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Denim advertising: Society's fabric

Pace, Angella M., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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DENIM ADVERTISING:

SOCIETY'S FABRIC

by

ANGELLA M. PACE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1994

1994

ANGELLA M. PACE

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/27/94
Date

[Signature]
Chair of Examining Committee

4/27/94
Date

[Signature]
Executive Officer

Professor Stanley Aronowitz

Professor Charles Winick
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

Denim Advertising:

Society's Fabric

by

Angella M. Pace

Adviser: Professor Lindsey Churchill

Denim is a fabric of anomaly. Georg Simmel's "Fashion" essay (1905), maintains that fashion begins in the upper classes and "trickles down" to the lower classes. This dissertation examines how denim has achieved just the opposite effect; it started as a working class fabric and now blue jeans have penetrated every strata of society. Denim has historically been the fabric of the working class; now it has been transformed into the fabric for leisure wear. Jeans today are far more than a fashion item; they have become a way of life for many Americans.

Themes inherent in the blue jeans advertisements are evaluated. This is done by having twenty respondents answer a questionnaire regarding several types of ads, including blue jeans ads spanning the decades from the 1940s through the 1980s. Current scholarly literature about the nature of advertising is also reviewed. Attention is also given to the writings of theorists Georg Simmel and Herbert Blumer.

The author concludes that advertisements for women's blue jeans are different from other women's wear advertisements because they advance the notions of the equality of women with men and the dignity of manual labor.

In Loving Memory of My Father

James J. Pace

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CHAPTER 1
EVOLUTION OF AN AMERICAN FASHION CLASSIC
HISTORY OF BLUE JEANS

Blue jeans have been worn by prospectors, presidents, preppies, yuppies and punks. They are paired with everything from sweatshirts to silks, from T-shirts to tweeds, in virtually every country and continent. They are coveted, copied and counterfeited throughout the world. Blue jeans may have had more influence and meaning in more places than any other single item of clothing known to man. Denim is a relatively unique fabric because it is the fabric of choice for both work and play.

Denim has historically been the fabric of the working class. From the miner to the farmer to the factory worker, denim is the working class material. Jeans have become a class leveler for they have penetrated every strata of society from the ghetto to the White House. Denim has gone from being not only a utilitarian fabric but also a fabric of the leisure class. Jeans are far more than a fashion item; they have become a way of life for many Americans.

The name "Levi's" has been accepted into the English language and can be found in the dictionary (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 1981, 655). A pair of the original 501 jeans is a part of the Americana collection at the Smithsonian Institution.

It all began over 135 years ago, when one man created a work uniform for the miners, loggers and cowboys of the old west.

Since that time, Levi's 501 jeans have evolved from a cowboy's legendary uniform to an American classic worn by everyone.

The story behind Levi's button-fly jeans dates back to 1853 when Levi Strauss traveled from New York to San Francisco, hoping to sell dry goods and clothing to prospectors and settlers who sought wealth in the California gold rush country. The rolls of canvas intended for use in tents and wagon covers became the durable fabric needed for these miners. The first pair of jeans called waist-high overalls was commissioned. They were tailored from heavy brown canvas, without back pockets or belt loops. The number 501 was the lot number assigned to the product (Berendt 1986, 24).

Later in the 1850s, Levi Strauss switched from canvas to a tough cotton fabric loomed in Nimes, France, called "serge de Nimes", a phrase that soon became "denim". The indigo dye selected for uniform color is the standard shade still popular today (Berendt 1986, 24).

The original 501 jeans were sold stiff and oversized and fit correctly only after they were washed and dried a few times. Miners, cowboys and farmers often made each pair shrink by putting on the pants and dunking themselves in a

watering trough. When the pants dried, they fit (Fehr 1974, 17).

With the turn of the century came the assembly line. When Henry Ford opened the first assembly line automobile plant so did Levi Strauss adopt his method. In 1915, he adapted Ford's method to making jeans and installed the first assembly line used in the clothing industry.

Until the late 1930s, jeans remained a purely western product, a mark of distinction worn by ranchers and cowboys. The frontier has long been closed, but jeans are still worn by modern cowboys. The pioneer spirit is kept alive by creating a fantasy of the mythical old west in rodeos where the cowboy symbolizes a uniquely American identity of rugged individualism, untamed virility and honest hard work. Jeans are an essential part of the cowboy's uniform and are a part of his life.

It was only until ranchers looking for income during the Depression opened their doors to easterners on vacation that the popularity of jeans spread. Vacationers bought jeans for ranch use, then took them back east for leisure wear (Quinn 1978, 18).

During World War II it was patriotic to wear jeans, which were the official uniform of the United States Navy and Coast Guard. Blue jeans were declared an essential commodity (Fehr 1974, 17) and were available only to people directly involved with the war effort. Women working long

hours in defense factories wore coveralls, but only those involved in the war effort were allowed to buy jeans. After the war, people went jeans crazy. Manufacturers could not make them fast enough, and to be fair, parceled them out to stores a few at a time.

Just as the cowboy helped fashion an image for the first generation of casual jeans wearers, following World War II a generation saw a new hero emerge from the West. His name was James Byron Dean (1931-1955) and he was emulated by thousands of American teenagers. His moody and independent behavior became a trademark, as did his uniform, black leather jackets and straight-leg jeans. It was the film Rebel Without a Cause (1955) which opened only three days after Dean's tragic death in an automobile crash that imposed jeans and T-shirts on a nation of youths wanting to look just as restless and brooding as their mythic hero. Only East of Eden (1955) had been released before Dean's death on a California highway. Giant, his remaining movie, was released posthumously in 1956. By the mid 1950s, teenage rebellion was riding America's highways and movie screens. Another superstar of the 1950s was Marlon Brando (b. 1924) who also popularized jeans in his film The Wild One (1954). Tough, distant and casual in his black leather jacket, white T-shirt and jeans, Brando symbolized a generation wondering if a gray flannel suit was their aim or answer. Both James Dean and Marlon Brando, rebels against

middle-class values, were spiritually among the first delinquent teenagers of the post-war period. "In James Dean's Rebel Without a Cause, or Marlon Brando's The Wild One, dungarees provided a channel of contempt toward the empty and conformist quietude of cold-war suburbia, and for the 'rural idiocy' of small town life" (Ewen and Ewen 1982, 112).

The rebellious independence of the 50s generation grew into a troubled skepticism in the 1960s. An unpopular Viet Nam War, a violent Civil Rights Movement and numerous assassinations of popular figures created an atmosphere of lost confidence in our government. Jeans became the badge of the disillusioned and the discouraged youth of the 1960s. Along with the Beatles came the dawning of "the age of Aquarius", and peace, love and brotherhood. Jeans took on an additional social significance; as in the 50s, they continued to symbolize youth and the rejection of old values; jeans and nonconformity remained synonymous. But there was a new twist: while the middle class prospered, its children celebrated nature, communal life, sexual freedom, mind expanding drugs and a style of dress that eliminated class distinctions. Young people donned jeans to separate themselves and their politics from their parents. Durable and cheap, jeans challenged planned obsolescence and the conspicuous waste inherent in earlier dress fashions. For the first time a clothing fashion evolved from the working

class, rather than being handed down from the upper class. Their association with the working class consciously broke with the ideal of upward mobility and the desire for better, bigger, and more possessions of the average American (Gottdiener 1977, 22). Jeans remained the uniform of motorcycle gangs and juvenile outlaws. While accepted as play clothes, wearing denim was the ultimate violation of high school dress codes. The look was the more patched and worn-looking, the better. In 1968, Time magazine noted that college seniors of that year, the most conscience-stricken, moralistic and, perhaps the most promising graduates in the United States academic history, "wore faded jeans under their academic gowns" (Time 1968, 78).

Jeans continued their popularity in the 1970s but with a difference. To be considered "hip", they had to be decorated with bright appliques, nailheads, embroidery, rhinestones, paint and even sequins. Glamour came to denim and jeans became an art form (Fehr 1974, 60). Television shows such as Happy Days, characters such as "The Fonz", and films such as Grease created a 50s revival. The jeans fad spread from California to China, with jeans selling on the black market in Cuba and Russia for over \$150 a pair. In Europe, fashion designers found a new way to make a lot of money by creating designer jeans which were tight and expensive. On the other hand, American designers such as Calvin Klein came back with their own "cowboy" jeans, and

put their name brand in the same place Levi Strauss chose over 100 years before.

How did the jeans revolution come about? One way to approach this area is to study clothing advertisements including jeans ads to discover the themes inherent in these print advertisements with their own surrounding mythology. Such social themes as the cowboy/frontier, working class and renegade youth have their own mythology and are depicted through what Judith Williamson calls "referent systems", that is, a body of knowledge from which both advertisers and audiences draw their inspiration (Williamson 1984, 99). If the audience is to make the transfer of meaning, advertisers have to access our social and cultural knowledge and transform this material into the ad's message. I find essentially two major referent systems: a) the dignity of manual labor; and b) the equality of women with men. It is my belief that these themes are unique to the jeans ads and not to other women's apparel. Certain advertisements for women's clothing such as dresses, pants, underwear and blouses sell negative sexual images, portraying women as objects of delectation. These articles of clothing are advertised very differently than advertisements for jeans.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF FASHION

For thousands of years human beings have communicated with one another through the language of clothing. One's gender, ethnicity and class are announced through one's choice in apparel. Clothing is designed to show the social position of its wearer. Fashions have always been indicators of the political and social pulse. For example, in the turbulent 60s fashion became overtly political. With the onset of the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation movements, folk music, rock 'n' roll and with the proliferation of hippies and flower children, drugs, Zen and other Eastern religions, clothing (as well as hair length) became a social statement. You were what you wore. Mass communication facilitates the process by which style or fashion in clothing is available to every individual. Printed materials such as consumer magazines, trade journals and advertising have been a major force in matters of dress. Also, the visual image, such as a drawing, a photograph, the store window or display, film and television have contributed to this process.

Through my research in the field of fashion, I have formulated what I feel are primary theories about fashion's social and psychological significance in modern culture. In the discussion that follows each perspective on fashion is

intended to be of equal importance regardless of its position in the sequence.

SOCIAL CLASS

Fashion has been studied from the point of view of social differentiation and stratification. In this perspective one argues that fashion is a product of differentiation. Fashion is regarded as a result of the fluidity of the social system without which it is not likely that the occurrence of fashion would have developed. It is conceived as a symbol of a social or status group. Therefore, it is considered to be closely associated with social stratification and class structure in a society. One conclusion that can be drawn is that there are symbols which originate in one status group and are later adopted by other status groups. Furthermore, the assumption is that symbols always originate in the upper stratum of society and are then imitated by the lower stratum.

In Georg Simmel's 1905 essay "Fashion", he states that fashion is a paradoxical phenomenon. This is so because it stands at the point of intersection of two forces: the desire for assimilation and the desire for differentiation. Fashion then, is by definition a matter of change but also results in conformity. Fashion functions to differentiate among classes through competition. Simmel saw the competition simply as one between classes motivated by needs for status enhancement in lower class people and status

differentiation in the upper classes. Fashion's power is in the upper classes because of their greater leisure and abundant resources. The content of any particular fashion is likely to change for them when it is socially diffused. Lower class adoption signifies upper class rejection. Thus, fashion is appealing to the individual who combines a dependent character with a desire for renown. In other words, the commonplace person achieves style and elevation through a fashionable adoption. In society, conformity usually is expected but does not earn honor. Yet fashion enables the individual to conform and to individualize at the same time. As an act of conformity, it is positive; as an act of differentiation, it is legitimate and carries no sanctions. Fashion may even be viewed, Simmel suggests, as an analogue to democracy. In the same way that democracy gives individuals a false sense of political autonomy, fashion may give the individual a heightened sense of one's individualism.

