

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN;
PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVERTISING IN THE AGE OF MASS CONSUMPTION
SENIOR ESSAY

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By

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The first half of the 20th century witnessed perplexing change in the United States. Social values were in flux and emerging forces of authority challenged the old and established. The American conscience had a completely novel experience that few could have predicted. Indeed the '30s and '40s themselves were decades rife with economic instability, which not only affected how much the American public was able to spend overtly, but covertly helped shift commonly held values. The '30s represent a unique time in American history up until then - a time in which a relatively small but noticeable portion of the American population was exiting the roaring '20s and saw the future with excitement. If there was a decade full of frivolous spending and the good life, the 1920s was certainly it – if only for the lucky portion of the United States. The majority of the American population attempted to make a living under stifling economic limitations. Nevertheless, the sudden onset of even lower incomes and bread lines was an unwelcome economic development. Coincidentally, it was during this time (the '20s and '30s) that advertising was entering the national stage. Since advertising relies extremely heavily on mass consumption, times of limitation, such as the Great Depression, present a particularly challenging obstacle for admen to overcome.

This essay will focus on explaining the rise of advertising in the '20s, and the changes it had to undergo in order to stay relevant during the Great Depression and World War II – another significant event in American history that represented a time of financial limitation. As I will delve into further, advertising came about as a matchmaker of sorts between mass consumption and mass production. The latter two knew they need each other, but it was the latter one that hired advertising in order to work out a symbiotic relationship. As C.H. Sandage stated in an essay written in 1951, “A luxury or surplus economy cannot be built upon the physical needs of society. It is dependent primarily on the

psychological needs and wants of consumers.”¹ Across the board, the scholars that I have studied agreed with the notion of advertising's need to sell products beyond their physical merits. Yet, from the data that I gathered in *Collier's Weekly*, spanning issues from 1930 to 1946, the rise of advertisements attempting to appeal to deep psychological needs is erratic at best. Which raises the question – Why and how did the progression of advertising take longer than most scholarly works suggest? Throughout my research, I have found one possible answer. Limits in economic production and disposable income during the Great Depression led to stagnation in the advertising industry's creativity. It was not until World War II that a perfect storm of changing social mores and increased economic capacity enabled a more rapid evolution.

It is important here to clarify some of the terms used throughout this essay, some that might seem relatively straightforward. The first term is “Americans” and its numerous allusions i.e. population, civilians, and such. Anyone with a rudimentary understanding of American history knows that the term is hard to pin down to exactly one definition. “Who is an American?” has been a question that has been answered with all types of intentions, from accepting all races and cultures living in the United States in an attempt of inclusivity, to a narrow minded view that the term is only applicable to a particular type of person, amounting to nothing short of bigotry. For the purposes of this essay, however, what I define as an American is for simplicity's sake and nothing else. The term is used to describe the rising white middle class of the mid-20th century. Although this might seem dubious and might even echo claims of a white-washed history to some, it makes perfect sense within the context of the topic at hand – the rising white middle class was by far the most susceptible and newly tapped resource of consumption recognized by the advertising industry. It should be clear by now that it is not my intention to completely ignore the history that Mexicans, blacks, and other non-white members of American society. Indeed, they have been integral to the founding and fostering of the nation. But their

¹ C.H. Sandage and Vernon Fryburger, *The Role of Advertising* (Homewood, IL: R.D. Irwin, 1960), 261.

histories, at least in the advertising world, are so different from the larger perspective of the nation that to include a paragraph of their history into a thirty page essay would not be sufficient. Their history is such a *unique* history that I find it adequate to conclude it warrants its own thirty page essay.

The second term that needs to be defined for the sake of smooth sailing for the rest of the essay is “disposable income”. It should be noted that disposable income in its strictest meaning was not available to the majority of families in the United States until the post-war economic boom that started in the mid-‘40s. As some notable historians have pointed out, disposable income (again, in its strictest meaning) was not a huge driving force in the commercialization of the American masses. The availability of pure capital, then, was not the sole economic reason consumption became an American trademark. It was the availability of credit, loans, and installment plans that made it possible for a fledgling consumerist society to thrive. Of course, at the end of the day, families are able to obtain capital in order to spend it on goods that are advertised to them. For the purpose of this essay, it matters little whether they entered debt to buy such goods or not. “Disposable income”, then, for the purpose, of this essay, encapsulates all forms and sources of robust spending that an individual could access – whether it was from under their mattress or a twenty thousand dollar bank loan – in order to participate in the marketplace and buy goods advertised to them.

The fact that disposable income was not incredibly prevalent in the early 1900s meant that frugality was an important social value. In any capitalist state, few people had the means purchase in the same volume that we do today. Mass production had not yet become inseparable from the definition of 'America', and as such each item made for sale was the culmination of a relatively painstaking process. Thus when someone bought an item, pricing aside, they looked for something that would last a long time. Early 1900s America also had established societal authorities had been deeply rooted in American conscience for decades. These societal authorities would prove to create something very volatile when mixed with the rise of mass production. Indeed, The United States would witness an

unprecedented evolution of social authorities nary seen anywhere else.

The long-established social authority in the family was the father. He was the sole income-provider of the household. The children helped him on the farm or in his workshop, while his wife tended to domestic matters. This was during a time in America in which the family worked in rural areas as a cohesive unit, and could create all that was needed to in order to survive – in many cases, even thrive. A New England farmer of the 19th century explained it as such: “My farm gave me and my whole family a good living on the produce of it and left me, one year with another, one hundred and fifty silver dollars, for I never spent more than ten dollars a year, which was for salt, nails, and the like. Nothing to eat, drink or wear was bought, as my farm produced it all.”² Of course this was all dependent on the quality of the yield the farm produced from year to year. Droughts were still very common and a number of factors (seed and terrain quality, scarcity of necessary supplies, etc.) could easily ruin a farm's output and, consequently, the livelihood of those living on it. Nevertheless, the family was a sort of interdependent, cohesive unit that all worked towards the same goal. The family was not so much dependent on the father as they were dependent on each other – the mother had to take care of everyone's health and make sure that everyone was properly clothed, the children had to help their father, who was the main unit of labor. This relationship between family members had existed for centuries before mass production became the norm. Yet, when mass production began to become the norm, everyone would be affected by it, one way or another.

Artisans and craftsmen could not keep up with the turning wheel of production, and left their trade to go work in factories. Farmers did the same, enticed by the modernity of urban areas. Thus the father lost his means of controlling the family, and the family as a whole became a unit of consumption. Whereas before one could at least own the tools of his trade, and when things took a dark turn they would at least have their own farm or shop, factories signified the inception of American reliance on

² Lawrence K. Frank, “Social Change and the Family,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CLX, (March 1932), 95.

industry for sustenance. But the father lost out in more ways than one during this period.

The very fabric of the familial interdependency was torn apart by mass production evolving from an idea to an attainable economic structure, and the subsequent propagation of wage labor. Families were forced to adapt to the wage system that was taking over the country. Men, women, and children still worked but their work was no longer connected. Rather, it was sold individually to the market, and each got individual recompense. Instead of relying on each other, they all relied on “those who generated new forms of survival – the factory owners who provided wages *for a living*.”³ As one would expect, the family as a whole suffered because of this. No longer could family bonds be strengthened by an interdependency defined by economic terms, rather it began to rely on unquantifiable notions such as love. The bonds were therefore much less concrete and much more varied. This interconnectivity opened the door for new sources of authority to influence family members, specifically the wife and children.

