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Published online: 13 May 2016.

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Gender models: changing representations and intersecting roles in Dutch and Italian fashion magazines, 1982–2011

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a comparative content analysis of gender representation in fashion magazines in Italy and the Netherlands. Updating Goffman's classic study of Gender Advertisements, we study the intersections of gender, professional role, country and time in media representation. Thus, we combine and confront quantitative content analysis with insights from critical gender studies on polysemy and intersectionality. Analyzing a sample of 5840 images from mainstream, commercial and high fashion magazines published in 1982, 1996 and 2011, we find that gender representation strongly intersects with time, place, and notably: professional role. Models, who represent the specific 'aesthetic capital' of the fashion field, are portrayed in highly specific ways. Over time, gender differences in representation become stronger in Italy, while in the Netherlands male and female representation converges towards conventionally 'feminine' styles. In both countries, we find increasing prominence of (North-American) Goffmanian gender conventions and a new 'withdrawn' gendered style emerging in the early 2000s. This new style employs new signs and conventions to denote gender and professional status: it separates men from women, and models from non-models. Our analysis shows, first, that gender representation does not directly reflect gender inequality. Second, it demonstrates the impact of globalization on gender representation. Third, it highlights the polysemy and cultural specificity of visual signs: gender difference can be 'ritualized' and 'stylized' in various ways. These diverse gendered conventions intersect with other characteristics, and may convey diverse, and changing messages about the relation between gender and sexuality, power, aesthetics and (visual) pleasure.

Introduction: from gender advertisements to gender models

Since the Second Feminist Wave of the 1970s, feminist critics and gender scholars have critiqued the portrayal of women in popular media. Fashion magazines, advertisements, and popular television shows were identified as central agents in the production and maintenance of gender ideologies (Gill, 2007; Hatton & Trautner, 2013; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015; Temmerman & Van de Voorde, 2013). Their stylized and idealized portrayals of women and – increasingly – men set high standards for beauty, health and happiness. They also present rather unattainable examples of good femininity and masculinity. Especially women are shown in a narrow range of stereotypical roles and poses. These 'ritualizations' of

gender reflect and reinforce power differences. As many studies have argued, gendered poses typically signal female dependence, subordination and objectification vs. male dominance, autonomy and sub-jectification (Baker, 2005; Collins, 2011; Hatton & Trautner, 2011, 2013; Gill, 2009; Mager & Helgerson, 2011).

Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979) transformed feminist critique into empirical scholarship. Through an interpretive analysis of North-American advertisements for a range of products, Goffman identified typical 'gender advertisements': ritualized poses denoting stylized and attractive femininity and masculinity. Since then, research on gendered representation has developed into two strands that increasingly went their separate ways. Quantitative content analyses measured and analyzed stereo-typically gendered poses in increasingly sophisticated ways. Critical-interpretive gender studies, on the other hand, analyzed the polysemy, variability and context-specificity of gender 'performances', arguing that gender representations continue to reinforce power differences despite great societal changes and variation across time and space (Capecchi, 2014; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015, pp. 25–31). While quantitative content analyses zoom in on gender representation, interpretive studies show how gender intersects with characteristics such as race, class or sexual orientation with their own dynamics of power. Both traditions, however, consistently report that women and men are portrayed in con-ventionally gendered poses that reflect gender inequalities. This continuity is remarkable given the considerable shift in the societal position of men and women, and the expansion and diversification of popular media over the past decades.

This study aims to reunite and confront these two research traditions by presenting a longitudinal analysis of gender representations in Dutch and Italian fashion magazines. Using data from a new database containing unique data on the representation of beauty in European fashion magazines, we look at a range of stereotypical gendered poses and positions. Many of those belong to the Goffmanian 'canon' of gender advertisements. However, we have updated Goffman's framework by adding variables that seem typical of twenty-first century European representational styles. We also use these codes outside their original American context, allowing us to investigate their cultural specificity. Moreover, we take into account the polysemy and intersectionality of media representations by comparing several intersecting categories: men vs. women, Italy vs. the Netherlands, and models vs. ordinary people vs. celebrities, across a 30-year period.

This study therefore has a threefold aim. First, by looking at the portrayal of men and women in dif-ferent roles, in two countries, over a 30-year period, we present an intersectional analysis of gender rep-resentation in fashion magazines. How are femininity, and its inevitable twin masculinity, represented? How does this vary across contexts, persons, and over time? Second, we update the 'Goffmanian' canon. As Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2015, p. 36) note in their new textbook on gender and media 'Goffman's analysis of gender displays in advertising is a real eye opener, because of the clear and recognisable patterns analysed. However, the book is also rather old and the gender displays should, at the very least, be reflected upon in a historical sense.' We look for the presence of old gender displays, as well as the emergence of new ones, in a longitudinal study in two countries where these categories have not been tested yet. Third, we intend to reunite and confront quantitative content analysis with critical gender studies. Therefore, we use a newly developed coding scheme that incorporates insights from both the quantitative and the critical traditions. Moreover, we use our data to ask open-ended questions about intersectionality and the polysemy and culture-dependency of gendered poses that are informed by theoretical discussions in critical gender studies.

Gender representation: poses, power and the persistence of difference

Almost 40 years old, Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* still is the central reference for studies of gender representation in popular media. In his analysis of American advertisements, Goffman distinguished six broad categories of ritualized gender advertisements: (1) relative size: women are portrayed as smaller or lower than men; (2) the feminine touch: women typically stroke or touch themselves or objects, whereas men are shown with loose hands or holding something firmly; (3) function ranking: men are portrayed

as autonomous or powerful, women as dependent and subordinate; (4) ritualization of subordination: women are shown in subordinate positions: lying down, in various curved, bent or tilted positions, for instance with the typical feminine 'head cant'; (5) licensed withdrawal: women are portrayed as passive or uninvolved, whereas men are portrayed as active and present, for instance by looking straight into the camera; (6) the family: women are represented in family groups. Three of these conventions are predominantly relational: relative size, function ranking and the family. The others concern gender-specific poses or behaviors exhibited by individuals. All conventions signal both difference and inequality. Women are represented as childlike, submissive, dependent, sexually available and overall less powerful than men. Thus, gender difference is not just difference: it expresses gender inequality.

