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ABSTRACT

The Center for Research on Women (CROW) at Stanford University along with the Communication Department, the Psychology Department, and the School of Education conducted a study on the image of women in advertising and suggested ways to improve women's image in the advertising media. With the objective of sponsoring some alternatives to expedite change, the project focused on how advertising agencies and advertisers interact and how they create images. The results of interviews and a literature search indicated that advertising agencies continued to respond to the profit motive rather than social needs. However, there seemed to be several ways of bringing about image change. These included: (1) having large organizations, such as National Organization of Women (NOW), approach major advertisers and advertising agencies with suggestions for change; (2) having stockholders demand a more accurate presentation of women; (3) having large organizations boycott products with particularly offensive advertisements; (4) encouraging acceptance of recommendations made by the National Advertising Relations Board (NARB); and (5) urging the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to be sensitive to presentations of women in commercials. The study concluded that alternatives needed to be backed up by research data showing the image of women portrayed by the advertiser or agency.

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IMAGE OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISEMENTS:  
A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF AVENUES FOR CHANGE

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## FOREWORD

On a campus like Stanford, there are many women pursuing graduate study. Most of us have no women faculty advisers. Some of us find sympathetic men who are willing to sponsor, and in some cases to advise, our projects dealing with "women's issues". Others of us are not so lucky.

The Stanford University community has been particularly fortunate in having the Center for Research on Women (CROW). This group has actively sought to sensitize Stanford to the needs of its women students, to help women work together, and to seek outside funding to support their projects.

Our Women and the Media research group became formally organized because CROW exists. Many of us are deeply concerned about sexism in the media and its effects on present and future generations of Americans. However, there are always so many other things to do -- course work, research assistantships, teaching assistantships, etc. Our mini-grant from the Ford Foundation through CROW provided the context for bringing together women from the Communication Department, the Psychology Department, and the School of Education. For the first time, we were able to explore these issues of particular relevance to us and society.

We feel that the achievement of each decade is influenced by its perceived "images of potentiality" (to borrow Ronald Lippitt's phrase). Women in the 1970's continue to see many of the same limiting media portrayals that all women in this century have seen. To a certain extent, this normative media image reflects our society. However, it also creates the agenda of the future. In our research, we want to work toward the full and equitable access to images of potentiality for both women and men.

When there are small amounts of money for individual research projects, it is sometimes difficult to evaluate the "usefulness" of the expenditure. For us, the seed money has been particularly significant, far beyond the findings of the project. Although most of us gave our time to the project without remuneration, we value the time spent together, the opportunity to exchange ideas, and the auspices to study these meaningful issues. Several of us are consolidating this experience by preparing a proposal for additional research on the portrayal of women in the media and effective ways of creating change.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has designated 1975 as International Women's Year. Tens of thousands of women belong to the National Organization of Women. More than thirty states have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Women represent more than a third of the work force. And still the media portray women as happy homemakers, concerned only with sweet smelling clothes, clean floors, and germs lurking in the bathroom.

The legal basis for equality exists in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11478, Executive Order 11246 as amended by Executive Order 11375 for Federal Contract Compliance, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 as amended by Education Amendments of 1972, etc. However, the social basis of equality for women has no legislative mandate and continues to lag significantly behind.

The mass media, and television in particular, represent the most influential force to perpetuate or to change the current social basis for discrimination. Over the past few years the media portrayal of women has been studied through content analysis and case studies. UNESCO's Commission of the Status of Women surveyed its members and reached the same conclusion as many other studies. They report:

"...the image of women in the family portrayed by advertisements reinforces sex-role stereotypes. It is acceptable for women to do the mending, washing and feeding, and men to do the handiwork and wash the car. Women are usually portrayed as unable to think for themselves and they invariably let the men make the decisions. Seldom are they shown even making decisions on the higher-priced purchases. Loss of masculine approval is viewed as a threat, and a woman's actions or clever uses of the product are viewed so as to gain the man's approval and securely entrench the woman's place in his life. Predominantly male 'voice-overs' are used in radio and television commercials, even those demonstrating the use of a woman's product. According to advertisements, women seem to be obsessed with cleanliness, placing above-normal emphasis on whiteness, brightness and expressing a gamut of emotions at smelling

the kitchen floor or the family wash. Housework is rarely viewed for what it is: a necessary task that is performed in order to make the family comfortable." (1974, p.15)

Growing criticism of the image of women in advertising prompted the National Advertising Review Board to establish a panel to examine the basis for these complaints. The panel concluded "The problem is real." (1975) They write:

"To deny that 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 woman-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.

Seen in this light, advertising must be regarded as one of the forces molding society. Those who protest that advertising merely reflects society must reckon with the criticism that much of the current reflection of women in advertising is out of date. To the extent that this is true, 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." (pp. 1-2)

The media continue to present women stereotypically. Feminists are eager to effect change in the presentations. There seem to be three major types of actions:

1. Social Action: Complaints to networks and advertisers by individuals and organized groups; demands for increased coverage of women and improved image of women in media; outlines of action steps for networks, advertisers, and advertising agencies;
2. Legal Action: Challenges to broadcasters' license renewals;
3. Financial Action: Boycotts of products that portray women stereotypically.

Each of these actions would be facilitated by:

1. Knowledge of the image of women portrayed by advertisers as well as the image of women portrayed in the programs they sponsor;

2. Knowledge of the functions that sexism serve;
3. Knowledge of who controls the image of women seen in advertising and programs as well as how the control is exercised;
4. Knowledge of the audience of advertisements and programs;
5. Knowledge of the effects of sexist advertising and programming on children and adults.

The first step is determined by content analysis, the second by sociopsychological analysis, the third by control analysis, the fourth by audience analysis and the fifth by effects analysis. To bring about change, we believe all steps are important.

Most of the research on mass media and women has been content analyses of television programs and advertisements. The studies have focused on how women are presented in the different time periods, such as Saturday morning children's programs, daytime serials, evening prime time, etc. Advertisements in magazines have been studied, the emphasis being on the presentation of women in different types of magazines, ranging from THE NEW YORKER to READER'S DIGEST. Except for illustrative materials in reports of these studies, we do not know which advertisers project which image in their advertisements or in the programs they sponsor.

The few remaining studies on mass media and women are effects research. Most of the studies have investigated how heavy television viewers versus light television viewers perceive roles and careers, or the extent to which role modeling of television's characters leads to stereotypic responses about sex role expectations.

The content analyses of mass media and studies of its effects are important. However, in those rare times when research has been combined with action (see Chapter III), the results have not always been successful. It was the intent of this research team to focus the content analysis on one advertiser. The results were to have been used through the entire project. Our findings would have been part of the study of the functions that sexism serve, the focus of our discussions with the advertiser and advertising agency producing the advertisements, the target for the audience analysis, and the stimulus material for our effects research.

Admittedly this is a large project requiring the attention of many professionals. Since we viewed the study as the test of a research model for change, we had thought we would limit the scope by concentrating on one or two products. However, we received funds to work only on the analysis of who controls the image of women and how

that control is exercised. Knowing the results from this preliminary investigation would be useful to us later when we are able to work through the entire research model, we eagerly began the project. Readers are urged to consider this study as only one aspect of 'research for change.' Comments we make are not only preliminary, but also need to be verified in the context of the entire model.

