liberated portrayals of the sexes,<sup>73</sup> the ineffectiveness of stereotyped portrayals of housewives,<sup>74</sup> the harmfulness of stereotyped portrayals to children,<sup>75</sup> and the ineffectiveness of sexual stimuli as attention-getters in advertising<sup>76</sup> have been documented by research. This information should be utilized in the education and persuasion process. Special interest groups and organizations, academics and other researchers should continue to play an important role in the education process by documenting the effectiveness of women as product representatives and announcers and by conducting research in the special problem areas of sex stereotyping. Individuals and groups should be

encouraged to continue efforts to inform advertisers, agencies, media, and regulatory agencies of their disapproval of stereotyped advertisements. Significant reduction in the amount and degree of sex stereotyping in advertising will require an extensive programme of education and persuasion backed by sound research evidence.

Unfortunately, education and persuasion have met with only limited success to date. Consequently, Table 8 indicates that industry self-regulation should be considered for many of the more serious concerns. Most of the major media have established general codes of ethics and reserve the right to refuse any advertising which violates these standards. Sex stereotyping issues may be included in such codes if legitimate concern is demonstrated to the various media.

The industry self-regulation agency, the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board (CAAB), and the Advertising Standards Council (ASC) could also be involved in the change process. The ASC now engages in pre-clearance activities for advertising addressed to children. One viable avenue for change would be to expand the pre-clearance criteria for advertising addressed to children to include sex role portrayals as part of the evaluation.

Achieving industry self-regulation in areas where pre-clearance procedures do not already exist will be a slower and more difficult task since regulation of sex stereotyping issues would require addition(s) to the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards. The CAAB must be convinced that problems of sex stereotyping are not merely problems of "taste and opinion". The industry must be shown that sex stereotyping is an important societal concern and that enforceable regulations can be developed. Guidelines on nudity, demeaning language, and other offensive portrayals would be

logical first efforts toward development of standards and drafting regulations.

Personal product advertising also is a difficult area. It appears that the major objection is not to the content of such ads, but rather to their placement. Although there has been a call for a ban on television advertising of these products, the desirability of such a ban is debatable. It would be useful to gather additional information concerning women's attitudes toward such advertising. An acceptable solution might involve development of media guidelines for personal hygiene products and pre-clearance of media schedules by the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board.

Industry response to date has been so limited in many of the serious areas of concern that there may be need for government regulation in certain areas if stereotyping is to be effectively reduced. The desirability of government regulation raises problems and most would prefer to be able to bring change through educational and self-regulating approaches. However, in Canada where some kinds of advertising (for example, drug advertising and advertising to children) are routinely pre-cleared by government agencies, the pre-clearance mechanism may be a useful one for dealing with sex stereotyping problems. Thus, in special cases, formal legislation may be an appropriate change mechanism.

Achieving change in the area of advertising sex stereotyping will undoubtedly continue to be an important concern in the years to come. There is still much which can be accomplished by research, persuasion, and efforts at self-regulation. In this transitional stage of society, the issues go much deeper and are more fundamental than advertising alone. However, the efforts made to reduce and finally eliminate stereotyping in advertising could make a significant contribution to reducing and eliminating stereotyping in society.

FOOTNOTES

## FOOTNOTES

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TABLES

Table 1  
EXISTENCE OF SEX STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING

Areas of Stereotyping	Documented by Empirical Research
A. <u>How the sexes are portrayed in advertising</u>	Females are predominantly shown as housewives and mothers, while males are shown in many occupations.
	Females are almost three times more likely than males to be shown inside the home.
(1) Portrayals of housewives	Subservient role portrayals; women are most often seen performing domestic tasks; men demonstrate products but don't use them.
	Women serve men and boys; men and boys do not serve women.
	Dependent role portrayals; men tell women what to do; explain what products to buy; tell how to use them.
	Women are shown as isolated from other women.
(2) Portrayals of girls	Girls are shown as more passive than boys.
	Girls are shown assisting mothers serving men and boys; girls are shown learning household tasks, beauty roles.
(3) Portrayals of sexuality	Women are more likely than men to be shown in decorative or non-functional roles.
	Women are more likely to be portrayed through exaggerated acting, stereotyped voice tone and stereotyped body language.

