SELLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
THE FRACTURED FEMALE IN ADVERTISING AIMED AT WOMEN

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I. Introduction

A nude woman lies on a rock. She likely sleeps, but it is possible she is comatose or even dead. One would assume she had just washed ashore were it not for the lack of cuts, bruises, or a single speck of oceanic debris on her flawless skin. While the woman’s journey to the rock remains a mystery, her purpose there is clear: to sell perfume. The perfume itself appears nowhere in the advertisement, but its name—“Truth”—is printed in the corner. [Figure 1] Such an ad begs several questions. For starters, why do advertisers believe that an unconscious and emaciated model will induce women to purchase an unseen product? Even more perplexing, why do consumers always prove the advertisers right?²

The degradation of women stands out as the most offensive of themes harnessed by advertising. Today’s print advertising presents women as fungible, vulnerable commodities. Unfortunately, the visual objectification and pacification of women not only sells product; it also conjures up the ideal victim: a weak, mindless, and highly sexualized collection of interchangeable body parts, eminently available for the consumer’s use. The fact that this imagery persists in advertising tells us that our culture is deeply saturated with acceptance of gendered violence. In addition, such imagery has the power to influence real-world perceptions of women, and thus violence against women.

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² See infra, note .

Exporting violence 7 – 9cbp
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This is the imagery that accompanies the growth of American consumer values around the world. Recent legal scholarship is filled with descriptions of the efforts of Western reformers to increase the relative wealth of Third World nations and to reduce the violent cultural practices tolerated in Third World nations. And indeed globalization has resulted in economic benefits and even made some progress in alleviating traditional, parochial forms of violence. But globalization is closely tied to colonization. Just as Europeans brought benefits of many kinds to the Americas, they also brought disease and destruction. American and Western commercialism brings prosperity, but with our material culture we import images of “fashion” that implicate gendered violence of a new sort.

In this paper, I demonstrate how common motifs in American advertising contribute to and condone a culture of woman-directed violence and how, as we increasingly export culture and fashion to a shrinking world, we infect other nations with depictions of objectified, fragmented, fungible, victimized and victimizable women. I begin in Part II with a brief description of how advertising works and why it is so potent a force enculturation in the development of psychological schema, particularly gender schema. I examine the function of advertising both as a lens through which we can see cultural attitudes and exist prior to and apart from advertising and as a mechanism of creating and reinforcing values. Part III briefly highlights the extent of gendered violence in the United States and abroad. I then illustrate in Part IV a catalogue of motifs from the most condensed and intentional form of popular culture – print advertising in

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3 The advertising motifs I address are prominent in American advertising, but are also evidenced (perhaps more egregiously) in the advertising of western Europe, and are being introduced into other cultures.

4 I initially identified some of these motifs in Cheryl B. Preston, Significant Bits and Pieces: Learning from Fashion Magazines about Violence Against Women, 9 UCLA WOMEN’S L. J. 1 (1998).
magazines. Part V addresses the exportation of these violence-promoting images into an international audience as a result of increasing globalization. Part VI discusses the implications of the fact that many, although certainly not all, of the most damaging genres of advertising are directed at, in magazines purchased by, and selling products favorably supported by women consumers here and around the globe.

II. Advertising and Socialization

The magical ability of the advertiser to use a few models and props to evoke a life-like scene of his own choosing is not primarily due to the art and technology of commercial photography; it is due primarily to those institutionalized arrangements in social life which allow strangers to glimpse the lives of persons they pass . . . In seeing what picture makers can make of situational materials, one can begin to see what we ourselves might be engaged in doing.

*Erving Goffman*\(^5\)

Advertising tells us something about our society. Either advertising accurately reflects our aspirations and fears, or we allow it to lie to us and consistently misrepresent our aspirations and fears. Either advertising captures what we envision of ourselves, or we make ourselves into what it envisions for us because acquiescing is easier or more comfortable than challenging the myth. Most likely, the relationship between advertising and consumers involves a complex interplay of all these scenarios.

Advertising is both imitative and generative. Through an “intimate give-and-take,”\(^6\) ads both reflect and create cultural values. As Gaye Tuchman describes, “[t]he mass media performs two tasks at once. First, it reflects dominant values and attitudes in

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\(^5\) **ERVING GOFFMAN,** *GENDER ADVERTISEMENTS* 23, 27 (2d ed. 1979).

\(^6\) **VIVIAN GORNICK,** *Introduction* to *GENDER ADVERTISEMENTS* viii (2d ed. 1979).
society. Second, it acts as an agent of socialization.”

My research concentrates on advertising in its reflective role and focuses on how its mirroring of daily “goings on” helps explain why violence against women is so much a part of our culture. Nonetheless, advertising’s power to direct the development of social values is also pertinent, especially as the influence of other social structures such as religion continually diminish.

As the perfume ad illustrates, American advertising no longer views its primary objective as conveying information about the product. Advertisers now seek to add cultural values to the goods and services they promote; thus, an examination of the visual signs regularly employed by advertising will reveal the type of culture ads sell.

We typically underestimate the ways in which advertising’s symbolic signals create and communicate meaning. In the classical world, myth served as a model to explain human activities. Today, the images that surround us serve a similar purpose. Advertising, like myth, relies on shared stories and meanings. Jib Fowles explains that children grow up learning not only language and social codes, but also cultural symbols. He notes, “[advertising] signs must be readable by others, so what the solitary consumer is buying is not so much self-definition in isolation as participatory symbols.” By using a shorthand display that deliberately presents a cultural message, an advertiser can provide elaborate background into the models’ relationship, situation, and

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7 Gaye Tuchman, Introduction to The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media, in HEARTH AND HOME: IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE MASS MEDIA 6 (Gaye Tuchman et al. eds., 1978).
8 See id. at 3-38.
9 Supra text prior to note 2.
10 Jean Kilbourne, an important critic of advertising’s portrayal of women, observes, “Advertising performs much the same function in industrial society as myth performed in ancient societies. It is both a creator and perpetuator of the attitudes, values, ideology of the culture, the social norms and myths by which most people govern their behavior.” JEAN KILBOURNE, DEADLY PERSUASION: WHY WOMEN AND GIRLS MUST FIGHT THE ADDICTIVE POWER OF ADVERTISING 67 (1999).
12 Id.
13 Id.
motivation, thereby evoking a number of complex emotional responses. Because advertising’s images are reflective of communal norms that oft go unspoken, a study of these images has the power to reveal the intricacies of our shared understanding on a variety of social topics, including gender relations.

In this part I discuss two simple propositions: (1) Studying advertising as a mirror on who we are tells us that our culture continues to ignore, if not condone the notion of women as easy (maybe acceptable) victims of violence; and (2) the consistent barrage of commercial images produces an audience desensitized to what may be abnormal or objectionable about the images and consequently reinforces negative and even violent attitudes regarding women.

A. Advertising as a Mirror on Who We Are

The significance of advertising in understanding gender relations, and the resulting inequity, follows this basic logic:

1. **We define who and what we are according to signals embedded in the details of daily life.** Goffman tells us “survival is unthinkable”\(^\text{14}\) without learning to read a larger meaning from the common codes evident in daily details.

2. **We organize daily details into manageable and understandable chunks through social “displays.”** A display is behavior molded into a formality, a ritual made up of consistently ordered details, an icon. For animals, the display “provides a readily readable expression of [the animal’s] situation, specifically his intent.”\(^\text{15}\) Other animals can then read the display and form a common understanding of anticipated

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\(^{14}\) **GOFFMAN, supra note** 1, at 6.