If we had proceeded with our interest in a content analysis of the image of women as presented by one advertiser, we would have chosen Proctor and Gamble Company since it is the largest advertiser, spending more than \$91,000,000 last year. As we write this report, the stockholders' resolution to have P and G study the image of women it presents has just been voted down. However, getting the resolution on the ballot was a major step. We feel that in the near future, targeted research will be common. Right now we say advertisements are sexist and we may cite a few examples. But no one is held responsible, because we never say who is presenting the image. If we analyze part of the product line of P and G, such as Folger Coffee (almost \$9,000,000 advertising budget) or Pampers Disposable Diapers (more than \$5,000,000 advertising budget), we then hold the company responsible and have a target for change.

Until now the liberation movement has been peaceful. But as frustrations continue to mount, women in America may feel the need to 'throw rocks' as their sisters in England did in the 1900's. As social scientists, we feel that 'paper rocks' can be effective, particularly when aimed with precision. Hopefully, this research project is a first step in the process of understanding images of women projected by individual advertisers, the amount of control over that image exerted by advertisers, the relationship between advertiser and advertising agency, the amount of control over the image that is exercised by the advertising agency, and the effects of the image on children and adults.

## II. BACKGROUND

Various aspects of women's roles in advertisements have been analysed over the past five years. (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971; Dominick and Rauch, 1972; Hennessee and Nicholson, 1972; National Organization for Women, 1972; Wagner and Banos, 1973, Sexton and Haberman, 1974; Culley and Bennett, 1975; McArthur and Resko, in press; Busby, 1975), etc. Their findings are remarkably consistent:

- married women rarely work outside the home;
- single women rarely have responsible jobs;
- women are silly, over-emotional, and dependent on men;
- women are found primarily in the kitchen and bathroom;
- women are usually between the ages of 20 and 35;
- women are rarely the 'voice-overs' for products.

In 1975 we find several advertisements that are transitional in their presentation of women and a few others that are nonstereotypic. The L'eggs commercial showing the woman as a police officer is to be commended for placing a woman in a nontraditional role. However, it concludes by drawing attention to her attractive legs, reinforcing the stereotype that whatever a woman is doing, men will notice her body. The RC Cola commercial showing a woman choosing her own lifestyle and saying "I have to be me" almost breaks the pattern. However, it shows her taking off on a motorcycle behind a man. The imagery of the male as driver indicates she is not in charge. Three recent advertisements have successfully presented women and men nonstereotypically. The Campbell soup commercial showing a man fixing dinner for his 'working wife' is outstanding as is the Excedrin advertisement showing the professional woman in her office commenting "When I have a headache, I have to keep going." Aetna Life Insurance Company was among the first to show women nonstereotypically. Most recently, the company sponsored the television special BABE, the story of Mildred (Babe) Didrikson. All commercial during the program showed women important and as needing life insurance as much as men. In one commercial a little girl is playing on a

baseball team. She does not stand on base, nor is she shown in some "passive" position. Instead she is shown at bat, hitting the ball, and running to the bases. Progress is slow, but welcome.

Criticism has been leveled at those who complain about the image of women. Critics say the role of advertising is to reflect society as it is, rather than as it should be (Greyser, 1972). However, the results of numerous content analyses show that advertising fails as an accurate reflection of the conditions that exist. The diversity of roles and the substantive nature of those roles of women in our society simply do not appear in current advertisements.

Who controls this image we see? How can the image be changed? Are advertisers willing to use new images? Are advertising agencies ready to displace stereotypes with new images? These are some of the questions we explore in the following chapters.

### III. SOME RECENT EFFORTS TO CHANGE THE IMAGE OF WOMEN

There have been two methods for changing the stereotypic image of women. The first is best characterized as a "due-process" approach and the second as an awareness approach. This section discusses recent progress as well as an indepth look at the report of the National Advertising Review Board on woman and advertising.

#### DUE-PROCESS APPROACH

Many of the due-process challenges have been spearheaded by the National Organization for Women (NOW). The National Media Task Force of NOW has two main offices. One, based in Washington, D.C., is headed by Kathy Bonk and is responsible for lobbying and challenges through the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). The other center is in New York City where Joyce Snyder works with advertising agencies and the networks.

In 1972 NOW petitioned the Federal Communication Commission under the fairness doctrine to deny license renewal to WABC-TV in New York and WRC-TV in Washington, D.C. on the grounds that the stations: 1) failed to consult with women or women's groups regarding women's programming, 2) presented a distorted image of women, and 3) discriminated in the employment of women. In support of the second charge, a content analysis that examined all programming and commercials was conducted. This extensive survey was published as WOMEN IN THE WASTELAND FIGHT BACK (1972). After three years of non-response, NOW asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for a decision. On January 22, 1975 the Court ordered the FCC to act on the petition within 90 days. The FCC has since rejected the petition (MEDIA REPORT TO WOMEN, March 1, 1975).

The Houston Area Chapter of NOW reached a more successful conclusion in negotiations with KPRC-TV. On the basis of NOW's complaint, KPRC-TV filed a new agreement with the FCC on June 24, 1974.

"...if the Women's Advisory Council is of the opinion that a commercial appearing on KPRC-TV may be offensive to women in the public generally...KPRC-TV will then review the commercial and, if it agrees with the opinion of the Women's Advisory Council, appropriate action will be taken to notify the person or firm responsible for airing the

commercial...KPRC-TV will continue to reserve the right to remove an offensive commercial from the air."

(MEDIA REPORT TO WOMEN, August 1, 1974)

In Vancouver, the Media Action Group of the Vancouver Status of Women lodged a complaint with the Canadian Radio and Television Commission. As a result, Benson and Hedges withdrew its advertisement "the longer the better" that featured a man emerging out of a manhole to gawk at a woman's legs. The Media Action Group suggested that the slogan might be an equally appropriate caption for a picture of a woman staring at a man's crotch.

NOW has also worked with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to challenge the image of women in advertising. NOW has asked the FTC to require substantiation of National Airlines' advertising claim: "I'm going to fly you like you've never been flown before." The complaint says that these advertisements are:

"deceptive because most of the ads refer to STEWARDESSES who say THEY are going to fly passengers, when clearly they do not perform any of the duties entailed in navigating the aircraft... Unless National Airlines can substantiate its claim that they are flying their passengers in a different method than the way a passenger has been previously transported by any other commercial airline carrier, we respectfully urge the FTC to issue a cease and desist order to National for unfair and deceptive advertising claims."  
(MEDIA REPORT TO WOMEN, March 1, 1975).

Apart from the direct impact of the complaints about advertising lodged with the FCC and FTC, advertising's image of women has been affected through another legal channel. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act that forbids discrimination by race or sex, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed against AT&T, one of the largest employers of women. In addition to the multi-million dollar settlement that AT&T was forced to pay its female employees, they also had to reform their advertising practices to eliminate sex-biased ads. In support of the EEOC case Sandra and Daryl Bem (1973) conducted an experiment to demonstrate that advertising shapes job preferences, and that a change in advertisements would change these preferences.