Since Goffman's canonical study, scholarly work on gender representation has taken two increasingly divergent routes: an empirical-quantitative and a critical-semiotic-qualitative route. In the first tradition, Goffman's concepts have been operationalized and tested in widely cited quantitative content analyses (e.g. Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Bell & Milic, 2002; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004; Mager & Helgerson, 2011). These studies have considerably refined Goffman's rather impressionistic categories. Generally, they find more support for categories related to individual pose than to the relational categories. Therefore, later studies focus on (presumably) gender-stereotyped individual poses and positions: feminine touch, licensed withdrawal (e.g. looking into the camera vs. looking away), and ritualization of subordination (e.g. women lying down, with curved body, head cant).

Over time, the framework has been expanded in several ways. Bell and Milic (2002) combined the categories with insights from visual semiotics. They looked at distance to viewer, photographic angle and implied 'gaze' in order to unravel not only the pose, but also the implied relation with the viewer. Kang (1997) added body display – nudity or suggested nudity – and Lindner (2004) added objectification as a category. This work on representation increasingly merged with the growing body of work on media sexualization (cf. Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). Baker (2005) considers lying down and relative size examples of sexualized portrayal. Hatton and Trautner (2011, 2013) use the feminine touch and lying down as indicators in their Sexualization Index, which they base on an extensive analysis of gender representation in *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Several studies have investigated changing gender conventions, hypothesizing that more gender equality leads to decrease in stereotypical representation. These studies show mixed results. Kang (1997) reports continuation of gender-specific portrayals, and increase of indicators of licensed withdrawal. Lindner (2004) finds a small decrease in gender-stereotypic representation. Mager and Helgerson (2011) find overall continuation of gendered representations, and increase of female ritualization of subordination. While most studies focus on female portrayal, those that compare genders report changes in male and female representation. Belknap and Leonard (1991) find that men over time are portrayed less authoritarian and more decorative. Mager and Helgerson (2011, p. 249) also note a 'trend towards using males in a more decorative fashion in magazine advertising'. Hatton and Trautner (2013), however, report increasing sexualization of women but not men in *Rolling Stone* magazine over the past four decades. They interpret this as a 'backlash' against the increasing power of women.

The vast majority of these studies analyze American mainstream popular media. The scarce comparative studies and studies outside North-America suggest that these conventions may be culture-specific (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005). In their Australian study, Bell and Milic (2002) reported limited support for Goffman's categories. McLaughlin and Goulet (1999) found that Goffman's categories were rare in American magazines aimed at African-Americans, with half of the advertisements classified as 'other'. Nam, Lee, and Hwang (2011), found that several Goffmanian categories did not occur in Korean girl's magazines. Moreover, Korean male portrayals were more in accordance with conventions considered feminine in American studies. To our surprise, we have failed to find quantitative studies using Goffman's framework to analyze European popular media. In Europe, Goffman's work is used primarily in qualitative studies (e.g. Willem, Arauna, Crescenzi, & Tortajada, 2012) that do not systematically investigate the presence of stereotyped poses in European media. Our study is therefore, to the best of our knowledge, the first quantitative validation of Goffman's categories in a European context.

While these quantitative content analyses have yielded many valuable insights, this research tradition has several shortcomings. First, it singles out gender as the central variable, often focusing exclusively on the representation of women. Second, the continued focus on advertisements privileges one genre, and one type of person: professional models. Third, even when used in comparisons across time and place, the categories – which are based on American materials – have remained almost unchanged since the 1970s. Finally, stereotyping and subordination are conceptually conflated: many conventional gendered behaviors are immediately interpreted as subordinate or 'sexist' (Collins, 2011). The rather mixed results of longitudinal studies suggest that the relation between inequality and representation is more complicated. While gender inequalities have arguably decreased, gender representations retain their distinctiveness, and according to some studies even increase. Thus, the relation between gender representation and inequality seems to be matter for empirical study rather than theoretical supposition.

A second research tradition has followed Goffman's original semiotic approach: interpretive analyses of gender representation, often combined with insights from critical or post-structuralist theory and critical discourse analysis. Rather than summarizing this broad and rather scattered field, we highlight important additions and corrections that this tradition can make to the findings and approach discussed above.

First, semiotic and critical approaches highlight the polysemy and culture-specificity of visual codes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This moves research away from the persistence of fixed categories, towards studying a 'multiplicity of femininities on offer in the neoliberal post-feminist era' (DeLaat & Baumann, 2016, p. 14). Rather than focusing on continuities in representation, the attention shifts towards the emergence of new styles like 'porno chic' (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006), 'objectified masculinity' (Patterson & Elliott, 2002) or 'caring consumers' (DeLaat & Baumann, 2016). Theoretically, these analyses stress that conventions do not have fixed meanings: they are culture-specific, contingent, and can be employed in reflexive and ironic ways (Brunsdon, 2005; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Scholars in this field are often critical of the clear-cut assignments of meaning in quantitative analyses.

Second, critical gender analysis has increasingly morphed into intersectional analysis. Gender is never independent of factors like class, nation, age, race or ethnicity, which have their own power dynamics (Ferree, 2009; McCall, 2005). Moreover, gender implies standards for the representation of masculinity, and not just femininity (Schippers, 2007). While incorporating all possible intersecting elements in one analysis is quite impossible, gender can never be studied in isolation. Gill (2009), for instance, shows how sexualized media portrayals work out differently – and are stylized differently – according to gender, sexual orientation, age, class, race and level of attractiveness. These different categories have their own set of connotations giving poses or behaviors a specific meaning.

Critical gender analyses are often less systematic in their empirical analysis, but more sophisticated theoretically. Thus, while quantitative content analyses easily extrapolate from difference to domination and from conventional styles to gender relations, critical gender scholars have written many treatises 'critiquing' or 'problematizing' these assumptions or 'opening up' debates and categories. While quantitative content analysis provides us with delineated and workable concepts allowing for systematic comparisons and firm conclusions, critical gender scholars are more aware of the pitfalls in studying power and representation. As a result, they provide more precise and in-depth analyses – but with limited generalizability. They rarely present systematic comparisons across time and place.

