The portrayal of women in magazine advertising: a cross-national analysis of two U.S. and Taiwan general interest magazines

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The portrayal of women in magazine advertising: A cross-national analysis of two U.S. and Taiwan general interest magazines

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department: Journalism and Mass Communication
Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1995
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the role portrayals of women in advertising: the comparison between American and Taiwanese general interest magazines.

Two decades ago, Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) pointed out that magazine advertisements seemed to reflect the world as it was—the average executive was a male, and most women portrayed housewives or decorative roles with products in the ads. Five years later, Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) found that this situation still remained the same. According to their study, "Comparison of 1958 ads with those of 1970 and 1972 suggests that some of the standards of expected behavior prevalent in 1958 have remained as the stereotypes of the present decade" (p.172).

During the past years, though showing the stereotypical portrayals of women in traditional wife/mother and decorative roles with products from advertisements has faced sharp criticism from feminists, advertisements have not portrayed women in a variety of roles. In a recent study, Soley and Reid (1988) reported the fact that "women are more often depicted in ‘sexy’ dress or nude than men implies that the advertising industry, reacting to the increasing sexual openness between 1964 and 1984, responded by allowing more
sexually explicit and provocative portrayals of women in magazine advertising" (p.996).

On the other hand, in Taiwan, a few related studies have been done during the past years. In general, Confucianism had a great influence on the East Asian countries of China, Korea, Japan, and so forth, especially its concept of women. Matsui (1989a) described that "Confucianism is not a religion but a system of ethics that oppresses women, as is demonstrated in its infamous 'three obediences' to father as child, to husband as wife, and to son as widow" (p.101-2). Even in today, those ideas are deep-rooted and hinder people's behavior changes.

But from a communication view, the communication research in Taiwan has been based on American perspectives. Chu (1986) mentioned that communication studies were first introduced to Taiwan in 1950s. However, most studies in role portrayals of women in the media in Taiwan still remained unknown.

A Problem Statement

The present study attempts to assess a comparison of the roles portrayed by women in general interest magazine ads between the U.S. and Taiwan.

Obviously, there have been several women's movements dedicated to achieving equal treatment for females at work and home in the U.S. Feminists have criticized the negative
portrayals of women in the media, including magazine advertisements. Taiwanese women's movements attempted to parallel the American movements, but not with resistance. Though the feminist movement has tried to overcome Confucian ideology in Taiwan, the movement was still tightly controlled. Lan-hung Chiang (1989b) stated in Matusi's book that "the feminist movement is quiet compared with the consumer movement or the environmental movement, because under the present political situation, the government does not welcome any new social movement, and the new women's movement is not an exception" (p.152-3).

Otis Pease (1980) argued that advertising influences society in at least two ways: as an instrument of marketing, and as social communication which convey and potentially affect social values. In short, do most of the stereotypes of women remain the same in the media today? Or do ads present a full view of the variety of roles women actually play in the society? Moreover, will the results from Taiwanese general interest magazines come out as same as do to the U.S.? Kang (1987) defined comparative communication research as the study of variations in similar and dissimilar communication phenomenon in different cultures. Thus, he thought that "comparative communication research should 1) construct communication theories with data from different societies; and
2) do the process of communication as social process by studying the operation and interaction of the media between different societies and areas of societies" (p.206).

Today, marketers cannot regard people only as the United States customers or Chinese customers but as global customers. Ricks, Arpan and Fu (1974) said that many successful American advertising campaigns failed overseas due to the failure to understand the foreign culture and its social norms. Compared with advertising from China, Hong Kong, Japan and Southeast Asian countries, the role portrayals of women in Taiwanese magazine advertising have been given little attention. Thus, knowing the advertising appeals in Taiwanese magazine advertising can help the marketers or advertisers to design international campaigns well. The question of this research is focused on "the portrayal of women in magazine advertising: A cross-national analysis of two U.S. and Taiwan general interest magazines."

Theoretical Perspective

Mueller (1987) said: "Advertising theorists supporting the specialization of commercial messages suggest that ad is one of the most difficult marketing elements to standardize, more often because of cultural differences" (p.51). Indeed, culture is pervasive. Hall (1966) once mentioned that no
matter how hard people tried, it was impossible for them to divest themselves of their own cultures; they could not interact at all in any meaningful way except through the medium of culture. And due to the different background, the cultural approach can be properly applied to make a comparison between the U.S. and Taiwan here.

Griffin (1991) defined this theory as the shared meanings which were unique to a given group of people, that is, an organization or a country did not have a culture, it was a culture. On the other hand, McQuail (1988) said that the purpose of the cultural approach was a method for the study of social changes in its own right and for the comparison of different national societies and cultures.

In fact, Schiller (1976) and Kumar (1980) believed that the cultural values and lifestyles of Western industrial nations are being imposed upon the developing nations through imported advertising and other forms of imported mass communication. Thus, many Asian ad agencies are multinational, and most of their headquarters are located in New York or London.

But facing the foreign cultural impacts, the original country still finds a way to accept them. Lubis (1986) in his study mentioned: "A living culture is an entity, which is in a continuous process of change and of self-renewal, of absorbing
and adapting and adopting new values from other cultures, reshaping them into its own" (p.64).

When this theory is applied to this topic, it means that those foreign ads cannot totally flow to Taiwan. In other words, the Taiwanese magazines still contain their own cultural-based ads. The best example would be the bag puppetry. Wang (in press) defined the bag puppetry as an art brought to Taiwan about 300 years ago. According to a study by Bitterman (1985), in order to provide for a better balance between locally-produced and imported programming, the Taiwan Television Company began to air programming featuring bag puppetry in the 1960s. Soon, the bag puppetry program was extended from twice-a-week to five-times-a-week. In short, the popular domestic programs had the potential to attract more Taiwanese advertising than foreign programming.

Bitterman (1985) later explained: "Transmission does not guarantee reception or influence. Where a culture does not understand or is not interested in the message—where no responsive chord is struck—the effort involved in sending it is wasted" (p.39).