Table 1 (cont'd)

Areas of Stereotyping	Documented by Empirical Research
B. <u>Presence of the sexes in advertising</u>	<p>There is a very low level of use of females as announcers, voice-overs and other authority figures.</p> <p>Males dominate as product representatives during prime-time hours. Females dominate as product representatives only in female cosmetic ads.</p> <p>Male product representatives <u>demonstrate</u> products; women are shown in <u>housewife</u> roles using products.</p> <p>Women are more prominent in personal product advertising (cosmetics, etc.).</p> <p>There is a low presence of women in advertising for big ticket products and services.</p>



Table 1 (cont'd)

Areas of Stereotyping	Documented by Empirical Research
<u>C. Special Problems</u>	
(1) Health issues	Active women and women engaged in sports are not shown.  Drug advertising addressed to doctors shows women as passive, dependent, and with exaggerated or imagined symptoms.
(2) Aging	Older men are shown, but not older women. The typical woman portrayed is younger than the typical man portrayed.
(3) Minority groups	Female members of minority groups are not shown in advertising.
(4) Liberation stereotyping	Liberation is belittled, used as a vehicle to show dominant women and stupid men, or as a vehicle to sell beauty products.
(5) Personal product advertising	Women's undergarments and personal hygiene products are advertised on television. Equivalent male products are not advertised on television.

Table 2  
 CRITICISMS OF SEX STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING  
 NOT DOCUMENTED BY RESEARCH

Areas of Stereotyping	Criticisms
Portrayals of housewives	<p>Women are shown as low in intelligence, unable to make decisions about household or personal matters.</p> <p>Women are shown as obsessive about cleanliness.</p> <p>Women are shown as afraid of and jealous of other women.</p> <p>Women are shown to have exaggerated love for and need for household products.</p> <p>Language used is often belittling to women, e.g. "Little woman"; "My wife, I think I'll keep her"; "I try to spend my husband's money well."</p>
Portrayals of sexuality	<p>Women are used as sexual objects to attract the attention of men to advertising.</p> <p>Beauty product ads exaggerate desire to get and hold a man and exaggerate the need for personal adornment.</p>
Liberation Stereotyping	<p>Female liberation is used as a rationale for greater use of women as sexual objects in advertising.</p>

Table 3  
SOME EFFECTS OF SEX STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING

Area of Stereotyping	Some Immediate Effects of Advertising Stereotyping	Some Longer-range Effects to which Advertising Contributes
<u>A. How the sexes are portrayed in advertising</u>	Ads influence adult perceptions of male/female occupational roles.	Women limit own access to, and are denied access to, a wide range of occupations; effects on salaries of women; working housewives forced to perform two jobs.
(1) Portrayals of housewives	Ads influence adults to believe housewives are unintelligent, dependent on men, subservient, have personality problems.	Affects individual self-esteem and others' perceptions of housewife; affects structure of family and divorce law; affects ability of women to organize; affects job access and salaries.
(2) Portrayals of girls	Like adults, children similarly influenced in their perceptions of sex roles, capabilities, personalities.	Limits aspirations and levels of achievement of girls. Profound influence for both sexes in life style, education, occupation and other choices.
(3) Portrayal of sexuality	Ads may influence women to devote too much attention to personal appearance; may influence men to view women as sex objects.	May be linked to depersonalization of women as sexual objects.

Table 3 (cont'd)

Area of Stereotyping	Some Immediate Effects of Advertising Stereotyping	Some Longer-range Effects to which Advertising Contributes
<u>B. Presence of the Sexes in Advertising</u>	Advertising influences perception that women cannot exercise authority; make decisions independently. Also it has direct impact on employment of women as announcers.	Influences aspirations of, and abilities of, women to manage and take on other authoritative roles. Influences both sexes' perceptions of women's abilities to perform these roles competently.
<u>C. Special Problems</u>		
(1) Health	Advertising may influence doctors to mis-diagnose and over-prescribe for women patients. Passive stereotype discourages women from active participation in physical exercise.	May have profound effects both on individual health and also on the way medical profession views and treats all women.
(2) Aging & Minority Groups	Absence of older and minority group women from advertising makes them an invisible part of our society.	May have profound effects both on individual mental and physical well-being and also on the way society treats these groups.
(3) Liberation	Advertising may influence us to believe that the women's liberation movement is a joke, unimportant, insignificant.	May act to slow progress of change for women and men.
(4) Personal products	Contributes to irritation with advertising felt by many men and women.	