#### AWARENESS APPROACH

In addition to using due process to change the media presentation of women, a variety of groups have tried to increase the awareness of networks, advertisers, and advertising agencies. Some of the efforts have been carried out by 'outsiders' to the media industry such as NOW and others have been done by 'insiders' such as the National Advertising Review Board.

OUTSIDER EFFORTS. NOW has held consciousness-raising sessions with advertising agencies (Snyder, 1975) as well as counter forums for the Advertising Age Creative Workshops and the A.J. Liebling Convention for Journalists (ADVERTISING AGE, August 5, 1974). The counter forums drew many advertising executives and journalists who heard speakers describe the problem with current advertising and call for more nonstereotypic presentations.

Other awareness strategies have been tried. In 1970, NOW developed a series of awards including the "Barefoot and Pregnant Award of the Week for Advertising Degrading to Women" and "Giant Leap Backward" awards. Large stickers were printed reading "This ad insults women" that were to be pasted on sexist advertising billboards (Ventura, 1974). These activities draw the attention of the public, the press, and the trade journals to the issue of women's image. The impact of these activities is less easily measured than the impact of legal decisions. These actions are part of the mainstream of social turmoil that acts on all parts of the system in an interleaving manner. Although we cannot pinpoint the cause of the raised consciousness, we feel the following comments by winners of the Advertising Women of the Year Award show some increased awareness:

"A lot of the objectionable things were inadvertent.."

"The movement has done a good job of telling the whole population that women are around and are capable of doing a good job."

"(The movement) has acted as a discipline on the fringe kinds of advertisement with excesses of stereotypes."

Of course, some of the comments illustrate the continuing perspective of advertising personnel, both women and men:

"Our research has proven that a big part of women's satisfaction comes from being wives and mothers. I see no sense in ramming liberation down their throats."

"Personally, I don't feel any resentment toward 'chauvinistic' advertisers, perhaps because I'm not looking for chauvinism."

"Successful marketers understand what most women want. Frankly, most women are not interested in careers but in affairs of the family and home."

(EDITOR AND PUBLISHER, June 8, 1974)

INSIDER EFFORTS, The earliest attempts to modify the image of women in advertising came from people within the industry. A cross-industry group called Media Women was founded in the fall of 1969

(Hole and Levine, 1971, p. 284). In December, 1969 they demonstrated in front of Macy's in New York City to protest the Mattel toy advertisements that portrayed stereotyped activities for boys and girls (Komisar, 1971, p. 305). The now often quoted Mattel Toy advertisement that prompted their action read:

"Because girls dream about being a ballerina, Mattel makes Dancerina... a pink confection of silken blouse and ruffled tutu... Wishing you were older is part of growing up... Barbie, a young fashion model, and her friends, do the 'in' things girls should do -- talk about new places to visit, new clothes to wear and new friends to meet...

"Because boys were born to build and learn, Mattel makes Tog'l (building blocks for creative play)... imaginative and fantastic creatures that challenge young minds to think as they build... Because boys are curious about things big and small, Mattel makes Super-Eyes, a telescope that boys can have in one ingenious set of optically engineered lenses and scopes... that... create dozens of viewing devices -- all for science or all for fun." (Akamatsu, 1972, p.1)

Although the group received no response from Mattel, they helped the industry and the public develop an awareness of the limiting imagery that companies use in their advertising.

National Advertising Review Board. Perhaps the 'insider' with the most potential to create change is the National Advertising Review Board (NARB). NARB is the self-regulatory body of the advertising industry. It is an arm of the National Advertising Review Council that represents four groups: 1) the American Association of Advertising Agencies, 2) the Association of National Advertisers, 3) American Advertising Federation, and 4) the National Council for Better Business. NARB is composed of 60 members: 10 agency representatives, 10 non-voting agency alternates, 30 advertisers and 10 public representatives.

NARB's initial charter was to ensure "truth and accuracy" in advertising. However, in 1972 James C. Nelson, Executive Vice President of Hoefer, Dieterich and Brown, led an effort to broaden the scope of the NARB to include the objective of "raising the level of national advertising." (Nelson, 1975). To accomplish this goal, NARB convenes five-person panels to formulate guidelines for these issues of taste and fairness. The first three issues to be considered were: 1) safety, 2) women, and 3) energy-related advertising. The image of women was placed on the initial list after Joyce Snyder of NOW approached NARB with a concern about the presentation of women in advertising.

NARB has no official means of enforcing either its specific findings (levied against a single advertisement for not being truthful and accurate) or its general guidelines. It relies on "moral persuasion", only occasionally threatening FTC intervention.

In March, 1975 guidelines concerning advertising and women were released. In the fall of the previous year, the panel had presented its findings to the Board. However, the Board's comments mandated a revision of the text. The majority of the criticisms had to do with strengthening the logic and grammar of the report. The Board changed the use of the word "feminist" to include both men and women concerned with women's issues, and they reintroduced the word "sexist", which originally had been stricken as being too militant. The report notes women's changing position in society and the importance of that change to advertising. It concludes with recommendations designed to stimulate advertising agencies to examine their advertisements and to be aware of the image of women they are presenting. (ADVERTISING AND WOMEN, 1975)

The report identifies two major reasons for believing that the industry should re-examine its treatment of women. First, it holds that the current treatment of women is intrinsically unfair. Second, it states that sexist advertising is a counter-productive business practice. The report does not include specific directives as did the earlier report on safety because "safety is a more clearcut issue than advertising to women." (ADVERTISING AGE, May 12, 1975).

While the report appears to be an accurate assessment of current advertising practices and general social conditions, it cannot be assumed that it will serve as the sole impetus for change within the advertising industry. It has been hopefully characterized by James Parton (Chairperson of NARB) as "a needle in the rump of the advertising business." (ADVERTISING AGE, May 12, 1975). It may be more realistically characterized as a marker in the flood of social forces moving towards change. As Nelson remarked, the advertising industry can neither cause nor stop social change, however, it may be able to shift the pace.

Although Nelson believes that responsibility for the image of women in advertising is fairly divided ("co-responsive, symbiotic") between the advertiser and the advertising agency, he feels the agencies will be faster to make changes. He believes advertising agencies move younger, less conservative personnel into decisionmaking positions faster than large companies. This means the clients are more likely to continue to think of women stereotypically while agencies are beginning to think of women in a larger number of roles. And to the extent that agencies are able to determine the image portrayed, change will occur.

Much of the impact of the NARB report will depend on its dissemination and publicity throughout the trade. The report was reprinted in full in ADVERTISING AGE (April 21, 1975). Sylvia Porter devoted a column to it in the NEW YORK POST March 24, 1975. She said

that "the criticisms in the NARB's report almost surely will have an impact going beyond any similar comments by an outside group." It remains doubtful, however, that any of the basic strategies of the advertising industry will change. In an effort to explain the new image as understood by Colgate-Palmolive, Tina Santi outlines a description of the "Outward Bound" woman and concludes by noting "we must learn as much as we can about the life styles and needs and strengths and insecurities of this woman." (ADVERTISING AGE, March 18, 1974).