Indeed, women and youth were perhaps the most affected throughout this transition. Women who had usually been seen as an integral part of home life, suddenly had become the *only* part of home life. For the most part women were rarely hired for work in manufacturing, much less expected to go out looking for a job. The majority of the women who did go to work went out of necessity rather than personal fulfillment. This was due to the inadequate wages that husbands were earning at the time. In the mid-1920s the Bureau of Municipal Research of Philadelphia estimated that \$25-30 per week was necessary to merely survive with a wife and two children in urban centers. Unfortunately, and as was customary in the '20s, the reality was nowhere near the equivalent of the ideal – three in five working men were making less than \$25 a week. This forced women to go out and find jobs – in a survey of working-class women carried out in the mid '20s, only 11 percent were found to work out of “personal

³ Stewart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 117.

preference.”⁴

If women were expected to stay at home, youth were expected to do the exact opposite and participate in capitalist society to their fullest capacity. Businesses highly valued youth for two different reasons. First, adolescents were seen to be in the prime of their lives. As such they were the ideal worker: someone who takes orders willingly and is physically able to work in the harsh environment of the factories. There are many examples of young people who seemingly stumbled or fell into a job that they would be working at for the rest of their lives.⁵ Or at least until they got old, according to one forty-year-old laborer:

Whenever you get old, they are done with you. The only thing a man can do is to keep as young as he can and save as much as he can. One woman spoke frankly about how youth was her family's most precious commodity. Speaking of her husband, she prophesied, “He is forty and in about ten years now will be on the shelf...” She added that “We are not saving a penny but we are saving our boys [to work].”⁶

Through this and numerous other accounts, we understand just how arduous factory work was on the body and the mind. The productiveness of youth, coupled with a pleasure-seeking trait that is found in every young person created a perfect duality for the business industry: the ideal unit of consumption that would work hard for a wage, and use his time off for frivolous spending. The next best unit of consumption was the young child, merely because of the potential that its body encased. Even though it occurred slowly, the effect of advertising directed largely at children cannot be understated. Many psychologists even argued that this was the most effective manner of advertising, preferring children's “'blank slate' characters to those of their parents whose prejudices might be more developed.”⁷ Children were just easier to manipulate, and although they themselves had no income to frivolously spend, it was hoped that they would be so attracted to a product that it would result in

⁴ Robert Lynd, “Family Members as Consumers,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CLX, (March, 1932), 88.

⁵ Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 141.

⁶ Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 34-35.

⁷ Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 144.

constant nagging of their parents until the product was bought. Even if ads were not directly aimed at children, they spoke in the child's voice complaining of parents cheating them and “Chiding non-consuming parents for less than adequate care of their offspring.”⁸ Although the indoctrination of different familial units into the world of advertising was a long process, it certainly acted as the harbinger of an immense social shift: the father, as a longstanding figure of authority within the family, was being challenged by mass industry and the advertising that came with it.

While factories were the harbinger of mass consumption, there were still clashing ideas on the subject. As mentioned before, frugality was very much valued in the household. This frugality was at odds with the amount of products being produced in factories – in economic terms, too much would be produced and without a high enough demand. Although advertisements had been around since the conception of a United States (there are numerous Revolutionary War era ads)⁹, they had played a fairly insignificant role in American history until the 1900s (it is important to note that by “admen” I refer to individuals selling a product, not those involved with political propaganda, although the line does blur well into the 20th century.) Although many corporations boasted of having attained national markets without the aid of advertising, the trade journal *Printer's Ink* argued that these “phantom national markets” were actually inefficient and unpredictable, scattered conglomerates of heterogeneous local markets.¹⁰ Advertising agencies had to work hard to overcome traditional values of thrift that had been long established in the American conscience. Indeed, the fact that “excessiveness replaced thrift as a social value”¹¹ was mostly due to the combined efforts of private businesses and advertising agencies. The role that big business played in speeding up the process of a society moving towards a consumerist mentality was so important that it would not be inaccurate to say they might as well have been the sole factor contributing to this metamorphosis.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Henry Sampson, “American and Colonial Advertisements,” in *History of Advertising* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1874), 188.

¹⁰ Editorial, “The Phantom of National Distribution,” *Printer's Ink*, September, 1923, 180.

¹¹ Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 25.

By this time in American history, the production industry was beginning to learn that a mass production capitalist-based society could only function as part of a symbiotic relationship - companies would only be able to make a profit if enough capital was pumped back in to the economy by consumers. There were a few businessmen that believed in this way of thinking but the production industry needed to move together or the American economy could very possibly collapse. Herbert Hoover validated this thought process when he proclaimed, “High wages [are the]... very essence of great production.”¹² Thus a dramatic movement to increase wages gained impetus all throughout the nation. Yet increasing wages was only part of the equation. The same movement also had to involve diminishing work hours – after all, an American would never be able to reach his full consumerist potential if he was too tired to go out shopping after working sixteen hours in a factory.

As big as the push was for workers gaining benefits, it faced two major obstacles that helped stymie worker reform. First, the push for higher wages and lower hours did not stem from the goodness of business owners, or from their desire to treat their workers more fairly. The mid 1920’s were the golden age of the Labor Party in the United States, and a large number of unions hit their peak membership at this time as well.¹³ The fact that average workers needed a lot of help defending their rights during this time is indisputable. It is fair to say that the average big business owner did not care much about the wellbeing of his workers and focused almost entirely on making a profit. Second, the push for higher wages and shorter hours contended against other business ideas. This is the reason why we don’t see a dramatic shift in either higher wages or shorter hours for the average worker, despite its admitted potential importance. In terms of economic development, the financial growth of industrial corporations averaged 286 percent between 1922 and 1929. Despite wage hikes and relatively shorter hours in some industries, the average manufacturing wage-earner showed a wage increase of only 14 percent during this period. During this same period, the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce,

¹² Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 119.

¹³ Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 87.

Julius Barnes, warned against the over-concentration of wealth which threatened the development of a “broad purchasing market necessary to absorb our production.”¹⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, big business owners paid no heed to Julius Barnes. By 1930, the top 1% owned 40% of wealth in America.

This treatment of the worker speaks volumes on what those in charge of advertising agencies and big businesses thought of the average American. The notions of shorter hours and bigger wages were tantamount to shaping the American populace into perfect units of consumerism. As Stewart Ewen states in his *Captains of Consciousness*, “[they] were subterfuges in so much as these alleged freedoms and choices meant merely a transformed version of capitalism's incessant need to mold a work force in its own image.”¹⁵ What we see during this time in American history is a paradigm shift from the point of view of the majority of the 1% - as it turned out, the average American had more to provide the U.S. economy than just labor. Re-invested capital was just as important as manufactured goods. This led to the realization that it was not enough to mechanize American industry – American citizens had to be mechanized as well. Suddenly, average Americans became a people that were to be observed and studied for proper advertising strategies. They had transformed from units of Puritan values into units of consumerism with basic wants and needs. As one adman put it, “goods offered as means of gaining social prestige make their appeals to one of the most profound of the human instincts.”¹⁶ In essence, Americans needed to be figured *out* and then the creation of desires and habits would be an easier process for the entirety of the production industry. Admen had to reach across social gaps such as region, taste, need, and class in order to attract as big a market as possible. The thought process that diminishes an entire people into automatons that can be easily figured out led to the thought process that looked to manipulate said people. As advertising techniques evolved and became more scientific, advertising became an inherently manipulative practice that relied on the automation of the perfect consumer unit. The amount of consumption that had been required for companies to keep

¹⁴ William Walling, *American Labor and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1926), 212.

