

Gender in Editorial Illustration:
A Century of Gender Representation
in *The New Yorker*

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**GENDER IN EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION:
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ABSTRACT

Within arts and culture research, the debate on gender representation has inspired many studies on visual culture as images are believed to reflect as well as shape social and cultural stereotypes. Despite the rise of new media, illustrations continue to be an important source of cultural output. Scholars argue illustrations to play an important role of learning gender among young audience and previous research has scrutinised gender roles in children's book illustrations. These accounts have identified specific markers that indicate gender identities and assessed them on their potential to reproduce gender stereotypes. Yet, visual culture continues to inform gender frameworks throughout adult life and studies on advertisement have found distinct dimensions of gender display that define femininity and masculinity. Combining both approaches, the here presented research investigates gender representations in illustrations targeted at adults and asks: How are gender identities represented in editorial illustrations and how have they evolved throughout the last century?

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative content analysis of almost one hundred cover illustrations of The New Yorker published between 1925 and 2023 was conducted. Through semiotic analysis, patterns in representational elements such as activities, clothing, and gestures were discovered. The examination of narrative and conceptual structures elucidated on conventions of gender representations within editorial illustrations and their changes throughout time in nexus with socio-historical developments in the United States.

The research concludes that the portrayal of men and women in The New Yorker changes in congruence with socio-historical developments, i.e., ideologies promoted by feminist waves. However, the covers predominantly reflect the evolution of gender roles and visual markers with some delay rather than overtly challenge them. The illustrations continuously emphasise women's roles as mothers and wives and rely on established male and female dress codes to express gender identities. Furthermore, Goffman's dimensions of gender display in advertisement are not consistently present in the studied illustrations, which suggests that women are less infantilised in editorial illustrations and that other frameworks of representations may be more appropriate for the future investigations of this artistic genre. Lastly, this study shows that the combination of gendered narratives and concepts allows for the depiction of ambiguous gender identities, whereas the absence of gender markers results in the identity being read as male. This is of particular importance for creators and publishers who aspire for more egalitarian and inclusive representation.

KEYWORDS:

gender representation, illustrations, visual culture, gender markers, The New Yorker

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1. Introduction

The representation of gender identities in visual culture has been of much interest in the social sciences for half a century, but has been more prominently revisited in recent years due to the increasing scrutiny of gender norms in society (Corda, 2016; Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020). Gender is argued to be a social construct that builds onto the binary classifications of feminine and masculine and reinforces the gendered separation of society (Butler, 1990/2007). Gender identities are thus said to be informed by social norms and performed in compliance with hegemonic ideals which, according to postmodern feminism, are dictated by patriarchal society (Hu et al., 2020). Visual culture constitutes and is constituted by social culture (Hall, 1980) from which follows that it both reflects and shapes social reality.

In his influential study on gender stereotypes in advertisement, Goffman (1988) asserts visual culture to “hyper-ritualise” (p.3) the social order by depicting its ‘ideal’. His findings have since served as an effective framework in subsequent research that discusses the value-laden hierarchy between male and female identities in visual culture (cf. Bell & Milić, 2002; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Kang, 1997). More recent empirical studies on children’s books criticise gender stereotyping in illustrations which they believe to decisively influence children’s understanding of gender concepts (Brugeilles et al., 2002; Capuzza, 2019; Yang, 2016). Assuming that visual culture perpetuates social structures such as gender hierarchies and influences social norms even in adult life (Goffman, 1988), representation can promote social inequality (Capuzza, 2019), as well as challenge rigid notions of femininity and masculinity in society (Nixon, 2013).

Whilst new media dominate visual culture (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018), illustrations are still ubiquitous and found in a variety of products, i.a., print media, product design and film (Association of Illustrators [AOI], n.d.), whose target audience is adults. Editorial illustrations have been argued to reflect the zeitgeist (Silverberg, 2012; Zeegen, 2009) and are thus artistic repositories of cultural history (National Museum of American Illustration [NMAI], n.d.) for social constructs such as gender representation. While illustrated children’s books play an important role in education and endeavour to socialise gender-based identities and social relationships (Brugeilles et al., 2002), editorial illustrations do not pursue these pedagogical ambitions. Instead, their myths are taken for granted because they confirm or challenge systems of representation already internalised by adults, which partly resembles the function of advertisement. Positioned between art and design (Zeegen, 2009), editorial illustrations have the freedom to address more mature and diverse topics than children’s book

illustrations without commodifying life to the same extent as advertisements, thus providing a more immediate commentary on social life. The question of gender frames in editorial illustrations, however, has not been subject to much empirical investigation thus far, which is why this study asks: How are gender identities represented in editorial illustrations and how have they evolved throughout the last century?

The majority of studies on children's book illustrations employ quantitative methods, focussing on the gender markers that define outward gendered appearances and activities. Nomothetic accounts, however, arguably fail to capture the changing social meaning of the visual cues that constitute gendered narratives and do not accommodate the nuanced concepts of social hierarchies. There is a recognisable trend of egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and blurring boundaries of femininity and masculinity in contemporary society (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). This liminal space enables new discourses to challenge the hegemonic system of representation through such nuanced changes in visual communication.

Hence, this study employs a qualitative content analysis in conjunction with semiotic analysis to examine editorial illustrations on their construction and representation of gender identities. This study assumes the meanings produced by cultural objects to reflect and shape Western social norms and thus focuses on the production of culture through visual culture. The illustrations under investigation were selected from the renowned magazine *The New Yorker* and were published between 1925 and 2023 which enabled a comparative approach to examine the evolution of gender representations over the last hundred years. This magazine's consistent usage of illustrated covers elevates its cultural standing, and as a precursor in the field of illustration (Gotthardt, 2017), it is influential in establishing genre conventions. Its reputation enhances the international distribution of the illustrations and the socio-cultural messages they contain.

In the following, the underlying theoretical concepts of previous literature which form the basis of this enquiry into gender representation are presented. The focus of this study is contextualised with socio-historical developments and the gendered concepts identified in visual culture relevant for the interpretation of the visual texts at hand. Subsequently, the presentation of the employed qualitative methods elucidates on the decisions made, followed by the report on the findings aided by specific visual examples from the sample. Finally, insights on gender constructions in editorial illustration are synthesised and discussed regarding their implications for arts and culture studies and artistic endeavours to advance egalitarian gender representations in visual culture. This research hopes to propose points of

reference for both producers and distributors of arts and culture, on how to promote equal gender display and thereby fruitfully contribute to the debate on gender representation.

2. Literature Review

Images are ubiquitous with everyday life and social meaning is generated through their circulation and consumption practices (Holt, 1997). Cartwright and Sturken (2018) describe visual culture as neither inherent to the imagery nor to individual interpretations, but as the culturally embedded interaction between cultural objects and consumers that elicits a shared meaning. Numerous sociological studies have examined these meaning-making processes; among them, counter-hegemonic accounts that provide important insights into visual representation. For example, feminist scholar Linda Nochlin (1999/2019) drew attention to the devaluing representations of women in paintings, whereas Laura Mulvey (1975) identified the objectification of women for the male spectator in film. This research assumes gender to be socially constructed and reproduced through (among others) visual culture. The concept of gender has, since its recognition as a social construct, enabled the study of the hierarchical and value-laden systems that govern the relationship between the masculine and the feminine in social and cultural contexts.

2.1. Defining moments: Key milestones in the history of American gender roles

Sociologist Ann Oakley (1985) first introduced *Gender* as the “social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (p.16) separate from biological sex. Butler (1990/2007) argues that behaviours have become artificially allocated to a specific sex, cementing the binary oppositions that underline traditional gender roles and sexuality. They debate how society’s expectation to conform to predetermined gender norms are internalised and revealed in gender performativity. Gendered behaviours that are forged by gender norms and stereotypes within the gender binary are presented as being in opposition to one another (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020), e.g., tender/rough, sensitive/hardened, weak/strong, active/passive, feminine/masculine. Goffman (1959) suggests that gender is performed as part of impression management on a front stage towards an audience. These accounts infer that gender identities and the “costumes” and “scripts” that pertain to them (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020, p.1119) are constructs asserted by societal values and are thus subject to change.

