Rachel Graham. Gender Role Reinforcement in Popular Magazine Advertising. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2003. 27 pages. Advisor: Claudia J. Gollop.

One month's issue of five men's (Details, Esquire, GQ, Maxim, and Stuff) and five women's (Cosmopolitan, Elle, Glamour, MarieClaire, and Vogue) fashion and leisure magazines were examined for the types of products advertised. If the advertising reflected traditional gender roles, the women's magazines would advertise products that focus on changing the self, while the men's magazines would advertise lifestyle-enhancing products.

Results showed that both the men's and the women's magazines had many pages of clothing and accessories advertising. The women's magazines did contain more advertising of personal care products, and the men's magazines contained more advertising of lifestyle products. However, the women's magazines did contain some lifestyle products advertising, and the men's magazines also contained some personal care products advertising, so it was not split totally across gender lines.

Headings:

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Sex role in advertising

Women's periodicals, American

GENDER ROLE REINFORCEMENT IN POPULAR MAGAZINE ADVERTISING

by Rachel Graham

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

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Introduction

Gender roles are created through a complex socialization process. Roles for each sex are reinforced through dress, behavior, and social interaction. Advertising layouts in the media are one way that gender roles are presented to society. Models and products are depicted in ways that presumably make them attractive to the consumer and encourage product purchase.

Gender roles exert pressure on both sexes. Traditionally, for men, the emphasis is outward, on professional achievement and enjoyment of a certain type of lifestyle more than personal appearance. Women are encouraged to look inward, critiquing the appearance of their bodies and faces. Will the advertising in men's magazines reinforce traditional gender roles by focusing on lifestyle-enhancing products, while women's magazine advertising focuses on changing the self? This research examines advertising in popular magazines as it reflects and reinforces gender roles for men and women.

Literature Review

Erving Goffman's study of gender in advertisements in the 1970's is one of the most cited works on the subject. Through the study of individual poses, facial expressions, and the interaction between models in advertisements, Goffman drew parallels between the reality of social interaction, and the 'hyper-ritualization' of advertising. ¹ In advertising, "advertisers do not create the ritualized expressions they employ; they

¹ Erving Goffman, Gender Advertisements (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 84.

seem to draw upon the same corpus of displays, the same ritual idiom, that is the resource of all of us who participate in social situations, and to the same end: the rendering of glimpsed action readable."² What happens in everyday situations of conversation and human behavior, is what makes advertising understandable. Through the concepts of relative size, feminine touch, function ranking, depiction of the family, ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal, Goffman explains how women and men are interacting in advertisements in ways expected and encouraged by society.³ Advertising is a fantasy, a created world, and people often recognize the fantastic element in advertising and incorporate it into their own interpretation of what life should be like. Goffman says, "what is common to commercial scenes and rare in life may yet be commonly part of the ideals and fantasies of many actual people."⁴ Advertising works if people are willing to buy into participating, if only briefly, in a fantasy world filled with beautiful people and things.

Vigorito and Curry analyzed the portrayal of men in magazines and advertisements, and discovered a difference in the portrayal of men in men's magazines versus women's magazines. They found that "the greater the percentage of male readers, the more males are portrayed in occupational (hegemonic) roles and the less males are portrayed in parent or spouse/partner (nurturing) roles." The problem with different

² Goffman p. 84 ³ p. 28-57

Anthony J. Vigorito and Timothy J. Curry, "Marketing Masculinity: Gender Identity and Popular Magazines," Sex Roles: A Journal of Research 39.1-2 (June 1998): 5.

roles for different audiences are the 'dissimilar expectations' that could occur.⁶ Men are apparently more realistically portrayed in men's magazines, while women's magazines provide more of an ideal picture of men. Since, presumably, many men are not reading women's magazines, men's gender roles as portrayed by magazine advertising and editorial content remain clear to men themselves.