¹⁵ Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 29.

¹⁶ Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 35.

turning a profit necessitated a much higher demand from the consumer. Admen created this demand, and fought frugality by stating that the United States was entering a new era of splendid fancy, and that everyone should be able to – and most importantly, *is* able to – enjoy the finer things in life.

The United States production industry could not satisfy itself with the American public being content with moderate consumerism. It should now be clear that the most effective type of advertising was, and remains, advertising that attempts to appeal to our hidden psychological needs. Indeed this notion is not new: the majority of the scholarship on advertising admits that this is the case. Yet what some of the academic works seem to get wrong is the time in which this type of advertising truly became popular. Through looking at issues of *Collier's Weekly*, the increase in ads that appeal to our most basic hidden needs is nowhere near as apparent as different scholars of the field would suggest. One might argue that *Collier's Weekly* is but one tree in a forest full of advertising sources. Given the popularity of the weekly magazine, however, it's not absurd to suggest that the data found within the magazine might be indicative of wider national trends. The question then becomes one of identifying different types of advertising.

Difficulties arise when one tries to categorize creative works in an objective manner. Indeed, it's impossible to analyze or compare different types of advertisements without creating a sort of guideline in order to assess the style that inspired the ad in question. Thus for this project I devised a manner in which the different types of advertisements I found could be separated into two main categories: Descriptive or Lifestyle. The latter style of advertising represents the type of advertising strategy that aims to satisfy our hidden needs – the type of ads that scholars say is necessary in a luxury economy. Not all advertisements I found fell under one of these categories, but I will dive into the minor categories later.

First and foremost, the vast majority (almost 90% of all advertisements studied) were categorized as being Descriptive. These types of ads sold the product as a one dimensional object,

mostly focused on the physical dimensions of the product. Most Descriptive ads split the page about 50/50 with text describing what the product does, and with images of the product itself. The text described either how to use the product correctly, as seen in many tire and refrigerator ads, or how it was better than the product you owned at home. The most important aspect to remember about a company selling a “better” product to the consumer through Descriptive ads is that the product is only better through its physical elements. The product would not improve anything else in one's life apart from being a physical improvement on the product currently owned. GE, the leading company in home appliances from the mid-1920s onward, used Descriptive advertisements quite often. Considering the fact that GE was on the cutting edge of home-keeping technology, this tactic made complete sense – their products were simply better than the competition's, giving them the ability to sell their products on the grounds that they were an improvement over other brands, or even earlier models of GE goods.

Although to call this the most “basic” form of advertising would be a stretch, it was certainly

Collier's, The National Weekly

\$29.50

WHEN WE TOLD
THEM THE PRICE

... THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES

A REAL TYPEWRITER—FOR ONLY \$29.50!—EFFICIENT, READY FOR YEARS OF SERVICE, EXACTLY WHAT YOU AND MILLIONS OF OTHERS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR! AN IMPROVED, REVERSIBLE WHEN ANYONE, WITH OR WITHOUT ASSISTANCE, CAN USE INSTANTLY AND WELL.

INSERT A SHEET OF PAPER INTO THE ROYAL SIGNET, AND IT WILL TYPE AS FAST AS YOU LIKE. EACH LETTER IS A KEY—YOU MERELY STRIKE THE LETTER AND THERE IS IT!

THE SHIFTER KEY IS GONE, ELIMINATED BY THE NEW MONO-FACE TYPE, A DISTINCTIVE TYPEFACE, WITH ONE MASTER KEY FOR ALL CHARACTERS. THIS HAS CREATED AN ENTIRELY NEW FONT—CLEAN, BRISK, STRIKING—AMAZINGLY EFFICIENT.

STUDENTS FIND THE NEW ROYAL SIGNET OF VAST ASSISTANCE AT ITS KEYS CHILDREN QUICKLY LEARN SPELLING AND SIMPLE SENTENCE STRUCTURE. EVERYONE, YOUNG AND OLD, HAS A MULTITUDE OF USES FOR THIS HANDIEST OF SMALL TYPEWRITERS.

THE NEW ROYAL SIGNET IS MADE WITH THE FINEST PRECISION FOR WHICH THE NAME “ROYAL” IS FAMOUS. ITS LINES ARE GRACEFUL AND PLEASING, FINISHED IN A HANDSOME SHADE OF GLOSS VERNONITE.

SEE THE NEW ROYAL SIGNET AT ANY TYPEWRITER DEALER. ALSO AT THE BETTER DEPARTMENT AND HOME APPLIANCE STORES. PRICED SIGHTLY HIGHER IN CANADA. CONVENIENT MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

ROYAL TYPEWRITER COMPANY, INC.
2 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

SENSATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AWARD
\$500 FOR IDEAS! 163 CASH PRIZES!
FILL OUT—DETACH—MAIL TODAY! OR SEE THE ROYAL SIGNET DEALER!
PLEASE SEND FULL INFORMATION REGARDING “OPPORTUNITY AWARD!”
ALSO LIBERALLY DISCUSSING THE NEW ROYAL SIGNET TYPEWRITER

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

Copyright 1932, Royal Typewriter Company, Inc.

Destined TO CHANGE THE WRITING HABITS OF THE WORLD

the type of advertising that had been long established and was certainly the norm up through the early 1940s.

A perfect example of this style of advertising is the ad found in the September 10th, 1932 edition of *Collier's Weekly* for The Royal Signet. The Royal Signet was, at the time, the most modern typewriter available to the public. The advertisement clearly wants the value and price of the product to be the biggest selling point:

“When we told them the price... THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES ”. Even the first sentence of the text points to this - “A real typewriter – for only \$29.50!” The fact that the font of the price is nearly as

big as the typewriter itself indicates that the price is the most important factor the potential consumer should remember. The typewriter is being sold on two aspects – its price and its superior quality. The lower part of the advertisement contains text that explains mechanical improvements on the product itself, such as the elimination of the “puzzling shift key” and the production of lines that are “graceful and pleasing.” Even the statement that “At its keys children quickly learn spelling and simple sentence structure”¹⁷ signifies that the product will only improve one's life through its physical benefits. The image at the top competes with the price tag for the reader’s attention. In it, there is a crowd of people of all ages and genders looking at an enlarged Royal Signet with awe. The size (large) and position (above the crowd) of the typewriter connotes that the product itself is a monumental piece of machinery. If the typewriter were to be replaced with the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty, the crowd of onlookers watching with awe would not seem out of place; coupled with the large 29.50 next to the image, the message is clear – you can own a piece of monumental innovation, on par with the Empire State Building, for only \$29.50.

