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Research Paper Topic Summary

The title of my research paper is: “What Sells? Gender in American Print Advertising in the 1950s”. I plan to investigate blatant and symbolic constructs of gender in American print marketing and advertising in the 1950s. The limitations for print advertising will be newspaper, magazine, and billboard, though primarily I will be looking at advertising in magazines, specifically *Playboy Magazine*, *Gentleman’s Quarterly*, and *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. Within the magazine, I am looking primarily at the advertisements, but also perusing the articles as well, for they provide a wealth of primary source information. My other primary sources are books about advertising, written by people in the advertising field at the time.

Combined with secondary sources on marketing and advertising, as well as books with a historical look at the 1950s, I will investigate the answers to a few questions. Specifically, I want to answer how constructions of masculinity were portrayed in the advertisements, and also how these differed from constructions of femininity. I plan to take into account the fact that the constructs are mostly masculinities of white, middle to upper-middle class Americans for both genders. I will investigate what these masculine/feminine constructs entail about the historical context of the time, and whether or not they fit realistically into their time period. Most importantly, my paper will attempt to answer to what extent the constructs are perceptions

(versus realities), and to what extent these companies/advertisers created or perpetuated various gender constructs in order to push their product.