Gender roles in Western societies have drastically changed since the beginning of the 20th century and with it their depictions in cultural media (Corda, 2016). This section provides a brief overview of the socio-historical developments of the position of women and men in American society. This is a reconstruction of a specific part of history (VanSledright, 2004) on the basis of academic accounts that discuss issues and developments relevant for the

here-presented investigation. This study focuses on the United States (US) because its soft power (Nye, 1990) propagates American norms and conventions abroad (Strelitz, 2001) through its enormous export of cultural products and popular media (Ritzer & Ryan, 2004). More specifically, much of feminist writings on gender and society originating from American academia have shaped Western European ideas (Bracke et al., 2021), such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Consequently, some aspects of the social movements that fought for equal rights for men and women in the US partly influenced similar developments in other Western (European) societies (Bruley & Forster, 2016). However, this is not to claim that the US are representative of Western European countries or pioneered gender equality as Western societies do not present homogenous developments related to gender roles (Bracke et al., 2021).

The shifting ideals and realities of gender roles will be explained in intervals that connect to the four feminist waves. Feminist movements have been most successful in advancing gender equality, according to surveyed Americans (Horowitz & Igielniek, 2020). Although feminism predominantly focuses on the societal position of women, their place stands in relation to that of men as its binary opposite (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). It has been argued that cultural and economic disparities between men and women are the result of a patriarchal, i.e., male-dominated societal order (Randev, 2023) that disadvantages women and dictates the life of both women and men (Corda, 2016). Furthermore, it should be noted that the here-presented developments were not uniform and varied significantly based on class and race (Chafe, 1991). White (middle- and upper-class) performance of masculinity and femininity is assumed to be idealised in Western cultures where White is viewed as the default ethnicity (Brekhus, 2023a; Zerubavel, 2018). Consequently, the following discussion on gender roles will focus on the White middle to upper class in the United States as this demographic constitutes the majority of *The New Yorker's* readership and are therefore most relevant for this study.

2.1.1. First-wave feminism and post-WWII transformations

The early years of the 20th century were still influenced by the “Victorian ideal of the True Woman” (Corda, 2016, p.18) that reduced women to their roles as mothers and wives restricted to the domestic sphere. Men were responsible for the family's status in society through their profession and therefore occupied the public sphere. When larger demographics of women realised the oppressive nature of these norms, they began to fight for more rights.

This movement constituted the first wave of feminism which advocated for political equality (Evans & Chamberlain, 2014). The first wave encompassed mostly liberal and social feminists who worked within the existing social system to improve women's legal position and alleviate the existing oppression. Women increasingly entered the labour markets, especially during WWI to fill the labour gap left behind by men who were sent to the war front (Chafe, 1991). However, when men returned from the front to reclaim their jobs, women were pushed back into the domestic sphere (Corda, 2016).

After WWI women were finally admitted the right to vote in the US (Mayhall, 2023), and the improvement of women's position was not exclusively of bureaucratic nature, but also affected social norms. Female sexuality became less of a taboo (Chafe, 1991) and women's bodies were liberated of the constraining dress like the corset (Hollander, 1994/2016). The novel concept of the "New Woman" emerged in America's White middle class (Corda, 2016, p.21) and to this day typifies the woman of the 1920s, the "flapper" (Friedan, 1963/2010, p.80) with her loose dress and masculine short hair engaging in unfeminine behaviour like smoking and drinking (Corda, 2016). The flapper, however, remained an unrealistic portrayal of women produced by media to idealise the improvement of their political position in the 1920s, whereas the anticipated economic emancipation of women failed to materialise in American society at that time (Chafe, 1991).

Labour market participation grew only slightly and was mainly limited to unmarried women in 'feminine' occupations (Corda, 2016). Even though these constrictions were suspended during the manpower crisis of WWII, those newly acquired liberties were vehemently countered in the post-war period and the New Woman fell into disfavour (Chafe, 1991). Instead, patriarchal structures and traditional role allocations that resemble that of the True Woman were reinforced (Corda, 2016). Women were compelled to return to the domestic spheres and re-assume their roles as mothers, wives, (McLaughlin, 1988) and consumers (Jackson & Gee, 2005). This was heavily promoted by cultural outputs that popularised the 'American Housewife' aesthetic and White beauty standards of the blonde, thin (Corda, 2016), doll-like (Friedan, 1963/2010) woman in the 1950s. While modern fashion pre-war was defined by sculptural elements analogous for men and women, post-war re-mystified the female body with petticoats and corsets (Hollander, 1994/2016; Voss, 2021).

The prominence of traditional family values at this time, was accompanied by the so-called baby boom (McLaughlin, 1988). Nonetheless, married women increasingly entered the work force out of economic necessity, which aligned with romantic gender roles as it was viewed as service to the family (Chafe, 1991). Society's double standards towards women

were based on the expectation that women should ideally be modern but actually domestic. The feminist scientist Friedan (1963/2010) described this imposed domesticity as the “problem that has no name” (p.9) which mentally strained women as well as men.

2.1.2. Second-wave feminism

In the 1960s, those traditional gender roles were overturned during the sexual revolution ignited by second-wave feminism (Rampton, 2008/2015). Afforded by the socio-political unrest of the civil rights movements, it adopted a radical perspective scrutinising patriarchy and the traditional family to end “domestic slavery” (Davis, 1983, p.237). This heralded an increase of women in positions of power in organisations and governments (Chafe, 1991; Jackson & Gee, 2005). During these developments, feminism entered academia and some scholars dedicated their research to the representation (cf. Nochlin, 1999/2019) and objectification (cf. Mulvey, 1975) of women in and through visual culture. Popular film culture started to reflect this shift in power within gender roles and stopped insisting on the superiority of men (Corda, 2016).

The second feminist wave yielded the de-stigmatisation of women’s sexuality, the acceptance of reproductive rights, and afforded liberations of sexual fulfilment for both men and women in the 1970s (McLaughlin, 1988), a progress which was halted again in the 1980s (Chafe, 1991). A “new traditionalism” (Leslie, 1993, p.690) disapproved of working women even though it had been established as a norm (Chafe, 1991) and reintroduced the idea of female desirability for the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). Participating in the labour market was again an economic necessity, but women also increasingly worked in ‘male’ professions (Chafe, 1991). Yet, they were confronted with a duality of expectations to succeed in both caring for the family and holding an occupation (Chafe, 1991; Corda, 2016; McLaughlin, 1988). Men started to apply themselves more in the domestic realm as well, but women retained the position as primary caregivers (McLaughlin, 1988).

2.1.3. Third- and fourth-wave feminism

The “Millennium Woman,” however, stripped herself of the confines of traditional gender roles and had adopted a “completely new lifestyle in which clear-cut gender roles are no longer valid” (Corda, 2016, p.82). This was reflected in the rise of the casual dress code – “anti-fashion” – that had shed itself from any sexual or gendered associations (Hollander, 1994/2016). Third-wave feminism is linked to mid-90s post-colonial and post-modern

thinking (Rampton, 2008/2015), embracing diversity, deconstructing binary understandings of gender, and reclaiming derogatory language. Men largely also developed a more open attitude to the change of gender roles and adopted what were previously considered feminine traits, which according to Corda (2016) indicates that men, too, had been constrained by society's ideals of masculinity.

From the realisation that gender equality has not been achieved yet and the recognition of enduring patriarchal structures, a fourth wave of feminism emerged around 2010 (Mohajan, 2022; Rampton, 2008/2015). The relatively young movement reignited public discourse about anti-women violence and advocates for taking a stand against this violence publicly. It also brought the debate of intersectionality back into international focus (Rampton, 2008/2015) using social media platforms for activist dialogues (Evans & Chamberlain, 2014). It draws attention to the marginalisation of groups and genders that have been disregarded in previous feminist movements.

Even though women are indispensable actors in the workforce today, they still face obstacles that deny them equal opportunities and treatment today based on stereotypical gender roles (Randev, 2023). Surveys have found that most Americans today are even more dissatisfied with the status quo in relation to gender equality than a decade ago (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020). To this day, patriarchal ideas and structures in society persist despite the prominent acceptance of gender equality (Randev, 2023). In contemporary society, women often feel the need to defend their return to the domestic sphere, while men continue to dominate the public sphere (Corda, 2016). This dynamic reflects persistent gender biases, where women are still seen as inferior by men, and men feel pressured to demonstrate their value through their careers (Corda, 2016).

2.2. Gender representation in visual culture

Art is often argued to be a reflection of societal conditions and an expression of the zeitgeist (cf. Helsinger, 1994; Goffman, 1979), while others argue that cultural products can have such lasting effects that they shape societal structures (cf. Gerbner et al., 1986; Hall et al., 1978). Both approaches are rooted in Marxist theory and are more recently used to understand portrayals of social categories and change (Alexander, 2021). Although this study focuses on the reflective and productive forces of media, it must be acknowledged that within academic discourses, reflection and shaping approaches are sometimes criticised for oversimplifying the link between culture and society and removing agency from the artists

and audiences in the interpretation of culture (Alexander, 2021). Yet, images are active agents (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018) that both constitute and create culture (Hall, 1980). Even though the aforementioned arguments are plausible, it is still important to consider that visual culture borrows from social life and is very likely to affect people.