Table 4

## EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

Subsample	Consumer Study	Sample Sizes			Product Category	Style of Ad.	Treatment
		Advertiser	Practitioner Agency	Study Total			
1	79	14	21	35	Breakfast food	Traditional	Test
					Floor cleaner	Liberated	Test
2	63	18	15	33	Dishwasher detergent	Traditional	Control
					Personal deodorant	Liberated	Control
					Floor cleaner	Traditional	Test
					Breakfast food	Liberated	Test
total	144	32	36	68			

# BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 5

CONSUMER AVERAGE ITEM RATINGS FOR THE  
BREAKFAST FOOD & FLOOR CLEANER TEST COMMERCIALS

Item	Breakfast Food Commercials		Floor Cleaner Commercials	
	Traditional	Liberated	Traditional	Liberated
Amusing	2.1 <sup>*</sup>	2.0	2.0	2.2
Realistic situation (E)	3.1	3.3	2.3	2.3
Exciting	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.6
For women like me (E)	2.3	2.6	2.0	2.3
Tender	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.2
Original (E)	2.5	3.1 <sup>a</sup>	2.4	2.3
Insulting to men (I)	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6
Worth remembering (E)	2.6	3.1 <sup>c</sup>	2.3	2.4
Irritating (I)	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9
Intelligent (I)	2.6	2.8	2.2	2.2
Insulting to women (I)	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7
Meaningful to me (E)	2.4	2.7	2.1	2.2
Convincing (I)	2.8	3.0	2.2	2.6 <sup>b</sup>
Makes me want to buy (E)	2.3	2.8 <sup>b</sup>	2.2	2.2

<sup>a</sup>p < .01, for difference of means test

<sup>b</sup>p < .05, for difference of means test

<sup>c</sup>p < .10, for difference of means test

\* To be read: On a five point scale from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree), the traditional breakfast food commercial received an average amusing rating of 2.1.

Table 6  
 PRACTITIONER AVERAGE ITEM RATINGS FOR THE  
 BREAKFAST FOOD & FLOOR CLEANER TEST COMMERCIALS

Item	Breakfast Food Commercials		Floor Cleaner Commercials	
	Traditional	Liberated	Traditional	Liberated
Amusing	1.3 <sup>*</sup>	1.3	1.2	1.3
Realistic situation (E)	3.4	3.5	1.9	1.8
Exciting	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.4
For persons like target group (F)	3.5	3.6	3.0	2.7
Tender	1.7	1.8	1.1	1.1
Original (E)	1.7	2.3 <sup>a</sup>	1.3	1.5
Insulting to men (I)	1.6	1.2 <sup>b</sup>	1.2	1.6 <sup>a</sup>
Worth remembering (E)	2.9	2.9	2.4	2.2
Irritating (I)	2.1	1.7 <sup>b</sup>	2.6	2.1 <sup>a</sup>
Intelligent (E)	2.4	2.7	1.8	1.9
Insulting to women (I)	2.0	1.5 <sup>a</sup>	2.5	1.9 <sup>a</sup>
Meaningful to the target group (E)	3.6	3.7	3.0	2.9
Convincing (I)	2.9	3.1	2.5	2.4
Makes target group want to buy (E)	2.8	3.2 <sup>b</sup>	2.8	2.5

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .05$ , for difference of means test

<sup>b</sup>  $p < .10$ , for difference of means test

\* To be read: On a five point scale from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree), the traditional breakfast food commercial received an average amusing rating of 1.3.