Garst and Bodenhausen also studied men's sex roles, specifically men's reactions to fake magazine advertisements. The men were split into groups of more traditional and less traditional gender role attitudes, and examined advertisements with models that were highly androgynous, mildly androgynous, and traditionally masculine (the advertisements featured both young and older models). Garst and Bodenhausen were looking for shifts in subjects attitudes' after viewing the advertisements. Those in the less traditional group were "more susceptible to media influences than their more traditional counterparts." So, if we think advertising might have a positive influence on changing sex roles, this study "casts doubts on the feasibility of creating dramatic changes in more traditional men's gender role attitudes through mass media channels because these men appear to reject images that do not fit their framework for appropriate male roles." If men are most comfortable with advertising that reflect the roles they portray in their own lives, men's leisure magazine advertising is more likely to reinforce the traditional, societally acceptable male gender role.

⁶ p.6

⁷ Jennifer Garst and Galen V. Bodenhausen, "Advertising's Effects on Men's Gender Role Attitudes," Sex Roles 36.9-10 (May 1997): 557

⁸ p. 565

⁹ p. 569

Paff and Lakner analyzed women's dress in advertising from the 1950's into the 1990's, and found an increase in masculine elements in the clothing, yet women's roles were still depicted as feminine and passive. Women have come to fulfill many roles outside of that of wife and mother, and yet the advertisements' studied seemed to show minimal progress. In a study of high school students' responses to advertisements with sexist images, researchers found that "even brief exposure to advertisements that rely upon gender stereotypes reinforces stereotypes about gender roles." Leisure magazines that have advertising that constantly reflects traditional gender roles could affect readers' perceptions of what products men or women should be interested in and capable of consuming.

Richins studied female undergraduate students for their responses to models in advertisements, and found that not only did the women regularly compare themselves to the models, but they were less satisfied with how they looked after seeing the advertisements with models in them. 12 They rated themselves the same in terms of level of attractiveness, so the models' pictures did not have an effect on that scale.¹³ Instead, the effect was that the students had a lowered sense of satisfaction for their physical appearance.¹⁴ The point of advertising is to sell product, and yet interestingly, for the "relatively inexpensive" products in the sample advertising,

¹⁰ Jennifer L. Paff and Hilda Buckley Lakner, "Dress and the Female Gender Role in Magazine Advertisements of 1950-1994: A Content Analysis," Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal 26.1 (September 1997): 9

¹¹ Sue Lafky, Margaret Duffy, Mary Steinmaus and Dan Berkowitz, "Looking Through Gendered Lenses: Female Stereotyping in Advertisements and Gender Role Expectations," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 73.2 (Summer 1996): 385

¹²M. L. Richins, "Social Comparison and the Idealized Image of Advertising," <u>The Journal of</u> Consumer Research 18.1 (June 1991):75, 80

¹³ p. 81 p. 81

"either the products were ineffective in improving appearance to the extent desired, or subjects were not sufficiently convinced that the products would yield the desired benefit and did not try them." Because advertising presents a beauty ideal that is obviously unattainable, it seems that at least part of the audience viewing an advertisement will employ a realistic interpretation and not even try the product.

A study by Klassen, Jasper, and Schwartz examined advertisements for depictions of traditional gender interaction, or "those that use scenes, characters, relative placement, expressions, identities, and roles that are stereotypically identified with women and men," reverse-sex advertisements that "depict women and men in ways that are precisely the opposite of those stereotypically associated with members of each sex and thus undermine the social expectation of the roles and positions women and men play," and equality advertisements, with men and women in equal roles. ¹⁶ Traditional advertisements had the strongest showing, with 75% of total advertisements in the 1984-1989 time period, compared to 13% reverse-sex and 12% of equality advertisements. ¹⁷ Advertisers seem to be most comfortable using models in ways that depict traditional gender roles. If this comfort level carries over to the choice of type of product advertised, there will be differences along gender lines of the products advertised in men's magazines versus women's magazines.