Schroeder and Zwick (2004) argue that images operate within systems of visual representation and create meaning beyond the intentions of the artist. They view advertising images as an “influential bodily representation in public space,” an exercise of power, and normativity (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p.23) that can henceforth partly explain gender norms. Artists impose their normative perceptions of gender onto an image while the image distributes them as norms among the audience. Even though the processes at play are more complex than simple reflection/shaping, since the interpretation of a message largely depends on the viewer (Hall, 1980), cultural texts possess a persuasive power that impacts society. Taking this into account, the focus of this study on the specific example of widely distributed media (i.e., editorial illustration) renders reflection and shaping approaches particularly relevant to answer the research question. To avoid oversimplification associated with those approaches, this study selects an individual case (a magazine) in which the specificity of audience (its readership) and context (sociohistorical environment) can be given special consideration.

Representation systems adhere to conventions (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018) that incorporate *myths* (Barthes, 1972) to communicate prevailing and seemingly natural ideologies. A myth is a cultural concept that is formed based on the (re)occurrence of the sign, such as the concept of femininity or masculinity. The attributes that connote femininity or masculinity are culturally contingent, but their proliferation renders them ostensibly universal and thereby configures a *myth* (Barthes, 1972). In his seminal study of advertisements, Goffman (1988) ascertained that gender displays allude to underlying social structures, making them a reflection as well as a “symptom” (p.9) of social hierarchies. Still images are tied to a narrative through visualised informative actions that allude to familiar social situations. Taking a structuralist approach, Goffman (1988) argues that the behavioural patterns of everyday social interactions become “hyper-ritualise[d]” (p.3).

Advertisers must resort to relatable, understandable, and therefore basic devices, i.e., conventions, which Goffman (1988) identifies as “intention display, microecological mapping of social structure, approved typification, and the gestural externalisation” of internal processes (p.27). These, he believes, depict idealisations of the relationship between the masculine and feminine which he decoded into the following dimensions: *relative size*,

the feminine touch, function ranking, the family, the ritualisation of subordination and licensed withdrawal (Goffman, 1988). *Relative size* refers to the expression of power dynamics through the height of characters. Men are usually depicted as taller with smaller women by their side and when the height difference is reversed it generates a comedic effect. This is related to *the ritualisation of subordination* that places women physically lower than men through furniture such as beds, seats, or floors. Subordination is also displayed through *function ranking*. In reference to occupational specialisations, men usually assume more active and instructive positions. When men are depicted in the domestic domain – traditionally the occupational realm of women – they do not interfere and are included as passive actors.

Portrayals of *the family* are reduced to the nuclear family that consists of mother, father, son, and daughter. Goffman highlighted the physical connections between fathers and sons and mothers and daughters respectively that symbolise special unities of symmetry between family members of the same gender. Furthermore, Goffman discovered that women are frequently depicted gently touching objects, others, or themselves, which communicates fragility as well as sensuality thus contrasting the utilitarian grasping or holding. *Licensed withdrawal* refers to emotional expressions and bodily stances that indicate, among others, shock, fear, shyness. These gestures present women as unoriented and dependent on the protection of others.

Goffman's findings have inspired numerous studies in the field of gendered media representation in the subsequent decades, much of which confirmed the persistence of value-laden gender display (cf. Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Kang, 1997) even though stereotypes have changed (Busby & Leichty, 1993). Similarly, Brugeilles and colleagues (2002) argue that children's book illustrations reinforce the gender hierarchies present among adults and thereby prevent the progression towards social equality between the binary genders among new generations. Visual culture, however, also has the potential to foster change in societal gender conventions. Nixon (2013) shows that advertisement can actively change notions of masculinity and the wider media has contributed to the construction of the "new age man" (Jackson & Gee, 2005, p.126) who partly moved to the domestic sphere and cares for children. This shows that gender politics are evolving, sexist stereotypes are being rejected, and the understanding of gender identities is moving beyond the binary, which is gaining more recognition in social discourses (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

2.3. Gender markers in visual culture

Meaning is constructed through symbolic functions of visual cues that represent larger societal concepts (Hall et al., 2013). Gender markers are manifold and can be separated into explicit and implicit markers. Drawing on Butler's (1990/2007) concept of gender performance and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach of the performativity of gender, Morgenroth and Ryan (2020) investigated the performance of gender from a psychological perspective and distinguish between "the *costume* one wears, the *scripts* one enacts, ... and the *stage* on which this performance takes place" (p.1119).

Empirical research on children's books has identified explicit markers of gender through quantitative content analyses. Connecting these findings with Morgenroth and Ryan's (2020) distinction of performance dimensions, it can be concluded that *costume* encompasses cultural attributes (van Leeuwen, 2011) like clothing and bodily attributes (Lindqvist et al., 2020) like hair length and breasts. They can be identified as explicit signifiers of gender in visual imagery and their allocation to a specific category is informed by cultural gender norms (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). Historian Anne Hollander (1994/2016) argues that clothes derive their cultural meaning from their associations with the gendered body. Yet, she emphasises that clothes do not define genders but describe the temporary relationship between them.

Social change has often been accompanied by fashion shifts (Newman, 2023; Voss, 2021) but rather than ousting previous conventions, their social meaning is changed (Hollander, 1994/2016). In her study on textbooks used at Hong Kong schools, Yang (2016) found female characters to be largely depicted with long hair and skirts, although women in Hong Kong often wear trousers and their hair short. While hair length and clothing do not consistently correspond with contemporary reality due to continuously evolving trends, she argued that these illustrations do not necessarily perpetuate gender stereotypes because women are also occasionally shown with short hair. Even though this study did not emerge from a strictly Western context, it offers valuable insights to better position the already discussed literature. More importantly, it shows how even subtle changes can imply a rejection and reformulation of stereotypes in visual culture.

Implicit markers refer to behaviours, traits, mannerism, postures, and positions and are comprised by what Morgenroth and Ryan (2020) call *scripts*. Like *costume*, *scripts* are shaped by gender stereotypes, but indicate socialised gender characteristics, such as activities and gestures, rather than outward appearances. Socialisation refers to the process of learning

roles, behaviours, and norms based on which individual beliefs are developed (Bourdieu, 1984/1987), that in turn form particular gender identities. Research on the activities that characters engage in found that girls and women are continuously depicted with caring responsibilities (Hamilton et al., 2006), while boys and men partake in more sporty activities (Jackson & Gee, 2005) in children's book illustrations. Goffman's (1988) qualitative study on advertisement showed that women are infantilised through size, gesture, and spatial positioning. Using theatre as a metaphor, he argues that the performance of a gender identity arises in a specific social context that dictates a certain script (Goffman, 1959).

To keep with the dramaturgical metaphor, visual culture circulates those performance props and scripts that are distinctive markers only in the context they emerge from. Associations attached to gender markers turn into learned behaviours (Bourdieu, 1984/1987), which becomes evident when considering illustrated animal characters in children's literature that are gendered through the application of gender markers (Hill & Jacobs, 2019). The reductive character of illustration requires a reliance on familiar concepts such as gender markers to communicate a message (Spaulding, 1956) and its narratives are most convincing when they cater to the viewer's ability to relate (Vara Sánchez, 2022). Books are said to be decisive "socializing agents" (Capuzza, 2019, p.326) that inform the internalisation of social gender concepts in children (Brugeilles et al., 2002; Yang, 2016). This internalisation, however, does not halt at a specific age but is subject to reproductions of gender throughout life (Butler, 1990/2007). The continuity of this socialisation process emphasises the importance of the examination of gender stereotypes in products of visual culture that are targeted towards mature audiences.

2.4. Illustration as a tool for representation

Despite common conception, illustrations as a medium are not exclusively directed at the readership of children. Historically neither popular culture nor high art, illustration frequently serves the purpose of cultural and political commentary and reaches all strata of society as it is not limited to the written word (Mainardi, 2017), which underlines its aesthetic as well as political "emplotment" (Rancière, 2010, p.115). The content of illustration is perceived as "analogical to reality" despite visual stylisation (van Leeuwen, 2011, Denotation). It is an expressive rendering of the zeitgeist and significantly contributes to the visual definition of a decade (Zeegen, 2009). Artists inevitably borrow from social reality as

they are social creatures that are specifically situated, and an artist produces ‘good’ art when simultaneously aware and unaware of their position as a social being (Rancière, 2010).