Table 7

## CONSUMER AND PRACTITIONER AD EFFECTIVENESS AND IRRITATION SCORES

Product Category	Style of Ad	Sub-sample	Consumer Average Scores	Practitioner Average Scores		
				Advertiser	Agency	Total
<u>Effectiveness</u>						
Dishwasher detergent	Traditional	1	19.1*	20.9	17.9	19.1
		2	17.6	21.2	19.2	20.3
Personal deodorant	Liberated	1	21.3	23.0	23.0	23.0
		2	22.4	24.1	23.7	23.9
Breakfast food	Traditional	1	20.5 <sup>b</sup>	23.4 <sup>a</sup>	23.2	23.2
	Liberated	2	23.5	27.6	22.0	25.0
Floor cleaner	Traditional	2	17.8	18.7	18.8	18.7
	Liberated	1	18.4	16.7	18.7	17.9
<u>Irritation</u>						
Dishwasher detergent	Traditional	1	6.2**	7.1	8.5	8.0
		2	6.4	7.7	8.9	8.3
Personal deodorant	Liberated	1	4.8	5.1	4.9	5.0
		2	4.7	4.3	5.0	4.6
Breakfast food	Traditional	1	4.9	5.0 <sup>b</sup>	6.2	5.7 <sup>b</sup>
	Liberated	2	5.1	3.8	5.4	4.5
Floor cleaner	Traditional	2	4.9	6.4 <sup>c</sup>	6.3	6.3
	Liberated	1	5.2	5.1	5.8	5.5

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .01$ , for difference of means test

<sup>b</sup>  $p < .05$ , for difference of means test

<sup>c</sup>  $p < .10$ , for difference of means test

\* To be read: On an 8-item scale developed to measure ad effectiveness, subsample 1 rated the traditional dishwasher detergent with a score of 19.1 out of a possible score of 40.

\*\*To be read: On a 3-item scale developed to measure ad irritation, subsample 1 rated the traditional dishwasher detergent with a score of 6.2 out of a possible score of 24.



Table 8  
CHANNELS AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Area of Stereotyping	Education & Persuasion of Advertisers, Agencies, Media	Self Regulation	Legislation
<p><u>A. How the sexes are portrayed in Advertising</u></p>	<p>In all areas, continuation of efforts to inform and pressure re individual and group concern; document the effectiveness of more liberated portrayals.</p>	<p>Development of guidelines. Insulting and demeaning portrayals related by industry &amp; n. a codes.</p>	<p>Legislation banning insulting and demeaning portrayals is difficult to develop and administer. Consider as last resort to control flagrant abuse.</p>
<p>(1) Portrayals of housewives</p>	<p>Document the ineffectiveness of stereotyped portrayals of housewives.</p>	<p>Guidelines. Codes.</p>	<p></p>
<p>(2) Portrayals of girls</p>	<p>Document harmfulness of portrayals.</p>	<p>Add to preclearance regulations for advertising to children.</p>	<p>Add to preclearance regulations for advertising to children.</p>
<p>(3) Portrayals of sexuality</p>	<p>Document ineffectiveness of sexual stimuli as attention-getters.</p>	<p>Guidelines. Codes.</p>	<p>Legislation as last resort.</p>
<p><u>B. Presence of the sexes in Advertising</u></p>	<p>Document effectiveness of women as product representatives and voice-overs. Document importance of women purchasers of 'big ticket' items.</p>	<p>Pressure from actors' unions for stipulations in union contracts.</p>	<p></p>

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Table 8 (cont'd.)

Area of Stereotyping	Education & Persuasion of Advertisers, Agencies, Media	Self Regulation	Legislation
<u>C. Special Problems</u>			
(1) Health issues	Drug companies & medical profession must be made aware of research findings on the incidence and import of stereotyped advertising.	Guidelines. Codes.	Add to preclearance regulations for drug advertising.
(2) Aging & minority groups	Consciousness raising of groups & demonstration of concern to advertisers.	Guidelines, Codes.	
(3) Liberation stereotyping	Document ineffectiveness of advertising practice.		
(4) Personal product advertising	Continue to inform media, advertisers, etc. of concern.	Develop codes for media scheduling.	Legislation re media scheduling.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES DEVELOPED BY THE  
NATIONAL ADVERTISING REVIEW BOARD  
FOR THE UNITED STATES

WHAT THE PANEL RECOMMENDS

The Panel offers no hard and fast rules for dealing with advertising appealing to or portraying women. The scene is changing too rapidly. Accordingly, we have not attempted to compile a list of current ads that the Panel thinks merit praise or criticism.