\(^{15}\) *Id.* at 1.
conduct. The display thus “allows for the negotiation of an efficient response from and to the witnesses of the display.”

In humans, gesture, expression, and posture along with words, clothing, and location add up to a “display.” One’s display signals to others important information for negotiating relationships and interactions. For example, “[p]eople are likely to organize their perceptions and expectations of another individual around his or her race, sex, age and attractiveness—all observable characteristics which reflect status in our society.” Consumer theorist Jean Baudrillard similarly notes that displays assist us in defining abstract personal qualities that differentiate one individual from another; for example, he notes that affluence is “merely the accumulation of the signs of happiness.”

3. Human displays act and react to affirm social arrangements and cultural values, including gender relations. Humans are socialized to provide displays and to read the displays of others. By an unspoken consensus, most of us learn pre-verbally to adhere to the assumed schedule of gender depictions in our displays. Anyone violating this code creates immense discomfort for those observing the display; however, the discomfited typically cannot pinpoint the exact source of their discomfort or what element of the observed display was “wrong.”

4. Advertisers exploit the assumed schedule of short-hand symbols to convey complex meaning in a single print ad or a thirty-second television spot. Baudrillard notes that in an effort to appeal to the individual consumer, advertisements

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16 Id.
19 GOFFMAN, supra note 1, at 8.
20 Id. at 2-3.
promote their products using signifiers guaranteed to elicit the same response from all or most of potential consumers of the product.\textsuperscript{21} Absent these signifiers, advertising “has no meaning.”\textsuperscript{22}

Unlike our incognizant use of coded displays, the advertising industry’s application of these communal symbols is both conscious and intentional. Ad critic Richard Pollay observes, “[A]dvertising is a symbol-manipulating occupation. The symbols of fashion and elegance are used to glamorize clothing and cosmetics. The symbols of youthful gaiety sell soft drinks and candy bars. The symbols of adventure and sportsmanship are used to promote cigarettes and liquor.”\textsuperscript{23} Pollay’s colleague Morris Holbrook further notes advertising’s attempt to manipulate public interpretation of these symbols in favor of the promoted product. Holbrook argues, “[M]uch advertising works by means of emotional appeals [drawing] on classical conditioning by assuming that the frequent pairing of a brand name with an experienced emotion eventually will result in the tendency of one to evoke the other and will thereby predispose the consumer toward buying certain brands.”\textsuperscript{24}

Advertisers can work this magic in nanoseconds. The effect is akin to an “objective correlative” in T. S. Eliot’s literary theory, wherein an objective device becomes a simple symbol for an enigmatic subjective meaning.\textsuperscript{25} Under Eliot’s theory, an author may inject her work with additional emotional meaning by a brief reference to its objective equivalent. A literary reference to a cross, for example, may cause the

\textsuperscript{21} BAUDRILLARD, supra note 10, at 88.
\textsuperscript{22} Id.
\textsuperscript{25} WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT, THE READER’S ENCYCLOPEDIA 725 (2d ed. 1965).
reader to think of “crucifixion,” “death,” or “Jesus Christ” without ever mentioning those words. Likewise, an advertiser may employ a shorthand display that instantaneously provokes the ad’s reader to assume a particular interpretation of the ad as a whole, including the background, relationship, situation, and motivation of the persons appearing in the ad. For instance, if an ad depicts an adult male, an adult female of like age and ethnicity, and two similar-looking children seated around a table and eating, the reader will probably assume they are a family despite an absence of text or any other indicia confirming it.

Studies of the speed by which humans draw conclusions indicate advertising’s attempt to conjure instant emotion using coded displays is likely effective. Research shows that adults make judgments about attractiveness—and its attendant benefits—in less than a second.26 Those who conducted the study suggested that the average adult’s detection of attractiveness was so automatic and effortless that attractiveness “should be added to the list of other facial characteristics, such as age, expression, and identity . . . which research shows can be detected with a single brief glance at another person.” The researchers also found that those studied made stereotyped judgments about the objects’ femininity or masculinity, job compatibility, and personality based on how attractive they perceived the objects to be during a 100-millisecond presentation.

5. By examining the cultural story revealed by the societal symbols in advertising, we can gain a better understanding of current gender relations. The images in print advertisements convey various depths of meaning because we bring to each detail a collective understanding of its attendant and extenuated meaning. Fowles

further explains, “In this expressive wondrous shorthand, one finds symbolized the personal assumptions, the operating beliefs, the aspirations, and the plaintive wants of those who populate what is currently the most dominant culture on earth.”

The story of advertising is of our preferred reality, as opposed to actual life. “Advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and women behave.” Similar to the classical myths, this cultural story contains elements of the fantastic, the supernatural, and the unreal that are inconsistent with natural experience. Nonetheless, the overall message is rooted on a shared understanding of reality and conjures up an amazingly accurate vision of our desires, ideals, and aspirations.

Thus, through the cultural mirror of advertising, we can isolate and study our shared understanding and pinpoint patterns. Fowles describes these patterns as those quintessential examples of human experience that we, as an audience, desire to see rendered repeatedly. Print advertisements condense and fix in still life the details of these idealized daily interactions so we can hold and study them.

B. Advertising as an Agent of Socialization

As I have stated before, my objective is not to “prove” a direct link between advertising images and individual evil acts or attitudes. Isolating cause and effect in social science has always been an imprecise business. For years, studies have been done to show the effect that pornography has on both male and female attitudes toward

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27 FOWLES, supra note 4, at 167.
28 GORNICK, supra note 2, at vii.
29 FOWLES, supra note 4, at 159.
31 See Pollay, supra note 15, at 31-33.
sexual aggression. Although the data is conflicting, none of it suggests that a constant diet of pornographic images is irrelevant to attitudes about sex, gender, and violence.

Empirical research similarly demonstrates the influence of advertising on attitudes towards women. One 1995 study concluded that men who view advertisements in which women are portrayed as sex objects are more likely to adopt beliefs which demean women—including those espousing rape myths and violence against women—than men who view more positive advertisements. A 1997 study of 267 male undergraduate students demonstrated that men’s gender role attitudes generally are influenced by images in advertising.

These findings were largely replicated by another 1997 study in which 46 female and 46 male undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of two rating groups. The groups rated ads for graphical design, use of color, amount of product information presented, and spatial layout. One group viewed ads depicting women as sexualized, while the other was given ads that depicted women more progressively and positively. After viewing the ads, participants answered questionnaires that assessed rape myth acceptance, stereotypical gender beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and support for feminism. Not surprisingly, both men and women who viewed the sex image advertisements scored higher on the tests for stereotyping, accepting rape myths, and adopting adversarial sexual beliefs. They also scored lower on the test for support of

33 See, Bits, at .
feminism. 36 “[These] findings underscore the need to be concerned about the narrowing gap between pornography and the portrayal of females in advertisements . . . . 

Advertisements are more pervasive than pornography, and unlike pornography are presented in a socially acceptable framework.” 37

The research shows that men are not the only people who are affected by sex image advertisements. A 1986 study found that for both men and women “traditional sex role orientation is the strongest predictor of attitudes supporting marital violence, while sex and race per se play a relatively small role.” 38

In citing this research, I do not mean to suggest that consumers are mere Pavlovian dogs who unthinkingly respond exactly as advertisers intend. However, even well-educated, cynical, and sometimes hostile people can be influenced by, or at least become familiar with and accepting of, imposed themes. Most Americans see and hear dozens of advertising messages everyday. While accepting that few adults are “brainwashed” by these images, we cannot deny that a pervasive, environmentally-entrenched diet of such images makes the reality they portray appear normal and acceptable. Through constant exposure to these images, we are desensitized to the bizarre or extreme.