Especially in the first half of the 20th century, illustrations were an indispensable source of entertainment and cultural commentary that majorly influenced the public’s understanding of (inter)national events, society’s taste and morals (Zeegen, 2009). According to the National Museum of American Illustration, illustrations serve as a “reservoir of our social and cultural history” and “a chronicle of cultural change” (National Museum of American Illustration [NMAI], n.d.). Art editor of *The New Yorker* Françoise Mouly agrees that “you can get a very nuanced portrait of the society in images” (Silverberg, 2012). It follows that socio-historical changes are salient in illustrated depictions of social life. Often linked to comics and caricatures, illustration has evolved into a distinct artistic discipline (Zeegen & Fenton, 2012) characterised by a particular visual vocabulary and genre-specific conventions. The following comparison of editorial illustration with art and advertisement allows for the understanding of its position within the systems of visual representation. Although the demarcation between these genres is not strictly delineated, the relation of editorial illustration to both is valuable to reveal its role within the field of visual culture.

Used, among other areas of consumption, in journalism and for (book) covers (AOI, n.d.), illustrations pursue a specific goal, which ranges from educational to commercial (Zeegen, 2009). Cover illustrations notably influence book choices (Brugeilles et al., 2002) and define a magazine’s identity (Mouly, 2000), and are thus crucial instruments to target specific audiences, introduce the content, and indicate political colour. The well-known idiom “Don’t judge a book by its cover” suggests that audiences indeed assess the content and quality by the aesthetic appearance of the book or magazine. A book’s aesthetic prompts associations and emotional reactions (Zeegen, 2009) which resembles the workings of advertisement. Like advertisement, illustrations are *artistic* and *socio-political artefacts* (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004), which situates illustrations within a system of visual representation that operates between aesthetics and politics (Rancière, 2010). The most obvious difference between (most) advertisement and illustration today arises from the use of media. Advertisement inflicts a “photographic fallacy” (Goffman, 1988, p.20) which means that photos convince the audience of their unquestionable truth through realistic reproductions of reality, while illustrations are mostly drawn or painted and thus posited as a distinctively artistic reproduction of reality.

Whereas the primary motive of advertisement is the commodification of lifestyles (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004), traditional art has been viewed to (harmlessly) mimic social

reality more than shape it (Rancière, 2010). The artistic nature of illustrations thus arguably conceals their commercial motives and opens their messages up to diverse interpretation. Assuming that social interactions are less “hyper-ritualise[d]” (Goffman, 1988, p.3) in art than in advertisement, the reproduction of social and cultural norms in illustrations must be more subtle. Consequently, illustrations are less subject to suspicion because they are considered art more than visual “interpellation” (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018, p.52) from which follows that a single illustration possesses the power to shape worldviews more unobtrusively. It can then be deduced that editorial illustrations not only have the capacity to promote social norms and cultural lifestyles like advertisement but also the freedom to play with different forms of representation that exceed ruling systems like art (Rancière, 2010).

While artists and distributors define the value-laden messages instilled on illustrations, cultural products also partly define their producers, consumers, and distributors through interpellation. Cartwright and Sturken (2018) apply Althusser’s concept of interpellation to visual culture to explain how cultural products shape the social subject “into a particular ideological position” by telling “them their place in the system” (p.438) while still acknowledging the viewer’s agency and the polysemy of meanings. Consequently, cultural objects – operating within a specific social framework – produce people who hold particular beliefs and engage in certain actions. For example, consuming certain periodicals such as *Time Magazine*, *Der Spiegel*, and *The New Yorker* characterises its audience as progressive or intellectually elitist. Cultural products project their cultural status and ideological position onto their consumers, and it is thus, that the research on cover illustrations is particularly meaningful.

3. Research Question

As has been established, visual culture reinforces social hierarchies. Studies on children's books show that illustrations often reproduce gender inequalities by reiterating binary stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. Moreover, the internalisation of gender norms occurs throughout life and structuralist approaches demonstrate that advertisement builds on hyper-ritualised portrayals of men and women which reflect and shape value regimes prevalent in society. Stereotypical representations have been found to persist despite feminist efforts to change these narratives. Illustrations are complicit in these processes. They rely on genre conventions and stylised markers to convey meaning. Visual culture is inevitably ideology-laden but cover illustrations of magazines interpellate their consumers less overtly than advertisement. It follows that editorial illustrations are simultaneously products and producers of worldviews. The considerations of the role of illustration in the system of visual representation and the evolution of gender politics make the investigation of social norms conveyed through products of visual culture targeted at adults invaluable.

The representation of gender in editorial illustration for mature audiences has received limited attention in arts and culture studies and is therefore addressed here through the question: How are gender identities represented in editorial illustrations and how have they evolved throughout the last century? Using the case of cover illustrations of *The New Yorker* magazine, this study examines the symbolic representation of masculine and feminine genders in illustrated print media. This research seeks to demonstrate how gender is constructed and has changed in illustrated visual culture throughout time, which may prove useful as points of reference for artists to advance the discourse of gender equality through representation. Additionally, it aims to generate guiding principles for future studies and artistic examinations of the possible portrayals of gender identities to extend understandings of femininity and masculinity. Only when mechanisms of gender stereotyping have been identified, can they be avoided or challenged to foster an equal treatment of masculine and feminine bodies and those who do not identify as either – not only within visual culture but also society.

4. Research Design

4.1. Methodological approach

For the study of gender representation in editorial illustrations, a qualitative content analysis was conducted to discover underlying meanings and patterns (Altheide, 2000). The iterative process of inductive mechanisms (Mayring, 2000) accommodated to study both reflection and shaping approaches (Alexander, 2021) on a micro-level (Bryman, 2012, p.408). Although the analysis was informed by the conventions identified in previous research (cf. Goffman, 1988; Yang, 2016), they serve as a starting point given the limited research available on editorial illustrations. A qualitative approach was employed to investigate the research question that asks: How are gender identities represented in editorial illustrations and how have they evolved throughout the last century? A qualitative method allows for some flexibility in interpretation necessary to engage with the different layers of meaning immanent in illustrated imagery and a critical hermeneutic approach to the method of analysis enforces a sensitivity to the socio-historical context they were produced in (Phillips & Brown, 1993).

To extract and interpret ideologically and socially charged messages, semiotic analysis was used to explore the possible meanings held by visual texts (Bell & Milić, 2002). Central to the question of representation is the language of symbols. Borrowed from linguistics, Saussure's approach of semiotics has been applied to a variety of cultural objects and practices (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018; Hall, 2013). Accordingly, meaning is not inherent to a sign but engendered by its difference to another sign, i.e., its binary opposite (Alexander, 2021). Applied to the subject under study, the representation of women becomes meaningful when considered in relation to that of men and vice versa. Barthes (1972) added onto Saussure's synergy of signifiers and signified in the sign through his conception of the *myth*. Visual texts entail myths that connote cultural values and societal norms, and their ideological meanings are naturalised (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018). Thus, the employed analysis leveraged the differences between the portrayals of men and women and those within each gender category across a specific time frame to access the ideologies they communicate.

Uncovering hidden meanings lies at the core of the here-proposed enquiry into gender representation in editorial illustrations which renders semiotic analysis the most appropriate method for answering the research question with the material at hand. This study concentrates on the cultural objects and the systems that generated them. In line with that, comparative

approach was employed to trace the relationships between the gender binaries and their development in representation over time. This approach facilitated the understanding of changes in illustrated visual culture. Jackson and Gee's (2005) approach compared gender portrayals in children's books across a period of 50 years and contextualised their findings historically. Similarly, the here-presented study compared gendered narratives in illustrations published throughout the last century and considered their socio-historical nexus.

4.2. Sample

To investigate (the evolution of) gender representation in editorial illustrations, this study focuses on the illustrations of one particular magazine; *The New Yorker's* (TNY) illustrated covers hold a unique position in the world. The magazine, featuring a wide range of literary and cultural formats, is eminent for its cover illustrations and has become a vital contributor to the cultural landscape of arts and media communication (Mouly, 2000). Various artists with a diverse range of styles enrich the covers to avoid a predictable house style (Mouly, 2000) and for illustrators worldwide, designing the cover of TNY has become a prestigious achievement, the illustrator's "holy grail" (Gotthardt, 2017). Despite technological advances in photography since its inception in 1925, the magazine persists in using illustrations for its front page to this day (Mouly, 2000). The periodical's commitment to the medium makes it particularly suitable for tracing how symbolic representations in illustrated media respond to the changing discourse on gender norms.