This study intends to combine the strengths of both. Our research design entails comparisons across time, place and gender to allow us to look for intersections, change, variations, and the possibility that Goffman's code are culture-specific or otherwise less fixed than some have assumed. Moreover, we include genres other than advertising, and therefore: persons other than professional models. Finally, although we present a quantitative content to allow for systematic comparison, our coding scheme was informed by insights from semiotics and critical theory. It has been designed to capture the polysemy and culture-specificity of signs, and to allow for inductive analysis as well as hypothesis-testing.

Data and method

This study draws on a new database containing data on the representation of beauty in European fashion magazines (NOTE REMOVED – comment: this note will contain a reference to the full codebook, as well a recent and a forthcoming publication in which the method is explained in detail). This data-set was constructed to account for variations in representational styles and conventions over time, across countries, and across magazines. This study was part of a large research project on the social shaping of beauty standards in six European countries. A detailed description of the method, data and analysis is provided in Kuipers and Van der Laan 2012, and in Van der Laan and Kuipers, 2016. In order to allow reliable comparison, we made our codes as descriptive as possible to minimize the influence of culture-specific interpretations. For instance, instead of one variable for feminine touch, we descriptively coded the position of hands (e.g. hand on face, hand on clothing, hand holding other person). Moreover, all variables were tested for reliability by coders from various countries.

Variables

The present analysis includes six variables measuring poses and positions that earlier studies identified as stereotypically feminine: smile, pouting lips, head cant, nudity, lying down, and self touch. Four other poses were expected to be typically male: eye contact, photographed *en face* (frontal image with both sides of nose visible), erect body, and active pose (the person in the image is engaged in an activity other than being photographed) (Hatton & Trautner, 2011; Kang, 1997; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Lindner, 2004; Mager & Helgerson, 2011). Because of the inconsistent findings regarding the relational variables in previous studies, we constructed four descriptive variables measuring company: alone, with child, in the company of (adult) women, or (adult) men. Previous studies suggest that men are portrayed in more autonomous positions than women, that is: alone. Finally, we used Bell and Milic's (2002) codes measuring physical distance towards the camera/implied viewer. On the basis of their findings, we expect women to be photographed from closer, more intimate distance.

Moreover, we developed several variables inductively during the pilot phase. We felt that existing measurements did not capture important elements of the images we found in our present-day European sample. We used a new operationalization for objectification that analytically separates objectification from sexualization by narrowly defining objectification as portraying someone as 'there to be looked at by others' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Our codebook defines objectification as: 'interchangeable for any other object/model, posed, not seemingly spontaneously caught in her/his own environment; no personality, no narrative, illogical or estranged setting.' Three codes were developed inductively during the pilot studies: all of these seemed to us, on the basis of our pilot study, typical of contemporary fashion images and more typical of women. The 'empty gaze' means a person is looking at a camera without making eye contact. 'Mouth open' denotes a non-smiling open mouth (a similar code was developed almost simultaneously by Hatton & Trautner, 2011. However, as we will see our interpretations diverge). When a person is 'very posed' s/he is, according to the codebook 'clearly adjusting pose for the camera, pose is usually not likely to occur in the same way in the depicted situation.' For a detailed discussion of development, testing and content of the codebook, see (Van der Laan & Kuipers, 2016).

Sample

This article compares Italian and Dutch fashion magazines. Within Europe, these countries are among the most different in terms of gender relations, media landscape and fashion culture. In the 2014 Global Gender Gap report (Bekhouche, Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2014), Netherlands is ranked 14th for gender equality, against 69th for Italy. These rankings reflect not only differences in political and economic positions of women in these countries, but also two divergent gender cultures. In the Netherlands, gender inequality and gendered forms of representation are rarely framed as problematic or even political (Merens & Brakel, 2014). In Italy, gender differences are more visible both in everyday life and in the

media (Capecchi, 2011; Furnham & Voli, 1989). Italian television, especially in the era of *Berlusconismo*, became known for its abundant presence of women in decorative, sexualized and gender-normative roles (Boni, 2008).

Italy also has a much more central position in the global world of beauty and fashion than the Netherlands. The Netherlands has few influential designers or fashion magazines. Italy on the other hand has a strong fashion culture. Italian designers and fashion magazines like *Vogue Italia* set global standards. This is also visible in everyday life, where people show great attention to style and fashion consciousness. This fashion culture also has promoted more stylized and aestheticized understandings of masculinity and femininity in Italy than in the Netherlands.

Our sample includes at least one mainstream (*Libelle*, *Anna*) fashion magazine from each country, and the national editions of internationally franchised commercial (*Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health*) and high-end (*Elle*, *Vogue, Uomo Vogue*) fashion magazines targeting men and women, from three sample years: 1982, 1996, and 2011. The sample increases over the years to reflect the expansion, diversification and globalization of the media and fashion field. Taken together, this sample covers the breadth of fashion images and gender representation in each country in each period. For each magazine and year, we coded 250 photographs portraying adult women or men. Coding was done by trained coders from the country where the magazines were published. The Krippendorf's alpha for the variables used in this article average alpha was a satisfactory .70.

The overall sample consists of 5840 images, 4369 (74.81%) of women and 1471 (25.19%) men. The magazine sample has led to unequal distribution over countries and years. 65.12% of images are Italian, 34.88% are Dutch. 26.24% of images are from 1982; 35.67% from 1996 and 38.09% from 2011. The focus on fashion magazines, which mainly target female audiences, means that women are overrepresented. We have included *L'Uomo Vogue* and *Men's Health* to counterbalance this, and to reflect the growing market for men with an interest in appearance. While differences between magazines are considerable, the overall gender ratio remained almost constant: 73.52% women in 1982; 77.13% women in 1996; and 73.54% women in 2011. The Italian sample has a slightly larger proportion of men: 26.58 against 22.58% in the Netherlands.

Results

Gendered representation styles?

Table 1 gives an overview of overall gender differences in representation. While we found significant differences, these are not always in line with expectations. As expected, women are more likely to smile, have an open mouth, the 'feminine touch', to be passive, lie down and have tilted heads. The latter two, however, are rare. Women are also more often objectified and very posed than men.