While a person may not be committing violent acts themselves, they may become more tolerant of violence against women in general. 39 This general desensitization matters at several junctures in the legal system. Evidence suggests that law enforcement

37 Lanis & Covell, *supra* note ___ (insert this) at (insert this).
39 Neil M. Malamuth & John Briere, *Sexual Violence in the Media: Indirect Effects on Aggression Against Women*, Add the rest of this footnote later
personnel are less responsive to domestic violence. Prosecutors are less likely to bring charges arising out of domestic violence and sexual assault. The difficulty of obtaining convictions in sexual assault cases may be linked to a culture that creates jurors may be less outraged by violent conduct against women. These effects need not be monumental in any individual case to become, in the cumulative, a significant factor in the administration of justice for women victims.

As this Part II demonstrates, advertising both imitates and generates shared cultural understanding. Subtle hints and shadows combine to reinforce and privilege certain media messages over others. And the messages then contribute drop by drop to the development of non-conscious gender schemas – many of which keep women from fully escaping the misogyny of the past.

III. Violence against Women

To create the proper attitudes to wage war successfully, [psychiatrist Leonard] Sillman argues that the training and indoctrination of American soldiers should . . . dehumanize the enemy. The proper enemy image must be developed; ‘the enemy has to be presented as an utterly inferior and unhuman being’ . . . The key is to create deep emotional reactions to the enemy’s image. The enemy must be viewed as an animal, whose killing should cause no guilt.

We live in a violent world and much of it is directed at women. Women are only 45.1% of the victims of all violent crimes, yet they are 73.4% of the nation’s victims of intra-family violence of all kinds, 84.3% of spouse abuse victims, and 85.9% of the

victims of violence between boyfriends and girlfriends.\textsuperscript{44} Wives were half of all spouses in the population in 2002, but 81\% of all persons killed by a spouse.\textsuperscript{45}

Even though overall violent crime rates in the United States have significantly decreased in the past ten years, rape rates are dropping much slower than other violent crimes. From 1994 to 2003, the number of murders in the United States was down 29.3\%, robbery was down 33.2\%, aggravated assault was down 22.9\%, but rape was down only 8.6\%.\textsuperscript{46}

Observers of the status of women in other cultures report not just the failure to decline, but the increase of woman-directed violence. Sexual violence, including stranger rape, has rapidly increased in post-reform China.\textsuperscript{47} Evidence of increased gendered violence also come out of South America.

\[\text{In Mexico, the number of reported cases of domestic abuse increased 1,900\% between 1990 and 1995. No less than twenty percent of Mexican women were beaten while pregnant. In a poll conducted the Center for Studies and Information, 56\% of women in Ecuador report that violence against them has increased.}\textsuperscript{48}\]

\textit{Add other research on gendered violence.}

\textbf{IV. Degrading Depictions of Women in Advertising}

Ads visually dissemble women into sexualized commodities. The most overt, and the most often cited, link between images and violence is objectification. If women are not our mothers, sisters, daughters; if women are not like “us,” or are not really people at

\textsuperscript{44} 2005 U.S. D.O.J. BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, FAMILY VIOLENCE STATISTICS, INCLUDING STATISTICS ON STRANGERS AND ACQUAINTANCES, 13.
\textsuperscript{45} Id. at 17.
all; if female bodies are a commodity separate from a human being—then why not use (and abuse) them? The various stylistic techniques advertisers use to objectify women are discussed in subsection A below. In subsection B below, I discuss more subtle and indirect techniques for suggesting that women will not or cannot fight back. The implication is that whether or not women are people with feelings and humanity, they are no less vulnerable, easy victims, who perhaps even enjoy victimization.

A. Objectification

In this subsection A, I explain how advertisers erase the personhood of women. In advertisements, the category “woman” itself is often treated as a thing. Women’s bodies are easily fragmented and readily fungible. Women sometimes become quite literally bodies – dead bodies. Also common in ads are women morphed into particular objects, notably animals, dolls, and the products being advertised.

1. Fragmentation

As if to emphasize that the picture is of the body, not the woman, ads often show only parts of bodies – legs, arms, torsos, etc.\(^49\) The ease with which women are dismembered and multiplied reinforces the notion that the elements of the body are what matters rather than the intellect, spirit, will, or identity of the person.

Ads that fragment a woman’s body give the viewer the impression that the model can come apart at the arms, legs, and especially the neck.\(^50\) The body parts of women are so random in ads, I suppose we need not be surprised by the image created in Figure 2. A pale woman dressed in black is sprawled against a corner with all four of her black-booted legs akimbo. Similarly, the woman in Figure 3 is against the wall holding a pair

\(^{49}\) Preston, supra note (going to need to put in note once done moving around) at 15.

\(^{50}\) Id. at 16.
of legs that apparently are not her own. But then, there are nearly a dozen sets of legs in Figure 4.

Sometimes, although all the parts of the body are present, the body is figuratively dismembered. The image in Figure 5 appears to be a photograph of a woman sliced into sixths and then reassembled. Unfortunately, however, the lines show across her face and the pieces of her chest and her legs are not quite aligned in the attempt at reattachment.

In Figure 6, the product Jigsaw is sold by using a close up of a woman’s face and a white surface, both crisscrossed with dark and light cuts, such as might be made by a table saw. Similarly, the motif of cuts and lines is drawn off the clothes in Figure 7 by the white line continuing up the collar and right through the center of the model’s face.

Many advertisements fragment women’s bodies by focusing solely on their bare legs, sometimes accessorized by high heels. In a Kenneth Cole ad, a pair of women’s legs are shown lying on the ground, cut off mid shin, and the woman’s right sequined high heeled shoe is missing [figure 8]. The caption states, “Where would we be without our rights?” Figures 9 - 12 seem to answer that we’d be in the same position, but at least we’d get to wear both of our shoes.

In a full-page ad for a vitamin supplement, a naked woman’s body is cut up into nine different sections and reassembled in a grid [figure 13]. The mind can piece most of it back together and fill it what the camera didn’t, or wasn’t allowed to include. However, even then she is without her eyes or anything else that would identify her as an individual.

2. Fungibility
Although several photographic techniques suggest the fungibility of the subject, the two most common in advertisements are: (1) eliminating our most individuating human characteristic – eyes; and (2) depicting women as space markers or units, like grain or widgets, any one of which can replace another.51

The eyes of the model in Figure 14 have been bisected, and the face of the woman in Figure 15 is completely missing above the lips. Figures 16 – 18 display other common methods for eliminating the impact of eyes, such as shading, blurring, or otherwise diverting their line of sight. Figures 19 and 20 feature women with eyes partially concealed. The eyes that are shown convey bewilderment and dishevelment. Note the unfocused style of Figure 21, which further lessens the impact of the woman’s one visible eye.

The ad for one skincare product [figure 21] suggests that people can’t help but notice the healthy glow of your skin when you use their product. Unfortunately, it appears as though this model will not be able to return all of the gazes because her eyes have been cut out of the picture. In the next figure, the model is allowed to show her eyes, but the rest of her face is covered by a brown bag, eliminating any other human characteristics she might have [Figure 22].

The eyes of the woman in Figure 23, lost in shadow, are almost completely invisible, and the viewer’s attention is instead drawn to a figure wrapped in plastic. The woman in Figure 24 appears to be a business professional on her way home from work. Shading and light in the image are used to wash out the woman’s face. Her facial features are indistinct and the viewer’s attention is drawn to her opened jacket and visible bra.