¹⁵ p.82

¹⁶Michael L. Klassen, Cynthia R. Jasper, and Anne M. Schwartz, "Men and Women: Images of Their Relationships in Magazine Advertisements," <u>Journal of Advertising Research</u> 33.2 (March-April 1993): 32

¹⁷ p. 36

Plous and Neptune examined gender and racial bias in advertising by tracking body exposure, representation, and position in advertisements in fashion magazines. Not surprisingly, women were far more exposed than men in advertisements. Exposure was defined as a model with bare "buttocks, upper leg, stomach, shoulder, or back." White women in advertisements were exposed 42.5% of the time, Black women 37.7%, White men 9.9%, and Black men 13.3%. In terms of representation, the target audience for each magazine had the greatest representation within advertisements in the magazine – 88.8% White female models in White women's magazines, 94.7% Black female models in Black women's magazines, and 93.2% White male models in White men's magazines. Body positioning in advertisements showed White women in more subordinate positions 17.4% of the time, as compared to Black women (9.3%), White men (9.1%), and Black men (9.1%). Sex roles are reflected in women being shown more often as sexual objects, although figures for representation by gender appear to show each gender as selling to themselves.

Thomas and Trieber also analyzed race and gender in advertisements. They created categories of status (affluent, trendy, and everyday) and product promises (good times, appearance, sex/romance, family/marriage, and celebrity identification).²³
Men most frequently modeled an everyday status, with Black women more likely

¹⁸ S. Plous and Dominique Neptune, "Racial and Gender Biases in Magazine Advertising: A Content-Analytic Study," <u>Psychology of Women Quarterly</u> 21.4 (December 1997): 635

¹⁹ p.634

²⁰ p. 634

²¹ p.634

²² p.636

²³ Melvin E. Thomas and Linda A. Treiber, "Race, Gender, and Status: A Content Analysis of Print Advertisements in Four Popular Magazines," <u>Sociological Spectrum</u> 20.3 (July-September 2000): 362-363

than White women to portray everyday status.²⁴ White women portrayed an affluent or trendy status most often.²⁵ In terms of product promises, appearance and family/marriage were used most often in the magazine for Black women, while appearance and sex/romance were used most often in the magazine for White women.²⁶ This emphasis on appearance shows again the difference in expected roles for women versus men. Within the study, "status-image distributions suggest that men are rugged, 'real,' average and normal (everyday), whereas women are fashionable, glamorous, young, and perhaps frivolous (trendy). Beauty-glamor messages are aimed relentlessly at women."²⁷

Advertisements tell women "they must change or eliminate what is wrong with them. There is an assumption, often explicit, that there is something wrong with their physical appearance, dress, or body odor."²⁸ This emphasis on change for women goes beyond the use of products; Cortese says that "advertising encourages not only fat-free diets but liposuction, anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, and cosmetic surgery and dentistry."²⁹ Men also face some of the appearance pressure; advertisements

targeted at men's physique and hair are popular.³⁰ Advertisers are not responsible for

coming up with these gender-based pressures. Instead, Cortese says, advertising

Cortese analyzed the presence of women and minorities in advertising.

²⁴ p. 364 ²⁵ p. 364-365 ²⁶ p. 368

p. 368

²⁸ Anthony J. Cortese, <u>Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising</u> (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) 63

²⁹ p. 56 ³⁰ p. 64

"draws upon and redirects issues that the target audience or common culture already share." ³¹

Several magazines target each gender individually as an audience. If advertising is a reflection of the current culture, will men's magazine advertising promote a different type of consumerism than women's magazine advertising? By comparing the types of products advertised in magazines with gender-specific audiences, reinforcement of gender roles based on the type of products advertised for consumption may be evident. Will women's magazine advertising emphasize products that are used to change one's appearance, such as makeup and body and hair care products? Will men's magazine advertising emphasize lifestyle-enhancing products, such as alcohol, automobiles, and electronics? This research sought to investigate these questions.