Contrary to expectations, men and women are equally likely to have a straight posture. Especially in combination with the dearth of tilted heads (only 10.01% of women), this challenges the Goffmanian opposition of straight men vs. S-curved, tilted and otherwise contorted women. Women are most commonly portrayed alone, or (less) in female company, while men are usually portrayed with other men. Men and women are equally unlikely to be portrayed with child, lip pouts or in the nude. Women are more likely to be portrayed from greater distance, showing the entire body, whereas men are most commonly viewed from the intermediate 'far personal' position, with visible shoulders and upper body (not shown in table, *p* < .005). While this may be explained from the greater emphasis on female bodies in fashion magazines, it is not in line with expectations. Finally, women make more eye contact and more often look into the camera, whereas men are more likely to have an 'empty gaze'. This defies our expectations of female passivity and withdrawal.

Thus, the overall analysis – encompassing two countries and spanning 30 years – gives some, but not full support for existing accounts of gender representation. In particular, it calls into question the expectation of female licensed withdrawal. Rather than looking away in ritualized withdrawal, women often look straight at the viewer. This supports Bell and Milic's (2002) interpretation of women as more

Table 1. Gender difference in pose/position.

	Female	Male	All	p
Smile	**35.77**	32.83	35.03	*
Pout	2.05	1.31	1.86	
Mouth open	**33.67**	19.31	30.05	***
Eye contact	**41.63**	32.43	39.32	***
Empty gaze	7.99	**10.94**	8.73	***
En face	42.21	38.08	41.18	
Head cant	**10.01**	3.67	8.42	***
Erect body	65.21	66.08	65.43	
Nudity	4.30	4.01	4.23	
Lying down	**5.75**	3.81	5.26	***
Self touch	**31.91**	21.75	29.35	***
Active	17.20	**23.85**	18.92	***
Very posed	**38.52**	22.08	34.39	***
Objectified	**53.83**	37.57	49.74	***
Alone	**67.45**	45.55	61.93	***
Female company	**32.50**	27.74	31.30	***
Male company	10.21	**54.45**	21.35	***
With child	2.15	2.86	2.33	
N	4369	1471	5840	
%	74.81	25.19		

Note: Bold numbers indicate significant gender difference, with highest value in bold.
*X^2 test, $p < 05$.
**X^2 test, $p < .01$.
***X^2 test, $p < .005$.

likely to 'demand' a relationship from the viewer, rather than the Goffmanian expectation of women as passive and withdrawn. The conventions most often associated with female submission, passivity and sexual availability – the tilted head, lying down, body exposure and pouted lips – are rare. Finally, women are more likely to be portrayed alone and from a farther distance, which suggests greater female independence than the literature has led us to expect.

Gender as master status? The intersection of gender and role

The intersectionality approach in gender studies has usually meant: looking at the intersection of gender and race, sexual orientation and sometimes class or age. However, we focus on another intersection: gender and professional role. Most images in our sample show models: people selected for their good looks, who were probably paid or compensated for their appearance in the magazine. Fashion magazines also show celebrities who are well-known for a variety of reasons. Whereas models mainly appear in fashion shoots or advertisements, celebrities are featured in advertisements, interviews, and editorial content like gossip or occasionally beauty or fashion shoots. Finally, fashion magazines portray 'ordinary people' like the magazine staff (e.g. the editor's photograph above her editorial introduction), or persons featured in makeovers, real-life stories or readers' panels. These three groups vary greatly not only in their status and function, but also in their 'aesthetic capital' (Anderson, Grunert, Katz, & Lovascio, 2010). We therefore look at the intersection of gender and role: do gendered styles of representation vary across models, celebrities, and ordinary people? Or is gender the 'master status' (Goffman, 1963) trumping other personal characteristics?

Unsurprisingly, these roles are not distributed equally across gender. In our sample, 90.35% of women portrayed are models, vs. 77.16% of men ($p < .005$). Percentages of models go down steadily for both men and women over the years: from 94.68% in 1982 to 86.62% in 2011 for women ($p < .005$); and from 85.96% (1982) to 69.10% (2011) for men ($p < .005$). The decline of male models is compensated by a sharp and statistically significant increase in celebrities, especially in the twenty-first century: from 8.62% (1982) to 11.13% (1996) to 23.09% in 2011. Representation of female ordinary persons and celebrities

Table 2. Gender representation and role.

	F				M			
	Ordinary person	Celebrity	Model	p	Ordinary person	Celebrity	Model	p
Smile	**83.85**	49.60	33.35	***	**47.93**	33.49	31.10	***
Pout	1.72	2.40	2.04		.99	0.59	1.49	
Mouth open	6.15	30.24	**34.78**	***	14.05	19.53	19.82	
Eye contact	**65.38**	57.26	39.89	***	**57.85**	45.12	27.31	***
Empty gaze	3.08	**13.31**	7.82	***	9.09	3.26	**12.60**	***
En face	**58.59**	48.78	41.24	***	**62.18**	48.31	33.46	***
Head cant	**17.19**	7.76	9.91	*	5.08	4.31	3.39	
Erect body	62.10	62.61	65.48		53.04	**70.81**	66.54	***
Nudity	0.0	**4.84**	4.41	**	.00	.93	**5.02**	***
Lying down	1.54	6.85	5.81		1.65	2.33	4.32	
Self touch	28.46	34.27	31.87		26.45	24.65	20.70	
Active	12.00	11.82	**17.71**	*	16.36	22.63	24.84	
Very posed	17.83	**40.08**	39.11	***	11.67	**25.35**	22.58	***
Objectified	37.21	45.75	**54.89**	***	27.50	**37.74**	38.62	***
Alone	65.38	73.39	67.15		52.89	**71.63**	39.82	***
Female company	34.62	26.61	32.80		21.49	11.16	**31.54**	***
Male company	9.23	5.68	**10.55**	*	47.11	28.37	**60.18**	***
With child	**12.31**	2.02	1.83	***	**12.40**	1.86	2.03	***
N	130	248	3991		121	215	1135	
%	2.98	5.68	91.35		8.23	14.62	77.16	

Note: Bold numbers indicate significant gender difference, with highest value in bold.
*X^2 test, $p < .05$.
**X^2 test, $p < .01$.
***X^2 test, $p < .005$.

rises steadily in about equal proportion. The presence of female celebrities goes up from 3.55% in 1982 to 8.86% in 2011; while ordinary people increase their presence from 1.77% in 1982 to 4.52% in 2011.

