

From the New Look to the Edge of Second Wave Feminism: *The New Yorker* Fashion Advertiser's Influence on Women's Gender Roles,
1947-1972

Project of Excellence

Abstract:

This research examines the role of women's fashion advertisements from *The New Yorker* during the years of 1947-1972. Data was collected from August and February editions of the magazine and used to make assertions about gender roles of the time period. The article makes arguments regarding the gender roles that emerged due to the relationship between fashion and advertisements in mid-century America.

Introduction:

“So the harder a wife works, the cuter she looks! Gosh honey, you seem to thrive on cooking, cleaning, and dusting.” An advertisement from the 1950's epitomizes what people believe is the classic image of the American women during the 1950s and 1960s. This women cooks, cleans, and above all else is beautiful. However, despite the image that this advertisement and many others created during this time, the perception of the 1950s and 1960s has shifted over the years. For some, the 1950s represented a time of happiness and flourishing with the existence of the perfect American family. Then, people look at the image of the 1960s as both a time of sexual freedom through the hippie movement as well as political turmoil. As the image of these times have both changed and molded to fit the perception of the current era, many people cling to nostalgia. People linger over images of smiling women in colorful, shapely clothes. Others believe that the 1950s was a time that confined women to the household and trapped her to live of servicing her family.

These perceptions have stemmed from advertisements, popular media, and certain expectations of prescribed gender roles that came at the close of the Second World War. However prior to the images of women in the home in 1950s and the sexual freedom of women in 1960s; in the early 1940s, the Second World War disregarded women's traditional gender

roles. The war flipped the role of women upside down, as young women poured into the work force, to supplement the loss of men who left for war. Women during the 1940s capitalized on their opportunity for independence, by taking on jobs never before available to them. Women were not held to a standard of ultra-femininity. The scarcity of resources and concern with national preservation, allowed women to escape the confinement of gender norms. However, once the war ended, women were urged to return to a life before the war. The nation, now had the economic availability and time to pour money into consumer goods and turn attention towards gender roles.

By 1947 advertisers were greatly influenced by emerging fashions coming out of Paris and shaped them to fit the American mentality. In the post war climate, advertisements were directly tied to promoting gender norms and shaped the perception of women's fashion and their role in society. Advertisement outlets portrayal of women's gender roles through fashion shifted from the years 1947-1969. Advertisers in the 1947 emphasized the New Look and a return to Victorian Age fashion that suggested a women's role in being elegant members of society. At the same time, advertisers were still being influenced by the end of the Second World War and promoted the American image as well as educational opportunities, however they were shrouded by the ideal image of femininity. By the mid-1950s fashion advertisers portrayed a women's role in society as a housewife and homemaker. However, for other advertisers, especially those of high-end clothing, a new focus on the universality of clothing and the movement of women as travel increased. Still, 1950s advertisers defined women's role through fashion in their relation to men. At the close of the 1960s, on the cusp of the feminist movement, advertisers portrayed the emerging freedom of women through clothing advertisements while at the same time describing women in sexualized terms. Advertisers continued to set up aspirational goals through fashion

for women to reach through influence of well-known social figures, and by suggesting to women that they should lead a certain lifestyle.

Secondary literature:

Other authors have looked at the context of 1950s and the 1960s in relation to the fashion choices made by both designers and consumers. Furthermore, other authors have discussed the role that fashion has played in the life of women and how advertisers produce products that are molded by these influences. In *American Decades: 1950-1959* and *American Decades: 1960-1969*¹, Cynthia Rose argues that women's fashion is a direct response to the Second World War. The return to a more domestic confinement, the authors assert, targeted the appeal of the homemaker. Women became part of a household consumer class. The authors discuss the abundance and availability to purchase new consumer products; products that became an integral part of the American women's image. Rose looks to French designer Christian Dior and American designer Claire McCardell, and draws a distinction of where and why the two designers differed. For fashion, Rose argues that Claire McCardell focused on the femininity but also the practicality of the dress for women. The authors show that while French designer Christian Dior was concerned with pattern and style, the American McCardell was concerned with making fashion fun while also paying attention to what the article of clothing would be used for. The designs McCardell conceived stood in strike contrast to the design that had launched a new era of fashion in the first place: Dior's The New Look. By painting a brief description of the Parisian fashion designer Dior, the authors detail the argument of France's influence in American fashion. This "new look" professed a desire to return to the domestic following the war, and

¹ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1950-1959* (Farmington Hill, MI: Gale, 2004).
Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1960-1969* (Farmington Hill, MI: Gale, 2004).

emphasized a feminine figure. Dior in contrast to McCardell, focused on luxurious fashion. McCardell on the otherhand focused on practical articles like the frock to wear over every day wear. In contrast to Dior's "New Look," McCardell's created the "American Look." Using McCardell's book *What Shall I Wear? The What Where When and How Much of Fashion*, the authors conclude that she was much more. The authors while pointing out the contrast, do not reflect on how these two varying styles work together to fit into the everyday lives of American women. The authors utilize primary source material well to assert their research, however they focus on excerpts, therefore minimalizing the full scope that the original documents may have intended.

Cynthia Rose in the "1960-1969" section of the *American Decades* notes fashion of the period was intended to shock. This turbulent time was reflected in the fashion design influencing American women. As the author notes the population of the 'baby boomers' that had followed the Second World War were came in the 1960s. In this atmosphere, the influence of music, entertainment and morality reflected a change from the previous decade and in the context of emerging national discontentment with the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the author argues that by 1963 feminist prospects started to bloom as women no longer accepted their role strictly as mothers and wives. The authors argue that books like the *Feminine Mystique* created discontent with the suburban homemaker. Furthermore, Kennedy's concept of 'equal pay for equal work' helped spur support for a blossoming movement towards women's rights. It is under this context that fashion in the 1960s saw a sharp transition away from that of the 1950s into a decade of both sexual and fashion freedom.

In *Dressing the Decades: Twentieth-Century Vintage Style*, Emmanuelle Dirix provides a socio-economic look into the fashion of the twentieth century.² Dirix shows both an overview of fashion trends in the 1950s and 1960s while also detailing the relationship of fashion at different consumer levels: high end, commercial, and household. In the 1950s, Dirix argues, the emerging fashions were not meant to confine women to the domestic sphere of the household but emphasized femininity. Rather, Dirix claims it was desire for luxury. Dior encapsulates this in the post-war era. Furthermore, other high-end fashion designers like Coco Chanel and Cristobal Balenciaga emphasized the ideas of a women's luxurious aesthetic: a look that showed women had a certain status through stylish feminine clothes. This push for luxury, the authors argue, permeated into everyday society outside of the high-end fashion retail. In the United States the desire for high end fashion combined with comfort to create the unique "American Look."

Dirix explains that the 1960s reflected a more youthful, less glamorous style. Dirix argued that the mini skirt, in the context of explosion of baby boomer consumers, played with the contrast to that of their parents who had grown up in the 1930s and 1940s where the Great Depression and World War II induced a more conservative nature upon many Americans. To the baby boomers parent's generation clothing was a necessity, rather than a statement. The author reflects on the significance of the miniskirt by looking at advertisements and fashion ads. This look, the author argues, was attributed in part to the increased freedom women had over their sexuality through things such as contraceptive pills. Thus the miniskirt displayed a sexual revolution that many young women embraced while others condemned it because it went against conservative norms. Furthermore, it objectified women to the male gaze. Also, the American-

² Emmanuelle Dirix, *Dressing the Decades: Twentieth-Century Vintage Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 118-157.

born 'hippie style' also displayed a counterculture nature in their fashion choices. However, the author argues that mass consumerism still dominated the style. This mix of emerging freedom in fashion, while still maintaining ties to the fashions of the previous era created a unique 1960s fashion identity.

In their publication, "Feminism and Advertising in Tradition and Nontraditional Women's Magazine 1950-1980," Linda J. Busby and Greg Leichty explore how advertising intended for women changed during the years between 1950 and 1980.³ Nontraditional magazines (magazines that did not promote mainstream values and ideas) did not emerge until in the mid- 1970's. Therefore during the 1950s and 1960s women's advertising in magazines are defined as "traditional." The author's research and analyze advertisements found in *Redbook* and *McCall* as a source of the "traditional" women's advertisements during the 1950s and 1960s. They find that most advertisements feature women between the ages of 18 and 34. The argument emphasizes the role that the traditional magazine played in the lives of women in the pre-feminist movement era. Furthermore, the authors find a fundamental difference in the presentation of women based on the product. In cleaning product advertisements, for example, women are placed in the family context to announce the role of a housewife. Whereas advertisements that display fashion and clothing, place women in a decorative role: an object of beauty found in the home.