Advertising Council. The second inside group with potential for creating change is the Advertising Council. Public service and public interest advertising could show women nonstereotypically. An estimated 80 per cent of public service advertisements come from the Advertising Council. From hundreds of requests received annually the Advertising Council accepts 25 campaigns per year. A provocative analysis of the structure and history of the Advertising Council indicates that it is business groups and business dominated institutions that are usually seen to be acting in the "public interest" and are therefore accorded treatment by the Advertising Council (Hirsch, 1975).

NOW sought support from the Advertising Council in 1971 and was rejected on the grounds that the organization was too politically oriented. However, this position was later reversed, and in June, 1973 the campaign "Woman power. It's much too good to waste" was launched. Two foundations aided in the cost of the campaign that was conceived and directed by Midge Kovacs. The advertisements were used by over 650 radio and television stations and 35 national magazines during a seven month period. (MEDIA REPORT TO WOMEN, November 1, 1974).

Public interest advertising directly and indirectly supports women's issues in advertising. One prototype organization for this activity is the Public Media Center in San Francisco that is dedicated "to the task of representing the unrepresented." (PUBLIC MEDIA CENTER ANNUAL REPORT 1974/75). Their goals are to extend education about appropriate use of the media and to provide specific media assistance to special interest groups. Work in media education is aimed at 1) funders and potential funders of the Center who need to be sensitized to the role of the media in extending results, 2) media personnel, such as broadcasters, and 3) client groups who need to know how to convey their message. While the Public Media Center is primarily funded by foundations such as the San Francisco Foundation and Vanguard Foundation, it also has received support directly from some local advertising agencies in terms of personnel assistance and skills. Both public service and public interest advertising provide an outlet for the expression of social responsibility by members of the advertising industry.

Unfortunately, public interest advertisers do not always take advantage of the opportunity to create positive counterimages of women. Although the Public Media Center has worked for Advocates for Women,

Bread and Roses, Coalition for Medical Rights of Women, and the San Francisco Women's Center, rarely have they successfully dealt with the presentation of women. In a selection of their film spots only one utilized women, and it showed them in the traditional sexist way. This commercial was excused with the explanation, "we have to give them what they want," a line not dissimilar from the excuses of the rest of the advertising industry (Hirsch interview, May 15, 1975). It appears that even public interest advertising has a limited awareness of the need for nonstereotypic presentations of women.

The third insider organization that has the potential to bring about change is the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). NOW is currently drafting suggested revisions for the NAB codebook statement of principles (Snyder interview, May 21, 1975). In this case NOW will be attempting to build a coalition among women's groups, media reform groups, and other interested organizations to ensure that their revisions have the broadest political base. NAB, unlike NARB, has both a long history in the industry and an elaborately structured code modification procedure. But like NARB, they rely totally on voluntary compliance. NAB's code can have a significant impact on the form of television advertising. For example, it was through their organization that the moratorium on liquor advertising was implemented. If the code is changed, it will be an excellent example of how the 'inside' and 'outside' approach to change can effectively work together.

One source of change within the advertising industry that is least easy to document and probably the most profound, is the effect of interpersonal influence. As more women come to understand the effect of advertising's image of women, more personal pressure is brought to bear on those responsible for forming that image. This influential group includes the growing numbers of women working in the industry as well as the close friends and relatives of those men in the advertising world. Communication research literature reports the strength of impact of these personal links. To the extent that the protest over the treatment of women in advertising reaches the public ear, it can influence anyone who at one time or another is in the role of the "public" as well as in the shadow of the industry.

Documentation of such sensitization is found in the NARB report. The authors write:

"...it might be noted that during the course of the investigation the members of the Panel experienced a distinct change in the levels of their individual awareness of the problem. They found themselves increasingly sensitive to the implications of advertising that portrays women or is directed to women and to the attitudes that many people hold toward this kind of advertising." (p. 2)

## IV. HOW ADVERTISING AGENCIES HANDLE ACCOUNTS

Advertisers and advertising agencies are responsible for the stereotypic presentations of women and men. Why do they continue to portray women in the home when women represent more than a third of the work force? Who decides how a product is to be marketed? How do advertisers and advertising agencies work on campaigns? Who exerts control? How is the control exercised? These are a few of the questions on our minds as we began our research about advertising.

Literature references and interviews are the sources of information for this section (see Appendices A and B). Occasionally, the sources conflict in their reporting of what happens on a day-to-day basis within and between agencies and their clients. Important questions such as who is responsible for what and who makes ultimate decisions are not easily answered, yet are important for 'change research'. For every question we have answered, we have raised a dozen more.

In answering the question "How does an agency work?" it is important to remember that how an agency functions greatly depends on how individual accounts are handled and on the size of the advertiser. Each advertising agency works autonomously in setting up its various accounts. However, with the larger advertisers, the agencies tend to have less autonomy. In a few instances, several advertising agencies have grouped together into one company, each still operating and accruing profits independently.

Each advertising agency includes both business and creative personnel who work together to design advertisements for clients. The next step is placing the advertisement in the appropriate media. The choice is made on the basis of media research, with such criteria as target audience to be reached. The media department is usually a separate division in the agency and increasingly is becoming computer-based.

Sales personnel, usually men, are responsible for soliciting an account. In order to be effective and informed, a profile of the prospective client is drawn up from marketing data. This profile may later serve as the basis in the formation of the new advertisements.

The individual advertising agency is motivated by the total amount of money spent by the advertiser since it is paid a percentage of that total. The agencies are placed in the position of having to sell a profitable but acceptable plan to the client -- one that will guarantee a percentage that puts the agency in the black. The advertising campaign itself must also provoke a profitable margin of sales in the public. The advertising agency may be perceived as functioning between two very demanding entities -- the advertiser and the public.

The specifics of developing an advertising campaign differs with each product. The process, however, is similar for all accounts. Some accounts consist of only a specialized approach, for example, a radio spot designed to reach only a limited community of people. Others are more diverse and cover a much larger market, such as a national television commercial campaign designed for a national brand name product. As the scope of the campaign differs, so does the individual advertising agency. But whatever the size of the agency, the ultimate in agency participation is the preparation of the ENTIRE marketing plan for a product.

An example of high agency participation is provided by Hall & Levine's handling of a large, new hotel on Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. The agency was consulted at every step of development as a marketing resource and image coordinator for the enterprise. Topics, such as the location of the new hotel, the architecture, the name, the prospective clientele, the publicity brochure and the prices were all part of an entire scheme developed by Hall & Levine in close relation with the hotel's owners and promoters. The agency was in full control of the kind of image they wanted to project.

This kind of account is ideal and especially sought after by agencies since it gives the agency more responsibility than a standard account involving a product that is already on the market. Added responsibility means added dollars for the agency.

#### BROCKMEYER ICE CREAM ADVERTISEMENTS

A similar degree of responsibility was extended to Carlson, Liebowitz, and Gottlieb in their Brockmeyer Ice Cream account. The client, Arden Farms Dairy, asked the agency to create an advertising campaign to rescue the "natural" ice cream from probable market failure. Their first step was to do market research in the form of a taste test conducted in Rexall Drug Stores. The test indicated that women liked the product. It should be added that this was not a "blind taste test" in that tasters were told the ingredients -- whole milk, honey, and eggs -- made it a healthy product for consumption.