**Growth of Taiwanese Advertising**

The main reason to choose Taiwan is that no research has been done which compares female stereotypes in advertising in
the U.S. and Taiwan.

Second, the Taiwanese media environment has dramatically changed. For almost forty years, American-influenced researchers were doing studies under the martial laws until the law was been lifted in Taiwan. In his article, Lent (1989) mentioned that "after Taiwan’s press law was relaxed in 1987-88, politics meshed with journalism and the first opposition newspaper in the nearly 40-year history of the nation was allowed" (p.20). Since then, the press has received more chances and spaces to speak out, and thus that increased the connection with the global information flow.

Third, the growth of Taiwanese advertising industry has been rapid. Ogilvy and Mather (1985) found that the advertising expenditures in Southeast Asia rose by almost 50 percent during the first half of this decade. In other words, over US$1 billion were spent on mass media advertising in the region. Meanwhile, in Lee and Leu’s study (1992), Taiwanese advertising expenditures were rated in the top 16 in worldwide advertising spending in 1988. Advertising revenues thus reaches NT$70 billion (US$2.6 billion) in 1992.

This research can explore the portrayal of women in Taiwanese advertising from The Journalist.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines available relevant research by categorizing it based on the approach used in each study. According to the categories, the content of the previous studies includes:

1. Research using content analysis
2. Research using the audience-based approach
3. Cross-national analysis

Content Analysis

About twenty years ago, women's liberation movement had questioned the limited and negative portrayals of women in ads, Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) thus examined magazine ads to see whether such stereotypes could be identified. They chose general interest periodicals which were published on the week of April 18, 1970: Life, Look, Newsweek, The New Yorker, Saturday Review, Time, U.S. News and World Report, and the April 1970 issue of Reader's Digest.

The question, in this study, focused on comparing the occupational and nonworking roles of men and women as portrayed in advertisements. A total of 729 ads in the magazines was sampled. Each ad was coded by one or more content categories, such as product type, the number and sexes
of all adults, and their occupations or activities. Finally, 312 ads showing one or more adults were analyzed, and more men (397) than women (278) were included.

The study found that advertising very rarely showed women in working roles. About 33% of the full-time workers in the U.S. were women, but only 12% of the workers shown in the ads were female. The study found that 45% of men were shown in working roles, and 9% of women were shown in working roles (see Table 1). On the other hand, when women appeared alone or with other women, 90% were in nonworking roles; and when men and women both were shown, about half the time they were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational categories</th>
<th>Proportion shown as workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level business executives</td>
<td>10 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>9 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainers, professional sports</td>
<td>20 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales, middle-level business, semi-professional</td>
<td>7 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofessional white collar</td>
<td>2 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>40 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers, police</td>
<td>12 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Occupations of working men and women shown in advertisements

In short, based on their findings, Courtney and Lockeretz concluded that, advertising supported three cultural stereotypes: First, a woman’s place was in the home. Second, women did not make important decisions or do important things. Third, women were dependent and needed men’s protection. Finally, men regarded women primarily as sexual objects; they were not interested in women as people.

Another study, conducted by Belkaouï and Belkaouï (1976), replicated Courtney and Lockeretz’s research but in terms of a longitudinal comparison: 1958, 1970, 1972. As Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) believed that advertising was typically reflected to the canalizing of preexisting behavior patterns or attitudes. It seldom sought to create significantly new behavior patterns. Belkaouï and Belkaouï thought that the media did not lead but reflect our society. To see whether the media were an indication of the society, the four hypotheses were tested:

H1: There is no employment status difference between the ways men and women are portrayed in print advertisements.

H2: There is no occupational role difference between the ways men and women are portrayed in print advertisements.
H3: There is no nonworking role difference between men and women in print advertisements.

H4: There is no difference between men and women in the nature of their buying.

Belkaoui and Belkaoui chose eight general interest magazines issued on the second week of January 1958: Life, Look, Newsweek, The New Yorker, Readers' Digest, Saturday Review, Time, and U.S. News and World Report. There were 268 ads showing one or more adults. Ads picturing children, teenagers, and crowd scenes were excluded because they were difficult to code. Each ad was coded by the number and sex of adults portrayed, occupations or nonworking activities, and the category of product being advertised. Finally, 222 men and 138 women were in the samples.

Based on significance of $X^2$ and contingency coefficient set at the 0.05 level, all the null hypotheses were rejected. These findings supported: 1) women were portrayed as unemployed; 2) women were portrayed as low income earners; 3) nonworking women were portrayed in decorative roles and idle situations; and 4) women were portrayed as having limited purchasing power.

In comparing the 1970 and 1972 studies, Belkaoui and Belkaoui said that "the major difference between the 1958 ads and those of the two 'post-liberation' studies stems from the
high percentage of women (74.4%) shown in nonprofessional white collar roles (i.e., secretarial-clerical jobs) in the 1958 ads" (p.171). Moreover, the image of nonworking women had changed from family roles in 1958 to more decorative roles in 1972. But meanwhile, men continued to be associated with expensive products in the ads. The researchers concluded that the status of women had improved from 1950s to 1970s, but mass media content, especially ads, still didn't tailor adequate messages to suit the social change. Thus, they suggested that advertisers should be aware of the results of the comparisons and make some adjustments to match the women's roles in the real life.

On the other hand, in Soley and Reid's study (1988), they used content analysis to examine whether models in magazine ads were wearing less. Nudity, according to Soley and Reid, was defined as the degree of dress of adult models depicted in the sampled ads. And there were four dimensions of dress:

1. Demure dress: "Everyday dress," including walking shorts and tennis outfits, but excluding evening gowns.

2. Suggestive dress: Which included mini-skirts, "short"-shorts, "muscle" shirts, full-length lingerie unless "see-through" that exposed cleavage or chests, and "hiked" skirts that exposed thighs.

3. Partially clad: Which included ads with models in bathing suits, wearing under apparel and three-quarter length or shorter lingerie, and "close-ups" where the
shoulders of the models were bare.

4. Nude: Unclothed models, including silhouettes, translucent under apparel and lingerie; models clothed in nothing except a towel; and "medium shots."