Recognizing that principles are more enduring than specific cases, the Panel has distilled its many months of study into a checklist of questions for advertisers and agency personnel to consider when creating or approving an advertisement. We realize that there will probably be differences of opinion about some of the items on this checklist, but we believe that whatever discussion may be stimulated by the controversial ones will be helpful in clarifying the issues.

Checklist: Destructive Portrayals

- Am I implying in my promotional campaign that creative, athletic, and mind-enriching toys and games are not for girls as much as for boys? Does my ad, for example, imply that dolls are for girls and chemistry sets are for boys, and that neither could ever become interested in the other category?
- Are sexual stereotypes perpetuated in my ad? That is, does it portray women as weak, silly, and over-emotional? Or does it picture both sexes as intelligent, physically able, and attractive?

- Are the women portrayed in my ad stupid? For example, am I reinforcing the "dumb blonde" cliché? Does my ad portray women who are unable to balance their checkbooks? Women who are unable to manage a household without the help of outside experts, particularly male ones?
- Does my ad use belittling language? For example, "gal Friday" or "lady professor?" Or "her kitchen" but "his car?" Or "women's chatter" but "men's discussions?"
- Does my ad make use of contemptuous phrases? Such as "the weaker sex," "the little woman," "the ball and chain," or "the war department."
- Do my ads consistently show women waiting on men? Even in occupational situations, for example, are women nurses or secretaries serving coffee, etc., to male bosses or colleagues? And never vice versa?
- Is there a gratuitous message in my ads that a woman's most important role in life is a supportive one, to cater to and coddle men and children? Is it a "big deal" when the reverse is shown, that is, very unusual and special -- something for which the woman must show gratitude?
- Do my ads portray women as more neurotic than men? For example, as ecstatically happy over household cleanliness or deeply depressed because of their failure to achieve near perfection in household tasks?

(A note is needed here, perhaps. It is not the Panel's intention to suggest that women never be portrayed in the traditional role of homemaker and mother. We suggest instead that the role of homemaker be depicted not in a grotesque or stereotyped manner, but be treated with the same degree of respect accorded to other important occupations.)

- Do my ads feature women who appear to be basically unpleasant? For example, women nagging their husbands or children? Women being condescending to other women? Women being envious or arousing envy? Women playing the "one-upmanship" game (with a sly wink at the camera)?
- Do my ads portray women in situations that tend to confirm the view that women are the property of men or are less important than men?
- Is there double entendre in my ads? Particularly about sex or women's bodies?

Checklist: Negative Appeals

- Do my ads try to arouse or play upon stereotyped insecurities? Are women shown as fearful of not being attractive to men or to other women, fearful of not being able to keep their husbands or lovers, fearful of an in-law's disapproval, or, for example, of not being able to cope with a husband's boss coming for dinner?

- Does my copy promise unrealistic psychological rewards for using the product? For example, that a perfume can lead to instant romance.
- Does my ad blatantly or subtly suggest that the product possesses supernatural powers? If believed literally, is the advertiser unfairly taking advantage of ignorance? Even if understood as hyperbole, does it insult the intelligence of women?

Checklist: Constructive Portrayals

- Are the attitudes and behavior of the women in my ads suitable models for my own daughter to copy? Will I be happy if my own female children grow up to act and react the way the women in my ads act and react?
- Do my ads reflect the fact that girls may aspire to careers in business and the professions? Do they show, for example, female doctors and female executives? Some women with both male and female assistants?
- Do my ads portray women and men (and children) sharing in the chores of family living? For example, grocery shopping, doing laundry, cooking (not just outdoor barbecuing), washing dishes, cleaning house, taking care of children, mowing the lawn, and other house and yard work?