All fashion is essentially class fashion; it always indicates a social class which uses similarity of appearance to assert both its own inner unity and its outward difference from other classes. Once the lower classes, aspiring to emulate the upper classes, adopt a fashion, the upper classes abandon it and create a new fashion. The new fashions of the upper classes are waiting in the wings ready to be adopted as their next fashion style. Thus, existing

fashions are deprived of their aim and attraction.

One's dress can create a role; but how do we explain the fabric of denim. Denim is so thoroughly woven into the fabric of society that its significance as a cultural symbol has often been overlooked. It was the "Cinderella cloth" that became the "Queen of the Ball". Denim had a democratizing effect and was a class leveler. Here was a natural fabric originating from a working class population which then infiltrated the upper classes. The denim phenomenon was social class into fashion, instead of fashion into social class and stands in stark contrast to Simmel's argument. It is a fashion product that is not generated from the top (upper classes) down (lower classes).

Although Pierre Bourdieu's book Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste is about French society, one cannot limit his theories on fashion to France alone. Because Distinction sums up a stratified, culture-producing, and culture-consuming society, it demands comparison to our American culture. The central theme of the book is that the stratification of the social classes provides the grouping for all cultural objects including clothing for body image. The different social classes consume different cultural products and Bourdieu would assert they also integrate their experiences differentially in relation to the discriminations they make among the qualities or experiences offered by those products. Thus some of us may use clothing

for protection only and others may use clothing for body image. One's sense of taste or inclination is acquired on the basis of social origin measured by father's occupation and education. The education system in particular is identified as a "fundamental agency of the maintenance of the social order" (Bourdieu 1984, 387). According to Bourdieu even when people have the same amount of education, their social origin still determines how much they know about culture.

CULTURAL SIGNS

For the reader of signs everything is a "language" to be deciphered. Thus, clothing is a system of signs deriving meaning from social context. Clothing is not merely a social artifact, but also a form of human communication using both signals and symbols. In other words, it is not the clothing that fascinates but the concept behind it. Clothes are used as a media of communication whose message describes the wearer.

In The Fashion System, Roland Barthes attempts to uncover the structure and meaning of the rhetoric of fashion. He proposes that, aside from the visual images of clothing, fashion descriptors that substitute words for shapes have their own collective image system. Barthes focuses his analysis on the language found in photograph captions in French fashion magazines from 1958 to 1959. He thinks that fashion that is read this way is an element of

mass culture. The essential function of Barthes' work is to suggest that in a society like ours where myths have assumed a form of reason, human language is not only the model of meaning but its very foundation. So, the prose makes the clothes, or, instead, the fashion. He then resolves the question, "Why does fashion utter clothing so abundantly?" Phrased in another way, why so many words? Because an industrial society he says, must create needs and desires in order to sell. Yet the commercial impetus of the fashion system will always conform.

Barthes creates his "dream of wholeness" and his "dream of identity" to mean the dream of being "oneself and of having this self...recognized by others" (Barthes 1983, 225). The utility of style in this regard is to find for oneself, and for others, the evidence of meaning in one's life. The fashionable person for Barthes is a quantitative assemblage of objective elements, all of which combine to present the semblance of an integrated subject (Barthes 1983, 254-255).

In The Fashionable Mind: Reflections on Fashion, 1970-1981, Kennedy Fraser notes that fashion is intimately connected with the way we live. The essay called "The Secret Power of Dress" begins with the thought:

The number of people who feel passionately about their clothes is far greater than their appearance or their conversation might lead one to suppose (Fraser 1981, 7).

Fraser observes how inward both the triumphs and confusions of dress are in contrast to its obtrusive externality, and how strong is the seductive pull of fashionable change:

It is fashion's business to manipulate our memories. Fashion is in ceaseless pursuit of things that are about to look familiar and in uneasy flight from things that have just become a bore. Pretending frenziedly to market enthusiasm for novelty, in fact it sells disgust for previous modes (Fraser 1981, 9).

Fraser's subject is fashionable dress and its marketing. She is considering the relation of the garment she looks at to the current state of its popularity, to the advice being sold with it, and to the presentation of it she and others are witnessing under the deceptive circumstances of the marketplace.

The old authority of fashion, with its confidence in itself as a minor art form has vanished. Clothes exist far less in the eye of the designer than in the emotions of the beholder. This truth, which has been dimly perceived by customers for some years, is now being translated by designers in the way they present their fashion shows. Clothes have a mysterious and human life beyond their tangible selves. They are fragile ideas and symbols, subject to the loss of vitality under the wrong circumstances and to increased value under the right ones. It was inevitable that designers should become concerned with manipulating the aura around their efforts (Fraser 1981, 171).

Nevertheless, Kennedy Fraser acknowledges that only by partly surrendering to fashion may the modern women experience pleasure in dress.

Another important work is Alison Lurie's The Language of Clothes. She maintains that clothes are a sign language, a non-verbal communication, revealing the wearer's economic status, temperament, intentions and state of mind, or, when skillfully chosen, disguising all those. She explores the meaning of dress by employing the paradigm of language - vocabulary, grammar, linguistics and semiotics. One function of clothing is to offer scope for the viewer's imagination. We all take fashion personally, interpreting on our own terms. Lurie sees clothing constantly offering many signals that are not as much sent as projected onto our surfaces in a complicated pattern, composed in pictorial terms yet generated by our sense of self, our capricious mind, our public posture, our memories (dim or vivid), our taste and the self-portraits we contemplate.

Lurie expands on the idea that if clothing is a language, it must have a vocabulary and a grammar like other languages. The vocabulary of dress includes not only items of clothing, but also hair styles, accessories, jewelry, make-up and body decoration.

Lurie discusses the magic that can abide in clothes. She discusses garments worn for secret reasons, clothes significantly given and exchanged, or religiously kept but never worn. Archaeologists and anthropologists studying primitive civilizations and tribes have come to the conclusion that, as Rachel H. Kemper in Costume states,

"Paint, ornament, and rudimentary clothing were first employed to attract good animistic powers and to ward off evil" (Kemper 1977, 9). In civilized society today belief in the supernatural powers of clothing remains widespread. Today, we give it the name "superstition". How many advertisements do we see in the course of a day which advise us that a certain soap, fragrance or deodorant will attract the opposite sex?

Articles of clothing can also be treated as having magical powers. Lurie raises the issue of the lucky sweater, shirt or hat worn to final examinations. We see this dependence on a magical article of clothing in the fields of sports and theater. For Lurie, contagious magic is at work: the chosen garment has become lucky by being worn on the occasion of some earlier success, or has been given to its owner by some favored person.

Lurie discusses color and its importance as a clothing sign. Merely looking at different colors, psychologists have discovered, alters our blood pressure, heartbeat, and rate of respiration, just as hearing a harsh noise or a harmonious musical chord does.

Color in dress is also like tone of voice in speech in that it can completely alter the meaning of what is "said" by other aspects of costume: style, fabric and trimmings. A bride in a black wedding dress would be like a person screaming out loud.

Uniforms and Nonuniforms: Communication Through

Clothing by Nathan Joseph is a text on the sociology of clothing, with an emphasis on sartorial signs. Clothing is viewed "as a system of signs that derives meaning from its context while enabling us to carry on our activities"

(Joseph 1986, 1). The book is divided into three parts. Part one examines several types of sartorial signs and their relationship to metaphor and metonymy, that is, clothing as an identification of the wearer's socioeconomic status. The second part includes an analysis of signs as related to the wearing of uniforms and explains the relationship of a uniform to bureaucratic control. The last section pertains to sartorial contrasts in the wearing of uniforms. Included are the role and function of the "quasi uniform" that displays signs of organizational association, such as the business suit, leisure clothing for after hours and weekends, and sport clothing.

Joseph examines the contributions of various sartorial symbols to such social processes as social control, cohesion, socialization, legitimation, bureaucratization, urbanization, ideology, deviance, overconformity, stratification, and expression of identity.

Joseph limits his analysis of clothing to a controllable type, uniforms, which he defines as the "legitimizing emblem of membership within an organization"

not merely similarity of dress within a group (Joseph 1986, 2).

Women have been regarded as beauty objects in advertising. This is both subtly and overtly encouraged. As people watch women, women become preoccupied with being watched. It is within this arena that women were able to adopt the cloth of denim as a symbol of the feminist movement. Women were able to detach themselves from being adornments for the masculine population. This is not to say that women were trying to take up the fundamental qualities of the opposite sex but rather to embrace the equality of women to men. The blue jeans revolution not only banished class difference, it also blurred gender difference. Blue jeans helped free women to compete with men in their world and to celebrate nonsexual physical prowess.

The anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir in his 1931 "Fashion" essay states:

The chief difficulty of understanding fashion in its apparent vagaries is the lack of exact knowledge of the unconscious symbolisms attaching to forms, colors, textures, postures, and other expressive elements of a given culture. The difficulty is appreciably increased by the fact that some of the expressive elements tend to have quite different symbolic references in different areas (Sapir 1931, 141).

Thus, we are encouraged to be "different" but not so different as to seem freakish or unduly rebellious. Sapir is aware of the difference between fashion and custom and he perceives fashion as being essentially complementary to

custom. He contends that "fashion is custom in the guise of departure from custom" and a form of "adventurous safety" (Sapir 1931, 140).

Fashion is based fundamentally on differentiation and emulation. In a class society, the upper classes are not easily able to distinguish themselves by fixed symbols. The more external features of their life and behavior are more likely to be imitated by classes immediately beneath them and who in turn are imitated by groups directly below them in the social structure. This process creates a vertical descent, that is the ability for fashion to "trickle down" to the lower classes.

Herbert Blumer, in his writings on fashion, develops a theory of collective selection which rejects Simmel's position. Blumer criticizes the traditional class-oriented explanation of fashion change and calls for an understanding of fashion based on a sensitivity to emerging tastes and collective processes. For Blumer, the social structure is conducive to fashion change, which can symbolize and anchor the rapid social change that individuals seem to be feeling in their lives (Blumer 1969).

Blumer suggested that fashion must be seen as a process of "collective selection" in which the trickle-down theory plays no significant role. Clothing does not take its prestige from the elite. Instead, "potential fashionableness" is determined by factors independent of the

elite's control (Blumer 1969, 281). Blumer views the fashion process as a successive presentation of choices and selection among them, which is influenced, but not determined, by elite choice. He goes on to argue that Simmel's theory, while suitable for the study of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century European fashion, cannot account for the fashion of modern society (Blumer 1969, 278). He also views the ideas of Simmel on fashion as a process of class differentiation and emulation no longer applicable in the latter half of the twentieth-century.

In brief, Blumer sees fashion as providing an orderly means of collectively adapting to a changing world.

The fashion mechanism appears not in response to a need of class differentiation but in response to a wish to be in fashion, to be abreast of what has good standing, to express new tastes which are emerging in a changing world (Blumer 1969, 281-82).

In Blumer's "Fashion" essay he answers the question - what is the social role or function of fashion? First, it introduces uniformity by selecting from many models one which is to carry the stamp of propriety and thus compel adherence. Second, fashion helps provide for an orderly march from the immediate past to the proximate future. Third, the fashion process nurtures and shapes a common sensitivity and taste, as is suggested by the congeniality and naturalness of current fashion in contrast to the oddness and incongruity of past fashions (Blumer 1968, 343-44).

Blumer's theories on fashion will be discussed in depth in the following chapter entitled SOCIOLOGY OF FASHION. It is in this chapter that I will demonstrate how Blumer's fashion theories support my theory on jeans advertisements.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL

This school of thought is mainly interested in the social development of the individual, that is, how the individual develops socially as a result of participating in group life. Fashion is as serious and vital a part of the social life of an individual as sex. Like sex, fashion is made up of the same ambivalent variety of irresistible urges and inevitable taboos. Fashion is an important regulator and means of expression within a community. It provides a symbolic medium for escape from the society in which we live.