Six magazines issues from 1964 and 1984 were randomly selected, and they also represented three reader categories: Esquire, Playboy (as men’s magazines), Redbook, Cosmopolitan (as women’s magazines), Time and Newsweek (as general interest magazines). From each of the magazines, they randomly picked up three 1964 and three 1984 issues, except the 1964 issues of Cosmopolitan because those issues contained few ads. In the 1964 issues, 367 from 586 ads showed adult models; in the 1984 issues, 467 from 1,112 ads showed adult models. Based on the four dimensions, if an ad showed one model who was nude, then the ad was coded as containing a nude model.

The results supported the hypothesis that nudity was more prevalent in 1984 ads than 1964 ads. Five percent of the models in 1964 were nude compared to 8% in 1984. The findings from general interest magazine ads showed that among 127 ads in the 1964 samples, 116 contained males but only 55 contained females. And of the 140 ads in the 1984 samples, 113 contained males and 72 contained females. In short, female models wore less than males in the ads during both time periods.
In women’s magazines, 7.7% of the 1984 ads contained nude females but none for nude males. In the sample of 1964 ads, 6 from 36 samples contained nude females but nude males were shown in none of the 1964 ads. In contrast, according to Soley and Reid, that "1984 and 1964 men’s magazine ads containing male models shows that there was an increase in the depiction of sexy dressed male models between the two years" (p.965).

The changes in society’s sexual attitudes between 1964 and 1984 were shown in the periodical ad contents; that is, women became more "sexy" than men in the ads over the past two decades.

The Audience-Based Approach

Some researchers have criticized content analysis studies, claiming they could not measure the impact of female role portrayals on ad effectiveness. Leigh, Rethans and Whitney (1987) examined the effects of women’s role portrayals on ad effectiveness by exploring how traditional and modern women responded to such ads.

Leigh et al. believed that the relationship between the role portrayal in the ads and the target audience’s expectations was a key in determining whether positive or negative reactions will occur. In order to do so, they
divided women into modern and traditional groups. There were three hypotheses:

H1: Role portrayal and orientation consistency should yield more favorable attitudes than inconsistency.

H2: Inconsistency should produce a larger number of negative role-related thoughts; consistency should generate larger number of positive role-related thoughts.

H3: The number of role-related thoughts was expected to mediate the effects of the "role portrayal by role orientation" interaction on the various attitude outcomes.

Through a laboratory experiment, all the hypotheses were supported by the findings. The results showed that, first, for both traditional and modern women, attitudes were more favorable when the role portrayal in the ad was consistent with their role orientation. Second, role portrayal and role orientation inconsistency yielded a greater number of negative role-related thoughts, and vice versa. Third, negative role-related responses correlate negatively with the attitude measure and vice versa. The results confirmed the market specialization view that communications effectiveness was enhanced by targeting the ad to the consumer. But it was hard to use one commercial for two different target audiences. In their findings, modern women were more severe in down-grading ads which were inconsistent with their role orientation, and
traditional women appear to be more tolerant. Leigh et al. thus suggested: "A ‘safe’ strategy for a company faced with vaguely defined target audience may be to use more modern role portrayals" (p.60).

The researchers believed using cognitive responses was more effective than using content analysis because the former obtained the audience’s reaction toward the ads.

Another study done by Jaffe (1991) examined ad responses to the shifts of women’s roles in society and tested alternative positioning strategies targeted for different segments of the female population. Jaffe divided women’s roles into traditional and modern groups. The former was delineated by a focus on nurturing and family; the latter was delineated by a focus on career as well as family. Three hypotheses were:

**H1:** The main effect of positioning will be significant.

**H2:** The two-way interaction effect between positioning and masculinity will be significant.

**H3:** The two-way interaction effect between positioning and femininity will be significant.

To test the hypotheses, a field experiment was conducted by using 200 adult women between the ages of 25 and 49. It was found that all hypotheses were supported by the findings.
First, Hypothesis 1 stated that in the aggregate, a modern positioning will enhance ad response more than a traditional positioning. The mean of the modern positioning was significantly higher than the mean of the traditional positioning at p < .01. Second, hypothesis 2 stated that the two-way interaction effect between positioning and masculinity. It was found significant for all three indicators of ad response at p < .01. Finally, hypothesis 3 stated that the two-way interaction effect between positioning and femininity on ad response would be significant. The interaction effect was significant at p < .01 for all three measures of ad responses.

In sum, the principal finding in this study suggested that a modern positioning would enhance ad response to financial services. Moreover, Jaffe pointed out that "while a modern positioning is essential for effective communication with women who score higher on masculinity, for low masculine women there is virtually no difference in ad response between a modern or traditional positioning" (p.63). Failing to consider product category as one of the independent variables in this study was a drawback.

A study conducted by Kilbourne (1990) also focused on the effects of sex role stereotyping in ads. He thought that women did unimportant things and a woman’s place was in the
home from the media’s contents, especially the ads. Therefore, in this study, Kilbourne analyzed the effect that exposure to traditional women stereotypes in magazine ads has on perceptions of women as possessing requisite managerial attributes. He then hypothesized that, first, subjects will draw interferences about the managerial attributes of the actor in the ad directly from the role portrayed in the ad. Second, the inferences drawn will be generalized to a non-role female.

There were 103 male and 70 female undergraduate students participated in the study. Each person was randomly assigned to see a housewife role condition or a professional role condition. The role was adjusted by changing the setting and the copy in the ads but remaining the product and the model constant. After viewing and evaluating those ads, the respondents were then asked to viewing one more slide which a non-role female about 25 years old was shown.

The results partially supported the hypotheses. Kilbourne said that "depicting women in professional roles in magazine ads did result in higher evaluations by male subjects of the degree to which the non-role female possessed managerial attributes" (p.31). But this result was not well confirmed by female subjects; in other words, this experiment had little effect on them. Two implications could be drawn
from this study. First, it reconfirmed the diagnosticity of out-of-role characterizations relative to in-role. Second, when it was applied to the public policy, it suggested that advertisers should eliminate the use of sex role stereotypes.