51 Id. at 17.
The use of shading is taken to an extreme in Figure 25. The model’s arms are up, her hair is down, and thus only a sliver of her face, darkly shaded, is showing. The light is on her naked torso between her low-cut jeans and the open sides of her pulled-up jacket. As if to intensify the objectivity of the female figure, the two words of the designer’s name are etched in paint – one just above and one just below her bare, highlighted torso.

Another photographic technique for conveying fungibility is to duplicate the image of a single woman. Figures 26 – 31 illustrate several variations on this theme. The four women in Figure 26 are turned in different directions and carry handbags; one wears a short version of the others’ pants. Note that their windblown hair covers at least one of each woman’s eyes. The three female images in Figure 27 are so similarly dressed and positioned that they differ only in a slight turn of the head. They all wear black overcoats and tall black boots, and each is captured photographically in midstep.

Figure 28 showcases six images of a female figure dressed, three in each, of two similar jean styles. In contrast to the open shirts, only four of these women’s twelve eyes are open. It is fairly obvious that the four people in Figure 29 are actually one woman, displayed in a progressive series of still shots. Two of the figures show one eye and the other two wear sunglasses. The four women in Figure 30 – posed like mannequins – are all wearing essentially the same outfit, with varying colors. Unlike Figure 29, however, it is impossible to tell if the women are actually the same person or not, because their noses and lips are their only visible facial features. The airbrushed appearance of what can be seen reinforces the idea of interchangeable dolls or mannequins.

52 Id. at 20.
One particularly egregious example is Figure 31. Not only does the model appear in triplicate, she is further dehumanized because she is painted and textured to match the stainless steel sinks. The only non-silver colors in the picture are the three sets of lips; only one of the women is looking at the camera.

3. Artificial Perfection

Many advertising pictures show identifiable women, with faces and even eyes, in fairly natural poses. However, in many of these images, their appearance is of such perfection that they seem as inhuman as the fragmented and fungible women discussed above.\textsuperscript{53} Figure 32 displays an example of this image of perfection. That the woman is supposed to be unblemished is reinforced by the adjectives listed to the left of her face. No pores are visible on the woman’s skin; indeed, the word “poreless” appears first on the list of what the reader must suppose to be requirements for physical flawlessness. The pores on the man’s face in Figure 33 are clearly visible, but the woman’s plastic-like skin betrays no hint of them.

Boys are imprinted early on with images of the “ideal woman” – and some may never be satisfied with any woman they meet.\textsuperscript{54} The end result is that any object – be it a car or a wife – that does not live up to these artificially fostered standards is not good enough to make the consumer happy.

4. Dolls, Masks, and Mannequins

\textsuperscript{53} Id.
\textsuperscript{54} See JACOBSON & MAZUR, supra note 1, at 198. The end result is that any object – be it a car or a wife that does not live up to these artificially fostered standards is not good enough to make the consumer happy.
One easy way to dehumanize a woman is to make her to look like a doll, toy, or lifeless mannequin that is simply there to showcase a fashion item. These techniques mask the woman’s true identity and allow the viewer to pass her off as an unfeeling item.

Figure 34 shows an army of women that have been turned into their own feminine version of toy soldiers. In addition to putting the woman into a plastic and easy moveable shape, the image employs the fungibility motif discussed earlier that makes the women interchangeable and no longer individual. The ad seems to imply that now that the woman is in this form, she will be able to be at the beck and call of everyone that needs her immediately.

In order to make the model in Figure 35 look more like a mannequin, the photographer posed her next to an actual mannequin. The model has the exact same hairstyle, similar clothes, and a similar blank stare, emphasizing her ability to easily become a mannequin meant only for showcasing the clothing that the advertiser is selling.

The model in Figure 36 bears immediate resemblance to a doll. The bent arms and unbendable legs remind us immediately of the Barbie dolls that little girls grow up playing with and the hunched over position suggests that if we could just push her torso a little further, she might be able to exclaim, “MA-MA!” Figure 37 also looks like a doll, except that it appears as though some careless child violently ripped her arms off and then perched her perfectly for display. The text of Figure 38 carries this theme further: “All Dolled Up: Be the cutest thing on any playground in the season’s über-girlie look.” Figure 39 shows another woman with doll-like round painted cheeks and lips. Note how
she is tied up by the strap of the purse being advertised. The toy-like portrayals in these two photos disguise the woman, while focusing on her object-like nature.

5. Disguise

In addition to picturing women as dolls and mannequins, the concept of artificiality can be communicated in other ways. Women in ads are sometimes bronzed or coated with a shine that suggests plastic, as in Figure 40. Though the image suggests splashing water, the model’s shiny, glazed appearance gives the impression that she has been dipped in some sort of preservative sealant.

The woman in Figure 41 is relegated to the category of waterfowl; the feathers adorning her dress and hair suggest that she is one of the geese with which she is pictured.

The identity of the female astronaut in Figure 42 is disguised and would probably bring the thought of a male adventurer if the ad hadn’t clued us into her identity by placing shapely, bare legs on the bottom of the astronaut suit and explaining that this was one giant leap for womankind. This ad appears to empower women, but does so by using cliché and degrading imagery to get its point across.

6. Women as the Product

In advertising, the boundary between woman and product smears. In addition to using a woman’s body as bait to catch the eye or as a display case, advertisers are wont to make the woman into the product itself. A classic example is the three women qua sinks in Figure 31, discussed earlier.
Other examples include the woman viewed from her bottom up in Figure 32 who is a cupcake with arms and legs. The dispenser in Figure 44 just squirted out a blob of pink cream with the head and arms of a woman. Similarly, a gob of gel is plopped like ice cream on a cone in Figure 45, which cone just happens to have female legs and feet. The audience for Figure 46 is asked to imagine if Gatorade made water, while viewing a woman gushing from a tap in the form of a drop. The text of the ad in Figure 47 compares the parallel posed woman to a watch, and asks, “What are you made of?” With a slightly different twist, rather than becoming the product itself, the body of the woman in Figure 48 is dry – not as dry as a tree stump; it is a tree stump.

Wrapping objects around a woman’s body, especially around her waist, or replacing part of her body with part of the product to make her look like the object itself is a common device used in advertising. The woman in Figure 49 is described as forging her buns of steel, which isn’t such a stretch, seeing as she has turned into a stack of weights around her waist and wrists. The woman in Figure 50 has a large orange peel wrapped around her to advertise the orange flavored cointreau that she is holding and the torso of the woman in Figure 51 seems to have morphed into a Ford Focus engine. (Magazine images). The model’s torso in Figure 52 has been replaced by the perfume bottle that she is promoting.

Figure 53 literally turns women into a piece of meat by taking a roasted chicken and making it look like a woman by positioning it so that it is lounging with a bikini “tan” line.

The alcohol industry frequently takes advantage of the fact that a woman’s body is somewhat similar to the shape of a bottle. In the Miller Lite ad in Figure 54, the
caption next to the upright bottle on the beach says, “OOPS, my top fell off,” as if to indicate that the beer can be compared to a woman – and a loose woman at that. The Amstel Light ad places two cans of beer next to each other to look like breasts and simply reads, “Nice Cans.” [Figure 55] Beck’s imported beer uses the label on the bottle to look like a skirt that is flying up and the ad simply reads, “Exhibitionist.” [Figure 56] Absolut Vodka is slightly more creative with its computer imaging and actually shapes the bottle in the ad to appear as though it has breasts. [Figure 57]

The dangers of viewing women as and equating them with inanimate objects – as anything other than human – should be readily apparent. Failure to take women seriously is not harmless, but the worst result of objectification is that in a man’s (or even another woman’s) mind, separating women from their humanity makes it all the easier to subject them to oppression and violence. Most people feel little or no guilt for chopping down a tree. How far of a stretch is it, then, if a woman is equated with a tree, as in Figure 48, to feel no guilt at her figurative or literal chopping down? There will certainly be a societal price to be paid for relegating women to commodity status.