In his book Fashion, Culture, and Identity, Fred Davis discusses the many theories about fashion's social and psychological significance in modern culture. He relies heavily on the theories of fashion put forth by Herbert Blumer. What makes clothes fashion, how fashions evolve, how fashion choices express social status, gender identity, sexuality, and conformity; and how fashion is or is not accepted are topics considered. The world of fashion contains ambiguities, that is, fashion must both cover and expose, tease and inhibit.

His analyses of the various sociological theories of fashion show us that they are incapable of informing us substantively of how clothing meanings are engendered, communicated, and eventually dissipated. Yet it is this, after all, that lies at the core of the fashion process (Davis 1992, 113).

In The Restless Image, Rene Konig presents a series of 27 essays on the historical development of fashion and its relation to economics, sex, role playing, ceremony, and social trends of consumerism. He explores the question of the social psychology of fashion, reaching the conclusion that hotpants are "related to" or "a manifestation of" sexual exhibitionism and that "fashion...is the code language of status" (Konig 1973, 27). He explains the persistence of fashion throughout history, its psychological implications, ceremonial and economic functions, and its relation to sexual mores. He discusses the geographical spread of fashions, and the ways technology has made fashion available to the masses.

Konig sees fashion's endless fickleness as a defense against the changing body fighting aging and death. It is the external search for making oneself sexually alluring. This aspect of fashion has been linked to women rather erroneously.

The decline of European aristocracy and the emergence of the bourgeoisie helped create a separation in the ways

men and women dressed after the eighteenth century. The sexes did not have equal access to the marketplace. Pregnancy, child rearing and household chores tied the women to the home while their men were able to live the Protestant work ethic outside the home. For Konig, the fashion cycle quickened with the advent of the Second World War. We see the emergence of the independent couturier designing clothes for mainly upper-middle class women rather than women of the aristocracy or prominent haute bourgeoisie society figures (Davis 1992, 105).

Anne Hollander's theory in Seeing Through Clothes is that historically the "inner eye" has felt satisfaction and the clothed self achieved comfort and beauty only when the dressed body has measured up to the current pictorial conventions. And conversely, the self perception of the naked body is also based on the pictorial ideal of the moment - which in turn depends on the dressed image of the time. In short, the author's intention is to demonstrate how clothes in art have contributed to our imaginative and idealized visualizations of the human body. Because we are accustomed to see the body clothed, there is a tendency to view nude bodies with clothed bodies in mind.

Hollander feels that through a structured parallelism of spatial and semantic metaphors the oppositions of over-under, inner-outer, and top-bottom often come to serve as formats for encoding the identity ambivalences,

contradictions, and ambiguities one wishes to convey concerning one's gender, age, social status, or sexuality. In her 1985 essay entitled, "Dressed to Thrill" she places a greater emphasis on the prepubescent which she sees as erotic incitements to androgyny. Also mentioned is the great fascination of male entertainers with borrowing female dress and symbols in order to make a statement.

Referring to the early film industry, Hollander places emphasis and importance on how those black and white films "...developed a fresh intensity of sexual meaning in the world of colorless fantasy" (Hollander 1985, 342-43). She continues to stress the symbolic values attached to color in dress.

...The emergence of the shop girl's simple black dress as a new and somewhat daring mode for leisured women was a striking sign of the spirit of the 1930s. Social consciousness was expressed, as before and since, in clothes of the student elegance (Hollander 1985, 385).

In her book Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity, Elizabeth Wilson sees fashion as a multifaceted phenomenon intricately active within the broad framework of social history. She discusses several theories of fashion. She challenges as inadequate the usual feminist explanation of fashion as economic exploitation and points to unresolved tensions from conflicting feminist interpretations of culture. Wilson takes on those feminist theorists who see fashion primarily as a restrictive force that makes women into sexual objects. She sees it, instead, as "one of the

ways in which women have been able to achieve self-expression" (Wilson 1985, 13). Clothing may confuse the process of developing a personal body image to some extent, especially when the clothes do not closely fit the shape of the body. Thus, a female can hide her sexiness while in an office situation and avoid any potential sexual harassment (Wilson 1985). On the other hand, some contend that fashion acts as a vehicle for fantasy, and, that through fantasy, the "unconscious unfulfillable" is expressed (Wilson 1985, 246).

Consistently, Wilson stresses the ambivalence of fashion: "...when we dress we wear inscribed upon our bodies the often obscure relationship of art, personal psychology and the social order" (Wilson 1985, 247). She includes the visual association of fashion to eroticism, mass production and gender, but adds several new "modern" dimensions: fashion as related to city life and popular culture, oppositional dress or deviant forms and utopian notions of dress.

She argues that fashion is an art form, and in terms of artistic expression, we need not necessarily expect all clothing to be warranted strictly in terms of human needs. Instead, a wide range of clothing styles, when viewed from a cultural-aesthetic point of view, reflects variations in aesthetic tastes and sensibilities. Hence, clothes not only serve individual, social, psychological, and physical needs

but also are cultural representations and art forms.

Regarding the emergence of fashions, Wilson equates this with the expansion of trade and the breakdown of feudal society. As early as the fourteenth century, Italian cities were beginning to display signs of capitalism, and fashion innovation and competition were on the rise.

Even the society of the Renaissance was "modern" in its tendency towards secular worldliness, its preoccupation with the daily, material world, and its dynamism. Characteristic of that world was its love of the changing mode, and a wealthy middle class that already competed in finery with the nobility. From its beginnings fashion was part of this modernity (Wilson 1985, 60).

Wilson suggests that between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, struggles for status and freedom of expression through appearance were apparent in city life. In the late 1700s, the Industrial Revolution in England brought mechanization to city life. Capitalism was brought to a new level, and cities were now arenas where social mobility was possible and assessment of social standing was increasingly complicated. In the early stages of urban-industrial centers, wealthy and poor individuals often lived side by side (Wilson 1985, 26). Now, fashion was even more important than it was in preindustrial cities, as street life offered a wider array of circulating images. Involvement in fashion seemed to become a strategy for re-creating the fragmented self (Wilson 1985).

According to Elizabeth Wilson, on the one hand, we embrace the manner in which fashion seems to reflect modernity and progressiveness, but on the other hand, we sense that it is impractical and wasteful. Industrial capitalism promotes a desire for the new and a realm of competition, "repeatedly throwing up ambiguous rebels whose rebellion never is a revolution, but instead a reaffirmation of the self" (Wilson 1985, 183).

Wilson notes that fashion should be regarded in terms of aesthetics, not merely utilitarian value, and to undermine aesthetic codes while giving priority to function is to underestimate the power of fashion. Here, she is in direct contrast to Thorstein Veblen who is motivated by a utilitarian bias - that which is not "useful" is deemed by him as insignificant and unappealing.

She is in agreement with Jean Baudrillard, who also acknowledges that cultural ambivalence exists and is linked to capitalism and aesthetic codes.

We both love and hate fashion, just as we love and hate capitalism itself....We live as far as clothes are concerned a triple ambiguity: the ambiguity of capitalism itself with its great wealth and great squalor, its capacity to create and its dreadful wastefulness; the ambiguity of our identity, of the relation of self to body self to the world; and the ambiguity of art, its purpose and meaning (Wilson 1985, 14-5).

Analysis of fashion theory would not be complete without addressing the theories of John Carl Flugel,

Lawrence Langner, James Laver and Alfred Kroeber.

In The Psychology of Clothes, Flugel's psychoanalytical approach notes that clothing serves three purposes: protection, decoration and modesty. More weight is attached to decoration and modesty than protection. Flugel sees these two fundamental motives of dress as having an intimate dependence upon one's sexuality. He feels that there is a tremendous symbolical significance in bodily decoration and apparel. There is an "ambivalence" in what role clothes play. They can both be revealing and concealing at the same time. For example, modesty can repel and reinforce desire. Flugel states "...we are trying to satisfy two contradictory tendencies by means of our clothes, and we therefore tend to regard clothes from two incompatible points of view - on the one hand, as a means of displaying our attractions, on the other hand, as a means of hiding our shame" (Flugel 1930, 22).

An example of this "ambivalence" is given by Lawrence Langner in his book, The Importance of Wearing Clothes.

A perfect example of this ambivalence is found in the décolleté evening dress which goes back historically to the end of the Middle Ages. So long as only the upper parts of the breasts are exposed, and the balance hidden, no undue sexual excitement is produced and no shock is administered to modern morality. But let the nipples fall out and panic ensues! Ambivalence no longer exists (Langner 1959, 44).

Langner's basic argument is that there would be little religion, government, society, law and order, morals and

many other attributes of modern civilization were it not for the invention of clothes. He goes on to declare that almost every article of clothing from ancient times to present day performs the following functions: useful, ornamental, indicates rank and stimulates sexual interest.

He refers to jeans as part of "colorful country clothes ...worn by businessmen in their leisure or on weekends" and to ... "New York actors" such as James Dean, "a more 'socially-conscious' variety, who dress in blue jeans..., commonly worn by mechanics, laborers or motorcyclists" (Langner 1959, 194, 196). Fashion is introduced by the masses quickly through our media superstars. A certain "look" will be noticed world-wide if it is modeled and adopted by one of our pop stars.

In James Laver's book, Modesty in Dress: An Inquiry into the Fundamentals of Fashion, he feels that clothes have been created and worn since Adam and Eve for reasons other than protection. Modesty is mainly for women; whereas, a man's clothing reflects his relation to society (the hierarchical principle), while a woman expresses her relation to a man (the seduction principle). Women's fashions depict a continually "shifting erogenous zone", bosom, knee or back being exposed or hidden at various times throughout history (Laver 1969, 96). "Fashion...has a curious coherence" (Laver 1969, 42). Even when it seems most arbitrary...it has a very close relationship to the

interior decoration, and even to the architecture, of its period. More than that, "it has a symbolic value....Fashion is a very much bigger thing than individual taste or personal convenience....There is something in the story of the clothes we wear which is beyond our comprehension and certainly beyond the control of our conscious minds" (Laver 1969, 42-3).

Alfred L. Kroeber, an American anthropologist, in his essay, "Order in Changes in Fashion", sees habitual, long-term patterns in fashion styles. During these extended durations occurrences such as wars or revolutions initiate a change in the fashionable dress of the times. Most of these periods of fashion development coincide with certain historical impulses of change. Similarly, Blumer's sixth fashion condition states that the fashion arena must be open to the impact of outside events, i.e., wars and assassinations, in order for social change to occur.

Now that I have described some major theories regarding fashion, I will attempt to examine how select theorists from each perspective would explain the jeans phenomena.

Denim is a fabric of anomaly. According to Simmel in his "Fashion" essay, he states that fashion begins in the upper classes and "trickles down" to the lower classes where there is a tendency for social classes to imitate those immediately above them in order to move up the social ladder. For Simmel, fashion lends itself to a symbolic

upholding of class and status. Fashion in the industrial era related to the wearer's social class, thus there is too much of an emphasis on social class differentiation as the basis for fashion motivation. Denim has achieved just the opposite effect; it started as a working class fabric and now blue jeans have penetrated every strata of society.

Barthes' theory of fashion incorporates a system of signs. It is an attempt to reveal the little worlds of meaning enclosed in each nuance of social life. His project is to fashion a science of vestimentary signs modeled on the structuralist theory of language first proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of theoretical linguistics (de Saussure 1966). Clothing communicates since it is a set of sign relations deriving from various combinations and substitutions possible among items of apparel.

Certainly the idea that we say things with what we choose to wear has merit. A three-piece suit on Wall Street is more of a uniform than a fashion. A uniform announces the wearer's membership in some group that is established independently of its taste in clothes; it is essentially a declaration of a social, sexual or institutional identity. People make fashion statements through their choice of apparel. Of course, the same item can be part of a uniform and an emblem of fashion, but as an emblem of fashion its function is to proclaim one's membership in a community that is constituted precisely by its taste in clothes.