In the *Collier's Weekly* issue of January 11th, 1936 we find another classic example of Descriptive advertising. Pontiac advertises a new model of their cars by stating mechanical improvements and that it is “The most beautiful thing on wheels.” The top half is dominated with by a drawing of the car driving down the street, with a bubble next to it - “Triple-Sealed Hydraulic Brakes – Enclosed Knee- Action – 'Turret-Top' Fisher Bodies – No-Draft Ventilation – Level Floors – Front and Rear.” These features culminate into the pitch that advertisement is attempting to sell the consumer. This is made clear by the format (bullet points) and the contrast between the bubble and the background. Yet, the advertisement goes on to describe other parts or functions of the car that merit a purchase. On the lower right of the advertisement, the little text blurb states that the new Pontiac combines “unsurpassed gasoline mileage with big savings on oil and upkeep...” All statements made by

¹⁷ Royal Typewriter Company, “The Royal Signet”, September 1932, *Collier's Weekly*.

the advertisement are supported by the text on the lower left: “AMERICA'S VERDICT AGAIN THIS YEAR.”¹⁸ This type of exclamation was incredibly common in advertising at the time. Using numbers (“2,000,000 users say its the best”) or saying that product was approved by America, as if it was a whole entity without varying views within, was an easy way to support claims made in ads. The most important part of this advertisement, however, is twofold: the drawing of the car driving down the street and the fact that the car stands out from its surroundings due to it being white and the rest being black. Coupled with the claim of being the most beautiful car available, this lets the potential consumer know that the car always stands out when compared to its surroundings. The freedom of choice, something discussed earlier in the essay, is a constant within the advertising industry, and is very much alive today. If one has the freedom of choice, why would they choose something bland or unremarkable? At its core, the Pontiac advertisement is about making the remarkable choice – after all, everyone wants to be remarkable.

The adaptation of Lifestyle advertising, and the subsequent abandonment of Descriptive ads, seems to have been the only possible course of natural progression. A Lifestyle advertisement is the type of ad that is the most prevalent in 2015, and is widely considered to be the most effective form of advertising. This type of ad tries to either *validate you* or *improve you as a person* - both are done through the product that you purchase. There was no singular industry that used this style of advertising. Companies that first used this certain brand of advertising, a bit surprisingly, ranged from De Soto cars to Listerine and Canada Dry. It's surprising that these companies used Lifestyle ads so often simply because it represents a very unsystematic usage of advertising across different industries and markets.

Lifestyle advertisements may play on one's insecurities but never play on fear. Fear itself was a very popular method of advertising in the early half of the 1900s. Indeed, throughout my research for

¹⁸ Pontiac, Advertisement, January 1936, *Collier's Weekly*.

De Soto. The text in the bottom supports this analysis: “Have cars ceased to be a Great Event in your life? Have you begun to take them all for granted? Then it's time you became acquainted with the new De Soto. You get a hint of something extraordinary...” The advertisement aims to provide excitement and thrills to an otherwise monotonous life. The entirety of the text on the lower part of the ad can be summarized as the car providing adventures to the consumer – but it is important to note the line “Your wonder grows when you step inside.”¹⁹ Not only will it provide you thrilling adventures, but stepping inside the car *is an adventure within of itself*. Near the end of the text, the advertisement adds “As for engineering, it's enough to say that the De Soto is built by Chrysler Motors.” The copywriter did not want to bog down the reader with text of how the car works, as it would have detracted larger signified-signifier duality. All the tedious specifications of the car are presented in the lower right, but they are found within a yellow box that is completely separated from the rest of the advertisement. As such, the audience can focus on the product – the car – and how it can improve one's lifestyle; more adventures with more friends. And although your friends will accompany you, they are not your equal – you will be head of the pack, looking down on your friends as the man does in this advertisement. Here, also, we see another manner of breaking monotony: “In a year of 'look alike' cars, De Soto's dashing styling stamps it as one of the most distinctive cars of 1936.” This is the same method used by Pontiac cars in the previous example, yet completely transplanted to apply to a Lifestyle advertisement.

Perhaps the earliest and most unique example of a Lifestyle advertisement can be found in the September 18th, 1934 issue of *Collier's*. The advertisement itself is in a form of sequencing pictures that tell the story of an insurance salesman, Warren, who goes on a trip with a rich heiress and attempts to sell her his product. Throughout the story Warren has numerous intimate encounters with the heiress and she dislikes the smell of his breath, or “halitosis”. Halitosis becomes such a problem that the heiress asks her dad to take Warren away so she doesn't have to deal with him, and “Warren's Rival

¹⁹ De Soto, Advertisement, March 1936, *Collier's Weekly*.

Now Gets A Look In” because Warren is “impossible! Everybody avoids him.” Luckily for Warren, the butler gives him a tip about Listerine and before he knows it Warren has sold the insurance policies to the heiress and her family, and the heiress is wanting of his company even after the business deal is struck. Not only did Listerine help Warren make the deal of his life that allows him to live a comfortable life and “seldom go to the office” but it also helped him find a potential romantic relationship. The message of the advertisement is clear yet somewhat subtle – Listerine will help you be successful in life and if you have a “week-end that started in failure” you can be sure to look back on it fondly and remember that it “ended in fortune.”²⁰

The two secondary categories are regarded as Informative and Image Focused advertising.

Informative advertisements sought to inform consumers on the inner-workings of a company, or to explain a certain service or product that the company offered. The tire, oil, railroad, and steel industries seem to be the ones that used Informative advertisements the most. Shell Oil had a very extensive advertising campaign that looked to educate potential consumers on how gasoline reached the general



Window into Yesterday

● A window into yesterday? Looking back hundreds of millions of years? Why bother with what happened? You know where? To Shell, the knowledge is so important that a new Laboratory of Exploration and Production Research has just been built... one of the largest in the nation.

Since 1920 different products have been made from petroleum—the demand for oil is here today, tomorrow... and it keeps growing. Shell's Laboratory will study every scientific possibility in the problem of producing more oil to fit that demand.

In the sciences of geology, chemistry, physics, with its combination with engineering toward these objectives: (1) Expansion of today's successful ways of finding oil; (2) Development of new techniques to find oil; (3) Recovery of more of that oil.

Scientists will work as a team. One group may tackle the theoretical—another will check on the practical side. A geologist may start on this, an engineer may start it through to production, but at the service of all is the finest engineering science ever devised.

Materials and gases may still be used to produce more and cleaner, their energies will make more... an abundance of well makes possible laboratory tests under field conditions.

Because the Laboratory deals with a heritage from the very distant past, it is a window into yesterday...

It is also a window that opens on tomorrow.

Scientific research into oil production and recovery is another way in which Shell demonstrates leadership in the petroleum industry, and its petroleum products. Whenever you see the Shell name and trade mark, Shell Research is your assurance of quality.

Shell Oil

You get a share of the alluring knowledge of Shell research when you have your motor vehicle equipped with Shell X-10 Motor Oil.



populace. They printed a large number of advertisements that depicted dinosaurs roaming the Earth, and included text explaining where oil came from and how it was refined into gasoline. These advertisements served the important purpose of giving a rudimentary explanation of a product that had to be used in tandem with a relatively new technology that was becoming increasingly available wider American consumer base – the car. Knowing this, Shell Oil also printed Informative ads that explained how to know a car needed an oil change. It is important to note that in this

²⁰ Listerine, Advertisement, September 1934, *Collier's Weekly*.

ad that explained the timeframe of an optimal oil change, Shell Oil did not advertise its own oil. They are still considered advertisements, however – even though they did not directly attempt to sell a product to the American consumer base, they market a respective company in a positive way. Had these advertisements been put out by the government or some non-profit organization, they would be rightly categorized as PSAs. These ads were in fact published by private companies, not attempting to sell a certain product but more so their brand, which is why they must be categorized as Informative advertisements. During World War II, we see how admen were able to create a hybrid between Informative and Lifestyle advertising.