Busby and Leichty find that although emerging ideas on the feminist movement were effective in changing women's portrayal in advertising, decorative roles (emphasis of women's

³ Linda J. Busby and Greg Leichty, "Feminism and Advertising in Traditional and Nontraditional Women's Magazines 1950s-1980s" *Journalism Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (1993): 247-264, accessed February 23, 2017, Communication Source, EBSCOhost.

physical attractiveness) dominated advertisements in many regards. For many types of advertising, the authors find that women actually increased their presence in the decorative role over time and in the late 1960s. This undermines their argument as they also insist that budding feminist movement contribute to an increased autonomy of women seen through advertisements. However, the authors effectively make the argument that women were exciting domestic sphere in some ways. By studying the environment of women's advertisements, women were increasing seen outside of the home and without male presence continually throughout the progression of 1950s and 1960s. The authors fail to address that perhaps that shift was not a result of the feminist movement but rather a shift in the attitudes among magazine and advertisement producers relating to other factors, such as women entering white collar occupations. To stay aligned with their original argument on feminism, they draw conclusions based solely on the role that feminism could have potentially played in reshaping the display of women in advertisements. This is telling of the fashion advertisements that reflected a shift during the two decades. Overall, there research is effective in displaying that advertisements give insight to how people lived in the day-to-day life.

Methodology:

With this background knowledge the research question guiding the study: Are there general themes found in women's fashion industry in the Post-World War II era? More specifically, what is the role of women's advertisers during 1947-1972 in the influencing gender roles?

This time frame is specially chosen because it represents three pinnacle moments of U.S. fashion history. The first, 1947-1949, creates the emergence of the New Look and therefore the launch of a hyper-feminine era. Women's fashion becomes standardized and mass produced. As a result, advertisers are able to produce a single "look" or design. Next, 1950-1959 is analyzed because it too is able to stand alone as a different representation of fashion. The fashion of 1950-1959, although separate from the design that the New Look created, also pushes a single "American look," that is sold to mass consumers. Thirdly, fashion advertisements in 1960-1972 creates a unique "look" that defies the designs that came before it. The look of the 1960s emphasizes the sexual freedom and youthful look of women. This idea of a single, yet distinct look comes to a close when women reject a single style of fashion. Around 1972, with the emergence of women public figures and leaders and second wave feminism, fashion styles expand. Fashion and fashion advertisers begin to diversify, ended the trend of a single fashion "look."

In order to look at the three main looks that emerged during the time frame, magazine advertisements are used. Given the resources that are available, the data collected is composed of women's fashions ads majorly from *The New Yorker, 1947-1972*. *The New Yorker*, although not typically regarded as a fashion magazine, represents a specific reader. Typically this reader is of a higher class and has a subscription to this magazine. The magazine is bought and read by a dedicated readership. Therefore, the reader has both the time and desire to examine the magazine closely. The advertisements found throughout are aimed at a targeted audience

Collecting data about magazines that target different socioeconomic readers, can create different outcomes. However, given the nature of the "look" that defines each time periods, patterns emerged. Even across different magazines, who advertise to women of different

socioeconomic standings and advertise different priced products; a similarity of the design and method is found. In essence, the advertisers created a single design of women across all age, socioeconomic status, and race during each of the three time periods.

Data:

The time period are divided into 1947-1950, 1950-1959, and 1960-1972. For each time period advertisements from *The New Yorker* were collected and categorized. The patterns that are repeated throughout each time period determine and rationalize the choices that advertisers make about women's fashion. For each time period the February issue and August issue are analyzed. February issue produces fashion for the Spring seasons, while the August issue produces fashion advertisements for the Fall season. These two seasons display the new trends that emerge from the fashion industry. By looking at the February and August editions from each time period, the fashion trends and norms for the given time period will be displayed. Advertisements that are chosen for each time period are randomly selected in order to get full picture of the time frame.

Categorization:

Advertisements are organized into six different categories: photograph or drawing/silhouette; portrayed with children or without children; shown with a boyfriend/husband or shown without a boyfriend/husband; shown outside the home/social or inside the home/non social; mention to travel/exploration or no mention to travel/exploration; mention to youth or no mention to youth.

Rationale:

Photograph vs. drawing or silhouette:

Advertisers who use a drawing or silhouette rather than a photograph indicate either an economic or aspirational tactic. In the post-war climate, as the country redeveloped economically, many advertisers cut cost by using silhouettes and drawings rather than photographs. Using a drawing

or silhouette can be more than a financially conscious choice as well. Advertisers can carefully employ the silhouette to allow women to picture themselves in the clothing. The silhouette allows the audience member to become the women in the picture. This technique both saves money while also providing every women the opportunity to wear the newest fashions. However, many advertisers used photographs to sell women's fashion during the 1940s- early 1970s. Even though photographs do not allow women to see themselves in the clothing, advertisers can specially convey the setting that the clothing should be worn in. Photographs can reveal the economic availability of the company and allow for a precise message. Photographs provide viewers an explicit message; telling the readers what and who they can be if they wear the clothing item.

Portrayed with or without children:

The rationale behind this categorization involves the perceived women's role during the 1947-1972. There was a heavy emphasis on women's role in the home and their role as mothers. However, using the data collected from *The New Yorker* reveals women almost exclusively without children in the advertisements. This could be in large part due to the nature of the advertisement and the audience itself. *The New Yorker's* main audience is not the typical housewife of the mid-century United States. The advertisers were not looking to appease the women spending her day taking care of their children, but rather the women who has the opportunity and availability to buy clothing.

Shown with a husband/boyfriend or without a husband/boyfriend:

Similar to the rationale behind categorizing advertisements based on the use of children is the portrayal of male figure in women's advertisements. The mid-twentieth century in many regards defined women as the caretaker of the family. Clothing itself is a device used by both genders to

attract potential companionship. Assumably, advertisers would portray clothing as an effective method to obtain the family and caretaker lifestyle that defined women's role at the time. However, through collection of data, women are almost exclusively displaying fashions alone or with another women.

Inside the home/non social or outside the home/social:

The significance of this categorization was determined by the expected role of women during the mid-twentieth century. Expectations in many regards confined women in the 1950s to the home. In the data it was expected that during the 1950s most of the advertisements would portray women in the home. By the 1960s, with the emergence of sexual freedom ideology, it was expected that the data would reveal women portrayed mainly outside the home.

Mention to travel/exploration or no mention to travel/ exploration:

The 1940s and 1950s gave way to many women returning to their home. With males back in the home front, society suggested it was women's role to remain inside the home, fulfilling the feminine duty. By the 1960s with the emerging ideas of sexual freedoms, women seemingly had more opportunities to explore. Through data collection, it is predicted that there will be increase in women portrayed in opportunities to travel and explore. This category also includes mention to exercise, as it becomes more acceptable for women to exercise into the 1960s.

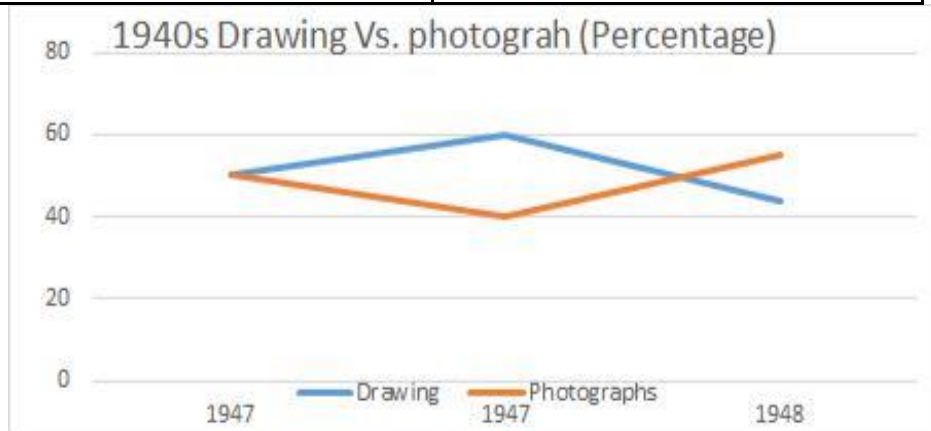
Mention to youthfulness or no mention to youthfulness:

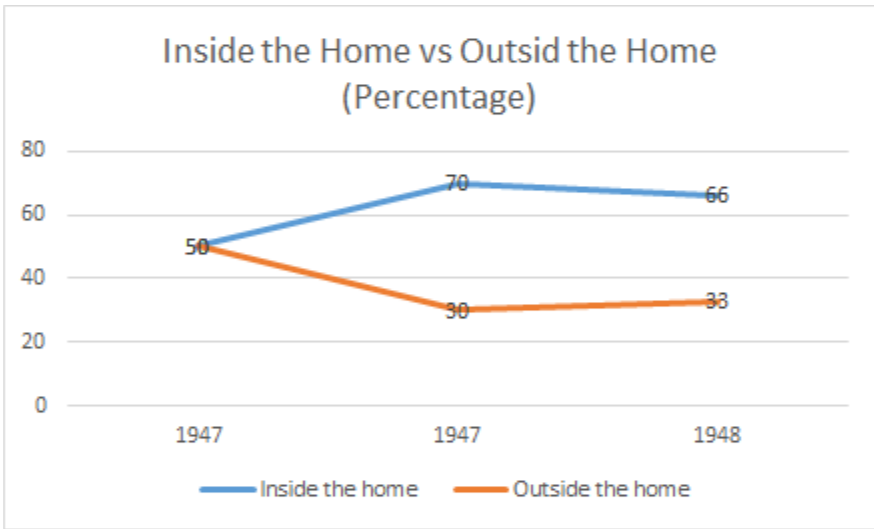
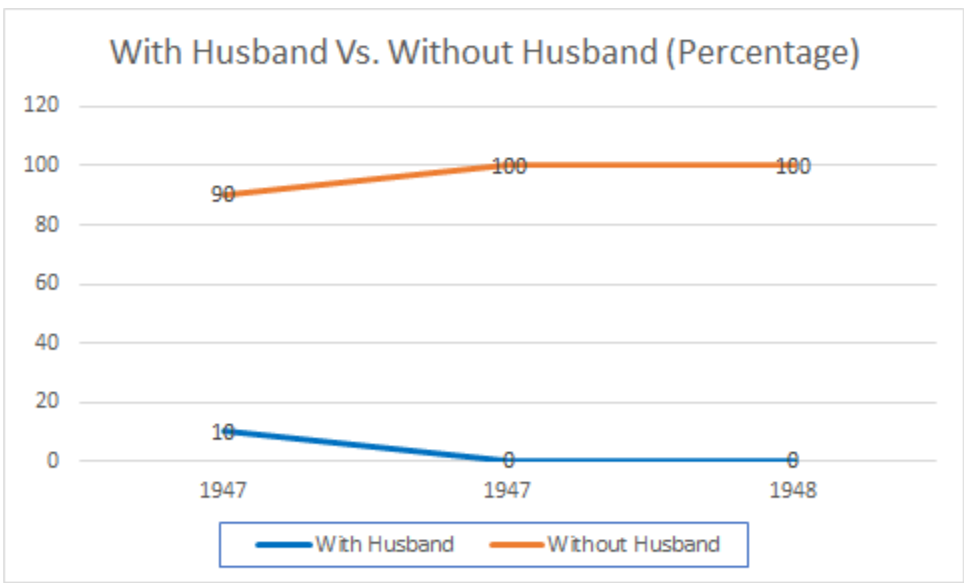
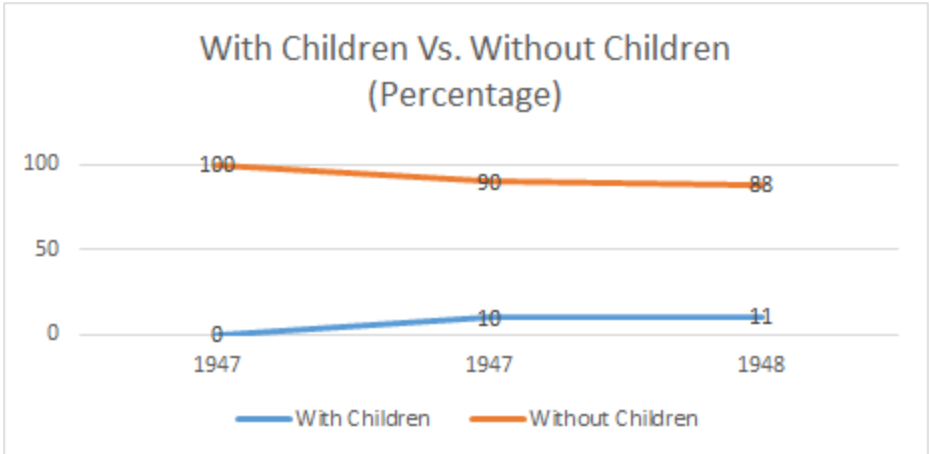
Intertwined into the sexual freedom movement that categorized the 1960s, was sexualized youthfulness. When expecting data, it is predicted that the 1960s will have a sharpened increase in mention to youthfulness. Fashion designers and icons of the 1960s played up the childlike body. This contrast with the 1950s, which dress emphasized the curves and in many ways the bust of women.

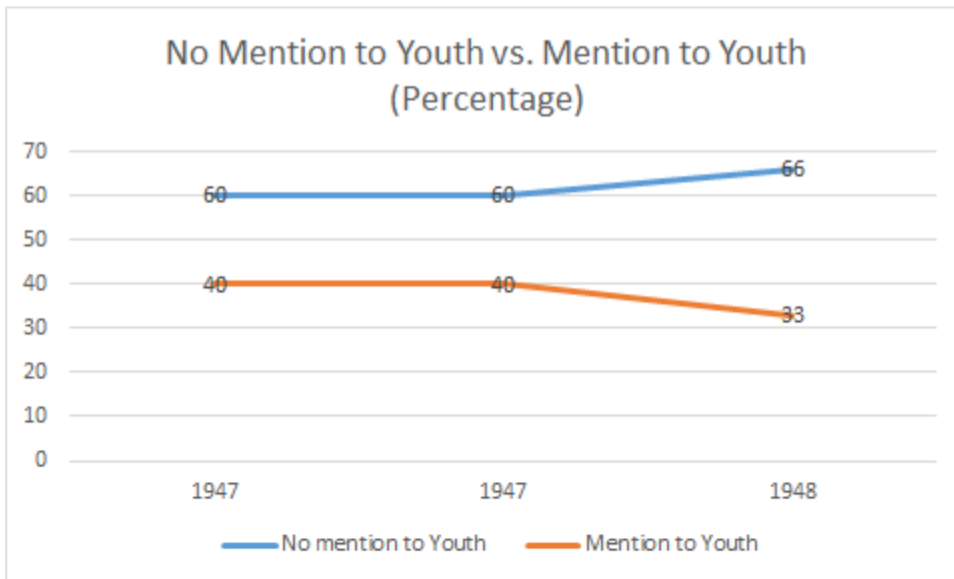
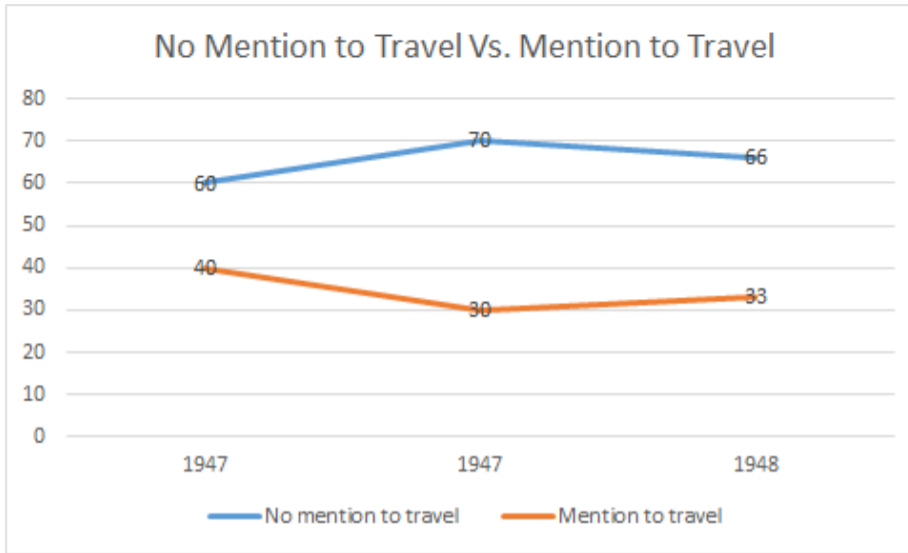
Advertisements during the 1940s:

1940s totals

Photograph 14	Drawing /silhouette 15
With children 2	Without children 27
With husband/boyfriend 2	Without a husband/boyfriend 27
Inside the home /non social 18	Outside the home/social 11
No mention to travel/exercise/exploration 19	Mention to travel/ exercise/exploration 10
No mention to youth 18	Mention to youth 11







Examining the data alone, no significant patterns emerge from advertisements during the 1940s. Women are clearly displayed without the presence of men or children throughout different editions and year of the magazine. Advertisers use equal amounts of photographs and silhouettes to advertise their products. More women are displayed in inside the home, without mention to travel/exploration, and without mention to youth.

It was expected that in the post-war climate, more advertisers would use silhouettes to sell their products. Economically, the post-war climate the use of a drawing was a wise financial decision. Furthermore, this reflects a desire by advertisers to allow women to see themselves in the clothing items. However, based on the sample size, the data showed that advertisers had no preference of medium during the time period.

Despite the inconclusiveness of the data collected from the 1940s, assertions can still be made by looking at the advertisements themselves. The categorization does not provide a full picture of the techniques advertisers used to sell a certain image during the time period. Beginning in 1947, the New Look by Christian Dior emphasized a return to femininity that many believed had been lost when women entered the workforce during the Second World War. Women's clothing following the New Look displayed a tapered waist, soft shoulders, long length, and volume. Dior wanted to escape the rationing and restriction that had defined fashion during the Second World War.⁴ However, when the New Look first appeared many were still weary and claimed that the luxurious look was excessive. In a recovering wartime atmosphere

⁴ Emmanuelle Dirix, Dressing the Decades: Twentieth-Century Vintage Style (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 117.

people still clung to the frugality of conserving material and putting the country rather than individual fashion choice first.