A community of fashion has no existence prior to its vestimentary manifestation. To wear and appreciate the clothes of the fashion group and to be able to extend the style creatively to cover new instances are all it takes to make you a member.

For Barthes, buying a pair of jeans would support his "dream of engagement", that is, we have this new "self" being recognized and accepted by others. By being a part of this "community of fashion" we are buying into some type of social, sexual or institutional identity.

Bourdieu argues that there is a relationship between social class and judgements of taste (style). He goes on to say that every class has an interest in "self-presentation" (Bourdieu 1984, 202).

Using Bourdieu's data on French culture, I have adapted his theories to apply to American culture. For upper class Americans, self-expression is more prized because the class is so diverse and complex. This would be the population to start a fashion "style" such as designer jeans. The middle class would buy what is popular. They are also concerned with appearance, anticipating "being" by "seeming" that is, "appropriating the appearances so as to have the reality" (Bourdieu 1984, 253). This group would purchase designer jeans to wear for dressing up and for identifying with a certain community. During the 1980s there was a push for renewal of working class values and the plight of the loyal

and patriotic workers. Bruce Springsteen and his "Born in the USA" (1984) album cover featuring a backside view of him wearing a faded pair of Levi's helped highlight jeans, denim jackets and red bandanas as a symbol of working class America. Unlike the middle class, the working class focuses on "being". They would be interested in function of fashion rather than the aesthetics of fashion.

Blumer sees fashion as providing an orderly means of collectively adapting to a changing world. We must await the "convergence and marshalling" of taste in a particular direction. An example would be the 1960s counter-culture movement where hippies needed clothing which would be not only functional but durable for protest movements. Thus, the jeans were "individualized" by patches, embroidery and emblems.

Blumer also acknowledges that new fashions follow from old ones. Out of the turbulent 60s came the elite's response - designer jeans in the 70s.

Unlike the "trickle down" theory, the fashion process for Blumer is a form of collective behavior, as a successive presentation of choices and selection among them, which is influenced, but not determined, by elite choice. Fashion is based on a sensitivity to emerging tastes and collective processes.

Fashion choices express social status, gender identity, sexuality, and conformity according to Fred Davis, a student

of Herbert Blumer. Underdressing (especially with upper-middle class men) is very common in contemporary America. We see men wearing jeans to all but the most formal of affairs. Jeans serve as a vehicle for the expression of status ambivalences and ambiguities. Denim began as a worker's uniform (miners) and in the 1960s we had jeans become an item of fashion that crossed over nearly all class, gender, age, regional, national and ideological lines to become universally worn and widely accepted. Even in Soviet bloc countries and Third World countries jeans or for that matter any denim clothing is revered and coveted.

Unlike the "trickle down" theory, for Davis, jeans went from a working class symbol to a symbol of the leisure class - ease, comfort, casualness, sociability and the indoors were now associated with denim.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIOLOGY OF FASHION

Human beings live in a world of objects that they constantly create and recreate through their symbolic designation of and action toward. Human beings fashion a world of things and stimuli into a world of objects because they act with purpose toward it. In this sense, jeans exist as objects in the human world because people act with intent, i.e., with the purpose of having a pair of blue jeans. First, human beings do not live in an environment of things or stimuli, but in a world of objects. Because their conduct depends on symbols and language, people must act toward objects they designate rather than merely responding to stimuli that impinges upon them.

In Herbert Blumer's words, from the standpoint of people acting at any given moment, "...the environment consists only of the objects that the given human beings recognize and know" (Blumer 1969, 11). For Blumer, people seem to create objects, meanings, and courses of action every time they interact. A Blumerian world is continuously designed and redesigned, like a spontaneous world of pure play.

Blumer's ideas have considerable merit and they support my theory on the nature of jeans advertisements and of the consumers who respond to them. Accordingly, his theories on fashion have been selected to be more fully developed.

His six fashion conditions generate my hypothesis for the study: that jeans are a working class clothing, and the ads for them depict women as dominant and non-traditional. In other words, there are two major themes characterized in the jeans ads: the dignity of manual labor and the equality of women with men.

In Blumer's article entitled "Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection", he suggests that fashion may play a role in allowing individuals to cope with the rapid pace of change in post-industrial societies. Consumers collectively select styles from a large display of possible choices, as they cast their ballots in the marketplace. Those styles that are selected appear to be within the spirit of the times. In Blumer's theory of collective selection, fashion performs an important socializing function in society.

Blumer has outlined six essential conditions under which fashion presumably comes into play. His first point has to do with the idea of change, that is, fashion may help people to collectively adjust to social change by providing them with the incentive to give up those styles that relate more to the past. The public must be ready for such changes; however, fashion history has indicated that apparel producers can no longer force new styles upon the consuming public. Instead, the styles should be socially relevant. In the late sixties and early seventies, women rejected the

midi (long skirt) in favor of pants. Perhaps the midi was not socially relevant at a time when youthfulness, individual freedom and sexual equality were being emphasized. Blue Jeans ruled out old-fashioned leisure wear and brought in a hard wearing material for both work and play. Jeans helped to redefine leisure. In 1950s suburbia, a woman was as easily identifiable as the mailman; like him, she wore a uniform. The prototype was a pristine, freshly ironed shirtwaist dress covered over by a neat crisp apron. This attire came to be known as the "housedress", which became the imaginary ideal to which housewives aspired, the epitome of the homemaker. The "Happy Housewife" of the 1950s is an image so familiar it need not be belabored: the smiling, pretty, suburban matron, devoted mother of three, loyal wife, good housekeeper, excellent cook (Rupp and Taylor 1987, 14). It was not until the 1960s that jeans helped to revolutionize denim. The sixties were a revolt against the fifties. We were at war: children against parents, blacks against whites, women against men and of course, America against Vietnam. In the early sixties, when white college students worked for civil rights in the South, they were embarrassed at being better dressed than poor blacks. Civil rights workers, male and female, began to wear Levi's jeans and jackets, blue-gray chambray shirts and sneakers (Rorabaugh 1989, 133).

The sixties youth culture started a trend towards democratization and reduction of sex differences in clothing. As an important symbol, adolescents of both sexes wore jeans on an everyday basis to express such different viewpoints as the revolutionary peace movement, or a desire to return to the simplicity of county life, or a taste for sexual freedom, or involvement in the Women's Liberation movement.

The feminine rush to denim garments hints at a burgeoning notion of women's liberation. In the 1970s a working female was not necessarily a nurse, a secretary or a waitress; she was just as likely to be a cop, a computer specialist, a bank officer. Blue jeans were becoming a symbol of clothing that was more a working class, non-traditional article of clothing. Rejecting the sex roles of convention, blue jeans were a feminist weapon against restrictive fashion, sexual objectification, passive femininity. This was the cloth of action, a challenge to the social fabric of sexuality. The cloth of labor became the emblem of liberation (Ewen and Ewen 1982, 114). Jeans accompanied in the liberation of women during that time. They cut across all gender and class lines. Blumer states, "any area of social life that is caught in continuing change is open to the intrusion of fashion" (Blumer 1968, 342).

Blumer's second condition is that the area must be open to the recurrent presentation of models or proposals of new

social forms. Self-presentations and social interactions play important roles in the fashion process, as a style becomes fashionable only when it has been accepted and worn in social contexts. Of the many styles introduced by designers, only a small number become fashionable. When the public is introduced to new fashions, the occasion is set by intense competition among designers and buyers to "pick a winner" that is, a fashion that will set trends and be highly profitable. In the arena of jeans marketing we have designers vying to create the "look" that will be embraced by the consuming public. An example of this would be how the proletarian self-presentation of denim overalls and jeans quickly become designer models.

The 1960s revolution created a large powerful social shift based on its associations with youth, sexuality and rebellion. These connections proved key in establishing denim's image throughout this decade. The sixties became linked almost inextricably with youth culture and all it embodied, social and political protest, sexual freedom, and drug experimentation. The year, 1967, became the "Summer of Love". In May of that year Scott MacKenzie sang a hit single that advised young people to come to San Francisco wearing flowers in their hair (Gitlin 1987, 216). In reality, the situation in Haight-Ashbury became desperate. Work, food and shelter were scarce; sex, drugs and trouble plentiful (Rorabaugh 1989, 144). Young people turned their

denim garments into a manifestation of protest against authority and the mores of mainstream society. For urban, politicized youth, denim clothing provided the means to simultaneously express participation in a given community and individuality. In the sixties, the fashion language of denim talked about what art and music talked about: peace, love, history, nature, and pleasure.

Blumer's third condition is that there must be a relatively free opportunity for choice between the models. Today, people have more leisure time to read fashion magazines which expose them to jeans advertising. There is a preferable selection and distribution through the media. One function of mass media is that of cultural transmission, through the impersonal communication of lifestyles and symbols that cannot always be communicated through interpersonal relations due to rapid social change and increased anonymity. On the positive side, the media can reduce feelings of alienation and continue the socialization of individuals who are not in direct contact with others on an interpersonal basis. However, the media also may "standardize" images of different subgroups by promoting stereotypical symbols. Beauty and youthfulness are overemphasized at the expense of some segments of the population such as the elderly.

The 1960s presented a choice to the young consumer. Jeans were a way to give up the old fashion and to take up

the worker's garment. The desire for decoration, rather than a need for protection or modesty, is generally accepted to be the primary motive for wearing clothes and the denim movement thus confirms that even wearing jeans can fit established theories of clothing. But jeans as first adopted by miners and cowboys were and are still completely utilitarian objects worn for practical purposes. Only in the last thirty years have they lent themselves to express such opposite ideas as traditional values and modern social dissent, group conformity and individualism. By the mid-sixties, blue jeans were part of an essential ensemble within an emerging commitment to social struggle. In the Deep South, where tenant farmers and sharecroppers, grandchildren of slaves, continued to wear denim in its mid-nineteenth century sense, they were joined by college student activists -black and white- in a battle to overturn the deeply embedded centuries of segregation and race hatred. "Blue denim -pants, jackets, overalls- became a sacred bond between them. The garb of toil was sanctified by the dignity of struggle" (Ewen and Ewen 1982, 113).

Blumer's fourth essential condition is that fashion is not guided by utilitarian or rational considerations. Fashion cannot take root in an area where rational criteria are applied. Although jeans were initially utilitarian clothing, they eventually evolved into being fashionable and stylish attire. Jeans advertising has created a nostalgic

yearning for the past. The jeans popularity can be seen as an intense infatuation with the American west. America's radical youth of the 1960s and early 1970s fell under the romantic spell of rural dress. Blue denim jeans, jackets and overalls linked them to a rural 19th century America of farmers and cowboys in direct physical encounter with an untamed continent. Although the nature the activist students chose to challenge was human, rather than prairie or mountain, and their stance political rather than occupational, they adopted the same dress as their 19th century predecessors as they turned utilitarian, rural denim garb into a social and political symbol.

Despite denim being labeled an outdoor rural working fabric, a split evolved along rural and urban lines. Cowboys, farmers and miners who had worn denim from the beginning continued to do so, but they disliked the fact that they shared a style with people who so vehemently opposed many of the traditional values which they still upheld. This is somewhat ironic since youthful demonstrators donned worn jeans and overalls partially in an attempt to indicate their solidarity with members of the working classes rather than with the intellectual community. Less importance was placed on social class; the heroes and heroines of the 1960s were the likes of Michael Caine and Twiggy, who did nothing to hide their working class origins (Powell and Peal 1988, 72). A curious dichotomy had

evolved: very traditional and very radical segments of American society wearing the same garments.

