

Father roles: The omitted roles in US magazine advertisements from the 1950s-1990s

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate the types of men's roles in advertising, particularly as father roles, the changes of the father's roles in advertisements and the advertising components during three periods: before the women's movements, during the women's movements and after the women's movement. The researcher content analyzed 772 advertisements in *Time* and *Good Housekeeping* magazines during three periods: the 1950s, the 1970s and the 1990s. The research results revealed that there was not an

association between the roles of men (family and non-family roles) and three selected time periods. Although men in society share household responsibilities with their wives, the advertisers in those three time periods still try to keep old family role portrayals in magazine advertisements.

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อศึกษาบทบาทของผู้ชายโดยเฉพาะบทบาทบิดาที่ถูกนำเสนอในงานโฆษณาทางสื่อ

สิ่งพิมพ์ในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา และเพื่อศึกษาการเปลี่ยนแปลงของบทบาทบิดาและองค์ประกอบต่างๆ ในงานโฆษณาในช่วงเวลา ก่อน ระหว่าง และหลังมีการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคมของสตรี (Women's Movement) จากการวิเคราะห์งานโฆษณาจำนวน ๗๗๒ ชิ้นในนิตยสาร Time และ Good Housekeeping Magazine ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ไม่มีความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบทบาทของผู้ชาย (ในครอบครัวและนอกบ้าน) กับช่วงเวลาที่เลือกมาศึกษา ทั้ง ๓ ช่วงเวลา ดังนั้นอาจจะสรุปได้ว่า ถึงแม้ว่าบทบาทของผู้ชายในสังคมจะมีการเปลี่ยนแปลง ในด้านของการแบ่งความรับผิดชอบในการทำงานบ้านกับภรรยา แต่ภาพที่ปรากฏในงานโฆษณาก็ยังเป็นบทบาทในครอบครัวแบบดั้งเดิม

Introduction and Background

Historically, women's roles have primarily focused on nurturing and seeing to the needs of the family, while the dominant role for males has been the breadwinner. Until the twentieth century, there were numerous economic and socio-economic developments promoting American women to participate in the labor force (Rubin & Riney, 1994). Additionally, the changes from agriculture to an industrial economy during World War II in the United States caused increases in the percentage of women participating in the labor force. Consequently, the number of working women dramatically increased from 37.7 percent in the 1960s to 58.9 percent at the end of 1995

(Davis, 1984; US Bureau of the Census, 1996). The traditional family with the husband as "breadwinner" and the wife as "breadmaker" was replaced by the two-earner family. Having the opportunity to earn money by themselves, women began to fight for equality both inside and outside the home (Jaffe, 1991). One of the frequent issues that was raised and criticized by women's movement groups was the unequal division of household responsibility (Townsend & O'Neil, 1990).

The women's movement, which began in the 1960s and continued with the most important changes in the 1970s, has probably been the most powerful force for family changes in the country (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988). Although some dominant roles of fathers, such as breadwinners and moral guides, still persisted, there was widespread identification of fathers as active, nurturing, and caretaking parents (Lamb, 1987). Similarly, Radin and Goldfish (1983) reported their research results that the amount of time fathers spent on childcare and household work had increased to 20-30 percent. Also, in the study of Benton and Bowles Inc. in 1980, eighty percent of the men in their study reported that they took care of the children (Cunningham & Wash Inc., 1980).

When Cafferata, Horn and Wells (1997) reviewed the changes in gender role attitudes and behaviors over the past 20 years by the DDB Needham Life Style Study, their study uncovered similar results. The agreement of men's attitudes toward "preferring a marriage where husband and wife both work, share

household responsibilities" has increased gradually from 1973 to 1993. In contrast, the agreement of men's attitudes toward "the father should be the boss in the house" has declined for both men and women since 1973.