However, by 1948 American fashion designers gathered inspiration from the look and started incorporating them into their own lines. The New Look represented a desire to return to “normality” or a world in which people could enjoy the luxuries that had existed before the war. As “new” as the fashion press defined the look, it echoed the mid to late-nineteenth-century model of a “nipped waist, rounded shoulders, and lowered hemlines.”⁵ Dior turned “evening-wear silhouettes” of the Victorian Age into “luxurious daywear” and shaped the gender role of women as mature, elegant, and feminine.⁶

Advertisers incorporated this new vision of women’s fashion into ready-to-wear clothing for all ages even though it emphasized the image of the mature woman. The February 1949 edition of *The New Yorker* features an advertisement for junior girls clothing entitled “Little Victorians.” The girls wear checkered wool coats, “deeply piped and flared” inspired by Victorian age fashion.⁷ Although the coats were made for youth, the New Look implied that the proper role of the female was luxury and femininity in order to stress the contrast of the working woman that appeared during the war. The New Look that became popularized around the world, displayed the “perfect” hourglass figure. In advertisement for



⁵ Emmanuelle Dirix, *Dressing the Decades: Twentieth-Century Vintage Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 118.

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⁷ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Feb. 6, 1949):70.

Bergdorf Goodman, the designer Irene “curves a coat dress in to her famous lines.”⁸ The exaggerated features of luxury accented the female body by creating “curves” that represented the return to traditional dress found in the nineteenth-century.⁹ The cartoon version of the model displays an over-exaggerated cinched waist that emphasized both the traditional Victorian look as well as suggest that women femininity was found in direct relation to the shape of her body. The New Look suggested that femininity was directly tied to fashion.

Other advertisers emphasized both the New Look designs while using rhetoric that was influenced by the women who had entered the working force during the war. Certain advertisers emphasized both youth and education when placing women in New Look attire. An advertisement for a Bendel dress from 1947 addresses the audience as “young-timers.”¹⁰ The advertisement appeals to its audience by contending that the dress is a “post-graduate course in flattery.”¹¹ The advertiser first emphasizes the idea of youth as a national focus on re-growing the nation following the war. Furthermore the language of the advertisement reveals the influence of education at the time. During the Second World War, women’s availability to enter both the work force and higher education increased as men were trained for more technical positions to aid in the war. In 1947, only two years after the war had ended, advertisers promoted women’s higher education. However, the fashion itself was dominated by New Look designs. The Bendel dress had an “emphasis on rounded hips and a neckline.”¹² The advertisement contradicts itself as the design of the dress emphasizes the ultra-femininity of a women, while the

⁸ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Feb. 6, 1969):100.

⁹ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1940-1949* (Farmington Hill, MI: Gale, 2004).

¹⁰ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 23, No. 29 (Sept. 6, 1947):65.

¹¹ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 23, No. 29 (Sept. 6, 1947):65.

¹² N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 23, No. 29 (Sept. 6, 1947):65.

rhetoric emphasis the opportunities available to women. The advertisers in this regard define women's role in regard to fashion. Only once the women achieved the preferred feminine look would she be able to have certain opportunities.

Advertisers also were influenced by the force of American culture. The need for national identity and moral strength permeated into the minds of Americans as Cold War tensions built. This promoted advertisements that both blatantly and subliminally promoted American superiority and strength. For women, this meant a focus on an American identity through fashion. In a 1947 advertisements for Hadley Cashmere sweaters from *The New Yorker*, the advertisers promote "luscious American beauties," and claim the sweaters are "American classics."¹³ The model used for the advertisement has brown hair, brown eyes, and white skin: an "American" look. Advertisers capitalize on the post war-climate, by promoting the vision of the American aspiration. This aspiration entices women to achieve a certain look that emphasizes their role as Americans. In this way, advertisers tie fashion directly to women's roles as good American citizens. During the 1940s a concern advertisers were shaped by a post-war climate that drove forth a definition a women as individuals that were defined by their fashions.

The new availability for buyers to consume more products allowed new opportunities for the meaning of fashion. As one advertisement from the August 1947 edition of *The New Yorker* declares "Poetry in motion," emphasizes the new purpose for clothing. For this advertiser, fashion now has the availability to be more than a practicality. With the economic stability pulsing through the U.S. fashion advertisers create a new market; a market of expression.

However, based on the collection of advertisements from 1947-1949, the majority of advertisements do not show a direct mention to youth. Rather the clothes emphasize the fabric or

¹³ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 23, No. 30 (October 4, 1947):5.

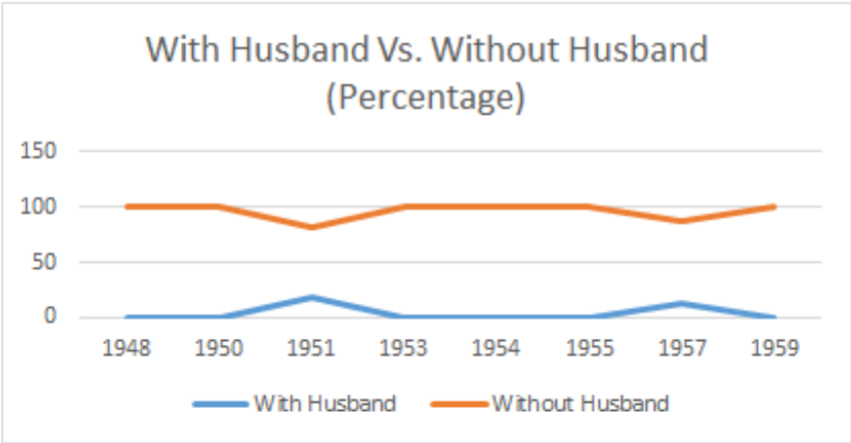
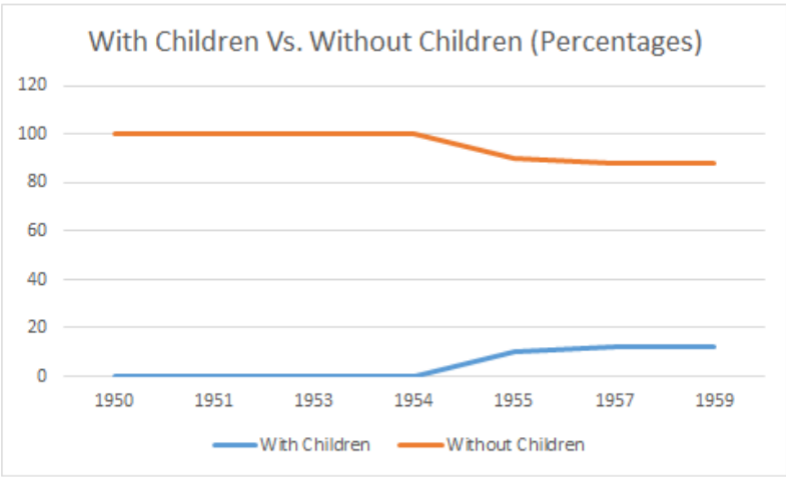
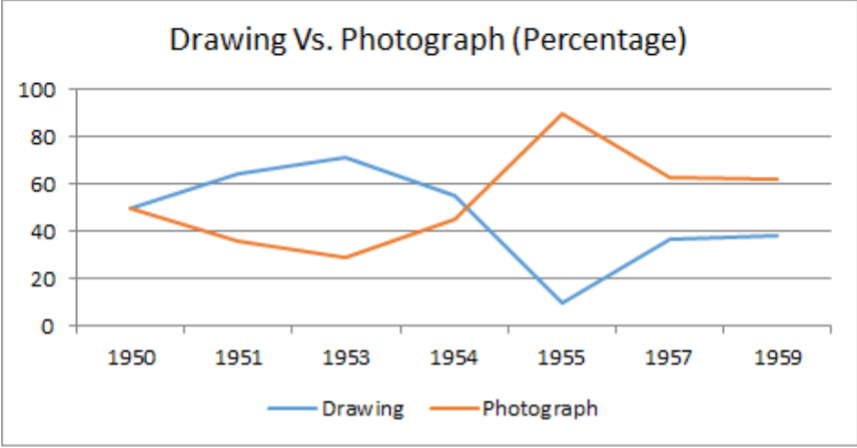
fashion itself. While the “New Look” directly aimed to create the ideal feminine image, the words that advertisers used did not always allude to the youthful “hourglass” figure during the late 1940s. This is telling of the demographic of the New Yorker at the time. At this time, luxury has now become available on a mass scale. While the readers of the New Yorker have most likely always had the ability to purchase luxury goods; there is now a push for product luxury for all people.