Blumer's fifth condition for fashion is the presence of prestige figures who espouse one or another of the competing models. Jeans advertising focuses on the "common person" or as Blumer states "prestige figure" who creates a fashion style. This can first be seen in the 1930s when easterners vacationing at dude ranches brought back brand new western jeans as souvenirs. In the June 1935 Harper's Bazaar a section entitled "Going West" listed blue jeans as one of the essentials for a month on a dude ranch (Harper's Bazaar 1935, 153). Levi Strauss ran an ad in the April 1935 Vogue that stated, "true Western chic was invented by cowboys" (Berendt 1986, 24). During the 1940s, the Blue Jean became a war hero. Jeans were declared "essential commodities", and to serve the needs of Rosie the Riveters, the Blue Bell company came out with a special Wrangler dungaree style called "the Jeanie" (Quinn 1978, 19). The company was honoring all women workers during World War II and perceiving them as patriotic and as having a "let's all-pitch-in" spirit.

Every decade has its rebels without causes. The media shape, and often create our reality. The cutting edge of fashion always relies on marginality. The rebel is an outsider and that very "outness" becomes in. Every decade has seen its rebels rebelling against a world they did not

create. In the 1950s prominent people like James Dean and Marlon Brando adopted jeans and they became the classic symbol of rebellious nonconformity. Along with the growth of affluence and independence among the young came an increase in assertiveness and the seeds of rebellion. Teenagers began to reject the values of their parents and react against their lifestyles. They chose as their heroes actors such as Dean and Brando who played alienated, disaffected youths in films such as Rebel Without a Cause (1955) and The Wild One (1954) (Powell and Peel 1986, 42).

Such prominent celebrities as Eldrige Cleaver, Betty Freidan, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Mick Jagger, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Timothy Leary rejected the values of mainstream culture. Rock escapism peaked in the 1970s, and disco songs loudly proclaimed that Saturday night was the only night worth thinking about. The lovesick teenagers of the fifties were out of school and now into the nine-to-five scene. They were part of the consumer culture and thus gave support to the designer jeans craze. Gloria Vanderbilt began the decade of the designer jeans. Denim was adopted by high couture designers such as Yves St. Laurent and Christian Dior. High fashion began to recognize that denim had come to stay (Tobé Report 1970, 1).

At the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, disaffected teens adopted the mutilated look of denim worn by punker Sid Vicious and his fellow Sex Pistols. This appearance gave rise to the Heavy Metal look with studded and ornamented jeans worn by such metal-heads as Ozzy Osbourne and the group Judas Priest. Their music challenges the order and hegemony of everyday life.

With the advent of the 1960s, such prestige figures as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez represented a jean-clad folksiness and sang about changing the world. Out of the San Francisco area, The Grateful Dead, a hippie band, was extolling the praises of the drug culture. In 1969, the film Easy Rider about two alienated, long-haired cyclists dropping out of mainstream society and searching for "the real America" catapulted Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda into hero status. It was during the 1970s that we were introduced to Bruce Springsteen, a Levi-clad young man extolling "all American" values - work, family, hometown roots, loyalty and idealism.

In 1980 nothing came between Brooke Shields and her Calvin Klein jeans. Fifteen million pairs were sold in a year. In 1983, Francis Ford Coppola's film, The Outsiders recreated the Dean/Brando brooding bad boy image. The 1990s have seen the emergence of Will Smith, a popular rap artist who has been able to make the transition into television wearing his oversized baggy jeans. Also emerging in the 1990s is the Seattle music scene with its prestige figures

wearing trashed blue jeans. It is the uniqueness of denim to become a class leveler. Lines of class distinction become blurred and our society becomes less stratified through the wearing of denim. "The fashion mechanism appears not in response to a need of class differentiation but in response to a wish to be in fashion, to be abreast of what has good standing, to express new tastes which are emerging in a changing world..." (Blumer 1969, 281).

Blumer's sixth and final condition is that the area must be open to the emergence of new interests and dispositions in response to (a) the impact of outside events, (b) the introduction of new participants into the area, and (c) changes in inner social interaction. Mass society is composed of multiple interest groups of varying degrees of power, as well as an unorganized, anonymous, and often uninterested citizenry. Sometimes within this context marginal and/or minority groups develop a "style" that sets them apart from the mainstream group. This in turn gives rise to certain anti-establishment styles being adopted into mainstream fashions. The rebellious jean-clad image of James Dean in the 1950s, created a transformation in mass taste and habit in the youth of that day.

World War II's impact was a turning point for blue jeans in America. Women traditionally seen in dresses were now wearing jeans while working in defense plants. For these women who had been wearing constricting clothing this

phenomena must have seemed liberating. During the 1950s in the conformist climate of the Cold War there was a group of disenfranchised individuals who reacted with alienation and disdain. These "juvenile delinquents" wore jeans as an anti-fashion statement in response to the Gray Flannel Suit and The Organization Man.

In the 1960s another type of rebel, the bohemian or "beatnik" began to come into prominence. It was the decade of assassinations (King, Evers, Malcolm X and the Kennedys), the unpopular Viet Nam War, the emergence of flower children (Hippies and the Haight/Ashbury drug culture) and the British invasion of rock musicians (Beatles, Rolling Stones), creation of the Black Liberation Army and other social protest movements. The youth-dominated counterculture, which was made up of the same baby-boomers who had worn jeans as play clothes and grew up with Saturday morning television westerns now turned to jeans as a symbol of the very antitheses of the mainstream "straight" world. The Woodstock generation was born.

By the 1970s blue jeans were so well accepted by mainstream culture that such political figures as New York City mayor John Lindsay and President Jimmy Carter were photographed wearing them. As the women's movement became stronger and more vocal, the wearing of jeans may not have given women equal status where it counts, in the professions and in politics; pants, however, were a logical step along

the way to women's emancipation. About 1975, denim shed its democratic and unpretentious image with the beginning of the status jeans craze. These designer jeans made no claim to practicality, or even to comfort. They were frequently so tight that people were compelled to lie down in order to zip them. Not until the 1980s had jeans advertising been a major factor in selling denim clothing. It was during this time that designers such as Calvin Klein and Georges Marciano relied on their reputations to make their forays into denim successful. Denim advertisements used the power of sex appeal. Ads featuring nothing except a panoply of denim-clad posteriors and ads displaying topless models only clad in blue jeans attracted attention. Considering all these groups in total, the denim market includes virtually the entire population.

The 1980s can be characterized as a decade of excessiveness and escapism. For Madison Avenue, sex sells in the eighties. The 80s youth is a far cry from the 60s youth. The easy sexuality and "free love" associated with the peace and love generation has given away to the fear of AIDS and lethal drugs such as crack cocaine. The realities of child abuse, incest, alcoholism and family violence are ever more prevalent. Today's generation is cautious and genuinely afraid. Seeing them embrace the "distressed" denim look, that is, washed out tattered garments provides them with the security of the most up-to-date fashion while

alluding to an anti-fashion of an earlier time, and perhaps plays upon a longing for the counterculture that produced it.

Considering all these groups in total, the denim market includes virtually the entire population. Today, there is scarcely an American closet that does not contain something made from denim, and scarcely an individual who does not associate denim with the American lifestyle. Jeans are as American as red, white and denim blue.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Images originate in marginal areas of society and are translated into a mainstream arena of expression - advertising. Within contemporary advertising, representations of different historical periods are utilized. For example, the Smirnoff Vodka campaign conjures up images of Czarist Russia and the Beefeater Gin portrays feudalism. Recently a genre of advertising has appeared which evokes certain representation of American culture. Particularly, the advertisements depicted by Calvin Klein and Georges Marciano (Guess?) draw imagery from an outlaw, renegade youth culture.

There is a visual discourse embedded in these advertisements. They are evoking a retro-look (through style of dress and posture), but selling a 1980/1990's product. One can trace many elements of contemporary culture within these ads, particularly sociological issues of class and gender. As the consumer public was invited to step into the world of Calvin Klein and Georges Marciano, other jeans manufacturers began to copy their successful advertisement campaigns. (See discussion entitled WORK FORCE (GAP) JEANS.)

Like Klein and Marciano, Work Force also tries to capture the symbolic unconsciousness of the viewing public to which advertising appeals. People react in terms of

cultural symbols and practice. Why are media images so powerful and persuasive? How do they infiltrate our conscious thought and unconscious desires? Have media fictions become a reality?

As a first step in reviewing these questions, I will examine two major works that have tried to empirically study print advertisements. They are Erving Goffman's Gender Advertisements and Judith Williamson's Decoding Advertisements. An example of Williamson's analysis can be seen in the WORK FORCE (GAP) JEANS discussion.

Not to be overlooked at this time, I would like to mention Marshall McLuhan whose book The Mechanical Bride is an important precursor to the semiological study of advertising. Although this book is certainly significant, I am limiting my study to the abovementioned Goffman and Williamson analyses.

In Gender Advertisements, Erving Goffman analyzes advertisements from the 1970s. He starts by presenting a general conceptual overview of people's ordinary social encounters as a series of "displays" about themselves. Then, he narrows his discussion to photographs and paintings about such displays. For example, men and women display gender gestures differently and this is observed in the advertising photographs. Finally, he presents and comments on a large sample of pictures from magazine and newspaper ads.

Goffman argues that advertising pictures both reflect and help shape our concepts about, and desire to engage in, behavior labeled "feminine" and "masculine". Contemporary advertising for Goffman becomes "commercial realism". He sees this realism as a way of portraying life. For him, there is little difference between life and advertising photographs; we all sell something.

How we portray ourselves to others (and also to ourselves) as male and female - how we stand, sit, hold our hands, how we look or avoid gazing at others to show that we are "masculine" or "feminine" are all issues taken up by Goffman. Myths, stereotypes and cliches about women's inferiority are evident - even to the non-critical - in our economic life, in our laws, and in society generally. Women still have many cultural time lags to make up. Goffman uses advertisements and photographs in print and broadcast media to demonstrate the domination and continuing reinforcement of this inferiority concept.

Goffman observes that animals display emotion and sometimes social gestures of dominance, possession and gender. But, given our capacity for symbolization, human gender displays are not simply patterned biologically, but also get fixed in culture and become part of ritualized interaction. They are transmissible and learned by each new generation. Goffman accepts the notion that the genesis and maintenance of gender display serve to affirm basic social

arrangements (i.e., keeping women in their place) and to present ultimate conceptions of man and the world. His central thesis is that gender relationships are permeated by a behavioral vocabulary typical of parent/child relationships. Thus, "ritually speaking, females are equivalent to subordinate males and both are equivalent to children" (Goffman 1976, 5).

In her book, Decoding Advertisements, Judith Williamson provides a detailed analysis of the way in which an audience derives meaning from advertisements. Her main thesis is that meaning is created through the audience, rather than meaning being directed at audiences. There are three stages to the establishment of this meaning. The first is that of transferring the meaning of a person, a social situation, something in nature, another object, or an emotional feeling to a commodity. An example is having a bottle of liquor on a table where a romantic candlelight dinner is being shared by a loving couple. Without any text or commentary linking the liquor and the situation, the transference is accomplished by us, by seeing the juxtaposition within the formal internal structure of the advertisement.

The transference of meaning from one sign to another is very rarely made explicit in modern advertising by the content of the advertisement itself. For example, in advertisements for Air Jordan foot gear featuring the basketball star, Michael Jordan, nowhere is it stated that

the sneakers are like the person. We are asked to transfer the meaning of Michael Jordan (handsome, sexy athlete) to Air Jordan footwear. However, a sign only replaces something for someone else if it has someone to mean to. The transference requires the active participation of the viewer of the advertisement.

Williamson examines the basic "images" advertisements often incorporate into their product messages. Analyzing over 100 print ads, she points out how the security, or sex appeal, or sense of belongingness communicated by an ad is more persuasive than the product itself. Images are used to sell certain commodities. People do not basically seek products; they want satisfaction and benefits. For example a person buys "social acceptance" more than a mouth wash. Ads create new meanings.