Method

Five men's and five women's fashion and leisure magazines were selected. The magazines were well known publications with a single gender audience. Requiring an emphasis on fashion and leisure omitted magazines that otherwise fit the criteria. For instance, Allure was eliminated, as its focus is on makeup and beauty products for women. Also eliminated were magazines with pornographic material, such as Playboy. The magazines with a male audience were Details, Esquire, GQ (Gentleman's Quarterly), Maxim, and Stuff. The magazines with a female audience

³¹ p. 11

were Cosmopolitan, Elle, Glamour, MarieClaire, and Vogue. Advertisements in the magazines were recorded in each of the following categories³²:

- 1) Alcohol (beers and liquors)
- 2) Automobiles (including tires)
- 3) Clothing (including lingerie and underwear)
- 4) Clothing, Designer
- 5) Hair Care Products (including hair coloring)
- 6) Facial Care Products (including cleansers/moisturizers, and products for the teeth)
- 7) Body Products (including lotions, deodorant, and weight loss products)
- 8) Electronics (televisions, phones, DVD players, etc.)
- 9) Entertainment (including movies, CD's, and video games)
- 10) Make-up (including nail polish)
- 11) Accessories (including handbags, belts, and eyewear)
- 12) Shoes
- 13) Jewelry (including watches)
- 14) Perfume/Cologne
- 15) Travel (including trips and luggage)
- 16) Food/Non-Alcoholic Beverages
- 17) Sporting Products (including equipment and memorabilia)
- 18) Miscellaneous (listed individually)

All magazines reviewed were the March 2002 issue. Advertisements were recorded by size, either 1/4, 1/3, 1/2, or 1 full page. For each category, the partial and whole

³² Categories were created from general familiarity with the type of magazines analyzed.

pages were added and the total expressed in whole pages of advertising. After recording the data, the categories of Travel, Food/Non-Alcoholic Beverages, and Sporting Products were eliminated from the analysis because they represented so few pages of advertising (5 pages or less) across magazines for both genders. From the results in the Miscellaneous category, Tobacco Products was added as a category for analysis, as advertising was present in every magazine across both genders. The complete data summary can be seen in Appendix I.

Results

The fifteen product categories were divided into three groups of five. Lifestyle Products included the Alcohol, Automobiles, Electronics, Entertainment, and Tobacco Products categories. Personal Care Products included the Body Products, Facial Care Products, Hair Care Products, Makeup, and Perfume/Cologne categories. The third group, Clothing and Accessories, included the Accessories, Clothing, Designer Clothing, Jewelry, and Shoes categories.

The magazines' advertising does not appear to be homogenous within the gender groups. The men's magazines varied the most in the representation of the Clothing and Accessories group. Higher-end magazines like Esquire, GQ, and Details had many more advertisements for Designer Clothing and Accessories than Maxim and Stuff (see Table 1). Designer Clothing had the greatest total pages of advertising overall.

Table 1: Men's Magazines, Designer Clothing and Accessories Group

•	Magazine					
Categories	Details	Esquire	GQ	Maxim	Stuff	Total Pages
Accessories	7.333	4	4.5	2.25	0	18.083
Clothing	8	0.333	5	15	5	33.333
Clothing - Designer	72	57.333	74.5	15	7.333	226.166
Jewelry	1.333	2	3.333	1	0	7.666
Shoes	7	11	17.167	7	7.5	49.667
						334.915

All of the men's magazines had minimal representation of advertisements in the Personal Care Products group (See Table 2). Perfume/Cologne had the greatest total pages of advertising overall. As expected, makeup advertising did not show up at all in the men's magazines.