The Cross-Cultural Analysis

For a long time, the global marketers or advertisers have argued about whether they should standardize ads worldwide. Lynch (1984) believed that the same product can be sold everywhere with the same or similar promotion strategies. On the other hand, Hornik (1980) said that "while concepts like product attributes are probably universal, and while the product function is probably similar across nations, the exact form of attribute perception in each society might differ considerably" (p.43).

Mueller (1987) thus explored the role of culture in ad contents. She tried to find out whether culture was reflected within ads, so requiring advertisers to adapt or specialize their messages for foreign audiences, or vice versa.

In this study, she compared Japanese ads with U.S. ads for similar products to see what an ad appeals looked like. Mueller then divided them into traditional appeals and modern and westernized appeals. The emphasis for traditional appeals included group consensus, soft-sell, veneration of elderly and
traditional, status, oneness with nature. On the other hand, for modern and westernized appeals, the focus was on individual and independence, hard-sell, youth and modernity, product merit, and manipulation of nature.

Based on this premise, the author hypothesized that, first, the majority of Japanese ads will utilize the traditional appeals of group, consensus, soft sell, veneration of the elderly and traditional, status, and oneness with nature. The American ads, regarded as a standard, were compared. Second, different appeals are more effective for certain types of products than others. Here, the degree of product involvement which ranges from low to high was used as the independent variable.

Two types of magazines from each country were chosen: a general interest news periodical (Shukan Asahi, Newsweek) and a women’s magazine (Katei Gaho, Good Housekeeping). The unit of analysis was a full-page four-color ad. Nine product categories, three from each level of involvement, were compared. There was a total of 1,978 ads for this study. The samples were 378 ads: 146 Japanese ads and 232 American ads.

In comparison, the first hypothesis—that the majority of Japanese ads would make use of primarily traditional appeals—has not been entirely supported. More American ads used the group or consensus appeal than did the Japanese ads. But in
soft-sell appeals, as hypothesized, Japanese ads were less direct when compared with American ads.

Moreover, in veneration of elderly and traditional appeals, more than one in ten Japanese ads surveyed stressed the traditional or respect for the elder generation. Another major finding was in status appeals. In nearly twice as many Japanese ads as American ads, some form of status appeal was made to the consumer. Finally, no major differences were found in the employment of nature-oriented appeals in American and Japanese ads. Both ads contained themes which focused on the goodness of nature in relationship with people.

On the other hand, the involvement level of the product had an impact on the most common type of ad appeal used in the East or West; in other words, the second hypothesis was supported. The difference between the East and West in the promotion of these high-involvement products was significant. The appeal most employed in Japanese ads was the status appeal, but it was the product merit in American ads. Among medium involvement products, the product-merit appeal was most commonly used in both ads, but it was stronger in American ads. Among low-involvement products appeal, the Japanese ads relied on product merit, traditional and elderly appeals, and on soft-sell appeals; but American ads were mostly focused on
product merit.

In sum, themes of product merit and status appeals were likely to show to consumers around the world. However, other themes such as grouping and consensual behaviors, the veneration of the elderly and the traditional were not universal; in this study, it could only be shown in Japanese ads.

Unlike Mueller, who did a cross-cultural study between the U.S. and one Asian country, Frith and Sengupta (1991) made a cross-cultural comparison among the U.S., England and India. Because countries share a language, standardized ads or specialized ads in the multinational ad campaigns were explored. The hypothesis was that the American ads would more frequently contain single individuals than would the British or Indian ads. Moreover, Indian consumers would be depicted most frequently within a group context.

By using a content analysis, a total of 374 ads from weekly general interest magazines from October 1989 to September 30, 1990 was selected. Three periodicals were: Newsweek (the U.S.), The London Sunday Times Magazine (the Britain) and India Today (India). The unit of analysis was a full-page, four color ads containing people. Nine product categories from three involvement levels (high, medium, low) were compared.
It was found that there were significant differences in the use of single individuals in British, U.S. and Indian ads. The U.S. was reported to be the most frequent user of single individuals in ads among three countries, and the least was found in India. The results thus questioned the effects of standardized ad strategies. The authors' views are that each country had its own cultural values, and the global advertisers should find the particular focus for their ads in order to fit audiences from different countries.

Another study done by Sengupta (1992) compared role portrayals of women in magazine ads from Hong Kong and the U.S. Sengupta believed that "because women's roles in society are changing constantly, albeit at different rates in different parts of the world, it is plausible that role portrayals of women in ads that are perceived as appropriate in one culture may seem inappropriate in another" (p.145). Thus, a comparative study would enable people to see whether there were any significant differences in some common role portrayals of women in ads from both countries.

Generally speaking, portrayals of women as housewives had declined over the years in the U.S., but still, women were shown with men or as sex objects. In the Asian ads, most of the time women were shown in non-working roles, even though they were pictured as passive and unintelligent in the ads.
The author thus hypothesized that:

H1: There is no employment status difference between the ways in which women are portrayed in magazine ads from the US and Asia.

H2: There is no occupational role difference between the ways in which women are portrayed in magazine ads from the US and Asia.

H3: There is no non-working role difference in the ways in which women are portrayed in magazine ads from the US and Asia.

The method here was content analysis. Two general interested magazines published in 1990 were selected: Newsweek (the U.S.) and Asiaweek (Hong Kong). A total of 222 samples was collected. The results supported the last two hypotheses but not the first. Most of the women were shown in nonworking roles between both countries, but the difference was not significant ($X^2 = .32; df = 1; p > .05; n=222$). In comparison, there was a significant difference in the working roles portrayed by women in ads from both countries ($X^2 = 38.85; df = 7; p < .00; n=84$). The author pointed out that the sharp contrast in occupational roles reflected the actual situation. In the U.S., 36% of the women in the labor force were executives, administrators and managers (Bloom, 1989), while in Asia, women were in low status jobs with low salaries and limited training requirements (Kalgreen, 1980). Finally,
among the non-working roles, the difference in women’s portrayals from both countries was significant ($X^2 = 27.5$; df = 2; $P < .001$; $n = 138$). Women in Asian ads were portrayed in decorative roles in idle situations more often than those in the U.S. ads.