Additionally, Ferber and Birnbaum (1980, p. 269) stated there is a decreasing utility for professional and housework. Spouses tend to find a more balanced sharing of housework beneficial and the husband may enjoy getting to know the children better. Sussman (1993, p. 312) predicted that the changes of the family roles would not return to the old superordinate/subordinate pattern. However, they became more equity and sharing in both prevalence and incidence in the coming years. Pleck (1987, p. 93) suggested that a new image, summed up in term 'the new father,' was clearly on the rise in print and broadcast media. The new father involved fatherhood different from older images in several key respects: he was present at the birth; he was involved with his children as infants, not just when they were older; he participated in the actual day-to-day work of child care, and not just play; he was involved with his daughters as much as his sons.

In the meantime, advertising in the early 1960s became heavily criticized by feminists groups and academic researchers as not reflecting the changing roles of women in their advertisement images. Advertisers had depicted women as true housewives, sex objects and underrepresented of the number and status of working women. They also tried to convince women that dull household chores

were in fact creative acts (Courtney & Whipple, 1983; Friedan, 1963).

To assuage these critics, some advertisers responded by modifying the portrayals of women in advertisements. Some research studies in the 1970s indicated that the roles of women in advertising have been improved (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Bretl & Cantor, 1988; Schneider and Schneider 1979; Sexton & Haberman, 1974). Moreover, other advertisers created a new family image in advertising. For example, an "egalitarian" image has received warm acceptance, from female audiences because it shows the sharing of household chores between a husband and a wife (Jaffe & Berger, 1994). It can be concluded that during the past two decades the portrayals of women in advertising have been an area of great interest in the United States (Ford & LaTour, 1993).

While female roles in advertising have improved, a few researchers studied the changes of male roles in advertising. Previous research studies about the men's portrayals rather focused on non-family roles (i.e. workers, sex objects or endorsements) than family roles (i.e. husbands or fathers). For example, Brown (1981) analyzed 521 advertisements in *Time*, *Life*, *American*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Newsweek* magazines from 1920 to 1978 in order to investigate the changes of family member roles. The research findings revealed that the proportion of advertisements depicting economic provision by husbands decreased. In contrast, recreation has become an

increasingly important aspect of the husband's roles more than it has for the wife's. Rarely did advertisements in that period depict husbands doing housework and therapeutic activities.

Bretl and Canton (1988) investigated the trends of men's and women's portrayals in US television commercials from 1970 to 1985. They summarized their findings, along with the previous findings of 13 research studies, which men and women now appeared equally often as central characters in prime-time commercials. Females and males were presented less as workers while the number of male roles that were depicted as spouses and parents has increased.

Kervin (1990) researched at the 50-year advertising history of *Esquire* and summarized that the masculine stereotypes found in the 1930s, were still in use five decade later. The advertising industry was careful to the portrayal of women in positive roles while the portrayal of men was a little change.

Another research study done by Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz (1993) analyzed men's and women's images in magazine advertisements during three periods: 1972-1977, 1978-1983, and 1984-1989. Three magazines, *Playboy*, *Newsweek*, and *Ms*, were randomly selected to be a sample. The definitions of men's and women's roles were categorized in three groups: traditional, reverse, and equal roles. The traditional role advertisements depicted men "playing a directing role with women" (Klassen, Jasper & Schwartz, 1993, p. 32). The reverse role-sex advertisements depicted "women as men in

ways that are precisely the opposite of those stereotypically associated with members of each sex" (Klassen, Jasper, & Schwartz, 1993, p. 32). Their findings revealed that traditional roles of men and women were presented less by year, while the equal role and reverse role of men and women in advertising have increased by year.

As can be seen, gender roles in advertising have been studied for a long time because many scholars believed that advertising, as an institution in society, plays a significant role in sex role attitude formation in children and adults (Jones, Hendrick, & Epstein, 1979). Most researchers mainly studied the roles of women in advertising, while the roles of men, particularly father roles, in advertising are less analyzed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the type of men's roles in advertising, particularly as father roles and to see the changes of proportion of men's roles in advertising during women's movement time period.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the types of men's roles in advertisements during three periods: before the women's movements, during the women's movements and after the women's movement.

2. To investigate the types of the father's roles in advertisements during three periods: before the women's movements, during the women's movements and after the women's movement.