7. Dead Bodies

Perhaps the ultimate transmogrifying of the woman into body into thing are the images of women as corpses. As morbid as it sounds, advertisers are not adverse to posing female models as though they are dead or nearly so. The most innocent of these are women who may be dead or perhaps just sleeping or drunk, such as the shiny-skinned form in Figure 58 and the body splayed across the rocks in Figure 59.

Figure 60 is eerily reminiscent of a photo at a crime scene – the pictured woman’s face is dead and expressionless, and her body, flung across the aisle of a subway or bus,
gives the impression that she has just been murdered. The woman lying inert among
crumpled newspapers in Figure 61 also calls to mind the scene of a homicide. She shows
no signs of life, and her corpse-like image is enhanced by the foot stepping on her
forearm – sure to be painful to a living person.

A recent Versace campaign featured, in various colors and settings, two people in
a hotel room or bedroom, as in Figures 62 through 66. One of the models is likely alive,
although she is less than alert and appears to have substance abuse issues. Behind or to
the side of this model, however, is a fragment of a half naked female figure that appears
dead. The most disturbing of these is Figure __. The forefront figure seems to be male.
Across from him is the naked figure posed so her head dangles off the bed.

The model in Figure 67 shows no sign of life except that she is somehow able to
stand up. Her arms are limp and her head hangs back with her mouth slightly opened. Her
lifelessness is reiterated through the use of the colorless black and white photograph.

Figure 68 shows a woman’s body being slowly devoured by a shark that
somehow made its way out of the ocean. (genderads.com Death image 11)

Figure 69 pictures a limp woman’s body draped on the stairs. She appears to have
died by falling down the stairs backwards, and the man’s feet at the top of the image
indicate that she might have actually been pushed down the stairs. This ad is especially
egregious in light of the fact that female domestic violence victims are frequently
hospitalized, and sometimes die, because they have been pushed down the stairs by their
partner. Perhaps the man in this figure is the same man that pushed the women in Figures
70 and 71 down the stairs.
Figure 72 shows a woman who appears to be the victim of a freak cooking accident. Her body is draped over the open oven door, with her head actually in the oven, which fortunately appears to be off.

The next figure is especially disturbing. The ad not only shows a woman’s dead body, but the woman appears to have been taken out of the city, violently raped, and left in her bloody condition. [Figure 73] The ad trivializes this violent image, making light of the fact that hundreds of thousands of women are violently raped and/or murdered in America every year.

B. Vulnerability

An advertising technique closely linked to objectification is portraying women as vulnerable. Even if women are recognizable as humans, some ad motifs suggest they can be physically, mentally, and emotionally overcome – maybe with impunity.\(^{55}\)

1. Addicted and Easy

Drugs and the fashion industry are old friends. Models seem to be a high risk for alcohol and drug abuse. Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell, among others have admitted to battling addictions.\(^{56}\) Beginning in the mid 1990s, drug abuse motifs in fashion have become appallingly frequent. Despite continued protests, these continue unabated though the ad campaigns vary in form and degree.

Following the furor of the heroin chic look, the industry abandoned the most egregious of the heroin chic accoutrements, but the look and concept clung tenaciously to life.\(^{57}\) Vestigial heroin chic images continue to appear in advertisements. Stringy,

\(^{55}\) Preston, \textit{supra} note \_ (insert this) at 29.
\(^{56}\) Katrina Tweedie, Calvin Decline, Scottish Daily Record, April 8, 2003, at P24, ?.
\(^{57}\) Preston, \textit{supra} note \_ (insert this) at 30-32.
disheveled hair and excessive dark eye makeup are the main indicia, often accompanied by extreme or unusual styles of clothing, as shown in Figures 74 through 76. One curious derivation of the motif is that of the homeless woman pushing a shopping cart full of bottles, as in Figure 77. Erstwhile heroin chic king, Calvin Klein, despite the company’s disavowal of the trend—“That genre has really seen its day”—continues to run ads derived from the concept, as evidenced by Figures 78 and 79. Calvin Klein himself has trouble getting over his own drug and alcohol addictions, having checked into rehab as recently as 2003.59

With so many drug issues to overcome in the fashion industry, it comes as no surprise that ads still blatantly promote the drug culture, as with Figure 80. This model is the poster girl for a new campaign that debuted in 2002. The sweaty, dazed model gives the impression of having passed into unconsciousness. The underlying dependency motif is solidified by the coupling of image with the name of the product—“Addict.”

The words as well as the image used in the Addict ad campaign—especially “sensuality” and “pleasure”—signify the convergence of sexuality and drug use within the advertising and fashion industries. The model in Figure 81, with “damp-looking hair and glistening skin,”60 looks to be caught in the throes of pleasure and/or some sort of mind-altering substance. In Figure 82, taken from Dior’s website, the model appears in a shot focusing on her nearly-naked torso. Her bra and panties are being pulled off, either by her or some unseen person. The website also features faceless silhouettes of nude

59 See Tweedie, supra note 1, at ?.
women dancing sensually and languorously, while words “sensuality”, “pleasure”,
“energy” and “addiction” scroll about on the screen.

Dior claimed the Addict woman is “addicted to freedom, emotions, beauty,
sensations, intensity and existence.” An addiction support group, Faces and Voices of
Recovery, complained that “Dior was trivialising the seriousness of drug addiction and
promoting the addict lifestyle as glamorous.” Yet Dior’s International Marketing
Director, Sabina Belli, insisted that “The word Addict can be very good. You can be an
addict to life, chocolate, fashion, music – very pleasurable meanings. We took the nice
parts of it; we ignored the negative.”

The word “addict” arguably has no “nice parts.” “Addict” means a loss of control
and self will, a desperation that leads to disastrous choices, and a total dependence on
those who control supply. And, of course, Dior’s addicted women is not addicted to
science or education, but to things trivial – i.e. chocolate and fashion. She is identified
with pleasure in a passive sense, not with accomplishment.

The Cesare Paciotti ad in Figure 83 shows the model as an emaciated and pale
woman with dark circles around her eyes – clearly a remnant of the heroin chic era. It
even has her holding a cigarette to indicate that she has at least one addiction that we
know of. The young woman in the Gianfranco Ferre advertisement [Figure 84] has
similar dark circles that contrast well with her excessively pale skin and seems to be in a
substance-induced trance.

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63 Julianne Chew, Addicted to Life!, The New Straits Times, December 8, 2002 at 07, 0?
The Calvin Klein model in figure 85 is sitting on a dingy couch with her darkly lined eyes peeking out through her stringy hair. She is sitting in strange lighting that looks oddly similar to the lighting used at rave parties to heighten drug experiences.

2. Impressionable (and Easy)

Advertisers often use images of teenaged girls and sexualize them to create the visual contradiction of an innocent youth who is ready to participate in an increasingly sexualized adult advertising world. As young women see these ads in fashion magazines directed at them, they are roped into imitating these degrading images at young and impressionable ages.