TNY's reputation enhances the international distribution of the illustrations and the value-laden messages they contain. The magazine has a wider reach and more influence in shaping the artistic discourse than the aforementioned children's books. Moreover, it maintains its societal relevance by actively engaging with and commenting on contemporary social reality and current events. Akin to advertisement, TNY sells a certain lifestyle which requires the appropriation of assumptions about the feminine and the masculine. Yet, the interpellation of the magazine's illustrations is more latent than that of advertisement because they are viewed as artworks (Mouly, 2000).

TNY is an influential magazine (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004) with the reputation to be progressive, favouring culturally and politically left positions (Huitsing, 2024; Jessica, 2013). The magazine has a largely high-educated, politically well-informed, and comparatively affluent liberal readership (Pew Research Center, 2012) and it has been criticised to be elitist as its distinct literary voice presumes a certain level of intellect (Jessica, 2023). While slightly

more men read TNY, this majority is reported as being negligible (Pew Research Center, 2012). The reason why the readership is relevant in view of the here-presented topic is its allocation among the cultural and intellectual elite of the Western world. Its status as a world-renowned (The New Yorker, n.d.) influential (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004) and iconic American magazine (Jessica, 2023) equally consumed by men and women makes it a precursor of cultural taste. Particularly the last point makes the study of the TNY's covers important for the discourse on arts and culture. The magazine's independence and commitment to contemporariness (Silverberg, 2012) pushes aesthetic and political boundaries that shape broader conversations of (visual) communication. With its aspiration to progressiveness, it is ideally suited to analysing the representation of gender identities with a shaping and reflection approach.

To counteract the monolithic presentation of societal developments, a homogeneous audience, and editorial illustration, the situatedness of TNY in the cultural-political landscape of the US is being considered. It must thus be acknowledged that the magazine reflects a certain version of social reality. Similarly, the here-presented paper discusses the evolution of gender roles within the social reality addressed by the magazine without claiming universality. This study takes reflection and shaping perspectives into account as they are viewed to work in reciprocity in order to understand representations of genders in editorial illustrations in the specific context of TNY. The examples drawn from this influential magazine are meant to be illustrative, not representative of editorial illustration in general.

4.3. Sampling strategy

The units of analysis are the cover illustrations of TNY. The American magazine is published on average 47 times a year since 1925, which means that the sampling frame encompasses over 4.500 issues. To facilitate a comparative analysis, all decades in the past 98 years were represented equally in the sample. This mitigated overrepresentation which would cause the information of one decade to skew the results. To properly assess the representation of gender identities and how they evolve throughout the last century, the sampling frame was drawn from 1925 to 2023.

The sample comprises nine issues from a single year in each decade since 1925 in ten-year increments. This means that nine issues were drawn from the year 1925, the next nine from 1935, then nine from 1945, and so forth. Due to the publication date of this paper, the most recent decade was investigated on the basis of the issues published in 2023 instead

of 2025. The sample thus consists of 99 cover illustrations of TNY from each decade since its inception to assure a level of theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2012, p.421) that yields comprehensive results to contribute new insights to the limited existing research on editorial illustration in arts and culture studies. Contrasting illustrations from eleven different decades with each other rendered conventions more apparent. The ten-year distance between the individual decades from which the units of analysis were drawn elevated the contrast and rendered the gradual and subtle changes observable, while still covering significant turning points in the evolution of gender roles (Mohajan, 2022).

The units of analysis were accessed and obtained through TNY online archive which contains every issue ever published in digitised form. The selection of the issues was executed in two steps: Firstly, nine issues, i.e., nine covers were chosen at random per selected year (1925, 1935, 1945, etc). An online random number generator (<https://numbergenerator.org/randomnumbergenerator>) was used to select eleven numbers between 1 and 47 which was repeated nine times to obtain a sample of 99 illustrations. These eleven numbers determined the numbers of the issues selected in every decade from 1925 to 2023 respectively in nine rounds. Due to the absence of volume numbers in the issues, the publications were manually counted from the first publication listed in the respective year category in the online archive. Even though random sampling methods are conventionally reserved for quantitative studies, they were employed in this step to mitigate a confirmation bias in the selection of the units of analysis.

Secondly, if the selected cover depicted humans or anthropomorphic animals, it was admitted to the sample. If it did not, it was rejected in favour of the previous issue that featured a character and was not already part of the sample. Despite the randomisation, the considerations implemented in the selection process indicate the use of purposive sampling methods for a theoretical sample (Bryman, 2012, p.420). The sampled illustrations were drawn from TNY online archive and stored digitally for their subsequent analysis.

4.4. Operationalisation

To investigate the constructs of gender in editorial illustrations and their change throughout the century, the analysis was operationalised into *narrative*, *conceptual*, and *interactive* elements of representation inspired by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) framework to interpret denotated and connotated meanings (Barthes, 1972, 1977) embedded in visual culture. Given the limited analytical accounts on editorial illustrations, this study

draws on nomothetic and idiographic findings in children's book illustrations (Jackson & Gee, 2005; Yang, 2016), discoveries in advertisement (Goffman, 1988; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). By integrating these studies into the framework devised by Kress and van Leeuwen (2020), this analysis establishes a coherent foundation to identify symbolic representation in editorial illustrations.

Narrative structures (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) address the activity and passivity of the participating characters in certain contexts. It also allows for the consideration of majority and minority ratio used to single out characters. Activity as well as the specific activities the subjects are engaged in have been argued to denote gender constructs (Jackson & Gee, 2005). When interpreting narrative representation, subjects can be related to spatial conventions assigned to femininity and masculinity. For example, drawing on an earlier study on Sexual Health promotion conducted by one of the authors (cf. Jewitt, 1997), Jewitt and Oyama (2011) illustrate how women were more assertive of their sexual control in, a. o., domestic and men in urban settings in the promotional leaflets. Jewitt and Oyama (2011) present an image promoting condoms that show a man and a woman embracing each other in a car. In the image, the man, who sits behind the steering wheel, is said to have control not only over the car but also the sexual encounter indicated by the condoms in his pocket. The authors argue that this dynamic changed in narratives that take place in the domestic sphere in which women possess more control. The illustrations of TNY were therefore analysed based on whether women or men are in the majority or protagonists in the narratives, who is involved in active or passive actions, whether these take place outside or inside, and what this reveals about gender roles.

Conceptual representations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) elucidate symbolic and attributive embodiments of the characters, which is important as bodies “[take] on knowledge of maleness and femaleness” (Jackson & Gee, 2005, p.122). These were assessed based on the portrayals of *costume* and *script* (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). As has been elaborated above, costume refers to cultural and bodily attributes such as body shape, hair, and clothing, since those have been found to be principal markers by which gender identities are signified in children's book illustrations (Jackson & Gee, 2005; Yang, 2016) and advertisement (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Furthermore, the concepts of *relative size*, the *nuclear family*, *rituals of subordination*, *function ranking*, the *feminine touch*, and *licensed withdrawal* which Goffman (1988) identified in advertisement informed the investigations of the composition of bodies, which have been found to connote gender norms. These seemingly neutral manifestations assume cultural meanings (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018) and contain messages

of symbolic power that can expose the reproduction or defiance of power dynamics prevalent in society. This is particularly relevant for the assessments of stereotypes because illustrations, due to their graphical restrictedness, simplicity, and stylisation, rely on visual conventions to be intelligible (Goffman, 1988). This means that the illustrated figures were analysed in terms of their size, position, posture, and gestures regarding their interpretative potential for the notion of femininity and masculinity as well as for gender role conventions.

Lastly, *interactive elements* as described by Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) situate the viewer to the visual and have been assessed through the perspectives used in the illustration and the inclusion of the viewer in the narrative, for example through the direct gaze of an illustrated character to the viewer as if to establish eye contact. Goffman (1988) argued that the viewer-subject relation is conventionally employed to manipulate the symbolic position of the subject. Characters viewed from above position the viewer metaphorically superior to the illustrated subjects and vice versa, altering the meaning of the depicted visual narrative. Even though the examination of *interactive elements* was part of the initial steps of the analysis, they have been found to be nonrepresentational for understanding gender identities and their evolution throughout time. It was ascertained that interactive elements did not exhibit significant patterns that inform the construction of gender identities neither within nor across the decades. The decision was thus made to exclude their discussion in this paper because narrative and conceptual structures yielded sufficient information to exhaust the investigation of gender representations in the sampled illustrations.