Table 2: Men's Magazines, Personal Care Products Group

	Magazin	e				
Categories	Details	Esquire	GQ	Maxim	Stuff	Total Pages
Body Products	2	2.333	2	2	0	8.333
Facial Care Products	0	2.333	2	1	0	5.333
Hair Care Products	4	0	4	0	0	8
Makeup	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perfume/Cologne	3.333	1	6	3	1	14.333
						35.999

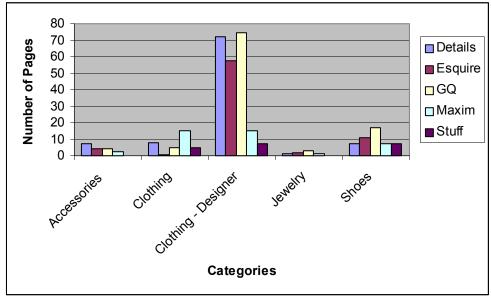
In terms of Lifestyle Products, the magazines Stuff and Maxim had much more entertainment advertising, mostly for video games, while Details, Esquire, and GQ all had much more Alcohol advertising (See Table 3). Stuff and Maxim probably have a younger readership, with less disposable income and less legal access to alcoholic beverages.

Table 3: Men's Magazines, Lifestyle Products Group

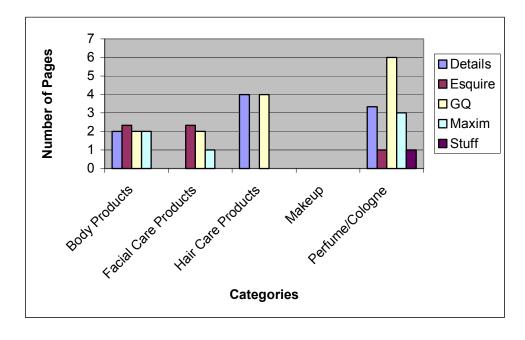
	Magazin	ie				
Categories	Details	Esquire	GQ	Maxim	Stuff	Total Pages
Alcohol	19	7.5	18.333	5	6.333	56.166
Automobiles	8	17	25	10	3	63
Electronics	3	0	6	2	0	11
Entertainment	8	1.167	10.833	12	13.5	45.5
Tobacco Products	9	2.333	5	7.333	7	30.666
						206.332

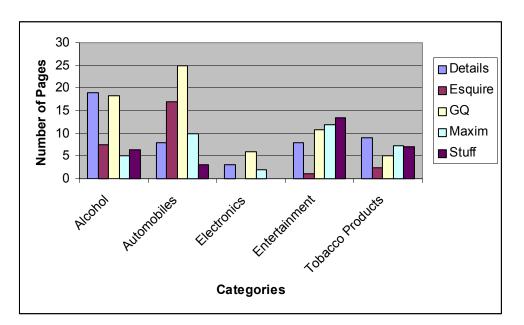
The results for the men's magazines are shown in Graphs 1 through 3. The men's magazines ranged in size from 172 to 354 pages. Regardless of size, they seemed to show the same trends. Designer Clothing and Shoes had the most pages of advertising in the Clothing and Accessories group. There was no real standout category in the Personal Care Products group, although Perfume/Cologne showed up at least once across the magazines. In the Lifestyle Products group, the greatest total advertising pages were in the Automobiles and Alcohol categories, followed by Entertainment and Tobacco Products.

Graph 1: Clothing and Accessories Group



Graph 2: Personal Care Products Group





Graph 3: Lifestyle Products Group

The women's magazines also seemed to vary the most in the representation of the Clothing and Accessories group of products. Again, higher end magazines like Elle and Vogue had more advertisements for Designer Clothing and Jewelry than Cosmospolitan, Glamour, and MarieClaire (See Table 4).

Table 4: Women's Magazines, Clothing and Accessories Group

	Magazine					
Categories	Cosmopolitan	Elle	Glamour	Marie Claire	Vogue	Total Pages
Accessories	0	24	1	7.5	43	75.5
Clothing	8	18	17	16	23	82
Clothing - Designer	7	113	10	40	213	383
Jewelry	0	9.333	0	5	13	27.333
Shoes	5	20	5.5	13.833	48	92.333
						660.166

All of the women's magazines had minimal representation of the Lifestyle Products category, with the exception of Vogue having 17 pages of advertising for Automobiles (See Table 5).