3. To investigate the advertising components that men portrayed as father's roles in terms of product types, setting and presence of family members including advertising appeal usages (informational or emotional).

Hypotheses

Based on the above literature reviews, the traditional family with the husband as "breadwinner" and the wife as "breadmaker" was replaced by the two-earner family. Past research showed that family changes resulted from the women's movement since the 1960s (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988). The roles of fathers as active, nurturing and care-taking parents have increased as well as the father's time spent with children increased more than in the past (Lamb, 1987; Radin & Goldfish in 1983; Cunningham & Wash Inc., 1980). When the women's movement groups criticized advertising, as an institution in society, not reflecting the real family roles in society, some advertisers responded by changing the portrayals of men and women in advertisements and creating an "egalitarian image" in advertising. Thus, the first, second, third and fourth hypotheses were set as follows:

H I: There is an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the men role portrayals (family roles and non-family roles) in the advertisements.

H II: There is an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the types of father

roles in the advertisements.

H III: There is an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the components of the advertisements portrayed men as father roles (i.e. presence of family members and settings).

H IV: There is an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the appeals of the advertisements portrayed men as father roles.

In addition, Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) analyzed advertisements appearing in April 1970 issues of eight general-interest magazines: *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker*, *Saturday Review*, *Time*, *US News and World Report*, and *Reader's Digest*. Their findings revealed that women were most often depicted as buyers purchasing relatively inexpensive items, such as cosmetics and cleaning products. On the other hand, men were often depicted as buyers of more expensive and thus more "important" items such as automobiles and financial services.

In contrast, Sullivan and O'Conner (1988) analyzed women portrayals in magazine advertising from 1958 to 1983 to investigate the relationship between product class and sex role portrayal in magazine advertisements. Males continued to prevail in the categories of cars, cigarettes, banks, industrial products, entertainment, and institutional advertisements while females dominated the cleaning products,

beauty products, and clothing categories. Interestingly, within the six product classes where sex role portrayals have been changed, four demonstrated an increasing tendency to depict males (food products, drugs, furniture, and home appliances). In sum, the trend in using male models to advertise inexpensive and household products has increased. Thus, the fifth hypothesis was set as follows:

H V: There is an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the product types of the advertisements portrayed men as father roles.

Method

Content analysis was employed to examine the magazine advertisements as the sample of this study. Coding variables were identified from previous research on gender roles in order to make direct longitudinal comparison.

The sample

Sample Selection

Magazine advertisements were selected to be the sample of this study. Two selected magazines were *Time* and *Good Housekeeping*. The reason to choose these two magazines was to cover various images of father roles presented in magazines in the market as much as possible. While *Time* appeals to general audiences, *Good Housekeeping* is directed primarily toward home care and childcare.

Time periods that were studied covered three periods, the 1950s, the 1970s and the 1990s, because of the significant differences caused by social changes taking places at the time. The 1950s were chosen because they marked the period following the end of World War II. Men just came back to their homes and women returned to serve in their housewife roles again. This decade represents the pre-women's movement period. The 1970s were selected because of the many organized women's movements that were formed in this period. Hot issues were occurred in this time period. And the 1990s were selected to represent the after women's movement time period. Also, to get time length in each period equally, 1955, 1975 and 1995 were chosen.

Additionally, because of the differences in publishing time periods (weekly or monthly), the researcher decided to randomly select one issue per month of *Time*, a weekly magazine. On the other hand, *Good Housekeeping*, as a monthly magazine, was coded every month. This reduced the disproportional amount of advertisements from one magazine.

Criteria for Selecting Advertisements

Two criteria were used in selecting advertisements. First, all color and black-and-white product advertisements in four different sizes, one-third page, one-half page, a full page or larger in size were coded. The reason for including the one-third page or one-half page advertisement as sample documents were that the advertisers in the 1950s or the 1970s advertised their products in these sizes.