- Do the women in my ads make decisions (or help make them) about the purchase of high-priced items and major family investments? Do they take an informed interest, for example, in insurance and financial matter ?
- Do my ads portray women actually driving cars and showing an intelligent interest in mechanical features, not just in the color and upholstery?
- Are two-income families portrayed in my ads? For example, husband and wife leaving home or returning from work together?
- Are the women in my ads doing creative or exciting things? Older women, too? In social and occupational environments? For example, making a speech, in a laboratory, or approving an ad?

Checklist: Positive Appeals

- Is the product presented as a means for a woman to enhance her own self-esteem, to be a beautiful human being, to realize her full potential?
- Does my advertisement promise women realistic rewards for using the product? Does it assume intelligence on the part of women?

Humor

The Panel is not so sobersided as to suggest that humor has no place in woman-related advertising. At the same time, the Panel feels called on to point out that sometimes meanness is expressed in the guise of humor. In its study of current advertising, the Panel came across some examples of attempted woman-related humor which could not have been funny to those who were the butt of the jokes. It is healthy for people to laugh at themselves, but usually this is a luxury only the secure can afford. Effective humor often has a cutting edge, and it requires extraordinary care to insure that the cut is not made at the expense of women's self-esteem.

In the present context, for example, the Panel suggests extreme caution in making fun of efforts to improve the status of women and the opportunities available to them.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS AND OVERVIEW  
OF THE REPORT OF THE  
CANADIAN ADVERTISING ADVISORY BOARD TASK FORCE.

# BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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## SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS AND OVERVIEW

The theme "Women and Advertising" inevitably raises a host of related issues but at an early meeting of the Task Force we decided our responsibility was to concentrate on the nature of advertising to and about women. Are the images therein current - and fair? If not, how out-of-focus is the portrayal? How do sensitive successful advertisers cope with the challenge of a society wracked by the stress of profound, diverse and often conflicting trends? Are there helpful guidelines for advertisers who would like to be au courant but aren't quite sure how to go about it?

We reviewed existing research, examined current Canadian media, invited comments and presentations from interested individuals and groups and underwrote a field test comparing "liberated" and "traditional" creative advertising approaches.

### General Conclusions

1. While our media review was not exhaustive, it did include broad media representation over a three to four month time frame.

As might be expected, given the diverse nature of the Task Force and the range of views also presented by others, we were not always in agreement as to the precise nature of the problem nor its extent. With a few notable exceptions, we found little justification for some of the sweeping indictments that have been made of the advertising process. We concluded that many advertisers are aware of the changes in attitudes and roles among men and women in Canada. The advertising community, as the NARB report points out, want to be decent and fair - and in portraying women it is also good business to be decent and fair.\*

\* Advertising and Women, National Advertising Review Board, U.S.A., 1975.

2. Real problems still persist. Consistent with other studies, our review indicates many of these relate particularly, though certainly not exclusively, to television. One reason for this may be the nature of the medium itself, which lacks audience segmentation.
3. Often, the problem does not lie with a specific commercial or even a pool of commercials. Rather, it is the cumulative impact of a whole series of commercials showing household products in use, with women demonstrating the products -- often with an enthusiasm bordering on ecstasy that the Task Force, and, we believe, many men and women in the viewing audience -- find incredible, hilarious or insulting. Household cleanliness has obvious merits in terms of sanitation, appearance and health. When cleanliness becomes an obsession, however, it reflects a strange set of priorities or a condition bordering on emotional ill health.
4. With individual commercials, the conclusion of the Task Force was that the elimination of sexism was principally a matter of "fine tuning", that is, the problem often lay with the execution rather than the original creative effort.
5. Women critics of advertising in the various media tend to be younger and better educated, active in business and community life, with above average incomes. They are thus in the "opinion leader" category - and as educational and career opportunities continue to widen their numbers will increase - and their views will be more strongly expressed.<sup>1</sup>
6. There is an obviously felt need on the part of many Canadian women, and men as well, to see themselves portrayed in advertising in a more realistic way. Some advertisers seem insensitive to this need. Others demonstrate a concern but are obviously still groping for an effective way to respond. It is our hope that these advertisers particularly

1 Based on analyses by York University and the University of Guelph of consumer complaints directed to the Advertising Standards Council. The National Advertising Review Board study 'Advertising and Women' reports the same findings.

will find this report useful. For their guidance, a set of specific suggestions has been included. (See Checklist, page 22.)