Meaning is not received in a unidirectional flow; the audience creates and re-creates it. The advertisement is a negotiator between producer and reader, standing at the juncture where producers of goods attempt to construct one set of meanings, and where consumers use them along with meanings drawn from other sources in the construction of their own lifestyles. This is the process of internal transference.

Williamson calls these systems of meaning from which we draw the materials to complete the transfer "referent systems". They constitute the body of knowledge upon which

both advertisers and audiences draw. She writes, "in advertising, the exclusion of products, people or language, as opposed to their customary plenitude, works to give the subject the impression that he is 'free' to produce a meaning for himself" (Williamson 1984, 71). Of course, any absence in ads requires us to fill something in, usually along the lines suggested by the advertisement. Similarly understatement, humor, jokes and puzzles involve signification through absence. Certain gaps or indirect references can be deciphered and reached through the ad. This has the effect of making us think that meaningful reality lies directly behind the signs once we have succeeded in decoding them.

Williamson's ideas can be seen in her analysis of two perfume ads, one for Chanel No. 5 and one for Babe.

This Chanel advertisement campaign uses the face of French fashion model and actress Catherine Deneuve. She is depicted full face with a bottle of Chanel No. 5 in the right corner of the photograph. Written across the bottom of the ad is "Chanel No. 5".

One could ask about the significance of this ad.

It informs us that the product (Chanel No. 5) is elegant, sophisticated and chic, that by using it we would be adding something to our individuality which is the epitome of "Frenchness" - glamour and perfect beauty.

In semiological terms, we have the signifier (bottle of perfume), the signified (French chic, glamour, beauty and sophistication represented by Catherine Deneuve) and their unity in the sign (Chanel No. 5 is French chic, glamour, beauty and sophistication).

One could ask how we arrive at this conclusion.

Nothing in the ad explicitly states this and a semiological approach suggests that the meaning of an ad does not float on the surface just waiting to be internalized by the viewer. Rather, it is built up from the ways that different signs are organized and related to each other, both within the ad and through external references to larger belief systems.

In semiological analysis the reader of the advertisement has to do some work in order to understand it. There are three steps to this process:

1. The meaning of one sign is transferred to another. The meaning of Catherine Deneuve (herself a sign meaning French style) is transferred to the product. No line of argument connects the two, and the transference depends on their juxtaposition within the structure of the ad. There are many ways this transfer can take place, such as between persons and objects (as here), between social situations and objects, between objects and objects, and between feelings and objects.

2. We must make the connection ourselves since this transfer of significance is not completed within the ad. For example, nowhere is it stated that "Chanel No. 5" is like "Catherine Deneuve". This meaning does not exist until we complete the transfer. Williamson stresses that a sign is only capable of being transferred or of replacing something if it has a meaning in the first place for the reader or viewer. The transference requires our active participation.

3. In order for the transference to take place, the first object must already have a meaning to be transferred; it must be already significant to the audience. We must already know what Catherine Deneuve "stands for", that is, what she means within the world of glamour, or there would be no significance to transfer.

In the early 1970s Margaux Hemingway was the model representing Babe perfume. She was touted as the new "fresh face" representing a modern and flamboyant style. In this ad Hemingway is dressed in a white karate outfit and is pictured in the action of kicking her presumably male opponent. Her stance is open and aggressive but she is smiling as if she is enjoying herself. Situated between the two models is a picture of the perfume and above this is the caption "The Fabulous Babe".

As with Chanel No. 5, in the Babe advertisement we need to know the meaning of the persons and activities being

transferred to the product. In this example the important value transfer is between the model Margaux Hemingway and the product. The transfers of meaning here work as those just described, but their concrete value is different because Margaux Hemingway's meaning is "in opposition" to that of Catherine Deneuve. Even if we could not identify the individual models in ads, we are usually able to deduce the reason for their presence by their "look", which indicates their position within the iconography of fashion (Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1990, 201-03).

WORK FORCE (GAP) JEANS

In these ads the idea of magic and the idea of referent systems transpose us to another time and place. Magic is the mechanism that allows the consumer to enter a non-temporal and non-spatial world. According to Judith Williamson, magic always involves the misrepresentation of time in space, or space in time. Time is magically incorporated into space, in such things as the crystal ball, an object which contains the future, and space is magically produced out of time, in conjuring up objects instantly out of nowhere, by means of spells or alchemy. In the center of these magical processes is you, the buyer or user of the product.

In advertising, the nostalgia is often created in the photographic style. The images, not the words, ultimately provide the referent systems in advertisements. They are systems of meaning from which we draw the tools to complete the transfer. They constitute the body of knowledge from which both advertisers and audiences draw their materials.

In one Work Force jeans ad, workers can be magically transformed into the image of Marilyn Monroe with her come hither stance. Although this photograph is reminiscent of the 1950s, the woman depicted, like Marilyn Monroe, is available, but she is tough, not vulnerable like her 1950s counterpart. She is the 1980s version of the madonna/whore.

As she leans against a 1950s convertible, her denim jacket is now magically transformed into a cloth of sexual fun. The denim material becomes very appealing; it is working class chic. The jacket is secured by only one button. The Marilyn Monroe representation leans provocatively on the automobile so as to expose parts of her anatomy. It is the "open sesame" impression, where we are one button away from being revealed.

There is a sense of a dare being presented by the young Madonna (virgin/whore). She beckons us to enter her world, a world of "truth or dare". She is not the submissive female found in Erving Goffman's Gender Advertisements. Rather, she dares us to go that one step beyond.

It is the notion of a woman using her body as a sex symbol to gain control. The Madonna of today is a business woman in a man's world. Sex is about selling; it is pure marketing, except the sex being offered has more equality attached in male/female relationships.

In another ad, we have the celebration of leisure time activities. Idealized versions of Marilyn Monroe and James Dean are depicted. The use of "...'lucky jeans' to wear on Saturday" connotes a spell. Against the background of a plane (modernity) is contrasted with the age-old socialization of boy meets girl (romanticism). Here we have two airline workers (male/female) at leisure. The "lucky jeans" have constructed a picture of total abandon, freedom

and passion. They have become a good luck charm. Jeans continue to be the uniform of the workforce as shown by a list of worker occupations. The list is non-elitist for we have everyone from orderlies to doctors mentioned.

In one ad the copy reads "Denim - it's the stuff dreams are made of". Denim the real fabric becomes woven into the idea of dreams. American worker stories are woven into every pair of jeans. It is not the clothing that fascinates but the concept behind it. The denim cloth is echoing the strength and durability of a nation that has spanned generations of trials. The vintage photograph depicts four women in aviation garb standing in front of a B17 heavy bomber (Flying Fortress in World War II). It is a celebration and glorification of American workers, especially the contributions of women. It demonstrates that the notion of women's equality to men is not a new concept but dates back to World War II. Here we had a hard working female labor force doing male jobs that became the backbone of a nation in war time. It is to the credit of these women that we have spawned the pin-ups of the 1950s. It is the "World in the Bottle" (World War II nostalgia) that is "the stuff dreams are made of".

A 1940s real photograph turns into the surreal photo in the ad sequence. We literally turn the page (alchemy) and we go from the 1940s (photograph of American female workers) to the assumed or make-believe 1950s with look-alikes of

Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. They appear to be on a work break. This photograph demonstrates the effects industrialization eventually had on leisure time. As the length of the work day declined and the more puritanical aspects of the work ethic weakened, labor became less an end in itself and more a means of gaining access to life's necessities and later life's luxuries. The time and energy no longer expended on work was now available for other purposes, such as activities that contributed to the realization of personal goals. Here we are introduced to the boy meets girl syndrome. The work space now becomes the dating arena and everyone is an equal player.

In the Work Force ads the myths of history and the myths of fashion merge into the myths of the jeans ads. There exist myths that are brought to us magically through the jeans advertisements.

THE STUDY

The basic object for analysis is how the three questions asked of the respondents are relevant to Blumer's theory on fashion. The key response would be Blumer's idea that fashion may play a role in allowing individuals to cope with the rapid change in post-industrial societies. Since the three questions are related to the themes a) the dignity of manual labor and b) the equality of women with men, they open up the possibility that some clothing advertisements were affected by what social changes were happening at the time. For example, the social conditions in the 1960s changed how fashion was perceived. Jeans, or for that matter pants, were adopted by women seeking sexual and individual freedom from the repressed 1950s "stay at home" culture. Also, the counterculture of the 1960s adopted the denim look as a social and political symbol. Denim no longer represented a rural 19th century America but a symbol of revolution and change.

As was previously mentioned in the analysis of Blumer's six conditions under which fashion emerges, the impact of outside social and political events helps to create new responses. An example is that later jeans advertisements moved to new scenes, (i.e., western setting, 1950s) is indirect proof that social change has occurred. The respondents perceived a shift in advertising itself toward the new social scenes in which jeans were being worn.

Today we must consider fashion as a complex system that creates both a standardization and differentiation of taste. Because of the synaesthetic nature of the fashion message, we need to consider fashion as the most advanced phenomenon of today's mass media culture.

The thesis will be a study of collected jeans ads to discover the themes (myths) inherent in these print advertisements. Such social themes as the cowboy/frontier, working class and renegade youth are depicted through what Judith Williamson calls "referent systems", that is, a body of knowledge from which both advertisers and audiences draw their inspiration. If the audience is to make the transfer of meaning, advertisers have to generate our social and cultural knowledge and transform this material into the ad's message. I find essentially two major referent systems: a) the dignity of manual labor; and b) the equality of women with men. It is my belief that these themes are unique to the jeans ads and not to other women's apparel. Certain advertisements for women's clothing, dresses, pants, shoes and underwear sell negative sexual images. These articles of clothing are advertised very differently from my collection of 1980/90s jeans advertisements. To provide evidence for my research, I will test my theory by seeking in these non-jeans advertisements the abovementioned themes. All advertisements will be taken from the same magazines.

My analysis will concentrate on how blue jeans, a working class image, transformed to leisure wear clothing. I will attempt to locate the jeans in some large social forces to understand why jeans have become the mass market product that is so widely distributed. What are the shifts in social representation that have elicited this social change? How did the jeans revolution come about? It is my assumption that the social class revolutions in the late sixties and early seventies assisted in this mass appeal for denim.

Denim is a fabric of anomaly. According to Simmel in his "Fashion" essay, he states that fashion begins in the upper classes and "trickles down" to the lower classes. Denim has achieved just the opposite effect; it started as a working class fabric and now blue jeans have penetrated every strata of society.

In the 1980s sex became so empty and essentially so commercial a transaction (in the wake of the sexual revolution) that a woman's position could be said to be similar to that of a whore. We had become sexually saturated with demeaning images of women selling everything from Audi cars to Zest soap.

Since we are visual creatures to a great extent we live in a visual marketplace where seeing becomes an act of choice influenced by social, political and personal factors.

Women have forever been regarded as fashion/culture

objects, (i.e., secretary, housewife and playgirl). While many roles are denied to females that of beauty object is subtly and overtly encouraged. This is most often seen in advertising. This objectification, that is, a focus on the female body and parts of the female anatomy would have been called pornographic at another time but today it is just referred to as high-class image making. Today's ads portray women as objects of delectation.