Second, advertisements that consisted of one main men role were coded only. In case that the advertisement was repeatedly published, it was dropped to eliminate skewing the numbers of any roles unexpectedly. If there were more than one main men role in the advertisement, that advertisement was also dropped. Finally, 772 sample advertisements were selected as the samples of this study. Then, the researcher selected only 120 advertisements depicting father roles to test hypotheses.

Coding Procedures

Coding sheet

The researcher developed a coding sheet to analyze men portrayed as a father in advertising. Five categories were men's roles (family or non-family roles), the types of father roles, the types of products, the advertising components (family members' presence and settings), and the advertising appeal usages. The first category was adapted from Busby and Leichty's study (1993) and Brown's study (1981). The father roles, the second category, were developed from the definitions of father roles in Darlin's study (1994). The third category was the product types, which the researcher borrowed from the study of Sullivan and O'Connor (1988). The fourth categories were developed by the researcher. Advertising appeal usages, the fifth category was adapted from coding categories of Plutchik (1980) and Resnik and Stern's study (1977).

Reliability Checks

To check for reliability of the coding sheet, two coders were trained in the concepts of men roles in advertising. Randomly selected 25 advertisements from the sample were coded in each category. Reliability was determined as the percentage of agreement between the two coders (Kassarjian, 1977). And the coder inter-reliability was 0.90. Analyzing the reliability coefficient for each category of the coding sheet, the category of men's roles in advertising had a reliability coefficient at 0.88. The category of father roles and product type had a reliability coefficient equal to 0.1 for each. The category of picture details and advertising appeal had reliability coefficients of 0.91 for each.

Statistical Analysis

To analyze the data, Chi-square analysis was used to determine whether selected variables were associated. All analyses were based on an alpha level of .05.

Research Findings

Men's roles in Advertising

From table 1, the statistical analysis showed that there was not an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the men role portrayals (family roles and non-family roles) in the advertisements. Thus, the first hypothesis was not supported.

Table 1 Men's Role Portrayals in the Advertisements in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s (N=772)

Men's roles	1950s		1970s		1990s	
	Frequencie	Percentage	Frequencie	Percentage	Frequencie	Percentage
Family	s	s	s	s	s	s
• Single	1	0.28	1	0.39	3	1.85
• Spouse	68	19.37	34	13.13	23	14.20
• Parent	48	13.68	54	20.85	18	11.11
• Grandparent	2	0.57	2	0.77	3	1.85
Non-family						
• Decorative	119	33.90	90	34.75	47	29.01
• Endorsed	25	7.12	36	13.90	52	32.10
• Employed	78	22.22	37	14.29	13	8.02
• Others	10	2.85	5	1.93	3	1.85
TOTALS (772 Ads)	351	100%	259	100%	162	100%

Compared between family role and non-family role: (Chi-Square = 1.791; df = 2; p = 0.408)

Father Roles in Advertising

From table 2, the statistical analysis showed that there was not an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s)

and the types of father roles in the advertisements. Thus, the second hypothesis was not supported.

Table 2 The Types of Father Roles in the Advertisements in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s (N=120)

Father Roles	1950s		1970s		1990s	
	Frequence	Percentage	Frequence	Percentage	Frequence	Percentage
Caregivers	7	14.58	5	9.26	2	11.11
Educators	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
Nurturers	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
Playmates	11	22.92	10	18.52	6	33.33
Providers	4	8.33	4	7.41	5	27.78
Decorative	26	54.17	33	61.11	5	27.78
TOTALS (120 Ads)	48	100%	54	100%	18	100%

(Chi-Square = 12.846; df = 10; p = 0.232)

Components in the Advertisements Portrayed Men as Father Roles

1. Presence of Family Members

From table 3, the statistic analysis showed that there was not an association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the components of the advertisements

portrayed men as father roles (presence of family members). (chi-square = 11.453; df = 6; p = 0.075). Thus, the third hypothesis was not supported.