Table 2 shows significant differences between the portrayals of different roles. Ordinary men and women are most likely to be photographed *en face*, smiling, making eye contact and with child, and hardly ever in sexualized poses (nude, lying down). This points to a conventional style of photography that is not particularly gendered: smiling and looking into the camera (the 'say cheese' look). However, ordinary women are more likely than female models and celebrities (and all men) to engage in stylized feminine behaviors like the head cant or smile. Combined with the full frontal photography, this makes for a traditional 'cute' portrait look. Ordinary men have a less clear-cut image. Apart from the snapshot aesthetic of looking into the camera and smiling – which they do more than other men, but still under 50% – they stand out for being least objectified, and not posing.

Celebrities are more likely than others to be very posed, and portrayed in close-up and alone (especially men). Their portrayal without company and in close-up probably signifies status: they are more important than models or ordinary people. Apart from this, representations of famous men and women have few distinguishing characteristics. Female celebrities are most likely to have an empty gaze, and male celebrities are quite objectified by male standards. The lack of a distinguishing pattern probably reflects the diversity of this category. It includes actors and media personalities who are probably represented like models; but also writers, sports persons and politicians, whose portrayal may be closer to ordinary people.

The portrayal of models differs sharply from other categories. Models of both genders are least likely to smile (a difference especially pronounced for women), make eye contact or face the camera. Surprisingly, classic gender advertisements like pouts, tilted heads, feminine touch, curved bodies, nudity or horizontal positions are more commonly associated with other roles. Models are highly objectified, but this is not (exclusively) signaled in these classically gendered ways. Female models often have a non-smiling open mouth.

Male models, like male celebrities, are objectified but not very posed or stylized. They are often portrayed in company of others, especially men, and more often from a far personal rather a far social distance – so from a closer range than female models ($p < .005$). The empty gaze occurs most often in this category (along with female celebrities). For men, this may signal not so much withdrawal as a masculine gaze towards far and potentially adventurous horizons (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996).

In an additional analysis (figures not shown) we looked at differences between editorial content and advertisements. Advertisements show less diversity in roles than editorial content: 94.82% of persons in advertisements are models, against 80.71% in other genres. Gender representations in advertisements are less diverse, and generally in line with the portrayal of models discussed above. We found no significant differences in numbers of men and women in advertisements vs. editorial content. Our study therefore captures more variation in (gender) representation than studies that exclusively focus on advertising. This highlights a shortcoming of much work on gender representation. Its focus on advertising may show the specificities of the portrayal of models, rather than general gender conventions.

Our findings show that while gender strongly affects representation, it is not an undisputed master status. The distinction between ordinary people and others is salient and marked by a specific 'snapshot' or 'portrait' aesthetic. This category is also the least prestigious. The distinctive portrayal of this group demarcates the boundary between ordinary persons and the more glamorous domain of models and celebrities.

We see here a boundary separating those with and without aesthetic capital: the capital central to the fashion field. Models embody this capital par excellence. The representation of these 'beautiful people' symbolically sets them apart from all others. Marked by a lack of engagement with camera or viewer, an absence of smiles and considerable distance, the portrayal of male and female models in many ways flaunts the snapshot aesthetic of everyday photography.

Changing gender representations?

Differences in gender representation are usually explained – at least partially – from power differences between men and women. We therefore expect shifts in the portrayal of men and women as a result of changing gender relations.

Table 3 presents changes over time in gendered styles of representation. Results, however, are not quite in line with our expectations. Instead of men and women becoming more alike, we find that the gap between men and women is growing steadily. In other words: gender differences in representation are becoming *more* pronounced. Moreover, we find an increase in conventional Goffmanian gender representations. In six gendered style conventions, differences have increased or emerged over time: smiling, pouting, open mouth, self touch, lying down, and active pose. The gender patterns for erect posture and empty gaze reverse over time, but in unexpected directions. The non-erect postures and empty, withdrawn gazes characteristic of Gofmanian female representation become more typically female over time. Moreover, only two poses show decreasing gender difference: nudity and portrayal *en face*. The gender difference in head cants remains constant, but this pose showed an overall decline. Finally, our unexpected finding (see Table 1, above) that women are more likely to look into the camera and thus 'demand a relationship' is specific to 1982. In other words: over the years women become more withdrawn.

The proportion of women photographed alone goes down, and of men photographed alone goes up. Men are less frequently pictured with other men, women more frequently with other women. The result in 2011 is a more or less even divide of people portrayed alone and in same-sex or mixed groups. Rather than a closing of the gender gap, male and female group compositions are each other's mirror image. This may be explained by the rise of male-oriented magazines that apply the conventions of female fashion magazines to male representation. However, this pattern is puzzling in light of previous studies. Women are not accompanied by men or family groups, but instead move from solitary portrayals towards female groupings.

Table 3. Gender representation: trends over time.

	Overall trend[a]	1982			1996			2011			Gender difference trend[a,b]
		F	M	p	F	M	p	F	M	p	
Smile	↑↓	41.44	40.64		36.51	35.50		**31.15**	25.30	**	↑
Pout	—	1.13	1.91		2.22	1.96		**2.60**	.42	***	↑
Mouth open	↑↓	**16.86**	10.59	***	**30.16**	19.96	***	**48.69**	24.79	***	↑↑
Eye contact	↓—	**47.65**	26.35	***	38.75	32.77	*	40.32	36.33		↓
Empty gaze	↓↑	3.55	**28.57**	***	5.92	4.62		**13.07**	3.90	***	↺
En face	↑—	**42.19**	29.67	***	42.43	45.93		42.01	37.76		↓
Head cant	—↓	**10.91**	4.68	***	**12.19**	5.02	***	**7.33**	1.94	***	→
Erect body	—↓	**71.15**	61.86	***	67.73	63.94		58.85	**70.65**	***	↺
Nudity	—	**4.08**	1.97	*	4.42	**6.72**	*	4.34	3.23		↓
Lying down	—	4.08	4.93		6.04	3.78		**6.60**	3.06	***	↑
Self touch	—	29.72	27.34		**31.71**	20.38	***	**33.60**	19.02	***	↑
Active	↑↓	17.53	17.93		18.84	**30.37**	***	15.47	**22.65**	***	↑
Very posed	—↑	**29.25**	20.87	***	**33.21**	18.98	***	**49.85**	25.38	***	↑↑
Objectified	↑—	**40.88**	15.27	***	**54.73**	49.36	***	**61.57**	43.10	***	↑↑
Alone	↑↓	**73.82**	15.76	***	**69.84**	55.67	***	60.72	57.89		↓
Female company	↑↑	26.18	26.60		30.16	29.62		**39.16**	26.99	***	↑
Male company	↓—	11.09	**84.24**	***	8.91	**44.33**	***	10.87	**42.11**	***	↓↓
With child	↓	3.11	4.93		1.25	**2.94**	*	2.38	1.36		≈
N		1127	406		1605	476		1637	589		
%		73.52	27.60		77.13	22.87		73.54	26.46		