The Sketchers ad in Figure 86 pictures a younger Christina Aguilera playing “dress up,” in a few different scenes. The ad attempts to make her look young, while putting her in sexualized adult roles, such as “bad cop,” “naughty nurse,” and “sexy schoolteacher.”

The Hennessey Cognac ad pictures two girls that don’t look old enough to drink the product that they are advertising for. [Figure 87] They appear to be out in a limo on their prom night and each of them have the words “loves oliver,” written next to them with the caption on the ad being “appropriately complex,” as if to suggest that having a crush on a boy is as complex as they can get for their age and intellect.

Figure 88 shows a little girl dressed up in what appears to be her mom’s clothing, high heels, and makeup, surprisingly well done for a little girl. She is leaning on a doorframe in an inappropriately seductive pose for her age. The ad reads, “The price of fame just dropped.” Apparently, so did the age.
Consider the contrast between the two images of a boy and a girl that appeared side by side in [whatever magazine]. The ads show a series of stills in which the boy, riding a skateboard in Figure 89, showcases pants that can unzip into shorts. The camera gradually zooms in, by each successive frame, on his lower legs in action on the flying skateboard, until the end result of the pants-shorts transformation can be seen. In Figure 90, however, the images of the girl are much more static. The photos of the boy in Figure 89 convey a sense of activity, accomplishment, skill, risk, and continuing motion. The girl is frozen in a mannequin-like pose. The only motion in the ad is being made not by her, but by blowing wind. The camera focuses on her face instead of her clothing. While her ringlet hair is indicative of childhood, her makeup (especially her lipstick) and the fashion model-like tilt of her head attempts sophistication and sexuality.

Figure 91 promotes makeup that prevents shiny skin. The very young model seems to be pulling a covering over her bare chest and her made-up face wears a sensual, open, waiting expression. The image of the barely dressed “waif” illustrates a young woman “stripped of clothes, . . . her blank face say[ing] that she is also stripped of experience, ability, competence and achievement.”

Figures 92 through 94 contain subtle examples of sexualized early teen-aged girls. Figure 92 is an example of the innocent, willing, but forbidden young girl. She lies on a bed in a bikini with her arms above her head and her knee up. Her sexuality entices the onlooker, yet she is surrounded by net, like a veil, conveying the sense of taboo.

The two very young girls in Figure 93 pose like street corner prostitutes. Lounging with one arm against the tree with their exposed midriffs and their “come hither” gaze,

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64. Kaye, supra note 7.

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they advertise teen shorts. The image of the blue-jean baby in Figure 94 combines a silver bikini, dark eye makeup, and body sparkles with the carefree ease of a young girl meditating in the grass. Her roller skates in the air and Wonder Woman bracelet denote the child she still is. The blade of grass aimed from her mouth suggests both a contemplative and a sexual motif. Meanwhile, the shadow covering her face downplays her individuality and focuses the viewer on her bare back.

Does this trend suggest that advertising’s women are moving away from the promiscuous, temptress, and over-sexed theme of the past several decades? Definitely not. In varying degrees, the image of the young girl is overlaid with intense sexuality.

Youth is sexy and is promoted as such. Images of teenagers, preteens, and even young children (especially girls) provocatively dressed, made up, and posed permeate the media. Young girls pout dreamily or gaze seductively at the camera - heads tilted downward, eye lifted, a trace of a smile on their lips. Grown women are pictured in “little girl” dresses, innocence reborn.65

This sexuality may not be a jaded, well-experienced sexuality, but it is sexuality with a sense of anxiousness, a willingness waiting to be discovered.

Subtlety is abandoned in the depiction in Figure 95. The perfume vial, tucked between the prepubescent model’s breasts in her bikini strap, is unquestionably phallic. The bare skin of this young girl, posed with a titillating hand to her cheek, is covered with a sparkling makeup that resembles perspiration. The copy tells us that the product, “Fetish,” is to be “app[lied] generously to your neck so he can smell the scent as you shake your head ‘no.’” However, the image shrieks “yes.” This ad, which appeared in widely read daily metropolitan newspapers as well as fashion magazines aimed at teen

65. Joyce Davis, Introduction to Chapter III: Essentializing Gender, in FEMINISM, MEDIA, LAW, supra note 11, at 171, 173.
girls,\textsuperscript{66} associates young girls with the intentional sexual tease and reinforces the notion that “no” might mean something else.

The young, impressionable, willing, and naïve thing that dominates ad culture virtually begins to be taken advantage of or dominated in the name of guidance.

3. Contortion

Advertisers commonly use odd body positions to draw attention. Unfortunately, many of the positions chosen for women models are potentially demeaning in a variety of ways.\textsuperscript{67} For example, in Figure 96, the model is crouched in a near-fetal position with her head below her rear and face turned to the side. Her arms are tucked under her torso and her hand is pressed to her mouth. She wears bikini underwear and a shapeless undershirt that is pulled up, revealing her midsection. The viewer’s eyes are drawn toward her raised posterior, and her position is vulnerable and uncomfortable.

The woman in the Nike ad in Figure 97 is crouched on the ground with her upper body in a tight ball, but her bare legs protruding out towards the camera. She has her hands over her head and her face is completely shadowed, as if she is hiding from the camera in shame. A similarly athletic looking woman is show in the next figure doing a difficult ballet move. [Figure 98] Her back leg is straight up in the air and her head is down against her other leg, hiding her face from our view. This gives her a sense of anonymity, as if any woman could get her body to bend like that.

Women are often contorted in ads in order to cover their naked body parts. The model in Figure 99 has her legs crossed in an unnatural position in front of her to cover up her genitals and her arms are crossed in front of her chest to cover her nipples. The ad


\textsuperscript{67} Preston, supra note ___ (insert this) at 26-27.
describes her as a “Blondes Don’t Have More Fun,” Brunette, as if it is enjoyable for her to maintain this position.

While models are usually positioned in a contorted pose to cover up things, the woman in Figure 100 is contorting herself to expose her rear end. Her dress is pushed up around her waist so that her legs may move freely behind her head. This highly unnatural and sexualized position draws attention to her legs and posterior. Just in case we missed her flexible capabilities the first time, the ad includes two almost identical images of her in this position.

4. Naked and Exposed

Although advertising has begun to expose more flesh on both male and female models, women continue to be shown naked more often, and in a more vulnerable state than men. There is a difference between being naked and nude. Nude connotes that one is without their clothing, but not necessarily without confidence, such as Michelangelo’s nude statue of David. Naked brings with it a sense of being exposed and vulnerable – helpless and defenseless against those who now have the power to gaze upon you. Men are being depicted without clothing more often now, but they are nude and still allowed some shred of dignity when they are able to pose confidently and boldly in front of the camera. Women are rarely so confident and still found naked, without clothes or dignity.

The man in Figure 101 appears confident and at ease. The woman in Figure 102, however, does not give the same impression. Her arms are raised up over her head, not resting comfortably at her sides as are the man’s. She looks as if she is stepping tentatively, with downcast eyes, over or into something. Combined with this position, her near-bare body conveys a sense of weakness, while the man’s bare chest and
positioning in Figure 101 expresses no such vulnerability. To the contrary, his pose evokes the image of the statute of David, the archetypal image of power.\footnote{See Bits at .}

As society becomes looser and looser about how much flesh is acceptable to show in public, print advertising pushes the line towards becoming pornographic. Women’s naked bodies are used as display cases for products, or have no relevance to the product at all, but are simply there to be seductive. The Patrick Cox ad in Figure 103 is selling shoes, which are all that the model is wearing as she lies seductive and nude on the beach. Likewise, the woman in Figure 104 is wearing nothing but the purse that the ad is selling. This disturbing ad depicts her with what appear to be thorns all over her back and thighs, which must be why she can’t wear any clothing.