Usually, the target audience for a product is chosen on the basis of research done according to the needs of the product. It is the job

of consumer research in an advertising agency to help the advertiser to understand how the value systems of consumers vary in the population and to understand the extent and nature of consumer information and attitudes about the brands advertised. (ADVERTISING AGE, November 21, 1973, p. 59.) Marketing research companies such as Nielson and W.R. Simmons are often the source for such data.

The next step in the Brockmeyer account was to choose a name for the ice cream. This was done by using the name of a man retiring at the dairy. The name Gilbert H. Brockmeyer seemed as wholesome and natural as the ice cream. A Will Rogers-like personality was created to accompany the name. The visuals, packaging and artwork were prepared to be as unpretentious as possible. The packaging was plain, the artwork primitive, not slick. The copy was written in a simple and down-to-earth tone. "The total effect was to communicate a natural, old-fashioned GOODNESS," says Carlson, who is responsible for the account.

A critical point in the campaign was reached when the agency decided to let the market select itself instead of targeting on a particular group. Although the advertisements were placed in magazines, the agency feels a great deal of the success in promoting the new product took place through word-of-mouth. The myth of Gilbert H. Brockmeyer seems to be accepted as real and factual and the product is a lucrative success for Arden Farms Dairy and the agency. The unity achieved between product and image accounts for the campaign's success.

#### HIGH TIDE SWIMSUIT ADVERTISEMENTS

In other advertising campaigns described by Carlson, the image of the company was more important than the image of the product. She described two such companies. Both are clothing manufacturers. The first, High Tide, is a trade account which means the advertising is targeted to other clothing manufacturer and buyers, but not necessarily to consumers. High Tide is basically a swimsuit operation and their advertisements are produced with the prime consideration that the account is limited to only two advertisements per year. Therefore, the advertising has to have impact. Usually this is accomplished by exposing or rather "over-exposing" a segment of the female anatomy, "to communicate the feeling of girl." The advertisements are written to remind people that High Tide is a young, aggressive, maverick company. People collect the ads; stores post them. The merchandise is now sent directly to the store for them to sell, bypassing a route that led directly to the consumer.

#### PAUL MARIS CLOTHES

Working on the Paul Maris Company account, again a clothing manufacturer in need of rescue, Carlson and her associates began developing an image of a company truly interested in women ages eighteen

to twenty-three. Their efforts resulted in one of the first advertising campaigns that strove to reproduce realistic images by using real people in the advertisements. The underlying reasoning and professed interest centered around the tactic that Paul Maris "would rather let you tell YOUR story than impose ours on you."

"We do not have affairs nor are we adulterers," runs one headline. The copy tells Randy Skinner's story of unmarried bliss. Her boyfriend is in the picture, playing a guitar. Her white dress is by Paul Maris. As one of Carlson's associates stated, "It was a sneaky way of selling a product by not being obvious, of doing something that must be done." The advertisements are a success, the image of the company saved. "If nobody's talking about it, then let us talk about it," is the closing copy line for each advertisement. Carlson, Liebowitz, and Gottlieb have been able to inject a realistic image into a slick magazine format even before any pressure to create nonstereotypic ads.

Carlson's account of the advertising campaigns suggests that despite claims to sell products, not images, agencies often spend much of their effort creating images. If every account demands a unique approach, and if it is necessary to shock people into recognition of an otherwise incognito bathing suit company, it will be done. If it is necessary to transform the image of a floundering fashion business, it will be done. The rarer but eternally successful instances are then those where product and image intermesh to form a new separate entity. The product does become more than product qua product. Myth is woven around cereal boxes, soft drinks, and cigarettes -- a myth that imbues a three dimensional product with a past, a presence, a character, charisma, and hopefully, a very lucrative future. The most popular products, given animate form by good marketing and creative insight, also attain a voice of their own that can be heard on any aisle in any supermarket in the country. The products become larger than life through the repeated projection of their image in the media; they are immortalized through their own specific myth of promised vitality or stunning cleaning powers. This is the magic of advertising and the power of commercial communication -- to create an unalterable myth that registers in dollars at the cash register.

## V. PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES

Moving away from specific case studies of products, we have tried to learn more about how advertising agencies perceive the role of advertising and the role of women in advertisements. There are many ways to characterize the advertising industry as a whole. - The most common metaphor used by people in the industry is that it acts as a mirror to society. By assuming the role of reflector of the current social mores, the advertising industry has removed itself from the arena of social change and responsibility. It has denied values as the basis for selectivity in advertising since a "mirror" reflects all aspects of its object. It has perpetuated the status quo by giving back to us, the public, a mixture of who we think we are and who they think we are. However, it would seem from watching television advertising or perusing the current magazines, that the advertising industry does not even act as an accurate mirror. Instead it throws back images that are obsolete and stereotypic. It is here where the issue lies, in particular, with the images of women being projected for mass consumption. The majority of these images show women in a 9 X 12 kitchen and/or as decorative objects. Although the products change, the setting does not.

Janet Carlson, one of the creative heads at Carlson, Liebowitz, and Gottlieb in Los Angeles, spoke of a stereotypic image of women that she perceives -- that "all America is 18-25 in age, that it's all long legged, an awful lot of it is blond and that it all lives on a thousand calories a day. I don't blame women for bridling at that kind of an image," she said.

From the point of view of the men and women in advertising, advertisements for kitchen products are designed specifically for the housewife because she constitutes such a large buying market for these goods. "I assume," said one advertising man interviewed this spring, "that most kitchen products are used by women and that men don't give a damn about them, even the bachelors. Since women are the major consumers, the main purpose of such an advertisement is to present a product in an average situation, usually the kitchen, being used by an average type person -- the middle class housewife. Do you propose that we put the woman in an office in the Empire State building with her garbage disposal, three children, and cat?"

It is to answer such a question that an extended description of advertising agencies has been composed. There are no simple answers. Searching for them required consideration of a number of characteristics of the advertising field. A discussion of these characteristics comprise the remainder of this section. The topics include further consideration of the stereotyped roles of women, the personal needs to which advertisements are directed, the consumer's subjective process of selection upon which advertisements are based, the promises made by ads, the primary purpose of ads, the roles of images in advertising, the seat(s) of responsibility for propagating images, the decision-making network in the industry, the use of media, and the acceptance of women by the industry.

The major objections to stereotypic advertisements about women have been that women do other things than just work in the kitchen and that they are other things than housewives. Almost half of the women in the U.S. work outside the home. Why aren't women being more realistically portrayed? Why aren't they given other roles as well?

When they are, as Mrs. Dickler of Southern California reports in an interview for mouth wash that says "married women care just as much about the way their breath smells as single women do", the impact and validity is questionable. One might ask how marriage could possibly be a determining factor in breath odor, and if women really do care about their breath as Mrs. Dickler reports they do. This particular statement plays upon the stereotype that married women cease caring about themselves and their appearance while single women are only interested in self-upkeep. The statement is structured to elicit surprise in the listener -- married women have really cared about themselves all along. If the advertising is attempting to correct the image of married women, why must it be in terms of breath odor?