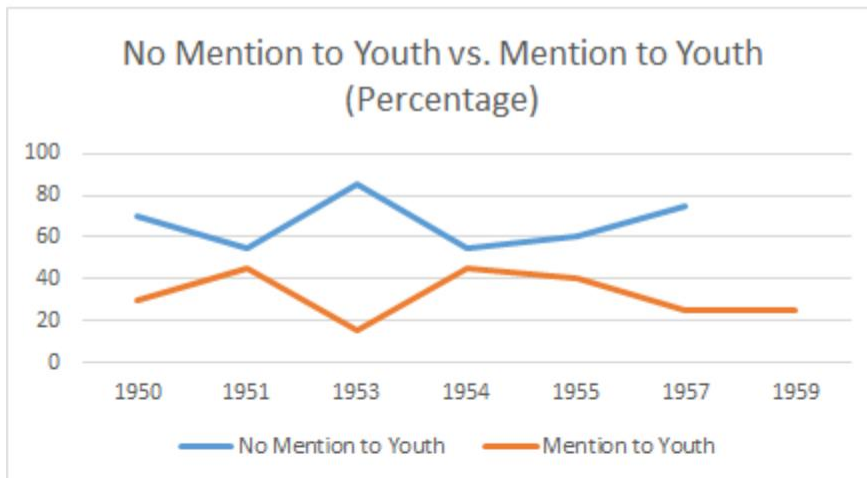
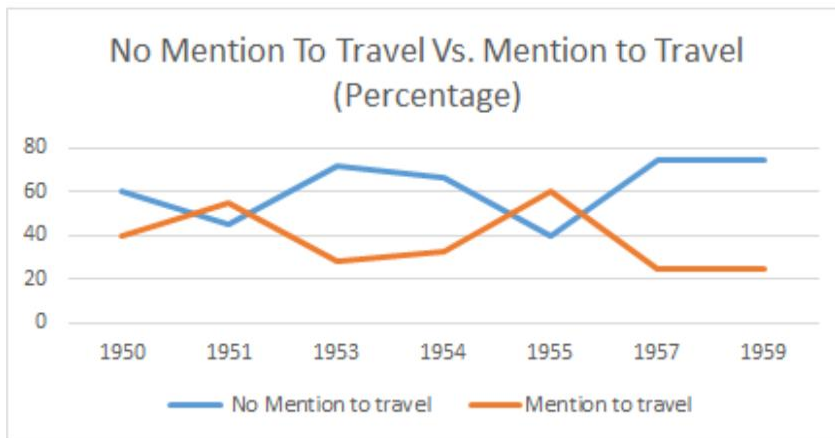
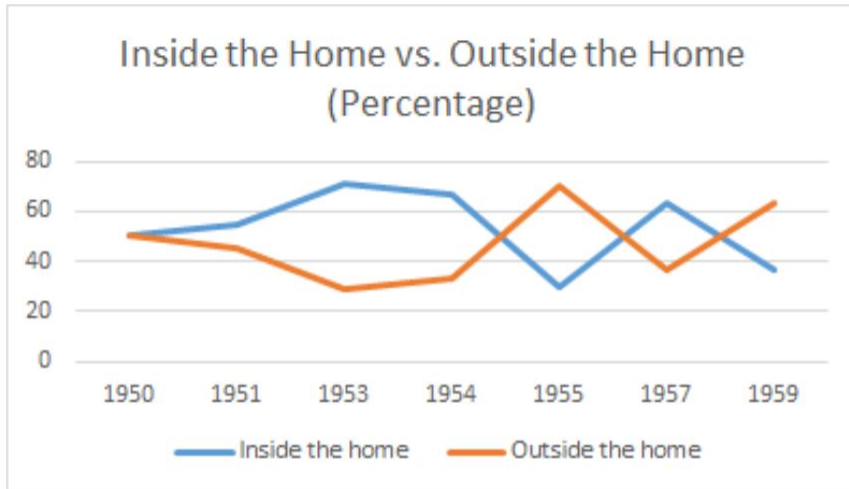
Other patterns and ideas emerged that are not reflected by the data categorization. Advertisers in *The New Yorker* were aware of the audience at hand. One advertiser declared “Poetry in motion,” in reference to a “fluidly draped dinner gown.” Phrases such as these emphasized the new purpose for clothing. Fashion had the availability to be more than a practicality. With increased economic stability pulsing through the U.S., fashion advertisers created a new market: a market of expression.

Advertisements during the mid-1950s

1950s total

Photograph 34	Drawing /silhouette 29
With children 4	Without children 59
With husband/boyfriend 3	Without a husband/boyfriend 60
Inside the home /non social 33	Outside the home/social 30
No mention to travel/exploration 38	Mention to travel/ exploration 25
No mention to youth 42	Mention to youth 21





As seen with the advertisements from the 1940s, women are primarily advertised without husband or children. There is a slight increase in the number of overall photographs used

compared to drawings or silhouettes, although not significant enough to make determine a pattern for the time period. The data does not reveal any increase of the use of photographs as the decade progresses. As seen in the 1940s advertisements, more advertisements feature women inside the home. This trend is expected given the perceived role of women during the 1950s. The emphasis on household duties would imply women's confinement to the home. In this regard, although many women are still featured outside the home during this decade, the trend for each year matches the traditional role of women during this time period.

Also as expected, there is less of mention to travel and exploration as the data will show in the 1960s. More advertisements will speak specifically to the clothing itself, rather than the role of the women in the clothing. In many regards advertisers were not mentioning travel/exploration because they focused on the material of the fabric itself. This was especially true of the advertisements that were drawings.

The categorization did not provide a complete picture of the 1950s advertisements. Trends regarding gender roles still emerged outside of the six categories. This trend can be explained by looking at the context of the century. At the turn of the half- century, the U.S. economy began to grow. Ordinary people now had the means to purchase goods for both luxury and convenience. This boom in the economy made it possible for many women to return home, as husbands were able to make enough to support an entire family. As a result of this availability for women to stay home as well as an opportunity for ordinary people to buy more products, by the mid-1950s advertisers of fashion urged women to pursue a role as the homemaker. The emphasis on the domestic role of the women permeated every genre of advertising. Household products catered to women fulfilling as role a wife and mother. Sprinkled throughout the 1955 issues of *Time* magazine, are advertisements for household products such as watercoolers,

refrigerators, dishwasher, and other household appliances.¹⁴ The advertisements often display women working at home dressed in heels, a nice dress, and a smile. Also, the women were usually alone, as to suggest these household appliance are designed solely for the woman to use. The advertisers stress the domestic role for women by putting them in the context of the home. Even if the advertisement was not for clothing, the women appeared to be dressed well. This suggest that part of the women's role was to appear beautiful while also making the world she lives in beautiful: that world being the home.

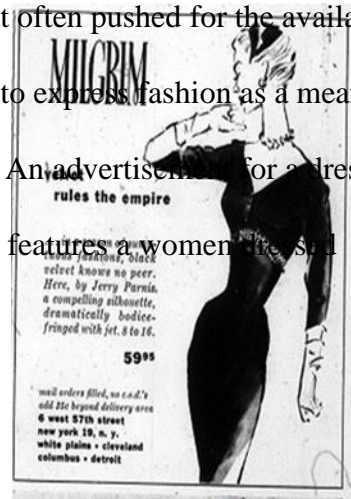
However, as many advertisements and magazines promoted the women in the domestic life, overwhelmingly fashion advertisements appealed to women with wealth and defined their role in relation to her prosperity. Advertisers in *The New Yorker* during the 1950s displayed women's role through fashion as one dominated by wealth. In the post war climate where consumerism was abuzz, fashion advertisements were able to promote the luxury in design. Magazines like *The New Yorker* that appealed to an urban, wealthy audience included advertisements that endorsed couture inspired looks. In a August issue of *The New Yorker*, an advertisements for a Milgrim dress announced- "velvet rules the empire."¹⁵ The advertisers use language that suggest elegance and class by telling viewers that "in a season of sumptuous fashion" the dress is "compelling" and is "dramatically" designed. The advertisers appeal to the women who have both the opportunity for luxury while also defining fashion as something that

¹⁴ N.A., *Time*, Vol. 65, (January, 1955):52.

¹⁵ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 31, No. 26 (September. 3, 1955):67.

commands attention. In this way, advertisers are not confining women to the household, but defining them as consumers.

Advertisers did not solely push women towards a domestic role, a role defined solely by their relation to the man, or even because women could now afford more costly clothing items. Fashion designers for women's clothing included women that often pushed for the availability and practicality of fashion. As a result, advertisers were able to express fashion as a means of democratic universality; clothing that all women could wear. An advertisement for a dress of "Dacron and wool" from *The New Yorker* in the fall of 1955, features a woman who still elegantly. Although the picture appears elegant because the



women wears white gloves, jewelry, and makeup; the advertisement stresses they convenience of the fabric. The dress is "lighter to wear," "resist wrinkling," and needs "minimum care."¹⁶ Even though the dress is directed towards high-end viewers of *The New Yorker*, the advertisers still emphasis the universality of the dress for all women when describing its low maintenance. This description follows from the new "American Look" of fashion. The American Look, although grounded in the Parisian "New Look" inspiration, was uniquely American because of its ability to "[marry] elegance with comfort," and quickly became popular because of its "style, comfort, easy materials, and designs."¹⁷ The designer Claire McCardell, who stressed the practicality and accessibility of American fashion, designed clothes to be "reasonably priced and ready to

¹⁶ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 31, No. ? (September. ?, 1955):11.