The woman in the DKNY underwear ad is not quite naked – she is wearing men’s DKNY underwear. [Figure 105] She makes no effort to cover up her bare chest, but stares blankly at the camera, fortunate that her hair is long enough and positioned directly over her nipples.

The nude woman in Figure 106 is out in nature and seems to be unaware that she has any viewers. The ad suggests that she is being subjected to our gaze and takes the voluntary choice of showing her body away.

5. Assault Games and Physical Weakness

The arms of the man in Figure 107 are wrapped around a woman, whose face wears a giddy expression. She appears to be reacting to a ticklish sensation; the positioning of her arms and closed eyes make it look as if she is subconsciously cringing or shrinking from the man’s touch. The sense of fear and the potential for violence is heightened in Figure 108. The model, with pale skin and black-circled eyes, appears
cowered in a corner. She looks fearfully over her shoulder. The bright red straps of her
dress come over her shoulders and hang behind her like the rope or reins that have been
used to capture her.

The Versace Jeans advertisement in figure 109 shows a woman who is almost
naked. She is covering her bare breasts with one arm and wearing men’s underwear with
her pants around her ankles. She is standing over a man who is simultaneously taking a
picture of her and kicking her in the crotch. She seems not to notice this violent act and
simply poses for the camera.

The before and after shots in Figure 110 are disturbing images of a man in
control. Before, the woman sits in a tight, skimpy, leather outfit on the man’s lap with an
uneasy look on her face, while the man seems indifferent in his buttoned up shirt and
slacks. The after shot shows the woman clutching what she was previously wearing over
her now bare body, still on the man’s lap and still with the uneasy look on her face, while
the man has only unbuttoned a few buttons and messed up his hair a little. He stares
directly at the camera, as if to challenge anyone who questions what just happened.

In the Valentino ad in Figure 111, the male aggressively clutches the woman’s
jaw and throat with what appears to be excessive force, seeing as the woman is not
fighting back at all. She doesn’t seem to mind the violent choke hold that he has her in.
Another Valentino ad pictures a man holding a woman against him with seemingly little
effort. [Figure 112] She has a determined look on her face and is trying to pull away, but
can’t seem to overpower his masculine grip.

In Figure 113, a woman is shown laying face down on a couch with her arms
pinned uncomfortably behind her. She has a painful look on her face and is obviously
not enjoying whatever it is that the man in the ad is doing to her, but is powerless to do anything about it.

The Dolce & Gabbana ad in Figure 114 depicts a scene that many women have nightmares about. The woman seems to have stumbled into an alley and is now surrounded by men that are closing in on her. The men have hungry looks in their eyes that indicate that they are ready to ravage her at any moment. One man has already moved in and appears to be grabbing the woman, but you can’t tell where because his arm is covered by the fashionable coat that the woman is wearing. The scary thing is that this scene is happening in broad daylight, and worse, the woman seems indifferent to what’s going on around her.

V. Exporting the Image of Violence

The media act as agents of socialization, perpetuating certain global beauty standards such as thinness and institutionalizing such conventions as photographic poses. With the rise of international media corporations and the spread of international editions of women’s magazines, these conventions are being spread quite rapidly around the globe. 69

With increasing globalization, American culture in all forms is spreading more rapidly than it ever has before – and not all of this is a positive cultural exchange. The degrading depictions of women discussed in the previous sections are now being exported into the world market as fashion magazines publish international issues and other countries seek to imitate the images that they see in American media.

Several fashion magazines, most of which originate in the United States or Western Europe, have taken on an international audience. Cosmopolitan is published in twenty five languages and sold in more than forty one countries, making it the largest

69 RACE AND BEAUTY – citing Shaw?
magazine franchise in the world.70 Elle publishes issues in sixteen countries,71 Marie Claire has 24 international editions,72 and many other women’s magazines are following suit.

Even in cultures where women continue to play a conservative role in society and native women are not yet as sexualized in practice as the women in advertisements, advertisers use women from other cultures to create their depictions. Western models are used in advertisements in Asia when “the underlying marketing strategy is that ‘sex sells.’”73 In South Korea, “advertisers regularly [use] images of Western fashion models in conventionally Western fashion poses to advertise products considered erotic or risqué (such as lingerie), whereas East Asian models were used to advertise household or domestic products.”74

In a study done in 2004, researchers found that in the most popular women’s magazines in Singapore and Taiwan, Western models were found in advertisements more often than Asian models.75 The Singaporean magazines pictured Western models in 73.3% of their advertisements, and Taiwanese magazines pictures Western models in 50.4% of their advertisements.76 The study also compared the types of depictions of the models and found that Western models were more likely to be depicted as “Sensual/Sexy,” (27.1% of the time) than the Asian models (10.8% of the time), and that Asian models were more likely to be depicted as “Cute/Girl-Next-Door,” (25%) than

70 http://www.hearstcorp.com/magazines/property/mag_prop_cosmo.html
71 http://www.elle.com/default.asp?section_id=42
72 http://magazines.ivillage.com/marieclaire/about/history/articles/0,13794,434743_441086,00.html
73 RACE AND BEAUTY – need to cite when I have Bluebook
74 RACE AND BEAUTY – citing to Davis
75 RACE AND BEAUTY
76 Id.

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Western models (15.7%). These figures indicate “an openness in these societies to foreign models and beauty trends, as well as an interest in embracing globalization.”

“Embracing globalization” is a mixed blessing at best. Although the spread of Western “prosperity” is touted as our gift to the world, considerable unanticipated risks accompany the saturation of other cultures in Western values. Many of these risks have received extensive attention. One that has been overlooked is the extent to which the importation of Western material culture will introduce new forms of gendered violence.

I am not suggesting that importing American fashion magazines is the either the most offensive or the most dangerous downside of globalization. However, the subtle implications of the combined package of materialism, open and unrestrained sexuality, explicit violence in television and film, and common Western advertising motifs associating violence with fashion should not be dismissed.

77 Id.
78 Id.
79 Ann Jordan reflects on the arrogance of Western societies in thinking that bringing economic development to other countries is the overriding value.

[U]ntil recently, women and men of almost every political and religious affiliation and every social, ethnic, and national/regional group around the world have touted economic development as a panacea for problems confronted by peoples in the developing world. Its proponents in the developed and developing world (mainly the elites) have forcefully promoted development as a means to pull “those backward peoples” and countries out of their collective and individual misery and into the twentieth century. They cite economic reform as a precondition to the realization of the rewards of Western-style modernization, and democracy. In this way, economic development, modernization, and democracy emerge as an atheistic trinity.

Ann Jordan, supra at 217.


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The literature of Western feminists is focused on the forms of gendered violence extant in Third World countries and efforts to eradicate it. In addition, we have become aware that the characterization of woman-directed violence in other countries has been cast in culturally derogatory forms, while we ignore that ours too is a culture marked by deeply embedded forms of violence against women. For instance, Michelle Adelman observed that “[r]acist portrayals of women in other ... ‘third world countries’ are rampant in U.S. media, and are rarely accompanied by any suggested parallel of such conditions in American society.”