The simplest form of Informative advertising can be found on the April 14th, 1934 issue of *Collier's*. Firestone was one of the major companies that used Informative advertising very often. In this advertisement, we see the general formula that was followed by the Informative style. Firestone first defines exactly why they are the best provider of necessary automobile equipment. Indeed, the company's entry into the car market “meant a forward step in the development of more efficient batteries.” The advertisement also makes the point to say that Firestone engineers had “developed and perfected electrodes of very fine texture that give quicker ignition, hotter spark, yet longer life.” It continues to praise the quality of Firestone's brake lining as well. The advertisement also remains general throughout, starting with advice: “The safe and economical operation of your automobile, truck or bus depends upon the safety built into your tires, and brakes and the efficiency and dependability built into your battery and spark plugs.”²¹ With so much description of different products offered by the company, there are two things glaringly amiss in the ad. First, it merely (or meekly) implies that every car owner should buy car supplements from Firestone. Although “better services”, “better value”, and of course better products are mentioned, the advertisement has much more of a “should” tone more than anything else. That is to say that the advertisement has much more of passive feeling than

²¹ Firestone, Advertisement, April 1934, *Collier's Weekly*.

anything else. Second, there are no prices to be found. It talks about great products, but it doesn't sell anything neither *physical* nor *ideological*. With all of that kept in mind, its easy to see how this advertisement is an example of the Informative style of advertising. Although it does not sell a singular product, it does inform the public of the services offered by Firestone and where to find them (Firestone Service Dealer or Service Store).

The fourth and least used category of this study is the Image Focused advertisement. This refers to the advertisement that contains very little text, forcing the observer to focus on the image that is being depicted, often in the center of the page. Perhaps one of the most famous advertisements of our time, Volkswagen's "Lemons", is a textbook Image Focused ad. They are a dime a dozen in modern media, but they were exponentially less prevalent in the earlier half of the 20th century. One of the earlier examples of Image Focused advertising were ads included a promotion for pineapple juice, later joined by cigarette and liquor industries. Here we see two very different types of Image Focused advertising. The first type, at first only used by cigarette companies and later liquor companies, after the repeal of Prohibition, was used to market their product as the classier alternative when compared to the competition. The background was usually a monochrome color, usually just white, which made the product pop out to the potential consumer much more. Due to the minimal use of text, the ad was much less cluttered and gave it, and subsequently the product it advertised, a much more cleaner look. The second type, used to advertise the pineapple juice, worked in a great amount of colors and a type of font that was not usually seen in advertising. This type gave the product a more exotic feel – which went hand in hand with selling a tropical fruit. Although Image Focused advertisements overlapped somewhat with Lifestyle type advertisements, this was anything but predetermined. Here it is important to note that Image Focused advertising was not present in *Collier's Weekly* throughout the entirety of the 1930s. Even though there are a small volume of these types of advertisements, there seems to be a higher concentration of them in early and mid-1940s.

They are noticeably missing from *Collier's* magazines that were published during the Depression. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Perhaps the most reasonable and obvious is that Image Focused advertising required a lot of space and had a certain upper-class aura about them. Advertising in such a manner during the Great Depression and its direct aftermath would not have been viable – indeed it might have alienated potential consumers struggling to just put food on the table. In a time of economic struggle it would have been faulty for an advertising company to depict the products produced by their clients in a way that showed them as unattainable. However, as the economy recuperated and with war looming in the horizon, Image Focused advertising began to play a larger role in the United States.

With all of those advertisements in mind, it is almost incredible to think that Lifestyle advertising did not make a much earlier entrance into the American conscience. As so many scholars have explained, and as Ewen reiterates, the practical value of a product was “no longer sufficient inducements to move merchandise at the necessary rate and volume” that was required by America's new economic capacity.²² According to this logic Lifestyle advertising should have been popular many years before it actually became so. Of course, advertising does not exist in a vacuum – indeed, it was the product of America's economic context. As such, there are two probable reasons as to why Lifestyle advertising only really grabbed a foothold in American society as late as the '40s.

First and foremost, advertising was dealt a huge blow during the Great Depression. Advertising is most effective when the average family has a large disposable income, not to mention when the economy is very healthy. After all it is an industry that is solely built around the consumption of products by the public. If families have restricted incomes, advertising suffers because ads fall on deaf ears. Since there is little demand, supply decreases and thus companies stop looking to advertising agencies to sell their product simply because there is no product *to* sell. The effects of a sinking

²² Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, 35.

economy on advertising are incredibly apparent in the advertisements found in *Collier's* magazines published during the worst years of the Great Depression, 1932-1933. In 1932, the Gross National Product (GNP, a measure of a country's economic performance, what its citizens produced) fell a record 13.4%, and unemployment rose to a tragic 23.6%. The year before, unemployment had reached 15.9% - in the timeframe of one year, unemployment had gone up an astonishing 7.7%.²³ This horrible turn in the American economy was reflected by the small number of advertisements in *Collier's* magazines. The *Collier's Weekly* magazine that was published on January 2nd, 1932 had a shockingly low number of full page advertisements – a total of four, and one of these was an Image Focused type of advertisement. Compared to the 1930 January 4th's magazine, which had a total of 23 full page advertisements, one can clearly see the effect of the stuttering economy on *Collier's* advertising. Although there seems to be an upswing in advertising on the February 6th issue, with twelve full page advertisements, the rest of 1932 is a terrible year for advertising in *Collier's*. Of 12 *Collier's* magazines (studied in monthly succession) examined in 1932, only two editions (February and November) had more than ten full page advertisements, and even then it was by a marginal amount. In 1940, between January and June *Collier's Weekly* printed as many ads as they did in the entirety of 1932. It is also important to note the quality of the advertising that was being published in 1932. In a phenomenon that lasted until 1934, there were no advertisements that contained color. With that in mind, advertising agencies definitely changed their tune of over-consumption to being frugal *while* consuming. It's no wonder that frugal automobiles became hugely popular during this time. Even though the market was much smaller, there were still products that needed to be sold and people with the capability to buy said products. In the mid-1930s, there were a lot of advertisements that were offering products that were the “best value” compared to the competition. The notion of frugal consumption budded during the Great Depression, but it truly blossomed during World War II.

²³ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 191.