¹⁷ Emmanuelle Dirix, *Dressing the Decades: Twentieth-Century Vintage Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 123.

wear.”¹⁸ McCardell in her book *What Shall I Wear? The What where When and How Much of Fashion* instructs women to “wear the fabric [they] feel best in.”¹⁹ Advertisers recognized this desire for comfort and practicality when another advertisement for a dress made of Dacron, a type of polyester material, and cotton, advertises that the dress will stay “fresh and fit.”²⁰ The advertisers promise that the dress will see the buyer through summer in good shape, as the fabric “leads an active life without showing it.” The advertisement point the appearance of luxury, with is aided by a well-groomed, white gloved woman, while also pointing to the idea that the dress is practical and easy to take care of.

McCardell and advertisers alike were conscious of “the changes cars and airplanes had wrought on American women,” so clothes were made “travel-wear resistant.”²¹ To McCardell, fashion was not simply something to wear, which it had been in the previous decade in a wartime atmosphere of frugality. Fashion, she and the rest of the country believed, should be modern and up to date. Now, fashion was an extension of the woman herself. This was extended to the new American opportunity to travel, as both the physical resource of cars and planes expanded, and the economic availability expanded. McCardell told her viewers that she had “seen Fashion in action – how it looks when you move—walking, traveling, flying, hitting a golf ball, skiing and sailing.”²² A *New Yorker* advertisement for a Julius Garfinckel & Co. blouse is able to “travel the world without ironing” while at the same time making women who wear it “look as fresh as spring.”²³ Like McCardell, advertisers recognized the desire for functional travel wear, while also

¹⁸ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1950-1959* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2004)166.

¹⁹ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1950-1959* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2004)167.

²⁰ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb.25, 1956):63.

²¹ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1950-1959* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2004)166.

²² Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1950-1959* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2004)169.

²³ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb.25, 1956):63.

giving women an aspirational look to strive that: that being a women who has both the means to travel and a women who has the right style to travel in.

However, as much as McCardell told women to wear the clothes they enjoyed she still expressed to readers that “you may invest in smart clothes because of your job, or give up smart clothes because of your husband. But one thing you can be sure of: what you wear is going to influence your life and what others think of you.” McCardell stressed that women were being looked to as an object of beauty. Women, even in various places or statuses still had a duty to look good; and that would come from fashion. Advertisers continued to make this point alongside McCardell when displaying women as a personification of beauty and class. An advertisement for Warner’s Merry Widow Corset, urges women to “extend themselves for fashion’s sake.”²⁴ Furthermore, the advertisement tells its viewers that the “lovely lines” it creates is “vital to the Gentle Look.” The advertisers emphasizes a standard that women must follow, by being lovely and gentle. Although corsets are traditionally a confining and uncomfortable clothing item, the advertisers point to how “wonderful” and “natural” a women feels while wearing it. The rhetoric suggest that the corset will not only make a women personify beauty, but also help her fulfill her “natural” role as a model of femininity. The advertisers also play on the aspiration of luxury by comparing a women’s body in the corset to “champagne flowing through an eased-in waist.”²⁵

Advertisements during the 1960’s

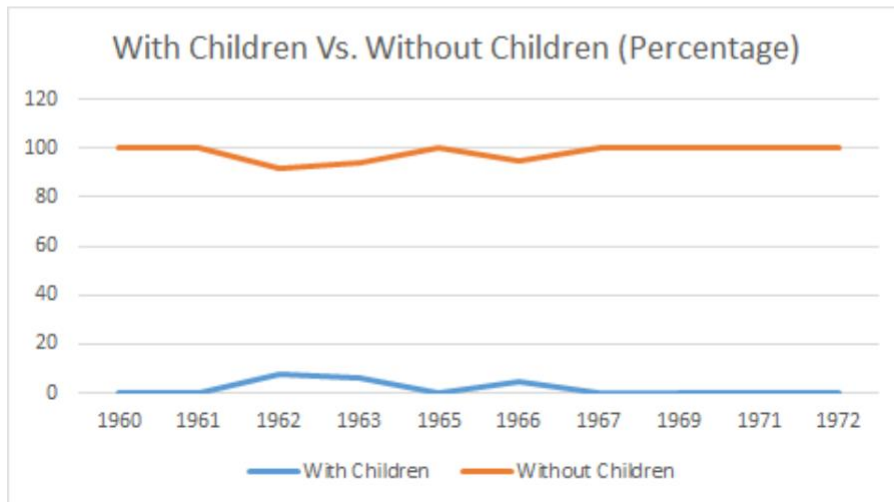
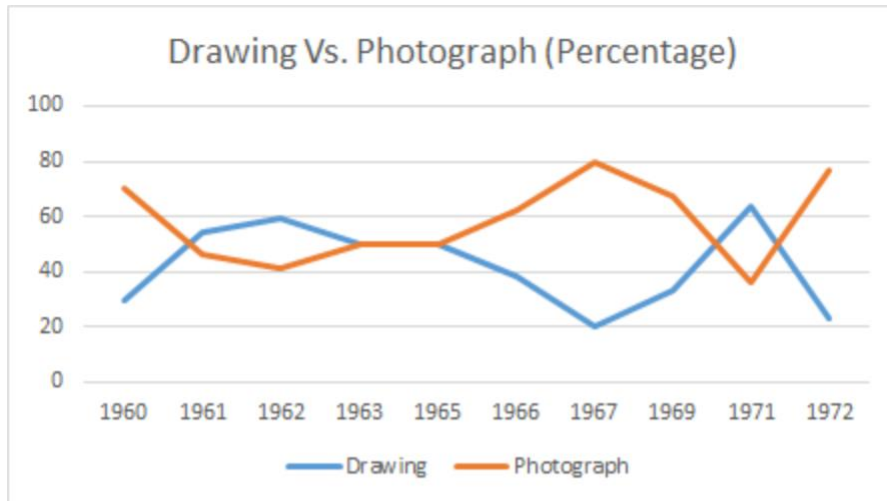
1960s total

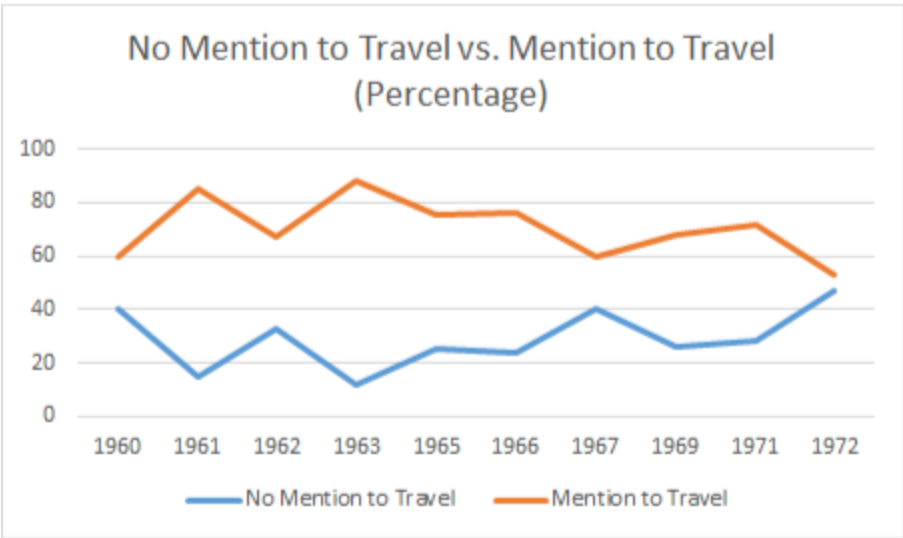
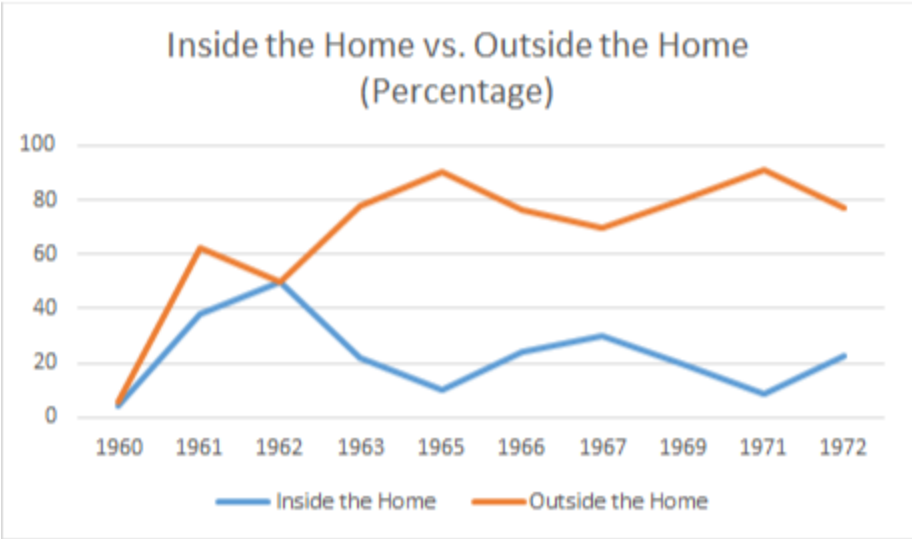
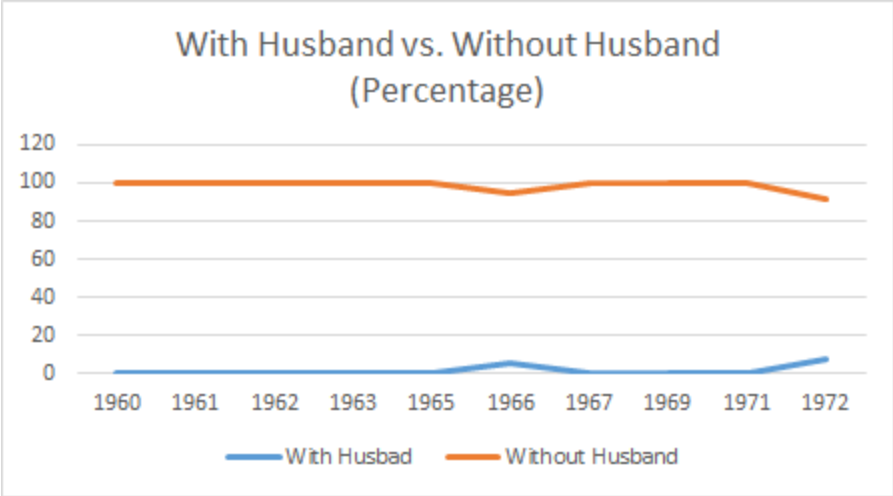
Photograph 82	Drawing /silhouette 61
With children 3	Without children 140