Certain roles of women portrayed in ads were more common in American cultures while others were more common in Asian cultures. But Sengupta questioned that if ads did reflect cultural norms, then mere translation and transplantation of ads developed in the U.S. may not communicate successfully to audiences in Eastern cultures. Therefore, he suggested that advertisers should distinguish the differences between each culture.

**Research Hypotheses**

This thesis is based on the cultural approach, which means that an organization or a country is a culture. Six alternative hypotheses were formulated and tested. First, according to Sengupta’s (1992) study, both Asian and American ads showed a majority of the women in nonworking roles. However, Bloom (1989) noted that 56.6% of the women in the U.S. were in the labor force; while in Taiwan, women’s roles were influenced by Confucianism; therefore, the first hypothesis contradicted Sengupta’s finding:
HI: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women more often in employment positions compared to those from Taiwan.

Second, Sengupta (1992) found that women in women in working roles in Asian ads were shown to occupy positions of lower level and prestige as compared to women in the ads from the U.S. The following hypothesis thus assumed:

H2: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women in different occupational roles compared to those from Taiwan.

In Taiwanese culture, which is influenced by Confucianism, women tend to be passive and submissive to men. Sengupta (1992) found a significant difference in role portrayals of women in ads among the non-working roles from the U.S. and Asia. The third hypothesis thus assumed:

H3: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women less often in domestic roles compared to those from Taiwan.

Another aspect of women’s portrayal in ads is product value. Hornic (1980) said: "While concepts like product attributes are probably universal, and while the product function is probably similar across nations, the exact form of attribute perception in each society might differ considerably" (p.43). Thus, the forth hypothesis was:
H4: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women with higher-valued products compared to those from Taiwan.

In addition, McQuail (1988) mentioned that "the purpose of cultural indicator analysis is often to test propositions about effects from media on society over time, but it is also a method for the study of social change in its own right and for the comparison of different national societies and cultures" (p.178). Compared with the Eastern countries, the U.S. is a more culturally-mixed country; therefore, the following hypothesis was stated:

H5: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray a higher proportion of females in foreign settings compared to those from Taiwan.

Finally, in Mueller’s study (1987), in almost twice as many Japanese ads as American ads, some form of status appeal was made to the audience, especially the use of foreign words/phrases and models. Meanwhile, Lo (1993) found that western words and concepts became part of the language spoken in Taiwan, due to the growing contact with the West through trade or other interaction. If culture was reflected within ads, then the last hypothesis assumed:
H6: Ads in general interest magazines from Taiwan portray a greater proportion of foreign than native females.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study was to measure the comparison of the roles portrayed by women in general interest magazine ads between the U.S. and Taiwan. In other words, what are the differences and similarities in women's role portrayals is made from both countries.

The presentation of the methodology has been divided into the following sections: 1) the choice of the methodology; 2) unit of analysis; 3) sampling; 4) operationalization; 5) reliability; and 6) data analysis.

Content Analysis as a Research Methodology

For this study, the best approach is a cross-national study using content analysis. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p.18).

Content analysis has gained popularity because data on media are easily accessible. According to McQuail (1988), "As source material, mass media content has the apparent advantage of being 'non-reactive' to the investigator and not subject to decay. Media content also appears in forms which seem to be much more constant over time than other cultural phenomena"
McQuail then pointed out that content analysis could reveal 1) the systematic performance of a media organization; 2) the society or culture in which it is produced; 3) the producers and their intentions; 4) the media organization and its way of working; 5) the languages, formats used to convey meaning; 6) the eventual audiences and their interest; 7) the quality of a content measured against external criteria; and 8) possible effects in reaching some goal. Moreover, Krippendorff (1980) believed that the purpose of using content analysis was to provide knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts, and a practical guide to action.

This study will use content analysis to examine the differences of role portrayals of women in magazine advertising contents of two general interest magazines, *Time* and *The Journalist*.

**Unit of Analysis**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1987), the unit of analysis is the most meaningful but smallest element of a content analysis. In this study, the unit of analysis is each featured single female model in a single photographic full page of magazine advertising from the selected sample. No paintings or sculptures were used.
Sampling

All items studied were from general interest magazine issues in the U.S. and Taiwan in 1993. Only general interest periodicals were selected because Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) believed that they were more likely to show women in a greater variety of roles than specialized periodicals such as women’s or family-oriented journals. The general interest magazines can be defined as magazines designed for the general population, with general interest editorial content developed for national audiences with broad demographic characteristics. Thus, Time and The Journalist were analyzed. The Journalist was first issued on March 12, 1987. Like Time, it contains politics, economics, society, arts and entertainment. In short, both magazines were matched by format, audience demographics and circulation.

This study used a random sampling procedure. Samples from the two magazines were selected from alternative weeks of every month in the whole of 1993. For instance, the first issue of Time was on January 11, followed by that on January 25; the first issue of The Journalist was on January 10, followed by that on January 24. Thus, 26 issues were systematically chosen from each magazine, making a total of 52 issues in the sample. At the end of data collection, there was a total of 289 women in all the ads.
Operationalization

Wimmer and Dominick (1987) defined independent variables as variables that cause or have some effects on dependent variables and vary by research situations. In this study, the independent variable was culture. This was operationalized as general interest magazines from U.S. and Taiwan. It was assumed that these magazines were representative of the cultural values of their respective countries. *Time* magazine was used to represent the U.S. (coded 1) and *The Journalist* was used to represent Taiwan (coded 2).

A dependent variable is defined as a variable that is correlated by other variables. In this study, the dependent variables can be represented as six measurements: value of the products advertised, employment status portrayal, occupational role portrayal, non-working role portrayal, foreign settings and foreign females. No causality is suggested.

1. Product

A matrix from Foote Cone and Belding stating in Frith and Sengupta’s research (1991) was used to specify products into high involvement, middle involvement and low involvement categories. High involvement products tend to be higher priced and require information-seeking on consumers, such as autos, financial services and banks. Middle involvement
products were priced in the mid-range and require moderate search activities, such as appliances, hotels and resorts. Low involvement products tend to be low-priced and purchased frequently, such as food, cigarettes and over-the-counter medicine.