Moreover, TNY covers normally only contain the title of the magazine, date, and price in its unique font. Any additional text is embedded in the illustration and serves its narrative which is why it was viewed as integral to the illustration. The here-defined layers substantially benefit the study of gender representation in visual culture due to their sensitivity to latent information and their ability to provide profound insights into the symbolic relationship between femininity and masculinity. They assist the inquiry of how conventions have evolved through the comparison of focal points concluded by previous studies on gender norms in visual communication.

4.5. Data analysis

The three moments for a critical hermeneutic approach outlined by Phillips and Brown (1993) served as a basis for structuring the analytical process which was recorded on five documents: (1) an overview of all units of analysis, (2) coded narrative and conceptual

elements, (3) connotations by illustration, (4) cover illustrations arranged by decade, (5) and conventions by decade. The process of data collection and analysis on these levels will be chronologically elaborated on in the following for the purpose of transparency (Bryman, 2012, p.406).

The *socio-historical moment* involved the investigation of the socio-historical context in relation to the evolution of gender roles in American society, as well as the discussion of the distributor and recipients of the illustrations, i.e. TNY magazine and its liberal readership, which has been outlined above. Furthermore, the illustrations were labelled with their sample number, date of publication, name of artist, title (if applicable), and a description of the image in a data set (1) (Appendix A). It must be noted that the individual artists have not been examined in detail, as the commissioning and distributing role of the magazine substantially determines the production and publication of its illustration.

In the *formal moment*, the data set (1) containing the profile information of each illustration was completed with notations on the prominent colours, drawing media used, and a first impression of narrative and conceptual elements to generate an overview of all illustrations. To avoid findings in earlier cover illustrations leading to a bias in the analysis of later published work, the steps of the analysis were initially subdivided into nine rounds in which eleven issues – one of each decade from 1925 to 2023 – were interpreted and compared with each other. It followed that the sampled illustrations in the overviews as well as the analytical documents were arranged in the same order. In other words, the illustrations were not grouped by year of publication but by sample rounds (cf. Appendix A).

Using Atlas.ti (2), the visual cues for narrative and conceptual structures outlined in the operationalisation were used to code the visual texts. Simultaneous to the coding process, signs were identified and complemented with their possible connotative meanings (van Leeuwen, 2011) on each illustration individually to preserve the images' polysemic nature (Cartwright & Sturken, 2018; Goffman, 1988) in a separate document (3) (Appendix B.1). Yet, to ensure consistency in the interpretations, this step required an iterative return (Bryman, 2012, p.386) to previously analysed illustrations. This document followed the same order as the previous overview with the aim to preserve some objectivity towards all decades, but also to allow for the emergence of patterns through the repeated return to each decade by means of illustrations from alternating decades. The subdivision into nine rounds enabled the in-depth examination of each illustration necessary to identify the markers and structures employed to construct gender identities and facilitated a great familiarisation with the data. A

code tree was constructed (Appendix C) to visualise relationships between the observations and formulise conventions.

Eventually, it became evident that this subdivision impeded to a certain extent the recognition of patterns within the decades and consequently the comprehensive understanding of their evolution across the decades. Thus, the sampled illustrations were rearranged in their visual form into their respective decade in a new document (4) which facilitated the visual and contextual understanding of the individual decades before cross-referencing the emerging patterns. An additional document (5) allowed for the report on the patterns prevalent in each decade on the basis of the visual cues that constitute narrative and conceptual structures (Appendix B.2). The identified patterns relied on the codes and notations made in the previous steps of the analysis. At this point, it became evident that *interactive elements* do not substantially contribute to the construction of gender representations, which has been elaborated above.

The *interpretation-reinterpretation moment* commenced after all decades had been analysed and consisted of the synthesis of the first two moments. The analysis (5) was expanded on by information on the socio-historical context in the respective decades. The findings of narrative and conceptual structures were discussed in relation to their socio-historical links (Appendix B.2). The findings were compared across the decades based on the narratives and concepts of gender constructions and how they changed throughout the century in relation to socio-historical developments of gender norms in America. This step required a return to the original data for additional coding as new patterns were recognised and compositions of posture, position, and gesture needed to be analysed in more detail to exhaustively investigate Goffman's (1988) dimensions of gender display discussed above.

The here described records present how much attention was paid to the individual illustrations and their different layers of interpretation as well as the efforts made to take an all-encompassing approach. Necessitated by the relatively broad research aim with a large sample, the structured and rigorous realisation of the here-presented investigation was executed to mitigate information loss on all levels of analysis.

4.6. Ethical considerations

The data sources are covers from TNY which are publicly accessible and therefore do not infringe on issues of privacy and confidentiality. A high level of authenticity of the illustrated covers is provided through the sourcing from the magazine's own online archive.

Considering the age of some of the illustrated covers, it must however be noted that their digitised copies occasionally exhibit aging effects or scan marks, which means that some colours may have lost their vibrancy due to their long-term storage and exposure to light.

Furthermore, the covers consist of artworks that are protected by the Copyright Act. The copyrights to TNY cover illustrations are primarily owned by the mass media company Condé Nast and some are owned by the artists themselves. It is thus that the Condé Nast office had been contacted prior to the submission of this thesis to assess the necessity for obtaining a licence to publish the illustrations. However, due to the investigative nature of this paper, the presentation of the illustrations is permitted according to the Fair Use Code. Thus, issues of copyright and ownership have been addressed and accommodated through the proper accreditation of the illustrations. No further concerns regarding the preservation of ethical standards emerged.

4.7. Reflection

It must be noted that I, the researcher, am a trained illustrator myself. While this explains my interest in this subject, it may have determined a bias towards the illustrations which has been mitigated by the careful consideration of the sampling strategy. More importantly, this expertise provides me with insider knowledge about technical and conceptual issues within the discipline of illustration (Greene, 2014). Having been trained professionally also equips me with the ability to read not only visual, but more specifically illustrated imagery critically. Consequently, the sensitivity to the perspective of the artists behind the works here discussed and their audience ensures an informed interpretation.

Furthermore, I am not American but grew up in Germany. Some of the cultural symbols embedded in the illustrations may thus have been subject to misinterpretation or neglect. TNY, however, caters to a larger audience than those residing in New York City and is aware of its growing international readership. It follows that the cover illustrations are chosen to engage both local, national, and international viewers. Having said this, the limited familiarity with the socio-cultural setting of the city did not obstruct the investigation of gender identities and norms communicated by the visual texts, as they function based on a similar system of assumptions that prevail in other Western cultures. Moreover, the duality of positions allows for a distance that benefits a critical examination of the matter (Greene, 2014).

Lastly, it must be taken into account that I am a woman, which poses a critical threat to the validity of this study. As a woman who grew up in the 21st century, my ideas about gender norms have been informed by egalitarian ideals endorsed by postmodern feminism. Consequently, the here-presented study may be influenced by feminist ideologies that have been internalised by the researcher. This has been actively countered by a repeated reflection on the balance and proportionality of the analysed and reported findings.

5. Results

In the following, the findings that emerged from the analysis of 99 cover illustrations of *The New Yorker* (TNY) will be presented. The research question that these results aim to answer is: How are gender identities represented in editorial illustrations and how have they evolved throughout the last century? The representation of gender identities has been investigated based on *narrative* and *conceptual structures* in relation to socio-historical developments in the US since 1925 that inform gender norms. Narratives were investigated based on the division of activities, as well as allocations of majority and protagonism among men and women in the sampled cover illustrations. The conceptual elements that constitute femininity and masculinity in editorial illustration were examined on the basis of the gender markers *costume* (clothes) and *script* (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020) (gestures) with respect to Goffman's (1988) dimensions of gender display. Lastly, this paper discusses *gender ambiguity*, i.e., how equivocal visual cues can impede the identification of gender identities in TNY cover illustrations.