Table 5: Women's Magazines, Lifestyle Products Group

	Magazine					
Categories	Cosmopolitan	Elle	Glamour	MarieClaire	Vogue	Total Pages
Alcohol	2	1	2	2	4	11
Automobiles	3	3	2	4	17	29
Electronics	1	1	1	0	1	4
Entertainment	2	2.667	2.667	0	2	9.334
Tobacco Products	4	3	1	3	1	12
						65.334

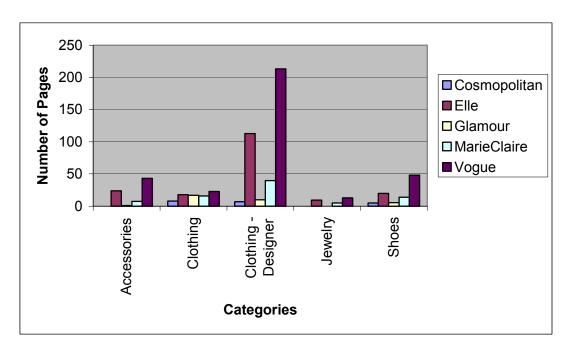
The women's magazines all had advertising in the Personal Care Products group.

The most advertising pages were devoted to Makeup and Facial Care Products (See Table 6).

Table 6: Women's Magazines, Personal Care Products Group

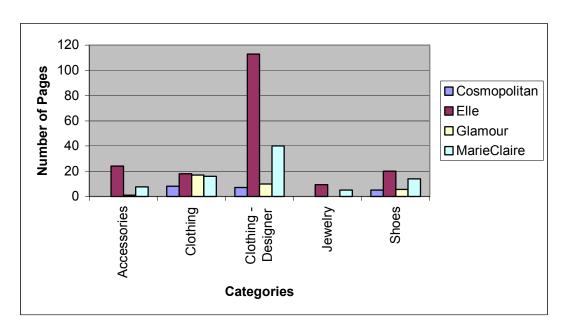
	Magazine					
						Total
Categories	Cosmopolitan	Elle	Glamour	MarieClaire	Vogue	Pages
Body Products	14.667	0	6.667	6	2.333	29.667
Facial Care Products	16.667	5	20.167	7.333	10.667	59.834
Hair Care Products	17.667	3	10	6	11	47.667
Makeup	14	9.333	23.833	11	17	75.166
Perfume/Cologne	5	6	9.333	3	16	39.333
						251.667

The results for all of the women's magazines are shown in Graphs 4 through 7³³.

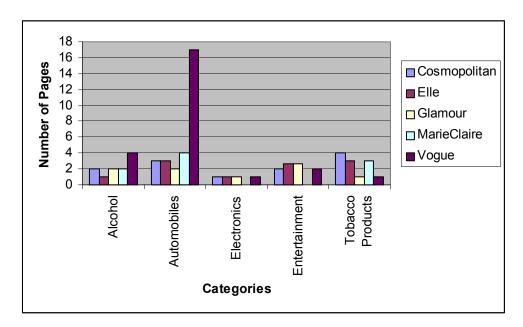


Graph 4: Clothing and Accessories Group (Including Vogue)



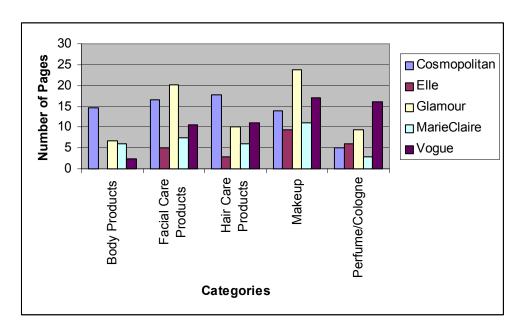


³³ Due to Vogue magazine's overall size, graphs are compressed when Vogue results are shown. Therefore, graphs are given both with and without Vogue results included.