7. On the basis of our pilot study, the fear of some marketers that "liberated" style commercials will lack impact or arouse negative reactions is unwarranted. Indeed, in our study, such messages tended to outscore the "traditional" type messages. (See page 15).

APPENDIX C

CAAB TASK FORCE: RECOMMENDATIONS

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONSAdvertisers and Advertising Agencies

1. Our pilot study indicates that "liberated" messages can work well. When created with **intelligence and good taste**, they tend to **generally** outscore the "traditional" message. We recommend that national advertisers undertake more extensive research in this field.
2. Employment statistics **change as** rapidly as the world around us. Market pre-testing should be checked against present day life-style patterns. You may be missing out on the close to 50% of women who work outside the home if your potential market sample is based on weekday afternoon interviews.
3. When women are included in advertisements, depict them as equals. It is regarded as a "put-down" when an advertiser uses women solely as decorative props, rather than as responsible, prospective customers.
4. Personal care product advertising should be directed at a woman's feeling for self-enhancement, rather than undermining her self-esteem or emphasizing the "man-trap" approach.
5. Humour in advertising calls for special skills. It may entertain and yet not sell the product, or it may demean and offend - and this applies to both men and women - instead of creating customer goodwill. One test of a humorous advertisement is the question - "Would it offend me to be portrayed in that way?"
6. Frequently the basic problem with feminine portrayals on television is the cumulative impact. The Task Force recommends that advertisers with pools of commercials explore the opportunities inherent in directing messages to various segments in their target groups. Thus, some commercials could use non-homemakers with outside interests, such as community affairs.



## 6. (Cont'd)

A businesswoman could promote, for example, a convenience product "because I'm a busy woman and my time with my family is important". Or depict other family members helping with or doing household tasks. Even when the mother is not working outside the home, many families share these responsibilities.

7. Depict people showing an intelligent interest in the benefits of household cleaning products and convenience foods - not hysterically impressed by them. Here the final execution is important. Even though the written words and described visual are on target, the talent direction and even the inflection of words can result in an exaggerated or annoying portrayal. The aim is to reflect priorities that coincide with the realities of today's world.
8. Purchasing decisions on some items - cars, appliances, liquor and wine - are often made jointly by husband and wife. Sometimes they are purchased by a woman alone, with no male involvement, and this important market segment should not be ignored.
9. When showing women working outside the home, expand the portrayals beyond the traditional job categories - nurses, secretaries, teachers, models, etc. Occupational choices have widened considerably in recent years and certainly some women operate at management levels.
10. Stereotypes are probably an inevitable component of mass communication. But some stereotypes of women invariably evoke, not a sense of identification but a sense of frustration, annoyance or outrage - "the witless housewife", "pretty but helpless", "the superservant". It is not a matter of avoiding stereotypes rather of using good stereotypes.

11. Since many radio messages are read by the disc jockey, rather than pre-recorded, the number of advertisements with male announcers is overwhelmingly higher than female. An effort should be made to produce more pre-recorded radio advertisements using female announcers; and in TV, more women should be used as "voice-overs" and announcers rather than just product demonstrators.

### Consumers

There seems to be a widespread feeling among consumers that complaints to companies about the quality of goods and services or the nature of advertising go unheeded. None of the business representatives on the Task Force shared this view. All could give examples of the impact of even a few letters to management. Naturally, not all advertisements - just as not all books, plays, or films - can be expected to please or appeal to everyone. But viewers, readers, and listeners who feel offended by an advertisement should let the medium and the company management know how they feel -- not just talk to the neighbours.

By the same token, when consumers admire advertisements created with imagination and good taste, we suggest the time sometimes be taken to write a note of praise. Individual voices can be influential when heard in the right places.

Our media review indicates that many marketers are aware of the changing nature of society and their messages reflect that awareness. Our hope is that this report will help add to that number.