5.1. Narrative structures

5.1.1. Narratives of gender roles

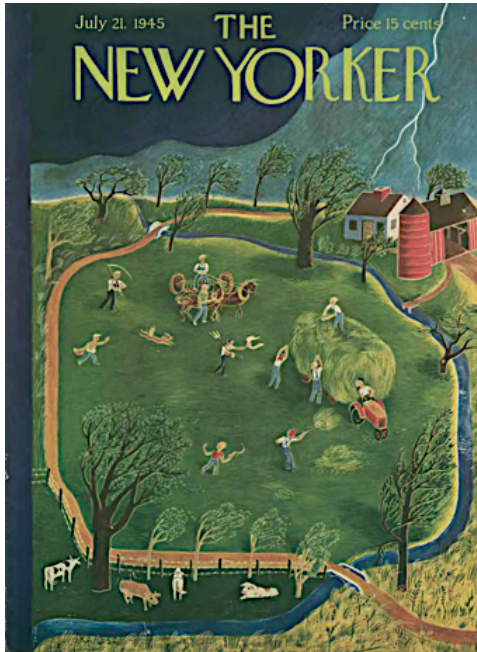
Narrative structures in visual culture are constituted by the activities characters engage in, in which spaces they are passive or active, and who is in the majority. Images are a snapshot of events unfolding as part of a narrative that connote social norms prevalent in society (Goffman, 1988). The observations that have been made in the sample are presented first to provide an overview of the evolution of gender representation throughout the century, followed by their interpretation in connection to socio-historical developments.

The sampled covers from 1925 predominantly portray women and it is noticeable that most of them play a more active role than their male counterparts despite then-held assumptions about the inferior position of women in society. Men and women both engage in play and conspicuous leisure, such as sports, gambling, cabaret, and drinking. Individual women are prominently depicted in bold shapes at the centre of the illustrations. On the covers on which women occupy most of the canvas, men seem to be ousted to the background as secondary characters, if depicted at all.

Women continue to be in the majority on the covers from 1935 and most of their narratives centre around women in their roles as mothers or wives. Three out of nine illustrations show groups of exclusively women, occasionally accompanied by children.

Figure 1

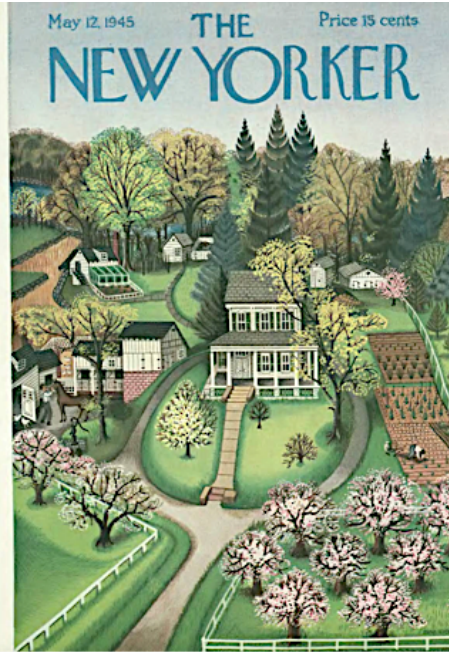
July 21, 1945



Note. Illustration by Ilonka Karasz. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 2

May 12, 1945



Note. Illustration by Edna Eicke. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

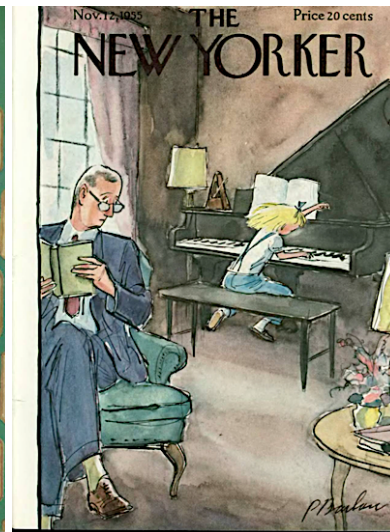
While two of those illustrations show women minding children in urban environments, the third depicts a wedding procession (Figure 28). When characters of both genders are depicted in one illustration, they are mostly arranged as a couple.

The vast majority of characters on the covers from 1945 are men, and women have been relinquished from their roles as the protagonists in most illustrations. While the narratives focus on men, they are almost always depicted in larger groups of men, or as the head of a family. Men take on characteristically ‘male’ positions and activities such as that of the soldier, gambling, and three out of the nine sampled illustrations in 1945 depict scenes of men performing farm labour in the countryside (Figure 1 and 2). The salient descriptions of the simple life in the idyll of the countryside in 1945 is remarkable considering the focus of the magazine’s content is the coverage of cultural events and social life in vibrant New York City. The instances in which men are the only male adult, they play a father. Women continue to be depicted in the role of the mother, but now as part of the *nuclear family* (Goffman, 1988), which will be further elaborated on below.

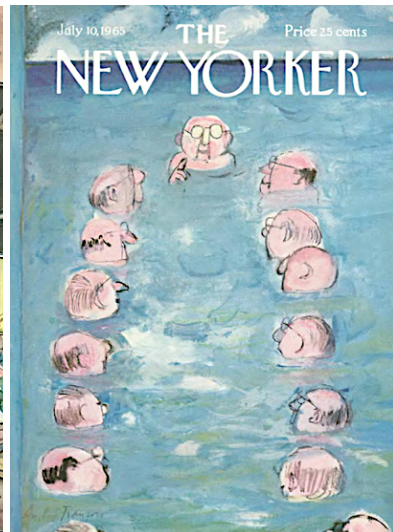
After having already been released from the role as protagonists in 1945, women primarily appear as passive participants in the illustrated narratives in 1955. While men are active and productive engaging in activities leisure, women tend to children, accompany their

Figure 3*April 2, 1955*

Note. Illustration by Rea Irvin.
Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 4*November 12, 1955*

Note. Illustration by Perry Barlow.
Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

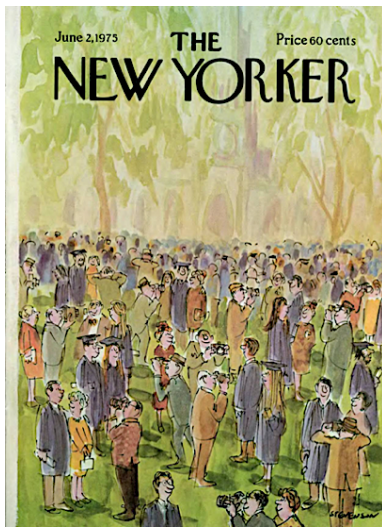
Figure 5*July 10, 1965*

Note. Illustration by Perry Barlow.
Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

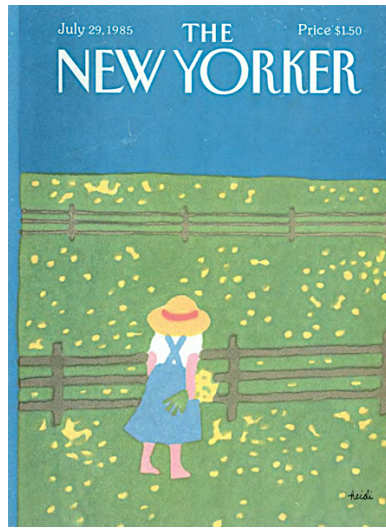
husbands or wait for them to return home. An illustration in 1955 (Figure 3) depicts a repetitive sequence of daily events in the life of, what can be assumed to be, a married couple. The protagonist is the man who kisses his wife goodbye in the first tile, then stands in public transport, sits at a desk to work, travels back by public transport, and lastly, kisses his wife again. The woman has long blond hair and wears heels and a dress, covered by an apron. The affection depicted as a kiss between the man and woman indicates that this woman is not an employee but the wife. She only appears at the beginning and the end of every row, and her only activity is kissing the man. Even though she is not an employee, she stands in servitude of the man. The apron alludes to the domestic labour she performs without being explicitly depicted. Conversely, the man's depiction in the home does not indicate any active participation in the domestic sphere.

Another illustration which appears in the same year strengthens the notion of men's passivity in the home constructed by narrative elements. In Figure 4, a father sitting in an armchair in the living room, is torn from his book as his daughter plays the piano with excessive enthusiasm. The father is not attentive to his daughter but rather annoyed that her piano performance interrupts his reading time.

The patterns visible in 1955 partly continue in the sampled illustrations from 1965; female characters are exclusively depicted in the harmonious company of men or as part of a larger group. While two covers depicting women in the company of a men render them as wives, only one of the four narratives that include larger groups addresses their roles as

Figure 6*June 2, 1975*

Note. Illustration by James Stevenson. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 7*July 29, 1985*

Note. Illustration by Heidi Goennel. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 8*March 11, 1985*

Note. Illustration by Charles Saxon. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

mothers (Figure 13). The remaining narratives include women as independent individuals partaking in the same activities as their male counterparts, like consuming art and nature, walking down the streets of New York City, or sunbathing. Three illustrations depict only men, wherein one male figure always takes the position of the protagonist, and other men seem to play supporting roles. The most important change in this decade occurs concerning the depiction of men. All illustrations that prominently feature a male character as protagonist do so with a satirical undertone. In Figure 5, a group of White elderly men convene in the ocean. They are arranged in a formation that is reminiscent of a long conference table and all men turn their heads towards the one at the end of the imaginary table raising his finger as if they were holding a council.