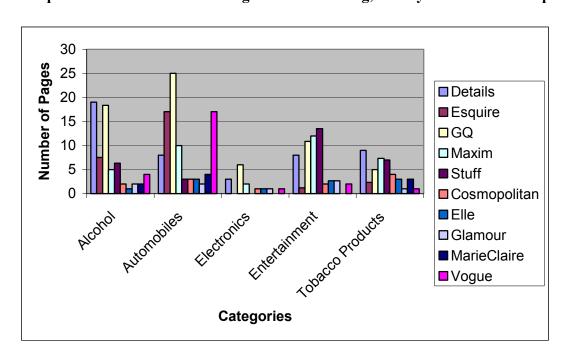


Graph 6: Lifestyle Products Group





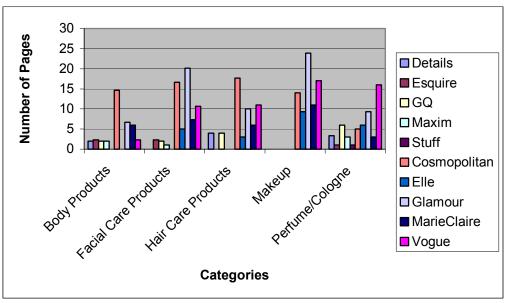
In the Lifestyle Products group, men's magazines had more pages of advertising for Alcohol and Automobiles (again, with the exception of Vogue's 17 pages of automobile advertising). The men's magazines also had more pages of advertising for Entertainment and Tobacco Products, with the exception of Esquire magazine. The Electronics category was not strongly represented by any of the magazines; only GQ had more than 5 pages of advertising in this category. Results are shown in Graph 8.



Graph 8: Men's & Women's Magazine Advertising, Lifestyle Products Group

In the Personal Care Products group, women's magazines had more pages of advertising for Makeup and Facial Care Products. They also had more pages of advertising in the Body Products and Hair Care Products categories, with the exception of Elle magazine. The Perfume/Cologne category was represented in all of the magazines, men's and women's. Results are shown in Graph 9.



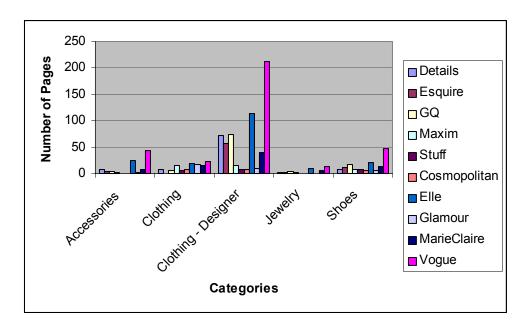


The Clothing and Accessories group had no clear result as to whether the men's magazines or the women's magazines had more advertising. All of the magazines had advertising representing the Clothing – Designer, Clothing, and Shoes categories. Accessories advertising was present in all of the magazines, with the exception of Stuff and Cosmopolitan. Jewelry advertising was not present in, again, Stuff and Cosmopolitan, but also Glamour magazine. Overall, the women's magazines in terms of total advertisements, had more than the men's magazines, but that could be because of the greater overall size of the women's magazines (see Tables 1 and 4). Results are shown in Graphs 10 and 11³⁴.

³⁴ Due to Vogue magazine's overall size, graphs are compressed when Vogue results are shown. Therefore, graphs are given both with and without Vogue results included.