Even before the Great Depression, however, the United States advertising industry suffered from negative public sentiment and found itself in the middle of constant controversy. This might be considered the second reason that might explain Lifestyle advertising's delayed rise to the forefront, albeit somewhat minor relative to the Great Depression. The common rhetoric that advertising is manipulative in that in the consumer-corporation relationship, all the power stems from the corporation (in this case the corporation represents a conglomerate of advertising agencies and producers) was very much alive in the '20s. Some might argue that this is not the case – advertising is mere reflection of what the consumer public wants to see. Admen create ads that resonate with their audience; they would be out of a job if they didn't. The negative stigma against advertising is not unjustly founded, however. Although advertising itself had been around for decades, the first piece of legislature that would regulate advertising did not go through Congress until the middle of the 20th century. Before then advertising agencies had created their own manner of self-regulation which was conveniently ineffective and impotent.²⁴ Yet the advertising practices of the 1930's and '40s seem like saintly acts when compared to the early 20th century. During this time, admen got away with murder. Perhaps the most common practice for those selling medical products was to create diseases from thin air. The most famous of these was “intestinal fatigue”, which was blamed for everything from lack of sexual prowess to inability to land a job. In the days before the internet and, to be quite frank, mass education, “intestinal fatigue” seemed like a perfectly viable health problem to have. For a while, bad breath was considered as something incredibly unhealthy as well, especially for women. It was advertised as a disease that could affect anyone, and could lead to other health complications – one of which was “intestinal fatigue”. In a LifeSavers ad in a *Collier's Weekly*, a woman witnesses her husband talking to other women because they have “fresh breath”.²⁵ Not only was bad breath unhealthy for your colon, it could also ruin your marriage. Businesses were advertising the fear of ending up as a lonely, backed-up

²⁴ Otis Pease, *The Responsibilities of American Advertising: Private Control and Public Influence, 1920-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 72.

²⁵ LifeSavers, Advertisement, August 1932.

woman. These advertising malpractices extended far beyond the medical market. In a 1921 *Collier's*, there is an ad for a waistband that would help a man pack in his gut and look more attractive. The ad exclaims, “Try this product without any risk, as it has been supported by \$10,000,000 in resources!” The United States government, in 1921, according to U.S. Government Spending website spent roughly \$10,528,900 *as a whole*. Apparently, this company had decided to allocate nearly 95% of what the government had spent in an entire year to produce waistbands for male confidence.

In the beginning of my study, I hypothesized that advertising in the Lifestyle method would slowly emerge as the dominant force in advertising throughout the '30s and '40s. It is, after all, the dominant force in modern advertising, so I believed that it was only logical that the amount of Lifestyle advertisements in one of the most important timeframes for advertising would slowly, but steadily increase. Thus showing that advertising was evolving from selling a product to selling a lifestyle. Since the practical value of a product or the traditional notion of mechanical quality were no longer sufficient inducements to move merchandise at the necessary rate and volume required by mass production it was surprising to find such a large number of Descriptive advertisements well into the 1940s. Indeed advertising that attempts to prey on the insecurities of the American public seem to be the most effective when attempting to sell a product. Carl A. Naether, an advocate of advertising for women, demonstrated how the link might be effected between “instinct” and mass sales:

An attractive girl admiring a string of costly pearls just presented to her would in no few cases make the one seeing her in an advertisement exclaim: “I wish that *I, too*, might have a set of these pearls and so enhance my personal appearance.” Such and similar longings are merely expressions of real or fancied need for what is advertised.²⁶

A given ad asked not only that an individual buy its product, but that they see products as inherent, indeed imperative, tools to improve their lives. By that perspective, he could ameliorate social and personal frustrations through access to products in the economy.

²⁶ Walling, *American Labor and Democracy*, 159.

This is made abundantly clear in Packard's *Hidden Persuaders*. Perhaps the most psychological-leaning text in the material explored throughout the research for this essay, Packard explains the tendencies that advertising strategies took to by way of psychological analysis. It is no coincidence that the role of psychology increased exponentially in the field of advertising once advertising really blew up as a social force. Of these psychologists, Walter Dill Scott was the one that truly pushed the envelope in applied psychology; he effectively applied his theories of psychology onto the field of advertising. Scott sowed the seeds for a style of advertising that was not solely based on the fickle tastes of the consumer, but was concretely grounded on science. Indeed, the psychologists that were led by Walter Scott into the great unknown that was applied psychology were looking for the “*whys* of our behavior, so that they can more effectively manipulate our habits and choices in their favor.”²⁷ This type of science that would effectively look at the *why* people act a certain way or want certain things was the first step in creating needs for a consumer base. After all, perceived needs were exactly what manufacturers and producers needed in order to stay afloat – as stated earlier in the essay; mass production demanded mass consumption in order for the economy to stay afloat. Descriptive advertising would presumably have not fulfilled these needs. After all, it was one the most basic type of advertising that solely relied on selling products on their physical merits. In order to keep profits high, reach a much larger consumer base, and – consequently – keep the economy from drowning in its own inefficiency, advertising agencies needed to tap into the consumers' core.

Advertising agencies, obtaining a number of psychologists on their payroll, decided that that the best way to do this was to access the great number of insecurities, both inherent and acquired, and exploit them. Here we see the origins of Lifestyle advertising. Instead of selling products on the basis of rational needs, admen started selling products with pitches that would strike a chord with our inner psyche. The pitches used to sell cars in print advertising serve as a microcosm for a larger, new

²⁷ Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: D. McKay, 1957), 4.

tendency of the entire advertising industry (cars are used in a lot of examples throughout this essay simply because the public was very much fascinated with them, and as such ad agencies placed great importance in their promotion). Since car advertisements had come into the forefront, they were sold on one largely universal characteristic – horsepower. No one can argue against the practicality of horsepower in the early days of the automobile. Much of the American populace was still living in rural areas and needed to cover large stretches of land; the faster the better. However, as urban centers expanded yet became denser at the same time the notion of horsepower was still very prevalent in car advertisements. One needs only to browse *Collier's* magazines printed in 1940 to find a number of car ads in which horsepower plays a role. So why did horsepower remain as a marketable aspect of a car even though practical use was diminishing? The word itself gives us a strong hint, specifically the latter half – power. More horsepower signified an extension of the owner's own power. It quickly became such a masculine feature that we see consequences of it even today. Cars from all manufacturers, from Honda and Chevy to Audi and Lexus, still mention horsepower in their ads. These companies realize who they are marketing to – their consumer base will not rent out the Autobahn and race their car up and down that marvel of German engineering. These manufacturers also know that a very low percentage of their consumers will ever use much less need, three hundred horsepower. Yet it remains a selling point because extensions of power are always in demand in America. This demand mostly derives from male consumers. As businessman Pierre Martineau states, “The automobile tells who we are and what we think we want to be... It is a portable symbol of our personality and our position... the clearest way we have of telling people of our exact position.”²⁸ Admen found a chord that strikes within the typical male's inner being, and have continued to play the tune for over a hundred years.

Indeed, Lifestyle advertising seems to represent the natural progression of advertising throughout the 1900s. David Ogilvy, advertising entrepreneur, pioneer, and widely regarded as “the

²⁸ Packard, *Hidden Persuaders*, 52.

father of advertising”, was a high apostle of pushing the envelope, specifically image based ads. He wanted to prove to his competitors that image based advertising was the future. Being head of his own company gave him an enormous amount of freedom, and so he decided to run an experiment:

Ogilvy's advertising firm devised a highly successful nonrational symbol for an obscure brand of shirt – a mustached man with a black eye patch. Soon the public knew that any man wearing a black eye patch had to be wearing a Hathaway shirt. To prove his faith in the power of imagery Mr. Ogilvy began running expensive color full-page ads in magazines such as the *New Yorker* that did not contain a single word of text, not even the word Hathaway. All that was shown was a picture of a man. He stood by an observatory telescope taking notes. He had a mustache. He wore a bright plaid shirt. And he had a black eye patch. Hathaway shirt sales thrived.²⁹

By taking a risk with his own company, Ogilvy proved that images were just as powerful, if not more, than walls of text. The man was a genius in the advertising field and this is not mere hindsight; his ability to build an advertising firm from the ground up and successfully increase profits for his clients year after year is a clear indication of it.