A representative from an advertising agency would typically respond to the above question that people are clearly more interested in how they smell and in what they put in their stomachs than how they think, which goes for women as well. Advertising is trivial; it concerns itself with trivial needs such as sweetening breath or whitening teeth. But these are, nevertheless, "real" needs, from the vantage point of the advertiser and the agency. Millions of people are faced daily with the "necessity" of choosing a product to satisfy these needs. To the extent that people are indeed fascinated by themselves, advertising does reflect a certain set of very human priorities. "Social scientists have always wanted us to write about and think about 'significant' things," commented one man in advertising.

The purpose of advertising is, therefore, to assist people in making decisions about what products to purchase. "Good advertising is intelligent oversimplification," stated Paul Keye of Keye, Donna, and Perlstein in Los Angeles. "How much does one need to know? Advertising gives people a way of making oversimplified decisions. To think about

everything in a sophisticated way would surely drive one mad." Keye went on to explain that advertising serves as an egalitarian form of communication in that it provides a very large "electorate", i.e., the consumer, with identical messages and asks them to select products on the basis of this relatively small amount of information. The process of selection is, of course, subjective.

Marshall McLuhan, in his work *THE MECHANICAL BRIDE* (1952), offers an analysis of the role of advertising agencies in society that explores the role and purpose of this subjective process. McLuhan writes:

"(Advertising agencies) express for the collective society that which dreams and uncensored behavior do in individuals. They give spatial form to hidden impulse and make possible bringing into reasonable order a great deal that could not otherwise be observed or discussed. Gouging away at the surface of public sales resistance, the advertising men constantly breaking through into the ALICE IN WONDERLAND territory behind the looking glass which is the world of subrational impulse and appetites. Moreover, the advertising agencies are so set on the business of administering major wallops to the buyer's unconscious, and have their attention so concentrated on the sensational effect of their activities, that they unconsciously reveal the primary motivations of large areas of our contemporary existence...

"The advertising agencies and Hollywood, in their different ways, are always trying to get inside the public mind in order to impose their collective dreams on that inner stage. And in the pursuit of this goal both Hollywood and the advertising agencies themselves give major exhibitions of unconscious behavior. One dream opens into another until reality and fantasy are made interchangeable. The advertising agencies flood the daytime world of conscious purpose and control with erotic imagery from the night world in order to drown by suggestion, all sales resistance. (p. 97.)"

To understand advertising, it is also important to keep in mind that almost every advertisement "dangles the carrot", that is, it makes a promise to the "electorate" that it does not or will not necessarily have to keep. These promises, that you will be more of a man if you use X or that you will retain your girlish youth if you eat Y, are all part of advertising's reliance on persuasion to sell a product.

Still, the basic premise of advertising, as reiterated throughout the industry, is **SELLING**. As Janet Carlson says, "Advertising takes advantage of what exists. It is in the business of selling products and it has to use everything around today to sell it. If that means I'm anti-women's Lib in certain areas, then yes, because I am in the

business to sell first."

In order to make a product saleable and desirable, it is necessary to consider first, not the image one wants a product to project, but the reality of the product instead. The following questions are worth asking before an advertising campaign is developed: What is the product? How is it used? Who uses it? What are any of the differences this particular product may have from others in its field? What makes it unique?

In terms of selling a product, however, a conflict often arises "in the eye of the beholder". A common perception made by most consumers is that advertisements sell images and not products, or that the product is secondary to the image. Most advertising personnel maintained throughout the interviews, that advertising agencies do not sell images nor do they sell on the basis of images. "At least they should not," commented Jerome Lubow, consultant to ten advertising agencies in New York City. "If an agency does rely heavily on images, it's crazy," he said. "Good effective commercials should rely upon developed modes of use associated with the product."

Perhaps the conflict or inconsistency lies in the definition of the word "image". Paul Keye defines image in the following way:

"Originally, the word 'image' was used to describe a stranger's perception of personality. Probably the word that is closest to image is 'charisma'. At that time, the personality of a product was something more than the product qua product. The differences in the perception of personality were called images. For example, the way my grandmother perceives an automobile is different from the way an auto mechanic perceives it.

Images are an assimilation of impressions separate from fact. Some are extraordinarily accurate, however."

In the words of Janet Carlson, "you sell the product through the image you create for the product." This is most true in the field of cosmetics. Then again, if the product is somehow associated with new images of women, then they will be used. But which products? What new images? Who are the new women?

The silent visual messages that people receive through advertising are usually the most objectionable, the most influential, and the most difficult to change. This applies to messages about women as well. Shelly Roberts of Keye, Donna, and Perlstein is particularly sensitive to the long range effects that stereotypic images may have upon the next generation. As a feminist she calls for a more realistic portrayal of women and their roles in advertisements since the perpetuation of unrealistic images holds women back by reinforcing chauvinistic

attitudes of the larger society. However, Roberts cautions against feeling too optimistic about some of the newer advertisements being made. For example, the line "You've come a long way, baby" from the Virginia Slims advertising is misleading in terms of the women's movement because, as she says, "it's been baby steps all the way". Clairol Hair coloring "Know you're the best you can be" is nevertheless an unnatural extension, because although the thrust of the statement is positive, it still asks women to change a part of themselves in order to be more acceptable to society. Roberts admits to not being totally idealistic in calling for the re-creation of reality in advertising since most advertisements have always fallen into an area between fantasy and reality. Again, there are those in the industry who would counter Roberts by saying that "any projected image is no more unrealistic than any other -- the projection is like theater and no type is typically the 'next door' type," or by those who say that "it's only a small number of liberationists who insist that all women hold their outlook." (ADVERTISING AGE, June 8, 1974)

Changes in the image of women will come primarily as a result of two factors: women have more money and women are more visible and more numerous in the marketplace. It is here where women are most often compared to minorities, especially blacks. Possibly, one sees more blacks in advertising now, not as a direct result of a higher social consciousness, but because blacks have more money and are able to exert a stronger buying power, and for this reason, have a far greater marketing potential. "If accelerating social change means more money, advertising people will accelerate it," said one former advertising man. "Social conscience is tertiary to them. Advertising people are a highly motivated, self-serving group interested in their own career and making a profit, and not much else," he said.

Responsibility for the images and messages produced by advertising agencies is difficult to assign. Since agencies try to mirror social trends, rather than establish them, no one person or position has full responsibility for the presentation of women. In monetary terms, of course, the client has the ultimate power. The commercial and its image belongs to the client.

Shelly Roberts relates two of her experiences about "taking responsibility" for the kind of images that are portrayed in advertisements. The first made her realize there was something wrong both in the treatment of women in the media and in the treatment of herself in the advertising business.

"I was working on Proctor and Gamble accounts, and I used to have frequent discussions with my creative supervisor. One day I went in and asked him if it ever bothered him what he was doing to women, not the women in the target audience, but the young ones growing up who receive all the messages and the silent ones too, and he

said, 'Well somebody would do it and it allows me to have the finest Pre-Columbian art collection in the city so shut up and go back to the script.' There was no concern."

Another experience happened later when Roberts was organizing a consciousness raising group for people in the advertising industry. The group intended to concentrate upon the image of women in advertising and upon the social responsibility they all held as producers of verbal, visual, and silent messages to society. Before the group could get under way a representative stood up and announced that the entire group had met already and decided collectively that "advertising had no responsibility to women, or to anyone. The only responsibility was to the client to sell the product."