In order to create a framework that individuals may use to analyze the society they live in, there will be a coding system for comparing jeans advertisements to advertisements for other articles of women's clothing. With respect to research design, I utilized the Semantic Differential which asks respondents to choose one of five possible responses along a continuum between opposite positions. (See Illustration 1, sample RESPONSE SHEET.) To form a numerical basis for evaluation, I assigned a numerical value to each of the five possible responses along the continuum. (See Illustration 2, RESPONSE SHEET with numbers.) There are 20 respondents broken down as follows: 5 females over thirty, 5 females under thirty, 5 males over thirty and 5 males under thirty. (The author acknowledges that, given the number of respondents used, this is not a definitive study. Instead, this is intended as a pilot study which could be performed on a larger scale.) My under 30 female and male respondents were students attending Herbert H. Lehman College in the

Bronx, New York. They were either freshmen or sophomores in a 4 year liberal arts college. All of them came from blue collar/working class backgrounds. In some instances they were the first in their family to start college. My over 30 female and male respondents were composed of friends, colleagues and family. Within this group there was a mix of backgrounds. Not all from this group came from blue collar/working class backgrounds. My 20 respondents were chosen to create a broad-based representation of an integrated urban environment. I began collecting the responses from November 1992 through February 1993. These 20 coders were asked to answer three questions concerning 150 clothing print advertisements. Also there were an additional 3 jeans advertisements which are arranged in a series. Each respondent answered each jeans series as one advertisement applying the abovementioned three questions. (See Illustration 3, METHODOLOGY SHEET.) The three questions would address the themes of the dignity of manual labor (working class) and the equality of women with men.

The 150 clothing advertisements incorporate six types of women's clothing - suits, underwear, jeans, blouses, dresses and pants. I have taken print clothing ads from the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s. The unique jeans series ads are taken from the late 1980s and early 1990s. The hardest part of this research was finding print advertisements from as early as the 1940s. I spent the

entire Summer 1992 in the library at the Fashion Institute of Technology located in New York City. Its collection included bound fashion magazines covering the periods I needed. The task was arduous and I spent long hours searching through endless stacks of fashion magazines. Mainly I culled from Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Charm, Seventeen, Mademoiselle and Glamour. What I strived for was finding print ads that were representative of each decade.

Advertisements from the 1940s and 1950s have women looking demure; that is, women are looking down or off to the side, never looking directly at the camera. Sometimes a hand is coyly positioned at the face and the total pose is a stilted one. It is a depiction of a middle to upper class girl-next-door image. Usually the women are dark haired and very stylized. Advertisements from the 1960s have women looking at the camera more frequently and the girl-next-door becomes more sophisticated. Sexuality is hinted at and there is a "dress for men" attitude commencing. Advertisements from the 1970s have a more focused sexuality. Now, there is a division between the little girl image versus the young sophisticate. Jeans advertising is creating some interest and the sexual revolution begins. Advertisements from the 1980s have jeans ads capitalizing on sex appeal. Women appear to be more direct and confident. There is a boldness to their stance. Advertisements from the 1990s have women performing roles that were customarily

male dominated. Women are catapulted to very non-traditional poses. There is a bold, almost defiant look at the camera.

ILLUSTRATION 1
RESPONSE SHEET

MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
TRADITIONAL						NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE						DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
TRADITIONAL						NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE						DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
TRADITIONAL						NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE						DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
TRADITIONAL						NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE						DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
TRADITIONAL						NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE						DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
TRADITIONAL						NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE						DOMINANT

ILLUSTRATION 2

RESPONSE SHEET

MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
	1	2	3	4	5	
TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE	1	2	3	4	5	DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
	1	2	3	4	5	
TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE	1	2	3	4	5	DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
	1	2	3	4	5	
TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE	1	2	3	4	5	DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
	1	2	3	4	5	
TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE	1	2	3	4	5	DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
	1	2	3	4	5	
TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE	1	2	3	4	5	DOMINANT
MIDDLE/ UPPER CLASS	VERY MUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEITHER	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	WORKING CLASS
	1	2	3	4	5	
TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	NON TRADITIONAL
SUBMISSIVE	1	2	3	4	5	DOMINANT

ILLUSTRATION 3

METHODOLOGY

I am using the accompanying format in my study. (See Response Sheet.) This format asks you to choose between two opposite positions concerning clothing advertisements.

1. Does this ad depict a middle class/upper class lifestyle?
Does this ad depict a working class lifestyle?
2. Does this ad depict women in a traditional way?
Does this ad depict women in a non-traditional way?
3. Does this ad depict women as being submissive?
Does this ad depict women as being dominant?

Please place an X in the box between the opposite positions that best expresses your feeling.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Twenty respondents were asked three questions about 150 advertisements which included 25 suit ads, 25 underwear/swimwear ads, 25 jeans ads, 25 blouse ads, 25 dress ads and 25 pants ads. An additional group of 1990s jeans ads were also presented for evaluation using the original three questions.

Class question #1 - Does this ad depict a middle class or upper class lifestyle? Does this ad depict a working class lifestyle?

The mean response for every decade (1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s) for all clothing advertisements was that jeans ads have a higher percentage of working class identity. There is strong identification between the ads and working class lifestyle in the jeans category (3.29). (SEE TABLE 1, MEANS TABLE.) The next strongest identification with working class lifestyle is the pants category (3.12). This may not be surprising since most of the jeans ads were for pants. The strongest identification with working class was in the 1970s (3.17) total and for jeans (3.55). This may not be surprising because since the 1960s jeans were associated with rebelliousness, and attacking middle class values, i.e., the values to which the working class aspired.

Traditional/non-traditional question #2 - Does this ad depict women in a traditional way? Does this ad depict women in a non-traditional way?

The jeans category tends more toward non-traditional than other categories of clothing (2.87), with pants not far behind (2.80). Suits and blouses are seen as more traditional; women are seen as being appropriately dressed for business with a suit and blouse.

Submissive/dominant question #3 - Does this ad depict women as being submissive? Does this ad depict women as being dominant?

Jeans were seen as more dominant in the 1980s (3.08). This was the beginning of a major ad campaign by such designers as Calvin Klein and Georges Marciano (Guess?). Overall jeans did not show as much gain in this category as they did in the other two categories (class and traditional/non-traditional). The rating of 2.70 is not as strong as the other jeans ratings. Respondents identified pant, suit and blouse ads as showing women as being in a more dominant role than did the jeans ads. Responses with the highest tendency to see dominance were the 1940s pants ads. The ads for all decades had a lower average of dominance than the jeans average for working class and traditional/non-traditional depiction.

The mean scores for the 1990s jeans series indicated even stronger results. The 4.05 class mean for the 90s

jeans series reveal an exceptionally sharp identity to the working class. The mean of 3.30 reveals a strong tendency to view jeans as being non-traditional. It is only when we analyze the mean score of 2.48 that we see a slight leaning away from having jeans viewed as a dominant attire for women.

TABLE 2 depicting RANK/ORDER presents the means data in a different way. Jeans are number one in all the decades for the class question. That is, jeans are strongly identified with the working class and honor manual labor. In three out of five decades (40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s) jeans come in first exhibiting that women are seen as more non-traditional than traditional. As for seeing women depicted as dominant, we have an inclination toward submissiveness in all the decades except for the 1960s and 1970s.

In general, the jeans ads in the 1950s have a higher affinity to a middle class lifestyle and traditional submissive depictions of women than any other decade studied. The means support my theory that jeans advertisements depict situations more related to the working class, more likely to present women in a more non-traditional manner, and that women appear to be portrayed as more dominant. Dresses and suits can be classified as formal attire and are identified with the middle and upper classes, whereas jeans and pants can be classified as informal attire and are identified with the working class.

TABLE 1 MEANS TABLE

	<u>CLASS</u>						
	Blouses	Dresses	Jeans	Pants	Suits	Underwear	X's
40s	2.00	1.94	3.44	3.21	1.69	2.67	2.49
50s	2.06	2.01	2.81	2.79	1.54	2.52	2.29
60s	2.55	3.01	3.22	3.16	2.42	2.91	2.88
70s	3.23	2.51	3.55	3.41	3.27	3.03	3.17
80s	3.34	3.25	3.45	3.01	2.86	2.55	3.08
90s	2.64	2.54	3.29	3.12	2.36	2.74	= 2.78
	Jeans Mean for Class 4.05						

	<u>TRADITIONAL/NON-TRADITIONAL</u>						
	Blouses	Dresses	Jeans	Pants	Suits	Underwear	X's
40s	1.61	1.83	2.50	2.50	1.75	1.79	2.00
50s	1.93	1.81	2.36	2.62	1.92	2.12	2.13
60s	2.14	2.65	3.23	2.65	2.35	2.34	2.56
70s	3.09	2.62	3.02	3.25	2.68	3.02	2.95
80s	2.61	3.00	3.24	2.96	2.56	3.00	2.90
90s	2.28	2.38	2.87	2.80	2.25	2.45	= 2.51
	Jeans Mean for Traditional/Non-Traditional 3.30						

	<u>SUBMISSIVE/DOMINANT</u>						
	Blouses	Dresses	Jeans	Pants	Suits	Underwear	X's
40s	2.46	2.34	2.38	3.18	2.57	2.45	2.56
50s	2.52	2.70	2.28	2.98	2.64	2.36	2.58
60s	2.65	2.10	2.86	2.46	2.56	2.01	2.44
70s	3.04	2.69	2.88	2.54	3.10	2.78	2.84
80s	2.89	2.76	3.08	2.99	3.06	2.90	2.95
90s	2.71	2.52	2.70	2.83	2.79	2.50	= 2.68
	Jeans Mean for Submissive/Dominant 2.48						

TABLE 2 RANK/ORDER TABLE

	<u>1940s</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Trad/Non-Trad</u>	<u>Sub/Dom</u>
Blouses		2.00	1.61	2.46
Dresses		1.94	1.83	2.34
Jeans		3.44	2.50	2.38
Pants		3.21	2.50	3.18
Suits		1.69	1.75	2.57
Underwear		2.67	1.79	2.45

	<u>1950s</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Trad/Non-Trad</u>	<u>Sub/Dom</u>
Blouses		2.06	1.93	2.52
Dresses		2.01	1.81	2.70
Jeans		2.81	2.36	2.28
Pants		2.79	2.62	2.98
Suits		1.54	1.92	2.64
Underwear		2.52	2.12	2.36

	<u>1960s</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Trad/Non-Trad</u>	<u>Sub/Dom</u>
Blouses		2.55	2.14	2.65
Dresses		3.01	2.65	2.10
Jeans		3.22	3.23	2.86
Pants		3.16	2.65	2.46
Suits		2.42	2.35	2.56
Underwear		2.91	2.34	2.01

RANK/ORDER TABLE

	<u>1970s</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Trad/Non-Trad</u>	<u>Sub/Dom</u>
Blouses		3.23	3.09	3.04
Dresses		2.51	2.62	2.69
Jeans		3.55	3.02	2.88
Pants		3.41	3.25	2.54
Suits		3.27	2.68	3.10
Underwear		3.03	3.02	2.78

	<u>1980s</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Trad/Non-Trad</u>	<u>Sub/Dom</u>
Blouses		3.34	2.61	2.89
Dresses		3.25	3.00	2.76
Jeans		3.67	3.18	2.78
Pants		3.01	2.96	2.99
Suits		2.86	2.56	3.06
Underwear		2.55	3.00	2.90

	<u>1990s</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Trad/Non-Trad</u>	<u>Sub/Dom</u>
Jeans		4.05	3.30	2.48

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Advertising alters the structure and content of our informational environment. It influences our conception of social reality by changing this environment. Thus, concepts of ourselves are formulated by the media, especially in the arena of advertising where wants and desires are created in a capitalist class. It accepts the marketplace as the arbiter of values. The world is a marketplace and to get from point A to point B, it is easiest if you are a recognizable commodity.

For the neo-Marxist, modern mass advertising creates new social norms and thereby alters the course of social development. To neo-Marxists such as Stuart Ewen, advertising is an organized, ideological apparatus of capitalism. In his book, Captains of Consciousness, Ewen asserts that in the 1920s, modern advertising forced its way into American society and helped give birth to a consumer culture. It did so by creating wants and desires in the working class and in new immigrants in ways that would benefit the capitalist establishment. In other words, advertising changes a society by changing its cultural values and economic habits through mass deception and persuasion. For Ewen advertising is an agent of socio-economic control, deliberately orchestrated to manipulate the people to accept the status quo of corporate capitalism.