Nonetheless, is extremely rare that the literature addresses even the question of whether, in our arrogance, we are targeting Third World violence with one hand while pouring in new seeds of violence with the other – at least in the literature generated in the West. Americans, as discussed above, are largely oblivious to our own acceptance of violence and especially to the extent to which the ubiquitous wallpaper of advertising visualizes and reinforces it. Those who have not been awash in American popular culture their entire lives – the recipients of the dubious benefits of Westernization – do sometimes see it for what it is. For instance, historian Veena Talwar Oldenburg reports that in India, “[c]ulture [is] blamed [for dowry murders] but so [is] Westernization, which brought in gross materialism, greed, and a desire for consumer goods and modernization.” She is skeptical that Westernization is at fault, given that in the United


83 *Veena Talwar Oldenburg, Dowry Murders in India: A Preliminary Examination of the Historical Evidence, in Women’s Lives and Public Policy: The International Experience* 147 (Meredeth Turshen & Briavel Holcomb eds., 1993). For the argument that Western commercialism is relevant to India’s dowry murders, see Yayori Matsui, Women's Asia 75-81 (1987). See also Peter Bell, *Gender and Economic Development in Thailand, in Gender and Development in Southeast Asia,* Working DRAFT: Do not cite or quote without consent of author
States the practice of dowries has largely disappeared because our legal system does not enforce them. However, in her limited focus on dowry practice and official legal practices, she too easily skims past the indirect implications of materialism, which certain deserve further exploration.

Some research is emerging that recognizes the correlation between increased economic development and increases in some forms of violence against women. In a sensitive exploration of how commercialization relates to increased gendered violence in post-reform China, Ann Jordan focuses on how increased concern with wealth and productivity are linked to rises in prostitution and reproductive services, as well as the influx of women into physically and sexually unsafe workplaces.

[T]he rise of consumerism and commodified femininity within a society dominated by a male elite and a masculinist culture. Suddenly, ‘worthless’ (in the sense of not having a monetary value), uneducated, rural and poor women have a monetary value. They can be bought and sold, their sexuality can be commodified for prostitution or childbearing and their labor can be sold.

She does, however, raise an interesting question about the dramatic increase in stranger rape in China that hints at the influence of sexually violent imagery.

The media accuses the huge transient male population [as the cause of the increase in stranger rape], but the figures show that, while transient men certainly do commit rapes, they are not the sole perpetrators. The increase may have more to do with how women are now portrayed--as commodities and as inferior, feminized persons . . . .
Others who have studied increasing gendered violence in Third World nations have insights that become particularly meaningful in light of Western commercial imagery. For instance, Maria Meis observed:

The most brutal forms of violence and of sexist terror are to be found in areas where agriculture has been rapidly ‘developed’ in recent years, where new forms of wealth appeared, where cinemas, alcohol, television and other new consumer goods were introduced as indicators of ‘modernization.’

The relationship to violence and “cinemas,” “television” and “consumer goods” deserves further exploration.

While, as I mentioned above, depictions that link violence and victimization to women are not the most significant risks of Westernization, their impact in the mix needs to be addressed. As Americans we blithely accept a constant barrage of victimized and victimized women; we should think twice, however, before we export these images to countries we seek to “help.”

VI. Women Buying In

It does not take a board-certified psychoanalyst to explain that feeding men with a constant diet of images depicting women as non-human objects manufactured for the sole purpose of sexual gratification and subjugation, which (not even “who”) are easily overpowered and consumed (and may even like it), may lead to men acting out the violent consumption of women. It also makes sense that those men who fantasize (or act

89 Maria Mies, Class Struggles and Women's Struggles in Rural India, in WOMEN: THE LAST COLONY 133, 137 (Maria Mies et al. eds., 1988).
out) sexual violence enjoy such images. But the far more disturbing issue is why the consumption of such images is most common in advertising aimed at women, particularly teen and twentysomething women. I address elsewhere the similar question of why women so willingly accept advertising depictions of female incompetence, triviality, and childishness.  

One possible explanation for both phenomenons is that ad executives, creative directors, and commercial photographers have an agenda that includes the demeaning of women and the encouragement of sexual violence. Certainly most of the power figures in the advertisement and marketing industry continue to be male. But this theory is implausible. The producers of ads must please a wide array of manufacturers and retailers of the merchandize to be sold. Although the vast majority of the power figures in these industries are also men, the broader the net of involvement, the more unlikely there is a common intent. Moreover, many similar images are used to illustrate the articles and fashion features created by the fashion magazine editors, many of whom are women. The concept of a conspiracy wide enough to include all of these actors is highly suspect.

Moreover, advertisers spend nearly $167 billion annually testing consumer responses and figuring out what pleases those who vote with dollars. Advertisers utilize elaborate market research to understand demographics—such as gender, age, education, and income levels—and psychographics—including motivations, ideals, and priorities.

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90 See Preston, Baby Spice, at 594 et seq.
92 See FOWLES, supra note 4, at 16.
Sophisticated statistical methods are used to interpret surveys. 93 Eye tracking devices are used to determine how ads will be read. 94 With recent advancements in technology, “the race is on to find methods that dig beyond what consumers can articulate to what’s ‘deeper in their mind.’” 95 Thus, marketers determine “consumers’ interpersonal concerns and what images will promote the desired self enhancement . . . using psychological stud[ies] of values and market research on psychographics . . . to develop more focused advertising.” 96 The incentive to conform to consumer psychology is likely stronger than the incentive to direct and mold consumer psychology, although of course that is a secondary affect of reaffirming with a consistent battery of selected images. 97

A more reasonable explanation may be that women have so long been identified as vulnerable sexual objects of desire (and violence) that most of society (including advertisers, retailers, journalists, and female consumers) has become desensitized and perhaps oblivious. We, together, willing and blindly roll along with the wave in repeating, reincarnating, and even magnifying the historical cultural mythology of sexual violence – even though the fashion minded among us are at the same time deluded into thinking we are so very fresh, trendy, and even avant guard.

The fact that such images are most prevalent in fashion magazines suggests another possible explanation. To be effective, such ads must project images of female

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94 See id. at 226 Fig. 8.6.
97 Women purchase fashion magazines for the express purpose of gaining advice on what being fashionable and desirable requires. It is foolhardy to suggest that such women absorb nothing from the pervasive and consistent messages taught by the images in these magazines, or that they make no effort to conform themselves to these images after going to the trouble and expense of obtaining the magazines, devouring the pictures, and purchasing the suggested products. They are taught again and again that fashionable females are vulnerable objects. So the cycle repeats itself.
beauty and desirability. In a world where having a man is the brass ring of many women’s existence, women who consume these images must believe that being beautiful and desirable requires being sexually stimulating to men and, moreover, that men find objectified bodies and vulnerable, weak figments to be sexually stimulating.

Those who buy and sell advertising certainly believe they are giving women the images of success. *Vogue* magazine urges companies to advertise in its pages because the product ads *Vogue* selects present the “image, influence and authority” for today’s woman. 98 This, no doubt, is an overstatement; however, to the extent that there is any truth at all to Vogue’s claims, Americans ought to be up in arms.

**Conclusion**

Popular advertising continues to bring a kind of pornography out from dark adult theaters and into our homes. 99 Glossy advertising pages consistently depict desirable women as those who are vulnerable, available, and insignificant toys, who are helplessly subjected to the will of others. Women, in turn, seek the lifestyle these ads portray, believing that they must look and act as do the women in the ads. By injecting naked, dehumanized images of women into the mainstream, advertisers deliver pornographic concepts about women to a wider audience than ever before. Just as war and the training of soldiers to kill anesthetizes their empathy for human life, such broad exposure to these concepts is certain to have a deadening, coarsening effect on our society.

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