Note: Bold numbers indicate significant gender difference, with highest value in bold.
[a]X^2 analysis, significant trends ($p < .05$; change > 5%). First symbol: 1982–1996. Second symbol: 1996–2011.
[b]→ persistent difference; ↑ emerging difference (not in 1982); ↓ disappearing difference (not in 2011); ↑↑ increasing difference (growing gender gap); ↓↓ decreasing difference (shrinking gender gap); ↺ reversal; ↗↘ increase then decrease; ↘↗ decrease then increase; ≈ unclear.
*X^2 test, $p < 05$.
**X^2 test, $p < .01$.
***X^2 test, $p < .005$.

How to explain these unexpected findings? First, it may be a matter of our sample, in particular the focus on all images instead of just advertisements. The inclusion of editorial content implies a larger proportion of non-models, who are more likely to be portrayed alone. Also, while advertisements often position people in semi-naturalistic settings to stimulate identification, editorial content (mostly fashion shoots and cover images) favors neutral or abstract settings that show off the clothed and styled bodies. Especially our findings regarding group representation may be genre-related.

However, genre cannot explain the increasing prominence of conventional gender representations. One possible explanation for this unexpected finding is that increasing or continuing gender difference co-occurs with a general decrease in specific poses or positions: the gender gap remains but the convention vanishes. Fashion photography is after all part of fashion, and probably subject to the same regime of constant change (Aspers & Godart, 2013): some gendered poses may seem old and dated, and therefore gradually vanish. This seems the case with smiles and tilted heads: gendered but in decline. However, in other cases gendered behaviors are constant, or even on the rise. In fact, many of the expected gender differences are not there in the *earliest* year in our study. In other words: in 1982, gender representations in European magazines were less like *Gender Advertisements* than they were in 1996 or – especially – 2011.

This leaves two other possible explanations. The first possibility is that, despite growing gender equality, we have found an increase in gender-specific portrayals. Such a pattern has been found in other studies as well, most recently by Hatton and Trautner (2013), who interpret this as a gender backlash: a pushback against the growing influence of women in the media. The second explanation is that we have traced a rise in *specific* conventional gender codes. The gender conventions analyzed here were mainly derived from studies done in North America. Possibly, Italy and the Netherlands have (partly)

different conventions for gender representations. Increasing globalization has led to the expansion of global magazine franchises, and increasing and asymmetrical exchange of images. Consequently, Dutch and Italian media may have adopted North-American conventions (Tan, Shaw, Cheng, & Kim, 2013). Both possibilities will be discussed below.

Finally, looking specifically at the trends leading up to 2011, we see the emergence of a new representational style. In 2011, representation of women is characterized by an open mouth, no smile, little eye contact, a passive pose, a straight body and a straight head. Women are more often objectified or very posed than in previous years. The feminine touch is present in less than half of the cases, and we see a marked increase of the empty gaze. In other words, female representation is still characterized by the traditional objectification and withdrawal. However, stylistic elements associated with the ritualization of subordination (lying down, head cants, S-curves) and lack of autonomy (male company) are less common in 2011 than in previous years, or than existing studies have les us to expect.

Interestingly, in male representation we see some of the same developments, notably the decrease of smiles, increasingly straight postures, and a dominance of passive poses that is unexpected in the light of male stereotypes. Compared with women, men are not very posed, but quite objectified. Thus, while 2011 male representation is still distinct from stylized femininity, it shares some of its characteristics, in particular those denoting withdrawal and passivity. This new style of male representation therefore marks a departure from classic masculine styles. This finding supports the observations of Patterson and Elliott (2002) of the rise of 'objectified masculinity', and the trend 'towards using males in a more decorative fashion' found by Mager and Helgerson (2011).

National gender styles

Table 4 shows national differences: to what extent do Italian and Dutch gender portrayals differ, and how is this changing over time? Overall, in Dutch magazines people are more likely to smile, make eye contact, look straight into the camera, have tilted heads, curved bodies, and to be objectified, alone or with child. Italian magazines portray everyone in a more withdrawn way – unsmiling, no eye contact, open mouth, straight posture – and in male or female company. Tentatively, we describe this opposition as a more conventionally attractive, engaged Dutch portrayal, vs. a more stylized, distanced portrayal in Italian fashion magazines. The latter seems to be in line with the more aestheticized high fashion style common in Italian magazines as well as everyday life, as opposed to the more informal and mainstream Dutch fashion culture.

As expected, Italy shows stronger gender differences than the Netherlands. In Italy, we found significant differences for almost every year and variable. Otherwise, patterns are as expected on the basis of findings discussed above. Men are more often portrayed in active poses or with other men, women are more often portrayed in the conventionally gendered poses, and increasingly so. Gender differences are most pronounced in the last sample year, when we see both Goffmanian classics and examples of the 2011 withdrawn female style: posed, empty gazed, open mouthed, self touching. In sum: in Italy, gender differences increase. An interesting finding is the reversal of gender patterns for the empty gaze and the erect body, both male-dominant poses in 1982, and typically female in 2011. Most patterns found in the sample as a whole are found here – unsurprisingly, as about two thirds of the sample is Italian. The exceptions are somewhat puzzling: Italian men and women are equally unlikely to be pictured smiling, pouting, nude or with child. Overall in Italy, we find persistent or growing gender differences, combined with the emergence over time of a withdrawn style, especially among women.