In brief, neo-Marxist scholars argue that advertising influences our basic conception of social reality by changing the nature of our information environment. Advertising is used to promote a consumer ideology and the growth of a "consumer culture".

We live in a time of images, a time when other people think for us. Advertisers or "image makers" create ads that are more persuasive than the product itself. The image reigns supreme. The power of the image is something to be reckoned with, at best it promotes a mutually fulfilling exchange between life and art. We are surrounded by images. Look at the number of advertising pages in magazines; there is an inundation. This abundance increases the need for product differentiation; the need to create ads that do not look like others, thus forcing consumers to view them as fresh and new. Today the advertisement has no copy; the image says it all. The image reigns supreme. Advertising has turned away from selling a product to selling an image. "Selling the clothes isn't the point of advertising," says Calvin Klein. "Creating the image is" (Vogue 1989, 370).

Probably no other print ads convey more controversy and excitement than jeans advertisements. Two major players in this arena are Calvin Klein and Georges Marciano (Guess?) jeans. Their ads create a sexual imagery that makes people think they are missing out on something, while not knowing exactly what this "something" is. The sexual imagery is

homoerotica, masturbation, fantasy, and decadence.

The Calvin Klein jeans advertisements beckon us to enter a world of transgression. Resembling the jeans they are selling, the images are also "blue" tinted. The indigo used in the production of the garment permeates the display. No longer are we entering a world of black and white, but one bathed in blue. The idea of "blue" connotes eroticism, something that is lewd, lascivious and obscene. Besides blue movies, we have harlots in houses of detention wearing bluegowns as the dress of ignominy. This concept dates back to the early 1600s (Farmer and Henley 1970, 253). In 1602, Thomas Dekker's play Honest Whore, Part II made references to this garment.

Your puritanical honest whore sits in a blue gown. -
Where! - do you know the brick house of castigation?
(Rhys 1894, 268).

The ads are depicting not just sex symbols, but men and women with sexual histories. The snippets of scenes allude to a much longer and darker melodrama. Here, we have a world "turned upside down". The notion of transgression and violation is being foreshadowed for us as the pages unfold.

The characters who are introduced to us in the morality play are prototypes of the jean-clad iconoclasts of the 1950s. With the birth of television, there was a drop in movie attendance but, nevertheless, Marlon Brando and James Dean were spiritually among the first delinquent teenagers of the post-war period.

In the successful and also controversial Guess? jeans campaign, Wayne Maser's pictures depict "white trash" girls involved in much sexual subtext. Strongly influenced by the mood of films by Vittorio de Sica (Two Women 1961), Federico Fellini (Amarcord 1974), Elia Kazan (Baby Doll 1956) and Nicholas Ray (Rebel Without a Cause 1955), the Guess? ads break provocative new ground. Beyond the theme of young sexuality, the subtext has occasionally nodded in the direction of rape and oral sex. It is down-to-earth and full of raw young energy. We do not look at the clothes; instead, we are drawn into a strange and often disturbing story (series of images about a woman, a man and a western setting.) A tousled blond beauty stands in the corner of a cattle pen, one finger caught between her lips, her denim bodice unbuttoned. In the next photograph she is lying down, and a man's hand is opening her shirt to reveal ample cleavage. In another shot she is dancing with a cowboy, her jean skirt ripped and her bra exposed. Where it could end is anyone's guess. The only rule is that suddenly there are no rules. Fevers of obsession have to run their course. Passion is not always predictable or polite. The advertising campaign is a cross between film noir and sexual fantasies. It is a retelling of The Misfits (1961) set in a rural, steamy atmosphere.

The Klein and Marciano ads make the public think about sex and their own sexuality - and that is very disturbing to

a culture whose roots are based in Puritanism. Puritanism meant morality and those who dared to be different would be damned. It was "hailed as the creed that highlighted self-restraint and control over appetites and emotions" (Sussman 1984, 41). In these ads one sometimes is introduced to the ultimate sin - that is, one of homoeroticism where men are attracted to men and women are attracted to women.

"The truly effective advertisement is likely to be one that captures the viewer's attention rather than simply attracting it, that engages the viewer's mind rather than simply engaging his eye" (Parker and Churchill 1986, 3). Both Klein and Marciano are masters at this for they signal a new look and style in advertising: Hyper-realism. It is pure theater at its best. Their "actors" have been "mussed up" making them look as though they were in the middle of something, their clothes as though they have been lived in, worked and played in, made love in. The ads have no sales pitch; they merely set a tone. Whatever the message, it is hard to deny that the medium is art. "Not only is art influencing business, but business is influencing art" (Calkins 1927, 156).

Although sex in advertising has been around for a long time (remember the White Rock girl kneeling innocently on a rock?), today that sort of discreet ad is out and "take it off and get it on is in" (Tratenberg 1986, 134). Now we have threesomes, double entendres and hints of rape.

Blatant sex in advertising has become part of our culture and Calvin Klein's and Georges Marciano's (Guess?) strikingly sensual advertisements have become powerful images in a world of appearance.

The preoccupation with the vulnerability of the body makes clothing a powerful expression of character. The contemporary phenomenon of designer jeans represents a fascinating example of a clothing image being "turned upside down".

In this world "turned upside down" transvestism as ambiguity has become a potent symbol for our confusions. Transvestism has attracted attention because at a time laden with anxiety about cultural, economic and sexual dislocation, cross-dressing recognizes that other possibilities exist. Contemporary popular culture has been inundated with gender-bending, in literature, film, music and art. From Shakespeare's sexual masquerade in such plays as Twelfth Night and Two Gentlemen of Verona to Dustin Hoffman's red-sequined gown and high heels in Tootsie (1982) to heavy metal rock stars who wear makeup and lace and Madonna who dons a double-breasted suit and a monocle while her male dancers wear oversized cone-shaped brassieres to the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe the chronicler and provocateur of homoeroticism, all put into question the categories of "female" and "male" today.

In Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety, Marjorie Garber traces western society's views regarding the clothes we wear and how they affect class structure, gender stereotyping and our own self-image. She claims that cross-dressing is a pervasive social phenomenon. Culture is inextricably linked to the figure of the transvestite and the transvestite reveals much about gender roles and sexual identity. She states that "there can be no culture without the transvestite" who, she argues, calls attention to cultural, social or aesthetic dissonances (Garber 1992, 354). She asserts that transvestism makes culture possible by deliberately confusing the constructs of gender identification and challenging the social control they seek to maintain. Garber demonstrates how cross-dressing is linked to the recognition of the power of women, androgyny, responses to gay identity and anxiety over economic or cultural dislocations.

For Garber, drag is not just about males wearing female clothing. It is about a whole range of interconnecting transgressions of many polarities: male/female, gay/straight, black/white, Orient/Occident, boy/girl, adult/child, high status/low status and layperson/cleric. Any boundary created by the way people dress is ready for crossing. Playing with dress is part of a large and endlessly reflective cultural system.

Garber acknowledges that the most conventional of motives for cross-dressing is the need for work. It is this economic force that has compelled many women to pass as men, or vice versa. She cites the film Tootsie (1982) starring Dustin Hoffman, who finds that there are more acting opportunities for women than for men so he transforms himself into a female impersonator named Dorothy Michaels.

In Epistemology of the Closet, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's thesis is that the homo/hetero distinction obtains with gender, class and race in determining "all modern Western identity and social organization" (Sedgwick 1990, 11). Through readings of Herman Melville, Friedrich Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde, Henry James and Marcel Proust she argues that questions of sexual definition are at the heart of every form of representation in this century.

Sedgwick has laid important groundwork regarding the relationship between gender and sexuality and how these categories are distinct from one another. Her claim is that questions of sexual definition are at the heart of all 20th century thought and culture. She discusses how the language of sexual identity relates to other dividing lines in culture: between masculine and feminine, secrecy and disclosure, public and private, sentimental and real. Our culture systemically blurs the boundaries between these terms, thus leaving everybody in a state of anxious

uncertainty. Thus, the "discourse" of modern sexuality keeps everybody off balance.

Today's photographers set the standards of attractiveness in our culture. They are pop culture commentators, purveyors of myth and dream merchants all rolled into one. Their jeans advertisements are moving away from sharp male/female delineations. Androgyny is reappearing in fashion and style, reflecting a sexually integrated workplace. Cross-dressing blurs the lines of sexual expression by attire and jeans do the same. Jeans become a crossover of sexual identity. What started out as an article of clothing, blue jeans now have become a whole category of fashion.

Blue jeans advertisements attempt to replicate two major referent systems: the dignity of manual labor and the equality of women with men. In other clothing ads one does not expect to see either of these themes. Put otherwise, jeans ads support two "inferior" groups in our society, persons who do manual labor and women.

The blue jeans ads attempt to recreate the adventure (myth), that is, selling aura. It is not the clothing that fascinates but the concept behind it. A working social system is reflected in these ads. These advertisements are on the cutting edge - not the clothing. The ads enter a territory where innocence and dark reality meet and mutate into unpredictable forms of life. There is a blending of

men and women into androgynous creatures. Marginal aspects of our lives are created in this mythic world generating androgyny, sexuality and eroticism.

For many of us, the lurid is often alluring. If blue jeans are a body part, it is apparently a unisex, multi-use one. The jeans ads corral and control all the throbbing, wiggling, pulsating body parts. We have the privilege of watching men and women reduced to body parts. Now we have the jeans positioned as a sort of sex organ in their own right, and thus the genitalization of blue jeans. This objectification of both males and females banishes both gender and class differences. Men, women and blue jeans are inextricably intertwined. What is created is a fantasy of image as power. These photographs can be a sociosexual Rorschach test. The jeans ads demonstrate that while there may be nothing new to see, there are new ways to show it.

Jeans are far more than a fashion item. They have become a way of life for many Americans. The working class image has been transformed to leisure wear clothing. Blue jeans are favored equally by bureaucrats and cowboys; bankers and deadbeats; fashion designers and beer drinkers. They draw no distinctions and recognize no classes; they are merely American.

Denim has historically been the fabric of the working class. From the miner to the farmer to the factory worker to the cowboy, denim is the working class fabric. The spate

of jeans ads in the 1980s and 1990s has honored and dignified the American worker and has brought equality to women.

Fashion changes when there is a big shift in society. The 1960s was that shift. This decade saw class conflict, generational conflict, middle class youth adopting a working class lifestyle, and economic power being redistributed. To look at the historical context that gave rise to this somewhat anomalous reversal of fashions - instead of filtering down as most theory holds, fashion was perculating up. The 1960s was when "everything" in American society was turned upside down, and when denim, which was a signifier of the working class, came to be "in" and dominated the world of fashion. In the 1960s, designers had to cope with the reality that fashion would no longer be dictated by the elite wealthy class; design success now lay in appealing to young lower-middle and working class consumers who wanted comfort and flash in their leisure clothing. It was at this time that jeans had become the unofficial uniform for young people of both sexes in America.

It is my belief that the theme of the equality of women with men is unique to the jeans ads and not to other women's apparel. Certain advertisements for women's clothing such as dresses, pants, suits, underwear and blouses sell negative sexual images. These ads portray women as objects of desire. These articles of clothing are advertised very

differently from my collection of 1980s and 1990s jeans advertisements.

With respect to my research design, the responses support my thesis that the jeans advertisements portray women as being more dominant, non-traditional and working class.

The mood and attitudes of a period are reflected in its fashions. The multiple symbolism of blue jeans has signaled increasing freedom and independence in matters of clothing. At the same time the world-wide spread of jeans signals the existence of mass society occupying a global village. Women's emancipation is expressed in wearing jeans. Differences in dress are now due to personal taste, rather than real social distinction. Females may now look like males, students like their professors, folklorists like their subjects. The fabric of society has changed, and it is denim.

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