Similar approaches had been used in Mueller’s study (1987) as one of variable measurements. From each level of involvement, the high-involvement products included autos, kitchen appliances and jewelry. The middle-involvement was represented by watches, TV sets and cameras. The low-involvement products were wine, hair-care products and food products. Therefore, three product levels are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Three product levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product levels</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Autos, financial services, banks, real property, jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Appliances, hotels, resorts, electronics, cameras, watches, travel, auto body repair shops, companies, airlines, films, TV programs, medicine by prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Food, drinks, cigarettes, over-the-counter medicines, clothes, hair-care products, glasses, magazines, books, music products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Employment Status

This is defined as working (coded 1) and non-working (coded 0) status of women from the general interest magazine ads. Fox and Hesse-Biber (1984) noted, "Work is any activity that produces services and products of value to other people. An occupation is the particular work activity that an adult assumes on a regular basis" (p.2). If an ad does not show a woman with working activities, then the uncodable role from nonworking status is determined.

3. Occupational Roles

Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) classified occupations of working men and women shown in ads into eight categories: high level business, professional, entertainment and sports, military, middle level business (secretarial, clerical), public service, and blue collar labor. Sengupta (1992) later replicated this occupational frame in his cross-cultural study. But from both studies, the researchers didn’t write clear definitions for each category. Blau and Ferber (1992) also said: "The main difficulty is that the definition and number of occupational categories undergo frequent changes" (p.127). In other words, even though the best efforts of the people who compiled the data and the researchers who used them, data were not entirely comparable over the years. Thus,
Table 3. Occupational role levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational roles</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional (doctors, lawyers, teachers,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial, clerical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A new occupational role levels of working women were divided into six categories as shown in Table 3.

4. Non-working Roles

Non-working roles include decorative model with products, the domestic roles, the elder or retired people and students. The decorative role is defined as a model shown with products, because she is beautiful or attractive, but not because she is necessary. Furthermore, the decorative role also includes women who portray as people with a lot of time for relaxation. The domestic roles can be defined as women who do the housework, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, childbearing and nursing. The elder or retired role is defined as women who are portrayed in retirement homes, with gray hair, or with grandchildren. Finally, the student role is defined as women...
who wear uniform or with books. The non-working role is shown in Table 4.

5. Foreign Settings

It includes women who are portrayed in ads where their physical surroundings indicate a foreign setting. For instance, ads from The Journalist may have their settings in the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty.

Table 4. Non-working roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-working roles</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorative roles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic roles</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder/retired roles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncodable</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Foreign Females

This applies to physical appearance of the model who is not Taiwanese or Oriental with physical characteristics, such as blonde hair, height, or blue eyes.
Reliability

After the coding process, an intercoder reliability test was used. Lo (1993) mentioned that intercoder reliability was the level of agreement among coders processing the same set of categories to the same content. The author was the first coder (coder 1) and an invited coder (coder 2) participated in the reliability test in October 1994. Both coders were given coding sheets and a code book. After explaining the methodology and the definition of measurements, the coding process was started.

The original result showed that three variables (employment position, nonworking status, foreign settings) were below .90 standard; therefore, these sections were reconducted. Two coders discussed the different results in terms of decision making. Finally, both people came to agreements in the operational definitions of these three variables. As a result, all correlation coefficients among variables reached at least .91 (see Table 5). According to Stemple (1981), content researchers had to get the minimum level above .90; therefore, the reliability was accepted.

Data Analysis

In this study, The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (The SPSS release 4.0), was used for statistical
computer analysis. Jacques stated in Babbie's (1992) book, that the computer and the SPSS package were tools which could be used to 1) summarize data; 2) create appropriate tables and graphs; 3) examine relationships among variables; and 4) perform tests of statistical significance on hypotheses. Moreover, SPSS was helpful when it came to manipulating large amounts of data and testing hypotheses.

Table 5. Results of intercoder reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Correlation between Coder 1 and Coder 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment position</td>
<td>.9689**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational status</td>
<td>.9493**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonworking status</td>
<td>.9100**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product values</td>
<td>.9122**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign settings</td>
<td>1.0000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign females</td>
<td>.9754**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at .01 level.

Frequencies were run for all the variables in the study. The hypothesized relationships were tested by using Chi Square and Z-tests. Babbie (1992) said, "Chi Square is based on the null hypothesis: the assumption that there is no relationship
between the two variables in the total population" (p.454). In addition, the last two hypotheses dealt with discontinued data, so the Z-test was used to the differences between proportions for them.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The purpose of the present study is to compare the roles portrayed by women in general interest magazine ads in the U.S. and Taiwan. The sample used in this study comprised 289 ads featuring single female models; 195 (67.5 percent) were from Time, and 94 (32.5 percent) were from The Journalist. The first part of this chapter presents the descriptive results. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the second section.

Descriptive Results

More than 66 percent of the ads portrayed women in nonworking positions and 33.6 percent portrayed them in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial/ clerical</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
working positions. As shown in Table 6, the most frequently portrayed roles of women in ads in the U.S. and Taiwan were as entertainers (37.1 percent), followed by professional (20.6 percent), business (19.6 percent), and sports (5.2 percent).

Table 7. Frequency distribution for nonworking status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonworking roles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decorative</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175a</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a 17 of the 192 nonworking status ads were uncodable.

On the other hand, among ads in the U.S. and Taiwan featuring women in nonworking roles, as shown in Table 7, 57.1 percent showed them in decorative roles, 34.3 percent in domestic roles, and 8.6 percent as elders or students.

The frequency distribution for product values is shown in Table 8. More than 39 percent were middle-valued products, 30.4 percent were low-valued products and 30.4 percent were high-valued products. That is, most ads were for appliances, hotels, travel, airlines, films, companies, auto body repair
Table 8. Frequency distribution for product values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product values</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

shops, cameras, watches, TV programming and medicine by prescription.