Table 3 Presence of Family Members in the Advertisements in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s (N=120)

	1950s		1970s		1990s	
	Frequeencie	Percentage	Frequeencie	Percentage	Frequeencie	Percentage
Family Members						
Men	1	2.08	1	1.85	0	0.00
Men with child(ren)	7	14.58	9	16.67	7	38.89
Family and Relatives	1	2.08	4	7.41	3	16.67
Men with family	39	81.25	40	74.07	8	44.44
TOTALS (120 Ads)	48	100%	54	100%	18	100%

(Chi-Square = 11.453; df = 6; p = 0.075)

2. Settings

From table 4, the statistic analysis showed that there was not a significant association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the components of the

advertisements portrayed men as father roles (settings). (chi-square = 13.158; df = 12; p = 0.358). Thus, the third hypothesis was not supported.

Table 4 Settings in the Advertisements in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s (N=120)

Settings	1950s		1970s		1990s	
	Frequence	Percentage	Frequence	Percentage	Frequence	Percentage
In home						
• Bathroom	1	2.08	0	0.00	1	5.56
• Kitchen	7	14.58	2	3.70	0	0.00
• Living	7	14.58	8	14.81	1	5.56
• Other	6	12.50	10	18.52	4	22.22
rooms	4	8.33	3	5.56	2	11.11
Around home	10	20.83	8	14.81	4	22.22
Away from	13	27.08	23	42.59	6	33.33
home						
Others/Unclear						
TOTALS (120 Ads)	48	100%	54	100%	18	100%

(Chi-Square = 13.158; df = 12; p = 0.358)

Appeal Usages in the Advertisements

Portrayed Men as Father Roles

Considering the appeals used in the advertisements, the data in table 5 revealed that there was a significant association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the appeals of the advertisements portrayed men as father roles (Chi-Square = 7.85; df = 2;

p-value = 0.025). Thus, the fourth hypothesis was supported. The number of the advertisements portrayed men as father roles had changed from using informational to emotional appeal. Emotional appeals increased from 37.5% in the 1950s to 66.67% in the 1990s.

Table 5 Appeals in the Advertisements in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s (N=120)

Advertising Appeals	1950s		1970s		1990s	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Informational	30	62.50	21	38.89	6	33.33
Emotional	18	37.50	33	61.11	12	66.67
TOTALS (120 Ads)	48	100%	54	100%	18	100%

(Chi-Square = 7.85; df = 2; p = 0.025)

Product Types in Advertising Portrayed

Men as Father Roles

Considering the product types, the data in table 6 revealed that there was a significant association between the time period (from 1950s to 1990s) and the product types of the advertisements portrayed men as father roles (Chi-Square = 43.247; df = 26; p = 0.018). Thus, hypothesis fifth was supported.

Table 6 revealed that in the 1950s, men portrayed as father roles were presented the most in food product advertisements (16.67%), and 14.58% in car advertisements. In the 1970s, men portrayed as father roles

in car advertisement most (16.67%), and the cleaning products, entertainments, and other products portrayed men as father roles equally (12.96%). In the 1990s, men portrayed as father roles were presented in institutional (33.33%) and insurance (16.67%) advertisements respectively. Interestingly, the number of father role portrayals that advertised cleaning products fluctuated. The percentage rose sharply from the 1950s to the 1970s (from 2.08% to 12.96%) and decreased again in the 1990s (5.56%).

Table 6 The product types in advertisements in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s (N=120)

Product Types	1950s		1970s		1990s	
	Frequeencie	Percentage	Frequeencie	Percentage	Frequeencie	Percentage
Bank	0	0.00	1	1.85	1	5.56
Beauty	6	12.50	3	5.56	0	0.00
Car	7	14.58	9	16.67	2	11.11
Cleaning products	1	2.08	7	12.96	1	5.56
Clothing	4	8.33	1	1.85	0	0.00
Drug	1	2.08	0	0.00	0	0.00
Entertainment	1	2.08	7	12.96	1	5.56
Food	8	16.67	2	3.70	1	5.56
Furniture	1	2.08	1	1.85	0	0.00
Home appliances	3	6.25	5	9.26	0	0.00
Institution	1	2.08	5	9.26	6	33.33
Insurance	4	8.33	5	9.26	3	16.67
Travel	5	10.42	1	1.85	1	5.56
Others	6	12.50	1	12.96	2	11.11
TOTALS (120 Ads)	48	100%	54	100%	18	100%