As hypothesized, in the Netherlands gender differences are less prominent than in Italy. They also follow a different pattern: differences are largest in 1996 and decrease afterwards. Surprisingly, in 1982 men were more likely to be portrayed lying down than women: a clear refutation of 'ritualization of submission' but otherwise hard to explain (and the numbers are small). Gender differences manifest themselves more consistently in company than in pose or portrayal, which suggests that gender displays are overall less pronounced or less ritualized. The Dutch sample shows the emergence of the

Table 4. National differences and trends in gender representation.

	Overall			Trend		Italy gender difference[a]				Netherlands gender difference[a]			
	IT	NL	p	IT[b]	NL[b]	1982	1996	2011	Trend[b]	1982	1996	2011	Trend[c]
Smile	26.21	**51.69**	***	↑↘	↑—	−5.45	1.21	1.78	=	1.42	12.47**	7.37	↗↘
Pout	1.65	2.25		—	—	−.87	1.28	1.76*	≈	−1.88	−1.56	2.93	=
Mouth open	**31.99**	26.34	***	↑↑	↑↑	7.04***	14.41***	28.84***	↑↑	3.44	1.60	14.98***	←
Eye contact	37.33	**42.91**	***	↓—	—	29.84***	6.14	.43	→	1.23	8.77*	4.95	↗↘
Empty gaze	**11.14**	4.22	***	↓↑	—	−31.87***	4.74***	13.22***	↺	1.50	−4.26**	3.04	↗↗
En face	37.07	**48.92**	***	—	↑↑	18.66***	.60	5.02	→	−6.87	−2.84	−1.6	=
Head cant	7.84	**9.57**	***	—	—↘	8.38***	6.78***	5.75***	→	−1.98	9.29**	5.27**	↑/≈
Erect body	**76.63**	44.00	***	↓—	—	18.95***	−3.19	−10.78*	↺	9.70	3.86	−3.47	=
Nudity	3.97	4.71		—	—↘	3.87***	.06	1.23	→	−3.27	−3.96	2.15	↗↗
Self touch	28.82	30.26		—↘	↑—	4.55	11.79***	20.02***	←	5.49	13.86***	.19	↗↗
Active	19.36	18.07		—↘	—↘	−.63	−8.85***	−7.91***	←	−2.88	−16.65***	−3.97	→
Lying down	5.65	4.51		—	—	2.24	2.30	4.03***	←	−8.37***	2.14	2.90	↘↗
Alone	56.55	**71.80**	***	↑↘	↑—	61.43***	14.41***	−9.50***	↺	45.19***	17.49***	25.23***	↘↗
Female company	**34.80**	24.67	***	↑↑	—↘	8.60***	1.24	33.20*	↘↗	−31.70***	−3.94	−6.76	→
Male company	**22.70**	18.78	***	↓	—↘	−77.65***	−41.26***	−27.74***	↓↓	−58.64***	−26.70***	−38.60***	↘↗
With child	1.42	**4.02**	***	—	—	−.56	−.15	−.68	=	−9.40***	−3.65***	1.39	→
Very posed	**34.84**	33.52	***	—↑	—↑	12.89***	11.12***	25.50***	↘↗	−2.83	18.75***	23.16***	↑↑
Objectified	**47.81**	**53.38**	***	↑↑	↑—	33.66***	12.39***	19.18***	↘↗	.32	6.86*	17.19***	←

Note: Bold numbers indicate significant gender difference, with highest value in bold.

[a] Difference between percentages of women and men. Negative sign: higher prevalence for men.

[b] χ² analysis, significant trends (p < .05; change > 5%). First symbol: 1982–1996, second symbol: 1996–2011.

[c] ↪ persistent difference; ↑ emerging difference; ↓ disappearing difference; ↑↑ increasing difference; → decreasing difference; ↺ reversal; ↗↘ increase then decrease; ↘↗ decrease then increase; = no difference; ≈ unclear.

*χ² test, p < .05.

**χ² test, p < .01.

***χ² test, p < .005.

non-smiling open mouth/highly objectified pattern in 2011 for both men and women, but without the increase in passivity.

The Dutch pattern is harder to interpret than the Italian one. In marked contrast with the Italian case, Dutch gender differences first increase, then decrease after 1996. We see a strong convergence toward the withdrawn style for male and female portrayals. Consequently, Dutch men and women are portrayed more similarly in 2011 than in 1996. However, rather than reflecting female empowerment, the overall portrayal of both men and women has become more objectified. Thus, we see a closing of the gender gap, but not in the direction expected by many gender scholars. In Dutch magazines men are increasingly portrayed like women, rather than the other way around.

Discussion and conclusion

This study had a threefold aim. First, we wanted to study changes and variations in the representation of gender. Comparing the portrayal of men and women in different roles, in two countries, over a 30-year period we found that representation is not only related to gender, but also to national context, time, and – importantly – to professional role and aesthetic capital. Second, we aimed to update Goffman's classic study on Gender Adverisements, using the categories and codes from quantitative content analyses in a longitudinal study in two countries where these categories had not been tested yet. While we did find Goffmanian poses and postures in Italy and the Netherlands, we also found ample evidence for their historical and cultural specificity. Third, we intended to reunite and confront quantitative content analysis with insights from critical gender studies. Thus, we inductively analyzed quantitative data in order to generate new insights and questions about intersectionality, polysemy, and the relation between representation, culture and inequality.

Our findings have a number of theoretical and methodological implications. First, we found considerable difference between the portrayal of models and other persons portrayed in fashion magazines. This calls into question the singular focus on gender in analyses of media representations; as well as the focus on advertisements, both in qualitative and quantitative studies. Advertisements tend to focus on one sort of person: professional models (and occasionally celebrities) who are represented in ways that mark them as different and desirable.

The boundary between models and others in some respects was more marked than gender differences. This boundary signals differential amounts of beauty or aesthetic capital. This particular kind of – very unequally distributed – capital may need to be added to growing list of intersectional variables. Beauty has traditionally been associated mainly with women. However, in today's media-saturated service economies it appears to be an increasingly important source of power and status for men and women alike (Anderson et al., 2010).