Every agency has an account manager who has the responsibility for handling each account and for communicating with the client or product manager from the corporation. In a diffuse decision making process, each advertising campaign must pass through many levels of development within the advertising agency before it reaches the product manager in the corporation. The final campaign is the result of many negotiations between the account manager, and the product manager, if the account is a large one. Once the new campaign is in the hands of the corporation it must again be approved on many different levels. Finally, a decision is made by the "guy with the guts" or "whomever is willing to stick his neck out", according to one man in advertising. Ultimately, though, the corporation (the advertiser) has the final say in explicit financial terms.

Once the account is approved, the advertising agency and the media representatives make decisions on placement of the advertisement. Negotiations for buying media time follow -- the advertising agency seeking to make the best deal possible. Essentially, the advertising agency may be perceived as the intermediary functioning between the advertiser and the media, hopefully to the advantage of both in order to reach the most people for the least amount of money, and between the consumer and product in order to bring product information to masses of people, simply and cheaply.

One may take responsibility for the content of advertising more on an individual basis than in any structured way established by a company policy. "I make choices on a fairly regular basis, whether I'm going to do something or not," said Paul Keye. "I don't do any dishonest ads." Keye seems to be the exception to the rule and surely loses potentially profitable accounts due to the choices he makes.

According to Lubow, "the advertising industry is in the jungle nowadays. People don't care; there are so few with any value system of their own left and the industry as well as the agencies reflect that. My role in business as a consultant to advertising agencies is to help

guide them out of the jungle and into the clearing, to help them reestablish the values that have been lost, to create a new system."

There are very few women who hold the responsibility for making decisions in advertising and comparatively few women in the advertising industry itself. The field is due to open up considerably more to women who are, according to one advertising man, "exceedingly well equipped for advertising since they possess that marvelous attribute called 'intuition'. Women 'know' what it is that other women and men consumers like, need, and respond to, that is, what SELLS, and it is usually an idea or concept that they have arrived at in an illogical manner."

Others say it is not easy for women to be successful in advertising once they have entered the field. Janet Carlson, winner of the Lulus and other copy award cups, and selected as one of the top one hundred creative advertisers in the U.S. relates the woes of being a woman in advertising agency. The four lessons a woman learns when working in advertising were noted in a speech she made before the Beverly Hills Business Men's Association: (1) You are supposed to be creative. You are told you think just like a woman. (2) You do what you are told. You are told you are a "good girl". (3) You become aggressive to succeed. (4) You are not considered a "normal woman" because you work in advertising. (ADVERTISING AGE, August 27, 1973)

Despite her many achievements and obvious expertise in advertising, Carlson still encounters situations like the following: Not long ago, in the middle of a meeting at White Stag (one of her accounts), there were eight men and two women present. When the Vice-President said to the rest of the group, "Don't you think we should ask the women here for their opinions on the subject?", the President replied, "Why no. This is a business that was begun by men, always run by men, and we've never had any problem knowing what should be done for women before and I don't see why we have to ask them now." "This is an old point of view, but one I must still deal with," says Carlson.

Adrienne Hall of Hall and Levine provides the unusual example of two women who started their own independent advertising agency in a garage ten years ago, later moving to a small office over a delicatessen, and finally arriving at their spacious offices in downtown Los Angeles. The agency employs mostly women and handles such accounts as Neutrogena Soap and Max Factor Cosmetics. The agency is a successful one. Typically, Hall and Levine are called upon to handle "women's products" since they are assumed to be specialists.

With the women's movement and as more and more women enter the marketplace (in dual roles as a worker in the home and business) there should be a subsequent shift in the kinds of advertising that will be reaching the American public. Future advertising should include a larger spectrum of women in a greater variety of roles -- roles with responsibility, dignity, and self-respect -- but not until women make

themselves more visible. Women should also make it part of their future to be in the places where decisions are made. As another woman in advertising noted, it was the market place experience that was most relevant to her in her career. "Did I work harder than a man? I worked harder as a PERSON."

## VI. ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR CREATING CHANGE

This preliminary examination of who controls the image of women in advertising has led us to make three types of recommendations for changing the image of women as portrayed in the media. These are based on our understanding of 1) current images of women; 2) previous attempts to create change; and 3) the decisionmaking processes in advertising agencies. The recommendations focus on who should discuss change with the agencies, who in the agencies should be approached, and what information should be conveyed to the agencies.

## WHO SHOULD DISCUSS CHANGE WITH ADVERTISING AGENCIES?

Action groups such as NOW are likely to have an impact. Their size, public image, experience, and ability to persevere make them effective. Large groups will be particularly successful in dealing with large advertisers and advertising agencies. For small or local product lines, it is possible that state or local chapters of NOW might be more effective. NOW's reputation makes it a strong enemy. However, there may be times when it seems better to work from the inside, rather than the outside.

Stockholders in Proctor and Gamble have been mobilized to demand that the company conduct a study of the image of women they portray in their advertising. Although their resolution did not pass this time, we may soon see stockholders in many companies creating an awareness of stereotypic presentations of women and demanding changes. The call for studies and for new images by those also concerned with the profits of the company, may be an effective strategy for change.

Although the regulatory agencies do not have much power, we feel their opinion is important to advertising agencies. And although we have listed them as groups that should be approached, we also feel they can approach the agencies. Certainly the report by the National Advertising Review Board is a significant first step. Hopefully there will soon be a study to determine awareness of the report, opinion of the report, and impact of the report on new advertising campaigns.

It is difficult to see researchers interfacing with advertisers or agencies directly. However, if action programs are funded by the government or by foundations, researchers may be in a position to test alternative ways of presenting women in advertising and to measure the effect on the audience. These studies will have to be sensitive to the

economic concerns of the advertising industry. Researchers long term interests in increasing the options for women and men (full equity in the "images of potentiality", to borrow Ronald Lippitt's phrase), will have to be balanced by the need to guarantee the successful marketing of products. Although those of us active in this field are certain non-sex object, non-dumb housewife images will continue to sell products, there simply have not been enough test cases to determine the dollar difference in alternative images.

#### WHO IN THE ADVERTISING AGENCY SHOULD BE APPROACHED?

The alternatives to this second question must be based on the following practical considerations. The person to be approached must be in a powerful position. However, it is best to consider the priorities of agency people when approaching them with an analysis for change. Those who are in secure positions with ultimate decision-making responsibilities are usually guided by the profit motive.

People who work in the advertising business respond to societal values as they think they "are" not "ought to be". Successful advertising people are usually a passive group in the arena of social change; agency personnel fear to lose their jobs if they take a progressive or radical stand. Moreover, most of the people interviewed for this study do not view advertising as a vehicle for bringing about social change. Successful people in the advertising industry are strongly motivated by two things: 1) the concept that what sells and sells well is good, and 2) the demands of their own careers. Only a minority of advertising people recognize advertising as a powerful social medium, one that should be concerned with "significant" things, one that should be more conscious of its role in shaping societal values. Most advertising people feel they must respond primarily to the profit motive and to their careers or they will not survive in the industry.