Ogilvy’s belief that the world needed to move on from Descriptive advertising would partly be proven during World War II. Indeed it would be in World War II that Lifestyle advertising would become the preferred manner of advertising. The war itself represented a huge power shift - Europe no longer housed the international superpowers, and the title instead went to the United States and Russia. The United States could not have achieved this newfound position on top of the global hill without the use of advertising. In his *All-Out for Victory!*, John B. Jones puts advertising during WWII under the microscope. He talks about everything related to the WWII in the home front, ranging from scrap drives and war bonds to the role that women were given in advertising and the black market. He sheds light on a period that is often recognized as a time of restricting yet altruistic acts of sacrifice. These acts of sacrifice were no doubt carried out by American fighting forces abroad, but to say that the majority of the American populace did not sacrifice as well would be horribly inaccurate. The

²⁹ Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 126.

sacrificial narrative was a thread that wove its way throughout society - the main way it achieved this was through using a needle that punctured different advertisements. Using the term “sacrifice” in advertisements was a hotly debated issue; there were those who believed that the word should only be used to describe what troops might go through in the field of battle (death, losing a limb) while others believed the term was applicable to the sacrifices being made on U.S. soil, such as shortages of food and common goods.³⁰ Regardless, the idea and connotations of the word “sacrifice” (whether the word itself was used or not) were incredibly useful to advertising agencies at the time. Although it would be somewhat of a stretch to say that the United States was a completely unified front, there is no doubt that as the war wore on advertising and propaganda had its desired effect on the American populace. The war grew ever more popular and the civilian population of the United States, by and large, wanted to help out in any way they could. Admen of the 1940's realized this and effectively utilized it.

Many remember that the United States was a powerhouse in WWII but forget that it underwent a time of rationing stateside. Goods that were easily found in stores suddenly disappeared from shelves, and the good that was affected most by the war was food. The role of advertising during this time was to effectively explain the shortages of peas, all types of meat, tomatoes, condensed soups, bicycles, tires, spark plugs, etc. to the consumer while at the same time keeping morale in high levels; a challenge tricky by nature. Essentially, admen had to tell consumers that they would not be able to buy as much as they once could but should remain happy. Admen figured that the best way to overcome this challenge was by selling the notion of sacrifice to men and women all over the United States. When the typical mother and father of America saw themselves making do without such “luxuries” as sugar, butter, and lean steak, they had to have felt like they were doing their part for the American cause and sacrificing their wellbeing for the greater good. Spreading the idea that small altruistic actions such as never buying more than what your ration ticket allowed meant that anyone and everyone could be a

³⁰ John B. Jones, *All-out For Victory! Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2009), 86.

hero in America's search for victory. Indeed, the use of war imagery juxtaposed with a product that was widely available to the public helped increase this feeling of home front heroism. Champion did exactly that with their Spark Plugs ad in the *Collier's* issue of February 12th, 1944. Most of the ad is the image of an artillery vehicle firing on enemy lines, and right above the statement, “WHERE PERFORMANCE REALLY COUNTS..” The advertisement is meant to primarily inform the public that the use of Champion Spark Plugs is incredibly necessary at the front, as “literally untold millions of Champions are in daily use” by America's military forces. In the lower right, however, the ad claims “To save gasoline – Keep spark plugs clean”.³¹ Combined with the imagery, the ad is really trying to say that saving gas, or being thoughtful when one consumes, is as important as American artillery firing into enemy lines. Americans, then, did not have to fight on the frontlines in order to feel like war heroes.

World War II presented a unique yet paradoxical opportunity for growth in the advertising industry. One such example of this is the way in which the circumstances of the times demanded a restoration of early 1900s values of frugality and thrift that advertising companies had worked so hard to erase. Limitations on capital goods such as steel and oil meant that the companies who were not selling to the government had to decrease output. The companies that *were* able to sell their goods to the U.S. military could obviously not sell as much to American families. As such American families had to rediscover their Puritan roots and focus on making their bought goods last as long as possible. Instead of attempting to hide or play down the fact that the majority of American families were rationing, the advertisement industry embraced the turn of events with open arms. If one just looks at ads found in *Collier's*, one can see that an immense amount of ads play on buying a certain product because it will last longer. Indeed, ads during this time did not condone “extravagant and unnecessary spending” as it did not help against “curbing inflation, fighting the Black Market, respecting ceiling

³¹ Champion Spark Plugs, “Where Performance Really Counts”, February 1944, *Collier's Weekly*.

prices”. The idea of “thoughtful buying”³² was prevalent throughout most if not all advertisements of the time. Many ads were not subtle about the importance of thoughtful buying – one particular advertisement had “LETS CALL A HALT ON THOUGHTLESS BUYING” written across it.³³

If buying Champion Spark Plugs and saving gasoline was the equivalent of firing artillery at the enemy line, then wasting food was like “handing a loaded gun to a Jap,” at least according to Canada Dry. Jack Sprat licks his plate clean “fat *or* lean” because wasting food is a horrible offense against the American



war effort.³⁴ Canada Dry successfully fuses elements of the Image Focused and Informational styles of advertising. Indeed, nowhere in the advertisement does Canada Dry try to sell its actual product. It merely states that Canada Dry, “a frequent guest and an old family friend says: Let's all help to finish the fight!”³⁵ The advertisement seems to put the war effort ahead of everything else and as such it is perhaps more accurately considered a privately endorsed propaganda poster. Another company that used a similar method was General Electric. In the *Collier's* issue of March 21st, 1942 GE ran an advertisement with the captions “FOOD... Handle With Care” and “You and Your Family Need These Six Kinds of Food for Healthful Diet.”³⁶ Most of the advertisement space is taken over by an image of different types of foods while the text goes into detail regarding what a healthy diet looks like. The advertisement goes on to say that a refrigerator needs to be kept in good working order - “first, to

³² Jones, *All-out For Victory!*, 188.

³³ Jones, *All-out For Victory!*, 191.

³⁴ Canada Dry, Advertisement, July 1945, *Collier's Weekly*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ General Electric, “Food: Handle With Care”, March 1942, *Collier's Weekly*.

prevent loss of vitamins you need; second, to prevent food waste and spoilage.” This message of preventing food waste is in line with the overarching sentiment of “thoughtful buying”. The advertisement itself successfully fuses aspects of Image Focused and Informative advertising.