Furthermore, of the 289 ads featuring single women in two magazines, one percent were shown in foreign settings.

Finally, among female models from The Journalist, 43.6 percent were foreigners and 56.4 percent were native.

**Hypothesis Testing**

H1: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women more often in employment positions compared to those from Taiwan.

Results shown in Table 9 indicated that ads from Time significantly portrayed women more often in employment positions than those from The Journalist. The overall percentage of women in working status from Time was 38.5 percent compared to 23.4 percent for The Journalist. Thus, Hypothesis One was supported by these results.
Table 9. The comparison of working positions between *Time* and *The Journalist*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>The Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working status</td>
<td>75 (38.5%)</td>
<td>22 (23.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonworking status</td>
<td>120 (61.5%)</td>
<td>72 (76.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>195 (100.0%)</td>
<td>94 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 31.55; df = 1; p < .01110

**H2:** Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women in different occupational roles compared to those from Taiwan.

The findings shown in Table 10 indicated that ads from *Time* did portray women in different occupational roles compared to those from *The Journalist*. Of the occupational roles, more than 50 percent from *Time* showed women in professional roles, compared to 4.5 percent in *The Journalist*. Moreover, 10.6 percent from *Time* showed women in secretarial roles, compared to 40.9 percent in *The Journalist*. Finally, 38.7 percent from *Time* showed women in entertainment roles, compared to 54.6 in *The Journalist*. Thus, Hypothesis Two was accepted.
Table 10. The comparison of occupational roles between Time and The Journalist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational roles</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th></th>
<th>The Journalist</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 3.856; df = 2; p < 0.00008

The six original occupational roles were grouped into three roles: Professional (professional and business), Secretarial (secretarial/clerical and blue collar), Entertainment (entertainment and sports) to reach cells with expected frequency > 5.

H3: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women less often in domestic roles compared to those from Taiwan.

In looking at nonworking status, the fewer categories such as elder and student were grouped together to avoid the cells with expected low frequency less than 5. Findings shown in Table 11 indicated that ads from Time portrayed women less often in domestic roles than those from The Journalist. In general, of those in nonworking status, 58.7 percent from Time showed women in decorative roles compared to 54.9 percent in
The Journalist. On the other hand, 28.8 percent from Time showed women in domestic roles compared to 42.3 percent in The Journalist. Moreover, 12.5 percent from Time showed women in elder or student roles compared to 2.8 percent in The Journalist. Thus, Hypothesis Three was accepted.

Table 11. The comparison of nonworking status between Time and The Journalist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonworking status</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>The Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorative</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder/student</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 6.086; df = 2; p < 0.03127\]

H4: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray women in higher-valued products compared to those from Taiwan.

Results shown in Table 12 indicated that ads from Time portrayed women with higher-valued products than those from The Journalist. Of the 195 females from Time ads, 40.0
percent were shown with the middle-valued products, closely followed by 37.9 percent with the high-valued products. On the other hand, of the 94 females from The Journalist ads, 47.9 percent were shown with low-valued products, followed by 37.2 percent with middle-valued products. Thus, Hypothesis Four was accepted.

Table 12. Comparison of product value differentiation between Time and The Journalist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product values</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>The Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 28.623; df = 2; p < .00000$

In addition, the relationship between product values and employment positions was investigated. Women shown in nonworking status in ads were significantly more likely to be shown with low-valued products than those with higher-valued. The results shown in Table 13 indicated that nonworking women
often appeared in ads with low-valued products, while working women often appeared in ads with middle- or high-valued products in both the U.S. and Taiwan. Of 192 nonworking roles, 37.0 percent were shown with low-valued products, followed by 34.9 percent shown with middle-valued product and 28.1 percent shown with high-valued products. Of 97 working roles, 47.4 percent were shown with middle-valued products, followed by 35.1 percent with high-valued products and 17.5 percent with low-valued products.

Table 13. The comparison of employment position and product values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Product Values</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonworking</td>
<td>71 (37.0%)</td>
<td>67 (34.9)</td>
<td>54 (28.1)</td>
<td>192 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>17 (17.5%)</td>
<td>46 (47.4)</td>
<td>34 (35.1)</td>
<td>97 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 29.536; \text{df} = 2; P < .00301\]

H5: Ads in general interest magazines from the U.S. portray a higher proportion of females in foreign settings compared to those from Taiwan.

The result showed that ads from Time did not portray women in foreign settings more often than those from The
Journalist. Only three females were shown in foreign settings: one from Time and two from The Journalist. The result was not significant at .05 level (Computed Z = -1.026; Critical Z = 1.645). Therefore, Hypothesis Five was rejected.

H6: Ads in general interest magazines from Taiwan portray a greater proportion of foreign than native females.

Finally, the results indicated that ads from The Journalist did not contain foreign females more than native females by 43.6 percent to 56.4 percent margin. The difference was not statistically significant at .05 level (Computed Z = -1.250; Critical Z = 1.645). Thus, Hypothesis Six was rejected.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings discussed in Chapter IV showed that the role portrayals of women in general interest magazine ads were different between the U.S. and Taiwan in terms of employment positions, occupational roles, domestic roles, product values, and the proportion of native models.

Discussion

The analysis of employment status indicated that women in Taiwan were portrayed as unemployed more often than those in the U.S. This finding was a reversal of the study conducted by Sengupta (1992). In his study, 35 percent of the women were shown in employed positions in ads from the U.S., but 39 percent of Asian ads showed employed women.

It could be concluded that the print ads still showed Taiwanese women in traditional roles, although Lo (1993) pointed out that modern and Westernized appeals became prevalent in Taiwanese commercials in her study. In other words, Confucian culture, which encouraged women to stay at home and to be homemakers, did have a certain influence on Taiwanese society.

In addition, through the comparison between *Time* and *The Journalist*, it was also found that of 289 ads featuring single
female model, a total of 194 was depicted in nonworking roles. From the economic view, first, on average, women were less firmly attached to the labor force than men due to families and children. Therefore, Blau and Ferber (1992) explained, this situation contributed to the relatively larger proportion of entrants and reentrants among female labor force participants. Second, different occupations and industries also played roles here. In general, women were more likely to work in white-collar jobs which had lower layoff and unemployment rates, but the chances of promotion or advancement were limited compared with men.