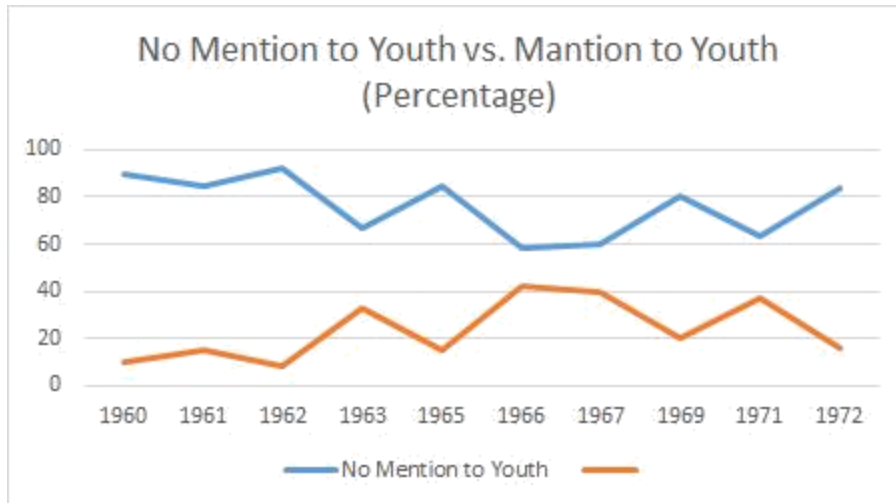
²⁴ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 30, No. 42 (Dec .4, 1954):103.

²⁵ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 30, No. 42 (Dec .4, 1954):103.

With husband/boyfriend 2	Without a husband/boyfriend 141
Inside the home /non social 49	Outside the home/social 94
No mention to travel/exploration 41	Mention to travel/exploration 102
No mention to youth 108	Mention to youth 35







In comparison to the 1940s and 1950s there is a clear increase in the amount of advertisements that either displayed women in a position of travel and exploration or hinted at their ability to do so. Looking at the context of the decade, advertisers helped define an emerging expectation that women could and would do more than stay inside the home. Advertisers, while reflecting the societal changes of the decade, significantly influence the role of women themselves. Advertisers show women the possibilities that clothing could provide them as there is a shift to a belief in more freedoms for women.

The data did not reflect a significant increase to the mention or emphasis to youthfulness. Comparing the percentages, there was a higher percentage to the mention of youth in the advertisements found in the 1950s. This is due in part to the viewers of the magazine. Sexualized youthfulness, although identifiable in cases throughout the 1960s and *The New Yorker*, did not consume the majority of advertisements. The readership could have a huge impact on many of the advertisers choice to refrain from the common trend that catergorized the late 1960s among other advertising platforms.

Trends outside the categorization also emerged during 1960-1972. Many advertisers recognized the emerging independence of women and began to increase the display of women outside the home, as more than a third of women began to work outside of the home by 1960.²⁶ Furthermore, feminist writer Betty Freidan captivated readers with her 1963 publication of The Feminine Mystic. The book reflected many women's apprehension with their role as homemakers and a desire for feminist action.²⁷ However, advertisements exploited the ideas of women exiting the home by setting up an aspirational look for women on the move. Other advertisers understood the different class roles and daily life of women but still gave them aspirational fashion figures such as Jackie Kennedy to look up to. Advertisers also contradicted themselves by producing advertisements that appealed to both women's freedom while at the same time sexualizing them; and by giving women masculine choices but only ones that set the male as the standard. Moreover, some advertisers still pushed the idea that women were tied to the man, and women's fashion choices were a direct result of this connection.

Advertisers designed an aspirational image of the free women in order to appeal to emerging freedoms. The July 1968 addition of *The New Yorker* published an advertisement for a "freewheeling-top" that was "programmed for action." The advertisers claim that women will be able to "bike, hike, go catch the wind."²⁸ This advertisement suggest adventure is available to women outside the home. The women is featured without the presence of a male or children, and implies that she will take on this exploration on her own.

Other advertisements highlighted women's emerging freedoms, while still characterizing them as sexualized beings. A 1965 advertisement from *The New Yorker* for Hanes Mystrecc

²⁶ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1950-1959* (Farmington Hill, MI: Gale, 2004).

²⁷ Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystic*, 1963 (New York: W.W. Norton Press, 2013).

²⁸ N.A., *The New Yorker*, Vol. 44, No. 8 (March 6, 1965):3.

stockings tells female viewers that they can “read about women who are unforgettable, disarming, and a not-so-quiet sensation” or they can become one by “wearing Mystrece.”²⁹ The stocking is seemingly advertised as an expression of women’s empowerment. By urging readers that they can become a “not-so-quiet” sensation, advertisers move away from the idea that women are the subservient, quiet half of society. However, this advertisement suggest that women can express themselves, once they have the right clothing. In this regard, advertisers suggest that independence will come as a result of wearing certain clothing rather than a movement of freedom for women. Furthermore, the visual representation of the advertisements contradicts the expression found on the advertisement. The woman who models the Mystrece stocking sits under a stack of books wearing nothing but the stockings. Her hair appears in a lavish up-do, while she gives a sultry look. It suggest to the viewers that she is studious while at the same time playing heavily on her sexuality. The advertisers display the idea of an independent, educated women while emphasizing that underneath it all is just a sexualized being. Furthermore, the advertisers display women’s sexuality under the guise of seemingly feminist rhetoric, all the while suggesting that women will be independent only once they buy their product. Advertisers seemed to reflect a growing movement towards women’s independence creating a new sexualized image of women. This new sexualized image of exposed legs and skin “alluded to sexual availability,” that was socially legitimized as birth control and emerging feminist thought allowed women to have more freedoms over their own sexuality.³⁰ The data category of “youthfulness” does not fully represent a recurring theme that still progresses

²⁹ N.A. *The New Yorker*, Vol. 44, No 8 (March 6, 1965): 25.

³⁰ Ruth P. Rubinstein, *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).

throughout the 1960s and the *The New Yorker*. In many cases it was specific advertisers that hinted at sexual freedom but did not specifically mention youthful nature.

Advertisers in the 1960s continued to set up an aspirational vision for women to achieve. One aspiration was independence that would be obtained with the right kind of clothing. At the same time, 1967 “unisex clothes began to show up in most of the major fashion designer’s

collection.”³¹ A Villagers clothing advertisement urges buyers to “Be Bold.”³² The advertisement presents two worlds: one in which women feel “helpless, cowardly, ill” or a world in which you feel like “Lindbergh” or “Bob, Son of Battle.” The advertisers explain that all a women needs to be brave is a wool blazer and wool slacks from *The Villager*. The advertisers interesting choice of aspiration is telling of masculine and heroic



its
and

influences at the time. Both Charles Lindbergh, an American hero and public figure, as well as Bob, Son of Battle, a fictitious heroic character represent masculinity. These figures also drew upon nostalgia. The advertisement for both a blazer and pants, traditional male clothing items draws on masculine figures as aspirational goals. The advertisers in this regard emphasis budding feminist style and rhetoric by emphasizing her ability to pursue the masculine role. However, at

³¹ Cynthia Rose, ed. *American Decades: 1960-1969* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2004)175.

³² N.A. *The New Yorker*, Vol. 43, No 4 (November 4, 1967): 45.

the same time, because the advertisers use male as the aspirational goal, the women's legitimacy is still based on male standards.