When dealing with large advertisers, it is important to keep in mind that their executives have the ultimate power, usually even over comparable executives in the advertising agencies. However, when dealing with smaller advertisers, the advertising agency personnel seem to take on more decision-making responsibilities and have more power.

Another alternative is to approach an appropriate regulatory agency. Although the National Advertising Review Board and the Federal Trade Commission have some say about advertising practices, they have not been particularly powerful in the past, especially concerning presentation of women. However, it may be possible to create pressure through these agencies.

A closely related alternative is to work with the advertising professional associations. Use of the professional associations as well

as the regulatory agencies may produce a kind of peer pressure to create change.

#### WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE CONVEYED TO THE ADVERTISING AGENCIES?

The most effective materials will probably be those that show an awareness of marketing and advertising. Data, rather than ad hoc observations or personal opinions, will continue to attract the attention of advertisers and agencies. Included with the data should be suggestions for implementing changes. The report should be directed to decisionmakers.

An effective approach may be an information analysis designed to show how it is to the advantage of the advertiser to show women nonstereotypically. For instance, the Aetna Life Insurance Company has created its new series of advertisements showing women in a variety of roles and explicitly saying, "you're important." We do not believe Aetna started the campaign because of a heightened social conscience. Instead, they realized that there was an untapped market. To get that market, they are treating women nonstereotypically.

Since many products are already bought by women, it will not be easy to show advertisers how new images will be good economically for the company. A key will be to get a major advertiser to test market products with stereotypic and nonstereotypic presentations of women. Another strategy will be to use data from studies of the consumer behavior of working women. As more women enter the labor force their incomes will alter previous spending patterns. New advertising strategies will be needed to reach these women. The time is coming when these women will not purchase a room deoderizer simply because it is advertised by a woman who spends her days searching for an elusive odor in the kitchen. A third avenue will be use of data on the purchasing patterns of men. One sees men in the grocery store. What types of products do they choose? Perhaps they would purchase Green Giant peas instead of Bird's Eye peas if commercials showed men using the product. Perhaps there is a large untapped consumer population for these companies. Maybe their sales would increase, if they showed men as efficacious users of the product.

Economics seems to be the critical issue. The NARB report puts it this way:

"For many advertisers, however, the most telling argument may lie in the area of advertising effectiveness. When all the evidence is summed up, it would appear that it is not just a lack of manners or a lack of social responsibility, but actually a counterproductive business practice to try to sell a product to someone who feels insulted by the product's advertising." (p. 2)

If advertisers do not respond to the presentation of data about the images of women and men in advertising, then it will be necessary to organize large scale boycotts of products. If we all refused to buy a product for a month, the sales figures and profit margin would show that the present image being portrayed was not effective. We live in a society that produces many similar products. If possible, a boycott would actively denounce one brand and enhance another brand that portrays women more favorably. Admittedly, these matched pairs may be difficult to find since few advertisements show women nonstereotypically. But it is certainly worth the effort since the message would be quite clear to the respective companies.

Boycotts need to be well advertised and companies should be presented with proposals of suggested changes. While documentation of current sexist advertisements and protests against them are important, we must begin to provide positive alternatives or counterimages for these companies.

Advertisers have 'used' us for a long time. They design products we do not really need and then create a reason for us to use the product. As social scientists we think it time to help bring about change. Like all women we want our daughters and sons to be encouraged to develop to their full potential rather than to be limited by the role models our media give them. Whenever possible, we will turn our abilities to producing the research that may make advertisers aware of this need. If that strategy does not work, then we are ready to unite with other women to use our purchasing power to make advertisers recognize the need to use nonstereotypic role models.

## VII. SUMMARY

• Numerous studies have documented the discrepancy between the stereotypic image of women portrayed in advertisements and the actual role that women have in society. Some recent attempts at changing the media image have been successful through legal challenges and educational/awareness strategies. These efforts have originated from inside as well as outside the advertising industry. However, women rarely see themselves as they are or as they might become. Usually they see themselves as homemakers with cleanliness compulsions or as secretaries making mistakes.

With the objective of proposing some alternatives to expedite change, this project focused on how advertising agencies and advertisers interact and how they create images. The results of our interviews and literature search indicate that advertising agencies continue to respond to the profit motive rather than social needs. However, there seem to be several ways of bringing about change. These include (1) having large organizations (e.g., NOW, WEAL) approach major advertisers and advertising agencies with suggestions for change; (2) having stockholders demand a more accurate presentation of women; (3) having large organizations boycott products with particularly offensive advertisements; (4) encouraging acceptance of recommendations made by NARB; (5) urging FTC to be sensitive to presentation of women in commercials. Each of these alternatives needs to be backed up by research data showing the image of women portrayed by the advertiser or agency.

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## IX. APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## LIST OF INTERVIEWS

- Richard Zackon: ex-advertising agency man, now a Stanford graduate student in the Communication Department
- Shelly Roberts: copywriter for Keye, Donna, and Perlstein, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Paul Keye: partner in Keye, Donna, and Perlstein, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Adrienne Hall: partner in Hall and Levine, Los Angeles Ca.
- Janet Marie Carlson: partner in Carlson, Liebowitz and Gottlieb, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Israel Liebowitz: partner in Carlson, Liebowitz, and Gottlieb, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Robert Anderson: advertising manager for LFD-Southern California Chevrolet dealers, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Jerome Lubow: consultant to 10 advertising agencies, New York, N.Y.

## APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions on this interview schedule are "funneled" questions (as described by Kerlinger. The maximum amount of objective information is asked before starting person or emotionally laden questions. We designed the questions to help us understand the way products are sold, the importance of images, and the relationship between agency and client). Since the project is viewed as a pre-test for a larger study that would include interviews in large agencies in New York, we were interested in determining what kinds of questions could be asked. The difficulty of conducting interviews on the general subject of "presentation of women" led to the focused questions on several products.

(The indentation format indicates the "level" of the funnel.)

How does your agency work?

How is an account solicited?

How is the target audience chosen?

How is the image determined?

How is the language determined?

How is the choice of medium made?

For instance, how was account X solicited? Audience chosen? etc.

How does account Y differ from account X as to audience, image, etc?

How does account Z differ from accounts X or Y?

Does the advertising agency or the advertiser make the ultimate decisions about components (image, language, etc.)?

Is one of your sponsors more amenable to portraying new images of women than another?

Can you estimate the percentage of women in the management of agencies? Of advertisers?

The National Advertising Review Board (NARB) recently published a pamphlet on women in advertising. Has your agency had to deal with NARB on the issues in the pamphlet?

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"Women's advertising guides pegged good start, but no panacea."  
ADVERTISING AGE, May 12, 1975, p. 58.

To which segment of the female population do you want to appeal in the advertisements for brand W?

Age: Children, young adults, adults, or senior citizens?

SES: Lower, middle, upper middle, or upper classes?

Marital status: Single, married, separated, or divorced?

Working status: Unemployed, part-time, full-time, or retired?

In your experience, have you witnessed a change in advertisements of the images of minorities? Of women?

Does your agency have a policy in reference to the portrayal in your advertisements of minorities? Of women?

If so, were you able to influence the direction of any policy?

In what way do you feel responsible for the kind of images that are being portrayed in ads?