The occupational differences between two countries were statistically significant in this study. According to Bloom (1986) and Kalgreen (1980), 36 percent of American women in the labor force worked as executives, administrators and managers, while Asian women were more likely to work with low status and low salaries with limited training opportunities. In the U.S., Blau and Ferber (1992) stated that over the 1970s and the 1980s, women made notable progress in entering a number of professions that were formerly predominantly male, including architecture, engineering, law, pharmacy, and medicine; as well as in many executive, administrative, and managerial occupations during this period.

The results also pointed out something interesting. The
phenomenon was the frequency with which women were portrayed as entertainers in *The Journalist*. Those singers, actresses, TV hostess and sports players appeared with their new music albums or programming; that was not prominent in previous related research. Whether it was due to the taste of target audience was unknown.

Both countries showed women in nonworking status, especially in decorative roles. Williamson (1986) explained that in American society, if "woman" meant home, love, and sex, what "woman" did not mean was work, class, and politics. It seemed that most advertisers followed the same rule whenever they designed the ads regardless of nations.

In addition, based on the finding, Taiwanese women were shown in domestic roles more often than American women. Though the improvement of education increased the opportunities for Taiwanese women to enter the labor force, the government still wanted the people to retain to their own Chinese cultural values. The current President, Lee Teng-Hui, believes that social unrest is due to an excessive emphasis on modernization; therefore, the only way to solve problems is to promote the values advocated by ancient Chinese sages (China Post Editorial Comment 2, 1991). Of course, those traditional cultural values included a traditional view of a woman’s place in the society. On the other hand, more and more women tend
to find paid jobs which require a good deal of training and the money available to spend on education. But not all families can afford to supply that. Thus, Bose (1980) believed: "The housewife status could be an attractive alternative to women who cannot afford the educational investment" (p.79).

Next, the involvement level of the product had an impact on both countries. As a result, ads from *Time* showed women in a higher valued product compared to those from *The Journalist*. Since the final goal of advertising was to sell, it revealed that American women had more buying power than Taiwanese women. This situation could be explained by the different employment positions between the U.S. and Taiwan. Because ads from *The Journalist* less often depicted women in employment positions, in a money economy; those who were unemployed financially depended on the dominant wage earners.

Furthermore, the product values and women’s employment positions were interrelated. *Nonworking* women controlled less economic power, and thus they were often shown with low valued products in the ads. Blau and Ferber (1992) indicated that: "There is evidence that a husband is more likely to respect his wife’s decision-making ability and to listen to her opinions when she is employed" (p.45). Moreover, this finding was also due to the cultural norms which tended to give men
power for spending decisions.

The other explanation might be due to the readership of each magazine studied. The majority of readers of both *Time* and *The Journalist* are male. In order to sell the products, the appearance of ads must match their tastes. Thus, women in the ads turned out to be subordinated to men.

About the foreign settings, ads from both magazines were not culturally identified. Among the three samples, two of them were advertisements for overseas travels, and the rest were for an international telephone company. The reason might be that first, each country kept its own culture while placing the ads in general interest magazines. Second, in Taiwan’s part, the advertisers might adapt foreign models to show the exotic environment instead of using foreign surroundings.

Finally, only 43.6 percent of females were foreign models from *The Journalist*. A similar result came from Lo’s (1993) study. In her research, Caucasian models were approximately in one tenth of commercials regardless of gender. As ads in general interest magazines, the ratio of foreign females was expected to be lower than those in women’s or fashion magazines. The result found that, in order to enhance the credibility of merchandise, advertisers liked to use foreign females to show exotic products, such as wine, cigarettes, clothes, tiles and so forth. It indicated that
the foreign cultures had not had a lot of impact on Taiwan, but if Taiwanese advertisers kept using foreign females with exotic products, the Western cultural values in the ads would become influential.

Limitations

Some limitations are listed here. First, the focus of this study was only on women. It did not to make a comparison between male and female. Second, both magazines were selected in 1993, and the trend of women’s portrayal in advertising could not be observed in terms of a longitudinal analysis. Finally, the types of general interest magazines from both countries were limited.

Conclusion

This study examined the role portrayals of women in general interest magazine advertisements from the U.S. and Taiwan. Results provide information on the cultural approach related to women’s role portrayed in different countries. Through the comparison, it can be said that the Chinese traditional culture still plays a certain role in Taiwanese society in terms of advertising appeals. That is, Taiwanese women were more often portrayed in nonworking-status with low-valued products than were American women. In addition,
Taiwanese women were more often portrayed in domestic roles—than were American women. Moreover, most Taiwanese advertisers still used native female models in the ads. Use of a foreign setting in ads from each magazine is rare.

Obviously, the cultural value in Taiwan was not completely universal. In other words, even though Taiwan was open to Western influence, standardized global advertising strategies could not be totally transported to Taiwan.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Further research could select more samples in terms of a longitudinal analysis with more types of general interest magazines. Moreover, the gender difference could be taken into account. How men are portrayed in the ads should be found interesting. Finally, a variety of advertising appeals can be investigated in this related study.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my wholehearted thanks to my major professor, prof. Barbara Mack, whose never ending kindness, patience and constant guidance has contributed a great deal to the completion of my thesis. Special thanks go to my committee members, prof. Kim Smith and prof. Motoko Lee for their helpful advice and their precious time.

My appreciation is also extended to Ing-Wei Her for being my coder and helping me collecting the data in University of Iowa. Also thanks my former classmates An-Chun Li and Chang-Hui Huang for finding and sending parts of issues of The Journalist from Taiwan for me. My thesis would not have been done without their help.

Special thanks go to my dear friends Tammy Chen and Ken Ando, whose understanding and encouragement have helped me go through hard times for all these years.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to my beloved parents who have consistently been a support to me for advanced education.
### APPENDIX

#### CODE BOOK

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