Gender equality and sexual freedom that advertisers took advantage of also emerged in magazines. However, despite both the aspirational vision of an adventurous woman,



fabricated freedoms riddled with sexual undertones, and the legitimate offering of masculinity that many advertisements offered, many advertisers still clung to the idea that women were dependent on the male and would likely enter a role in the home. An advertisement for Cone Demin from 1965 urged women to write to them for help. Each response Cone Demin suggested involved clothing products would solve the various issues a women could have. However each of these problems were in direct relation to men. One women writes

under the name “Plain Jane” and tells Cone that her “fiancé pays more attention to his Jag than to [her].”³³ The writers at Cone advise the women to gain the attention of her fiancé by

“distract[ing] him” with a “demin slicker” coat. Another women begs Cone to help her with her problem of being twenty and unmarried. The advertisers propose that Cone demin shorts will have her wed by twenty-one. While viewers are unaware about whether the women who wrote to Cone are real or fictitious, the advertisement makes it clear that Cone clothing will help women with their problems involving. The advertisers suggest that women are not satisfied without the male, but they easily satisfy the male, and therefore themselves, through Cone’s products. The advertisers connect the role of a women directly to fashion by suggesting that role of the women

33 N.A. *The New Yorker*, Vol. 44, No 8 (March 6, 1965): 45.

is to gain the attention of the male through clothing. Advertisers just as they had done in the 1950s approached women through a variety of tactics. However, in the 1960s, they called on social figures like Jackie Kennedy and emerging social movements of feminism. Underneath the surface, the rhetoric of women's freedom was undermined by advertiser's use of aspirational look to entice women to set a fashion standards.

However, the data revealed unexpected patterns. The majority of the women's clothing advertisements in *The New Yorker* during the 1960s to early 1970s, portrayed women inside the home. This unexpected pattern can be attributed to the demographic of the magazine reader's and economic choice made by advertisers themselves. Analyzing advertisements directed at middle class readers could reveal different data. Women in the upper class in many ways already had the social availability to leave the home prior to the 1960s. There was no substantial shift because advertisers were not focusing on the aspirational opportunity for women to leave the home.

Data similarities:

Common patterns among the three time periods emerged. The majority of fashion advertisements from 1947-1949, 1950-1959, and 1960-1972 did not display or give mention to a woman's children or husband. While children and husbands were not the focus of women's fashion, there is a common image and expectation of women at the time period. Even by looking at other genres of advertisements from women, there is a clear hint to her role of motherhood and wifely duties. While collected data is partially limited in regards to availability of sources, the study reveals the patterns high socioeconomic demographic of readers; thereby serving as a representation of the styles and products that advertisers produced during the three time periods.

As discussed, some of categories chosen for data collection did not allow for an accurate reflection of the time period. Also categories were skewed because of the select group of advertisers that *The New Yorker* allows in its publications. *Bonwit and Teller* almost exclusively uses drawings or silhouettes to advertise their clothings regardless of the year. This recreated misconceptions in data. Making it appear that there were many drawings and silhouettes still being used in the 1950s and 1960s to advertise clothing. However, the other advertisers featured in magazines, while were consistent in the company, changed their method of advertising to photography in many cases. Some advertisements do not feature women at all-- advertisers created drawings of clothes and printed them for magazine use. Therefore the categorization of women in relation to social setting was lost. Furthermore, because of the high frequency reference to luxury throughout the advertisements, a category that addressed language concerning luxury would have added a clearer understanding of norms in the data. Homogeneity of the Upper Class:

The primary readers of *The New Yorker*, the upper class, represent a different consumer than women of the middle class of the same time period. By looking at the Upper Class, advertisers emphasis the luxury and availability to be high-end consumers. Even as mention to travel and exploration increase in the 1960s, many advertisers still accentuate the high-end material of the clothing items. While across every socio-economic group during this time period there is an increase in purchasing power, the advertisers of the upper class use *The New Yorker* as a platform to suggest the role of clothes in determining success. The advertisements suggest that if you can buy these clothes, you can be the desirable women (whatever that may be, dependent on the time frame). Practicality and versatility, while important to some advertisers and women, was

not the primary focus for the upper class. Therefore the continuation of the “New Look,” a trend heavily reliant of luxury, was a natural choice for advertisers of the upper class.

While it is helpful to separate the time periods into decades, fashion does not make a shift just because a new decade does. Rather, the trends that defined the late 1940s in the upper class are almost identical to those of the early 1950s. Fashion reflects trends rather than years. The “New Look” remained the guiding trend for women’s dress into the 1950s. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s styles progressed homogeneously; a reflection of both the long-with standing traditions of the upper class as well as the similarity of goal among advertisers during the two decades. While there is an introduction of “The American Look” in the mid-1950s, many upper end advertisers continued to emphasize the luxury of the “New Look.”

Conclusion:

Fashion in the late 1940’s seemed to be strictly defined to making women feminine. Instead fashion, as advertisers tell us, was concerned with promoting order. That order involved women fulfilling a role that had not been available during the war. Once men could return to work, the nation once again was concerned with what women would do. In order to secure both the masculinity and security of the country, women could no longer represent the masculine force that they had been able to as they undertook jobs and more education during the Second World War. The New Look, a fashion that emerged from France, a nation that was obsessed with rebuilding itself after the war, looked to gender roles as a way to rebuild their nations. American women’s fashion followed the very designs that promoted women in ultra-femininity. To both France, the United States and all those effected by the war, creating order through gender norms

would create a prosperous country. In this way, fashion, and the image of a luxurious, ultra-feminine woman that advertisers promoted was tied to a global scale and for the United States represented the security of a nation.

Many authors have looked at the 1950s as a time of women's confinement to the domestic sphere, but in the high end *The New Yorker* magazine, the advertisers were pushing the image of aspiration. They use a tone that suggest almost quite obviously women would want to reach a certain status and elegance. This tells the audience not necessarily that it is the women's job to exclusively stay in the home, but instead urges readers that it is the role of the women to strive for the highest status she can achieve. The advertisements in this sense did not define women as an object of domesticity, but rather defined women as economic means. In reality, advertisers were not telling women they had to fulfill a role in the home, advertisers were taking advantage of new opportunities. Advertisers capitalized on the accessibility of women of status who had the means to purchase new, expensive material. At the same time advertisers appealed to women who did not have the status or wealth of high-end women, by creating standards to reach. This was pushed forth by a society that was obsessed with consumerist ideology and legitimized by an institution of economic stability. By using both subliminal and clear messages of status aspiration, advertisers create a further incentive for purchasing while also confining women to a role based on status. However, advertising and fashion choices in the 1950s holds feminist action in the way that flourishing consumerism gave choices to the women that was previously unavailable. In the mid-1950s women had the opportunity to expresses individuality that allowed for empowerment in fashion. Especially women who had the financial means to purchase high-end products were able to experience a new freedom in the form of fashion

availability. This freedom, previously restricted by the frugality of war, and a pre-consumerist society, was now readily available to all women.

Furthermore, in the atmosphere of the Cold War where consumerism was promoted heavily as a way to show American superiority through a booming economy, fashion advertisers urged women to buy more. The pursuits of advertisers were global in their endeavors as the Cold War; a war concerned with proving the masculinity of a country, was aided by advertisers who urged the women to consume more products. Consuming more products, the Nation believed, would power the economic machine while also promoting a national identity grounded in the consumer goods. Fashion itself, although now seemingly with more options, helped create a unified American identity. The femininity of fashion added security to the foundation of American ideals. In this way the femininity of fashion was a national and even global way to maintain American stability. Once again advertisements influences in gender roles were tied directly to the security of a nation.

By the 1960s the advertisers were still concerned with promoting the image of women in the context of a reaching an aspirational standard. That aspiration shifted to women who had new found freedom. Some advertisers took advantage of the new movement toward women's equality as a way to sell more, by using rhetoric that suggested they were on the cutting edge of feminist action. At the same time advertisements did not reflect the growing instability of the American public. Although they were willing to use rhetoric that expressed women had more opportunities and equality, they still choose images that restricted women to being sexualized objects or a gender that relied on the male. In this way advertisers continued to preserve the image of stability by restricting women to a certain aspirational role. The blossoming of feminist action that appeared at the end of the 1960s came at a time of growing national discontent with the

Vietnam War. This, in combination with sexual freedoms provided by birth control and an emphasis on youth as the baby boomer generation came of age, created turbulence in American society. However in both high-end magazines like *The New Yorker* and middle-class catalogs, advertisers continued to submit women to roles that was in direct relation to the male. Advertising, more than promoting feminism, was concerned with the preserving the image of stability and continuity.

The time period spanning from 1947-1969 on the surface appears to be a time period where women are confined to the New Look, then a life of domesticity, and then obtain sexual freedom. However, instead advertisers in the time period effectively defined women in terms of luxury, aspirational goals, and their relation to men. All of this was used as a way to preserve both national stability and security at a time when the United States hoped to maintain its presence as a great nation following the Second World War and into a new era dominated by the Cold War. Fashion advertisements were not simply a product of consumerism, rather they secured American ideals by insisting women played a crucial role in preserving order.

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