(Chi-Square = 43.247; df = 26; p = 0.018)

Conclusion, Discussion and Implication

The purpose of this study is to investigate the types of men's roles in advertisements, the types of the men portrayed as father's roles in advertisements, the advertising components (such as setting, presence of family members) and advertising appeals during three periods: before the women's movements, during the women's movements and after the women's movement. The main results obtained from content analysis of those advertisements revealed that there was not a significant association between time periods and men portrayals (family and non-family roles). Also, there was not a significant association between the types of father roles and time periods.

It is interesting to note that the number of advertisements portrayed men as the decorative role or fulfilling the family pictures still persisted from 1950s to 1990s. In 1970s, the trend of men's roles as spouses decreased while the men's roles as the parents increased. However, the parent roles decreased in 1990s.

When analyzing only the advertisements portrayed men as father roles, the results showed that the father roles as a playmate increased from 22.92% in 1950s to 33.33% in the 1990s, while the number of men portrayed as a caregiver declined from 14.58% in 1950s to 11.11% in 1990s. In addition, the role of the fathers as provider persisted throughout all periods. Analyzing the advertising components, the finding revealed that men in advertising were more portrayed in-home than out of home in 1970s. Another interesting point was that the

presence of men and children in advertisements has increased from 14.58% in the 1950s to 38.89% in the 1990s.

Moreover, there was a significant association between time periods and product types in advertising that portrayed men as a father and time period at level 0.018. While most of the number of men as father roles in the 1950s' advertisements to promote food, car and beauty product types, most of the number of men as father roles in the 1970s' advertisement to promote cars, cleaning products and entertainment.

There was also a significant association between time periods and appeals used in advertising that portrayed men as a father roles and time period at level 0.025. The emotional appeals were increasingly used in advertisements that presented men as father roles since the 1970s. This appeal can bring an impression to target audience more than informational appeal. The increased use may reflect a way that the advertisers try to please audiences. Also, bringing men as fathers into the advertisements may contrast with the traditional roles that people perceive. Thus, using emotional appeal can increase the audience's positive feelings and let them finally accept this new model.

Generally, it can be seen that the advertisements in this study were produced to respond the women movement playing a significant role in fighting for sex equality. Such portrayals reflect the attempts of advertisers to bring fathers into home in the advertisements. After time passed, by the 1990s, the pressure

about women movement was not serious as much as the beginning period. Thus, the father role portrayed in advertising media seems to be less prominent.

This study results are congruent with some previous research studies (Brown, 1981; Kervin, 1990) reporting that most of the advertisements were likely to portray men with his family. However, these men did not receive a significant role in the families or were not be a representative for the voices of family members. Lemon (1995) inserted that 'while social, economic, historical and political change has rendered traditional male roles obsolete in some respects, the mass media... still propagate the old stereotypical roles for men and women....' Additionally, Sussman (1993, p.312) suggested that the changes within the family would not revert to the old superordinate/subordinate pattern, but rather that equity and sharing would grow in both prevalence and incidence in the coming years (Sussman, 1993, p.312).

As stated previously, advertising have long been criticized for insensitivity to female

roles in advertising. The findings of this study suggested that the advertisers still portray men in traditional roles, breadwinners, in the advertising even though most men in the US society share household responsibilities with their wives and take care of children as well. This implies that advertisements is a distort mirror that does not reflect the real picture of families in society. Thus marketers and advertisers need to be concerned this issue when advertising their products. To facilitate the gender role shifts by men, portraying males in more gender neutral manners is might be suitable for people in society. This might be another tactic that advertisers can avoid criticism. Also the future researchers should conduct a research by using interview or focus group techniques to investigate the father roles in consumer's attitudes and to understand consumers' responses toward such advertisements. This will help marketers to know how to produce an advertisement for targets appropriately.

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