Second, our findings highlight the polysemy and cultural contingency of visual signs. Quantitative studies of gender representation typically assign fixed meanings to gendered poses. However, as many interpretive scholars and gender theorists have pointed out, the same sign can denote a range of things, and masculinity and femininity can be signaled in many different ways (Collins, 2011; Gill, 2007; Schippers, 2007). The reversal of gender connotations of both the empty gaze and the erect body are a case in point. Associated with masculinity in the 1980s, these poses probably signified male aloofness and readiness to take off to far horizons (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996). In the 2000s, they are more typically female. They are combined with other representational conventions to create the more withdrawn feminine look typical of contemporary fashion photography.

This polysemy of visual signs also explains varying interpretations of the non-smiling open mouth. During our pilot studies, we discovered that this pose had become prominent in the early twenty-first century, alongside other new signifiers of what we interpreted as withdrawal. Hatton and Trautner (2011, 2013) more or less simultaneously noted the rise of this expression on the covers of *Rolling Stone*, where it is often combined with nudity and sexualized poses. Thus, they concluded that the open mouth denotes sexuality. In the context of *Rolling Stone*, combined with these other signifiers, it probably does. However, the vacant look typical of present-day modeling images contains few other

signs of sexuality like nudity or suggestive poses. In the context of fashion images, this expression does not suggest sex, but passivity and objectification. In this different context, and combined with other signs, the same sign acquires different meanings.

On the other hand, similar meanings can be conveyed by different visual signs. An important finding of this study is the emergence of a new withdrawn representational style. This style combines a vacant look, lack of smile, open mouth and passive but erect pose. These specific visual elements are new or newly prominent in 2011. However, the combined effect is reminiscent of what Goffman called licensed withdrawal: a lack of engagement with the viewer, suggesting that someone is there to be looked at. There are, however, interesting differences between the two representation styles. The new style lacks the conventions associated with ritualization of submission: female dependency, curved bodies and canted heads. Moreover, men, especially male models, are also portrayed in this withdrawn style. Compared with the (American) 1970s, therefore, women in Italian and Dutch popular media in 2011 are still objectified. However, so are men. And over the decades, the link between female objectification and subordination has weakened.

Obviously, our study still suffers from some of the limitation of quantitative content analysis. While our analysis has been constructed to capture the polysemy of signs, in the end our coding scheme reduced over 5000 images to table presented aggregate number on just a few poses. We realize that this method cannot capture all the meanings potentially implied in reflexive, ironical, or rebellious uses or readings of these images. However, for us quantitative content analysis is not necessarily the end of a research process. Rather, it is a step forward in a dialectal process of induction and deduction, exploration and comparison, and hypothesis-development and hypothesis-testing. We hope that this large-scale comparative study will inspire many smaller, qualitative studies that analysis the complexities and intricacies of representation. Moreover, in our view this study has opened up the possibility of comparison of gendered poses across time and space. The interpretation of the changes and cross-national variations we found will certainly require more detailed analysis of images, magazines, and production practices.

Finally, our findings raise new questions about the relation between gender representation and inequality. To our surprise, we found that gender-specific representation *increased* over the years. This pattern worked out differently in Italy and the Netherlands. In Italy, we found a significant increase in gender differences, along with increasingly objectified representations of men and women. In the Netherlands, gender differences were – in line with our expectations – overall less pronounced, and they declined after 1996. The reason for this, however, was somewhat unexpected: male representation in Dutch magazines became more similar to female representation.

There are several possible explanations for this increase of gender-specific representation over time. First, it is probably caused in part by the international diffusion of American styles of representation. With increasing American advertisements, photo shoots, other media products spread across the globe. In their wake, American gender conventions may have been imported as well. This raises the question how femininity and masculinity were portrayed in European magazines in the 1980s. We cannot answer this question with our data. The main limitation of quantitative content analysis is that it can only uncover patterns in codes predefined in the codebook. In our case, this means: codes derived from existing studies and from our pilot studies of contemporary magazines. Italian and Dutch gender conventions of the 1980s and 1990s were probably signaled in in culturally specific ways that have escaped our attention.

A second possible explanation for the increasing gender gap in our findings is backlash: an attempt to symbolically reaffirm women's submission and objectification in response to their growing power (Gill, 2009; Hatton & Trautner, 2011, 2013). Hatton and Trautner, for instance, interpret the increasing sexualization of female images in *Rolling Stone* in this vein. While this argument makes a lot of sense in the context of *Rolling Stone* and the male-dominated music industry, it seems less plausible in the fragmented and female-dominated world of fashion and lifestyle magazines. Another objection to this explanation is that men are also more objectified over the years, especially in the Netherlands. This finding is in line with other studies that find increasing objectification of men over the years (Cortese & Ling, 2011; Gill, 2009; Mager & Helgerson, 2011).

We therefore suggest that an explanation for these increasing differences in gender representation should not be sought, or sought exclusively, in gender relations. The assumption underlying most research in gender representation is that differential representation is a reflection and reaffirmation of power, domination or inequality. Our findings suggest that this is not necessarily the case. So we may need to look for new explanations elsewhere.

The intersectionality approach helps us to understand that images of gender are not only about gender. It is also about the representation of persons possessing a number of desirable qualities: youth, beauty, and ample access to consumer goods, nice friends, exotic locations and good stylists. Thus, seeing gender models and gender advertisements only in terms of gender obscures maybe more than it reveals. The increasing objectification of all models, men and women, suggests that fashion images may be as much about the objectification of unattainable beauty, youth and wealth as it is about the objectification of femininity and female sexuality. It still is about inequality and desire, but maybe about a different form of inequality and a different type of desire.

Even in an era of increasing (though imperfect) gender equality gender difference remains functional as well as pleasurable. It is probably no coincidence that the Goffmanian conventions most directly related to female submission and women's dependency were the first to disappear. What remains are conventions that are less explicitly about power, and more about the representation of desirability. These conventions signal gender, in a code that the audience is able to read without any difficulty. But the symbolism of such gender conventions is not necessarily dominating. Depending on context and composition of the image, they can be performative, expressive, reflexive, ironic, in short: communicative in many ways. In order to read the message, we need to look at more than just gender – and much more than just domination, inequality and power.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

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