

ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN AND SATISFACTION WITH SEX ROLES IN ADVERTISEMENTS¹

H. BRUCE LAMMERS AND MARILYN L. WILKINSON

California State University, Northridge

The present study reassessed the counterintuitive findings that the holding of pro-feminist opinions does not significantly affect regard for the roles assigned to women in advertisements (1, 4). Such findings dangerously imply that the grievances of individuals holding liberal attitudes toward women can be disregarded by advertisers without significant penalty.

Ninety-six female and 109 male business school students (*Mdn* age = 22 yr.) completed a self-administered questionnaire containing measures of satisfaction with sex-role portrayals in advertisements (5-point scales). Based on a median (100.14) split of their scores on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (3), the students were classified as holding either progressive or traditional attitudes toward women's roles in society.

A 2×2 (sex \times attitudes toward women) analysis of variance on satisfaction with female sex-role portrayals showed that women ($M = 2.54$) were less satisfied than men ($M = 3.46$; $F = 19.95$, $df = 1/201$, $p < .001$) and progressives ($M = 2.62$) were less satisfied than traditionalists ($M = 3.42$; $F = 11.69$, $df = 1/201$, $p < .001$). The interpretation of these significant main effects must be in terms of the significant interaction ($F = 4.01$, $df = 1/201$, $p < .04$) which showed that progressive males ($M = 3.30$, $n = 33$), traditional males ($M = 3.53$, $n = 76$), and traditional females ($M = 3.14$, $n = 29$) did not differ in expressed satisfaction with female sex-role portrayals. The progressive females ($M = 2.28$, $n = 67$), however, expressed significantly less satisfaction with female depictions than did any of the other three groups of participants ($p < .05$, Duncan's tests). The analysis of variance of satisfaction with male sex-role portrayals produced no significant effects (Grand $M = 3.31$).

In conclusion, the hypothesis that persons holding more liberal attitudes toward women would be less satisfied with the way women are portrayed in advertisements was incomplete. Women with progressive attitudes displayed significant dissatisfaction with female sex-role portrayals, but progressive men did not share in the displeasure. Perhaps the progressive men were progressive only in terms of general attitudes toward women (as measured by the scale) but were not progressive when nailed to such specifics as, say, role portrayals in advertisements (2). No significant effects were found in satisfaction with sex-role portrayals. This may simply reflect the conception that, on the whole, males tend to be depicted in a noncontroversial manner in advertisements.

REFERENCES

1. DUKER, J. M., & TUCKER, L. R., JR. "Women's Libbers" versus independent women: a study of preferences for women's roles in advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1977, 14, 469-475.
2. GREENBERG, R. P., & ZELDOW, P. B. Personality characteristics of men with liberal sex-role attitudes. *Journal of Personality*, 1977, 97, 187-190.
3. SPENCE, J. T., HELMREICH, R., & STAPP, J. A short version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, 1973, 2, 210-220.
4. WORTZEL, L. H., & FRISBIE, J. M. Women's role portrayal preferences in advertisements: an empirical study. *Journal of Marketing*, 1974, 38, 41-46.

Accepted March 11, 1980.

¹Request reprints from H. Bruce Lammers, Dept. of Marketing, California State University, Northridge, CA 91330.