As advertisements changed during WWII so did the mores of society that they were attempting to reflect. We have already explored how the American consumer base had to return to its roots of frugality and thoughtful buying that had been prevalent in the early 1900s but had eroded due to dawning of the mass consumption era. The manner in which women were depicted in advertising before and during the war is a perfect example of how advertising changes paralleled shifting conventional norms. It is no secret that women experienced newfound agency during WWII. After all, the largest part of the American workforce – young men – had gone off to fight enemies abroad and at this time (arguably more than ever) America needed to sustain its production outputs, if not increase them. Thus industries of all types reached out to women, the one segment of the population that represented an untapped labor force. Women substituting men in the workplace was becoming a common sight but early in the war, as Jones states, “advertisers weren't terribly enlightened or forward-looking.”³⁷ Take for example an ad that was printed in the March 21st, 1942 edition of *Collier's*. The Brewing Industry Foundation believed that an advertisement consisting of an old woman (the old sage) giving advice to younger women because “I think I've seen a lot of life” - she is talking from experience, and the consumer should listen to her. As the advertisement goes on, it states that a wife's responsibility is to offer a “smile of welcome... a cheery word” when the husband returns from work. As long of a day that a wife may have in the taking care of the house and children, it does not “hold a candle to the vexations and worries of the average man's daily work.”³⁸ The message of the advertisement is clear: the primary goal of a wife is to take care of her husband. What the advertisement and the admen behind it failed to understand is that they were both attempting to hold on

³⁷ Jones, *All-out For Victory!*, 220.

³⁸ Brewing Industry Foundation, “Suppose an old lady talk for a change!”, March 1942, *Collier's Weekly*.

to an outdated view regarding the role of women in society. The fact that the old woman is the pseudo mascot of the advertisement sends a clear message - this is how things have always been, and this is how things ought to remain.

Comparing that advertisement to one found in the February 19th, 1944 issue is the difference between an advertising company believing that social norms would remain the same during war, and another that recognized societal values were shifting somewhat and decided to shift along with them. In the 1944 advertisement, the imagery is already completely different. The woman is confident, happy, and most strikingly, holding a rifle. The text explains that Emily Mallia's husband is in the army and she “likes to think of him as carrying one of these .30 Caliber Carbines wherever he goes.” She works in the factory that produces the weapons and she finds comfort knowing that “my hands helped make part of what he's fighting with.”³⁹ She's not merely sitting at home, staring out the window with a longing look, waiting for her husband to return. She is being a proactive member of America's war effort. Admittedly this is not the most progressive advertisement – at the end of the day, the biggest factor in her contributing in the war effort comes from her relationship with her husband. Yet this advertisement undeniably sheds a different light on women in the war, and is indicative of how the role of women was slowly changing in the American society. It did change very slowly, and it is true that business were merely seeking an untapped labor force since all the young men had gone to fight abroad. It is also true that the role of the



³⁹ Underwood Elliot Fisher Company, Advertisement, February 1944, *Collier's Weekly*

woman began to revolve around being the nucleus of the family post-WWII. It is however, a sign that women were at least being recognized as capable whereas in the decades heretofore they had been widely ignored.

It is no coincidence that the controversy of advertising gathered steam when advertising stopped selling products and started selling lifestyles. As mentioned above misleading advertising was rampant in the early 1900s. Yet the lies and utter thrash that the American advertising industry was spreading to the American populace was nothing compared to the controversy that advertising would encounter from 1940 onwards. The hiring of psychologists meant that advertising agencies were able to access the back door of the inner human psyche. As such new questions of advertising's overreaching practices arose and never really went away. In his essay *The Growing Power of Admen*, Vance Packard shares his concerns with advertising. For one, advertising's unhindered growth in the last decade (keep in mind he wrote this in 1957):

The growth of their power is seen in the amount of money entrusted to them to spend. In 1940 they had at their disposal \$2 billion to conduct campaigns of persuasion. Today they have \$10 billion. If you divide that figure by the total U.S. population, you come up with a fairly startling statistic. Approximately \$60 is now being spent each year on *each* man, woman, and child in America solely to coax him or her to use products the admen are promoting.⁴⁰

Mr. Packard would be rolling in his grave if he were to find out that the American advertising industry was valued at 103.72 billion dollars in 2013.⁴¹ The number has undoubtedly risen since then.

Nevertheless, his point stands – advertising companies were using too much of their earnings to manipulate consumer choices of the American public. However, Packard's main gripe against advertising in the late '50s was the trend of advertising agencies using “techniques that designed to catch us when our conscious guard is down.”⁴² It is hard to imagine that advertising would have such terrible controversy following it if the use of psychologists had not become a popular practice among

⁴⁰ Vance Packard, "The Growing Power of Admen," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1, 1957, 56.

⁴¹ "Estimated Aggregate Revenue of the U.S. Advertising and Related Services Industry from 2004 to 2013 (in Billion U.S. Dollars)." www.statista.com. December 1, 2014. Accessed February 4, 2015.

⁴² Packard, "The Growing Power of Admen," 58.

advertising agencies. Packard's concerns include: advertisers pandering to our hidden weaknesses, the manipulation of children, “the deliberate sale of products for their status-enhancement” such as cars, and advertising’s role in politics.⁴³ Without a doubt, the rise of Lifestyle advertising went hand in hand with the rise of advertising controversy. This is due to the fact that advertising companies stopped focusing on the physical features of products and started focusing on things that remain constant, such as our hidden desires and uncertainties.

In his *The Permissible Lie*, Samm Baker takes a frank look at advertising agencies. He quotes Prof. John W. Crawford, “Advertising is an instrument in the hands of the people who use it. If evil men use advertising for base purposes, then evil can result. If honest men use advertising to sell an honest product with honest enthusiasm, then positive good for our kind of capitalistic society can result.”⁴⁴ Advertising, then, is a mere tool to be used by anyone – be it for good or evil. Whether it is good or evil, it is nonetheless necessary for the United States, and consequently the rest of the world, to continue to live in prosperity. As Baker concedes, “It's an essential activity of our economic system.”⁴⁵ Here, he comes to the same conclusion that Ewen came to in *Captains of Consciousness*: mass production demands mass consumption.

Advertising agencies, for many years now, have not been able to sell their clients' products solely on their physical features because America's luxury economy – that has existed since the 1940s – cannot exist if producers merely sell what consumers *need*, and not what consumers *want*. Widely considered to be the most effective type of advertising because it hones in on what our psyche *wants*, it is no surprise that Lifestyle advertising represents an immense portion of all advertising today. In the beginning of this study I believed that the increase in Lifestyle advertisements would be consistent; instead I found it to be staggered. But this might be attributed to the years in which this study focused on: it would hardly make sense to experiment with advertising techniques during the Great Depression,

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Samm Baker, *The Permissible Lie: The Inside Truth About Advertising* (Cleveland: World Publishers, 1968), 180.

⁴⁵ Baker, *The Permissible Lie*, 181.

and we only start to see the evolution of advertisements make big waves in the later years of World War II. It should also be noted that advertisements in *Collier's* were not necessarily reflective of advertisements in other popular magazines, such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Life* etc. On the other hand, one would be naïve to dismiss my findings only because they are from a single magazine source. Lifestyle advertising was always going to emerge after mass production became an established economic system. How it would emerge, however, was never going to be a constant variable, and as such we see the Great Depression and negative stigma attached to advertising, among other things, holding back the evolution of the art form. It was able to emerge during WWII because it served as a reinforcement of the American unified front against the Axis – there was very little room or tolerance for controversy against advertising when a war was being fought. World War II would provide the impetus, fueled by hints of evolving social mores and an ever improving economic capacity, for Lifestyle advertising to flourish into the type of advertising we see in magazines and TV today – the type necessary for a luxury economy to survive.

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