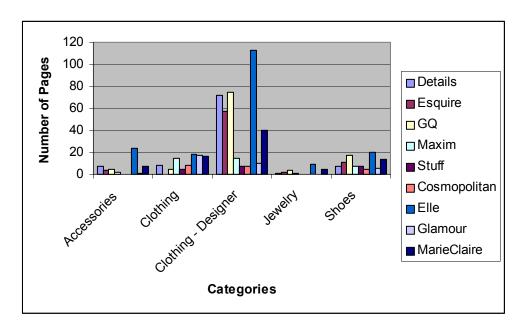
Graph 10: Men's & Women's Magazine Advertising, Clothing and Accessories

Group (Including Vogue)



Graph 11:Men's & Women's Magazine Advertising, Clothing and Accessories

Group (Excluding Vogue)



Conclusion

Results indicate that no one type of advertising predominates in women's and men's magazines. While men's magazines did have more advertising in the Lifestyle Products group overall, and women's magazines had more advertising in the Personal Care Products group overall, the Clothing and Accessories group was represented in magazines targeted at both genders. Within the Lifestyle Products group, there was advertising in the women's magazines, and within the Personal Care Products group, there was advertising in the men's magazines (with the exception of Makeup). In terms of the reinforcement of gender roles, advertising might be slowly changing as women's magazines represent more and more lifestyle products in their advertising, and men's magazines represent personal care products in their advertising as well. Future research could examine a larger sample across several years, to see if these results are a sign that there has indeed been progress.

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Appendix I: Data Summary

	Men's Magazines								
	Details	Esquire	GQ	Maxim	Stuff				
Categories									
Alcohol	19	7.5	18.333	5	6.333				
Automobiles	8	17	25	10	3				
Clothing	8	0.333	5	15	5				
Clothing Designer	72	57.333	74.5	15	7.333				
Hair Care Products	4	0	4	0	0				
Facial Care Products	0	2.333	2	1	0				
Body Products	2	2.333	2	2	0				
Electronics	3	0	6	2	0				
Entertainment	8	1.167	10.833	12	13.5				
Makeup	0	0	0	0	0				
Accessories	7.333	4	4.5	2.25	0				
Shoes	7	11	17.167	7	7.5				
Jewelry	1.333	2	3.333	1	0				
Perfume/Cologne	3.333	1	6	3	1				
Travel	1	0	0	1.333	0				
Food/Non-Alcoholic Bev's.	2	0	4	1	0				
Miscellaneous:									
tobacco products	9	2.333	5	7.333	7				
credit cards	2	0	1	1	1				
non-profit	0	1	1	0	0				
medications	0	0	1	0	0				
other	1	2	2.5	11	7				
Total Miscellaneous:	12	5.333	10.5	19.333	15				
# of pages in magazine	262	230	354	208	172				

Women's Magazines								
	Cosmopolitan	Elle	Glamour	MarieClaire	Vogue			
Categories								
Alcohol	2	1	2	2	4			
Automobiles	3	3	2	4	17			
Clothing	8	18	17	16	23			
Clothing Designer	7	113	10	40	213			
Hair Care Products	17.667	3	10	6	11			
Facial Care Products	16.667	5	20.167	7.333	10.667			
Body Products	14.667	0	6.667	6	2.333			
Electronics	1	1	1	0	1			
Entertainment	2	2.667	2.667	0	2			
Makeup	14	9.333	23.833	11	17			
Accessories	0	24	1	7.5	43			
Shoes	5	20	5.5	13.833	48			
Jewelry	0	9.333	0	5	13			
Perfume/Cologne	5	6	9.333	3	16			
Travel	0	0.667	1	0.333	2.5			
Food/Non-Alcoholic Bev's.	5	0	4	1.333	3			
Miscellaneous:								
tobacco products	4	3	1	3	1			
credit cards	1	1	0	0	1			
non-profit	2.333	0	0.667	6	2.333			
medications	10.667	4.333	18	7	4			
other	8.5	4	1.667	7.5	11.167			
Total Miscellaneous:	26.5	12.333	21.334	23.5	19.5			
# of pages in magazine	240	404	288	278	598			