In the following decade 1975, the illustration's narratives show women and men engaging in a variety of activities, and even more covers portray larger groups than in the previous decade. Men continue to constitute the majority of characters depicted, and only one illustration has women taking on the roles of mothers: Figure 6 shows a scene of proud parents photographing their graduating children, many of whom are young women. Having said that, the relationships between men and women are generally less discernible than in the decades before.

For the first time again since 1935, female protagonists are in the majority in the illustrations sampled from 1985 and many covers present single individuals rather than groups. The activities men and women take part in are similar and always occur outside the

Figure 9

Sweet Nothings,
May 8, 1995



Note. Illustration by Jacques de Loustal. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 10

Debut on the Beach,
June 13 & 20, 2005



Note. Illustration by Ana Juan. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 11

Early Start
May 25, 2015



Note. Illustration by Carter Goodrich. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

home. More importantly, nature appears in six out of the nine illustrations, for example, a woman picks flowers in a field in Figure 7, or a man walks into his lush greenhouse with a tray of seedlings in Figure 8.

The majority of characters on the cover illustrations in 1995 are male but both women and men engage in a more diverse range of dynamic activities than in the previous decade, such as running, skating, and swimming. While the conspicuously dynamic compositions of all sampled illustrations provide women with unprecedented agency, they render even sitting men more active compared to previous depictions of female passivity. Although four out of the seven illustrations that contain women portray them as mothers or partners, women appear at this point to be much more independent. For example, Figure 9 shows a couple having a romantic dinner at a chic restaurant with live music but the men and woman both are on their phones and not talking to one another.

In 2005, the sampled cover illustrations contain a much higher representation of men who are also portrayed as the protagonists in the narratives. Male characters engage in more energetic activities than women, for example biking, playing ball or an instrument in an orchestra. The one illustration, however, that stands out is *Debut on the Beach* (Figure 10) which displays a female reinterpretation of Eustace Tilley. To identify this as the second female rendition of the dandy in the history of the magazine, research had to be expanded beyond the sample. While the iconic TNY character was featured on the magazine's first

issue in 1925 and every anniversary issue since, its first female reinterpretation appeared in 1996. Instead of a suit, top hat, and monocle, the female Tilley wears a bikini, a large hat, and holds sunglasses in her hand, in the here-presented illustration. Yet, this example remains an exception of female prominence in this decade of the collected sample.

The covers from 2015 focus more on the experiences of women than those in 2005. Women are back in the majority as protagonists of most images and actively shape the narratives. However, they do so again as mothers or wives, particularly evident in *Early Start* (Figure 11) which depicts a mother stretching in the park next to her baby in a runner's stroller in the early morning as indicated by the title. In this process, she is, however, depicted in a hypersexualised position (Götz & Eckhardt Rodriguez, 2017) in which her buttocks and slim waist are the focal point of the illustration.

In 2023, women and men are represented to almost equal amounts, but men engage in more active movements than women, such as playing sports, or delivering packages. Most female protagonists are young women sitting, reading, and daydreaming. However, more covers present individual women as protagonists of the narrative while men are more often part of a group. This division of activity and passivity accompanied by the fact that three illustrations feature female protagonists resembles the structures observed in 2005. Even though the portrayal of ethnicities is not the focus of this paper, it must be acknowledged that the representation of people of colour has increased drastically in 2023. Four out of nine sampled covers depict people of colour, sometimes even in the majority.

5.1.2. Contextual traces in narratives of gender

Through comparative analysis it was possible to contrast the illustrated covers with each other across the decades to discover patterns within their systems of representation in correlation with their socio-historical context. It is undeniable that the representation of women has evolved towards a more egalitarian understanding of their position in society since the beginning of the 20th century, but in which aspects of representation this evolution transpires will be discussed in the following. The presentation of the findings within narrative structures primarily focuses on the depiction of women since their portrayal is tightly connected to that of men. Representational meaning emerges from the difference between the binary opposites and the social position of one has implications for that of the other.

For a long time, American society functioned based on the gendered separation of the domestic and the public sphere: Women were assumed to attend to duties at home while men

were expected to financially sustain the family (Chafe, 1991). Allocation of these domains, however, must be understood in its figurative sense for the analysis of TNY covers. Women are not literally confined to the physical space of the home, but their activities are tightly connected to the duties of a wife and mother as opposed to an occupation in paid employment, even if they take place *en plein air*. Thus, in the here presented investigation of editorial illustrations, women's activities outside the home in the absence of a husband and/or a child relate to personal freedom as she serves only herself. Based on this definition of the spheres, the gendered separation of society into the two domains becomes visible in the cover illustrations of TNY.

The magazine's covers in 1925 prominently feature the flapper as an emancipated, active, self-sufficient New Woman (Corda, 2016) who occupies the public sphere. Many of those women engage in conspicuous leisure (Veblen, 1894/2011) and exhibit behaviour then deemed 'male' (Corda, 2016). This type reiterates the fantasy created by popular media (Chafe, 1991) that women had acquired substantial emancipation resulting from the suffragette's movement (Evans & Chamberlain, 2014). While this did not correspond with women's position in social reality as the assumption that women's place was the home even intensified, it illustrates the social optimism of the first decades in the 20th century (Chafe, 1991) and the magazine's aspirations to cover a glamorous life in poster-like abstraction in the 1920s (Mouly, 2000).

The covers of 1935 show a shift in focus away from the imaginative New Woman and towards the woman as mothers and wives. The narratives focus on the experiences of women in her socially accepted realm of child-rearing and the expectation that women find personal fulfilment in this position (Chafe, 1991) is promoted by the depicted contentment of all mothers and wives in the illustrations. Women overwhelmingly appear in the presence of other mothers, women, or their partner, which emphasises companionship and sociality but also the shared understandings of these gender norms.

The illustrations taken from 1935 and 1945 respectively revealed that normative gender roles do not change substantially when compared. The increase of societal support for working women during the manpower crisis that shaped American society during WWII remain absent in the illustrations published in 1945. Men longed for social stability and "domestic tranquillity" (Corda, 2016, p.49) and working women were thought to threaten the patriarchal order of society (Chafe, 1991). This longing for traditional gender roles takes an interesting shape in TNY cover illustrations. The romanticisation of the simple rural life seems to stand in direct connection with the desire for a conservative domestic order that

consolidates masculinity. It is thus that the representation of women as mothers and wives in 1945 does not significantly differ from 1935 despite the social change that occurred in-between.

Especially the 1950s were defined by the glorification of the American housewife who was expected to find gratification in the domestic sphere (Corda, 2016; Friedan, 1963/2010). TNY covers seldom confirm the doll-like woman typically found in 1950s media or make them a target for consumerism (Jackson & Gee, 2005). This narrative is much more prevalent in the illustrations from 1945 (Figure 13). Nonetheless, the covers in 1955, especially Figure 3, reduce the woman to the role of a housewife, illustrated by the apron – however rare its occurrence. The depiction of the man as a father in the domestic sphere without the presence of the mother in an illustration published the same year (Figure 4) is remarkable. The assumption that men should take on domestic duties like caring for children does not become common in American society until the turn of the Millennium (Donnelly et al., 2015). Having said that, he remains an inactive participant which is supported by his facial expression of irritation and the orientation of his chair away from the child, thereby illustrating that child rearing is not a male responsibility.

The change in women's portrayal in 1965 is subtle but noticeable and they are afforded an agency that was previously missing. American society was defined by socio-political unrest in the 1960s, and second-wave feminism achieved women's emancipation from domestic labour into prestigious professions and their sexual liberation, and fought against patriarchal structures (Chafe, 1991; Donnelly et al., 2015; Rampton, 2008/2015). At first glance, the sampled illustrations seem to barely reflect these events or the societal changes they spurred. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that all sampled illustrations depicting male protagonists in 1965 employ a comedic effect that undermines their masculinity and scrutinises male dominance in society.

The above presented illustration featuring the council of old men in the water (Figure 5) formulates a criticism of the patriarchal systems engrained in the social, economic, and political structures of society. On the one hand, it may visualise that professionalization has taken over leisure time and people act as businesspeople even when they are not at work. In this case, the cooling water simply refers to a hot summer. On the other hand, they all represent the same archetype of the old bald White man which reads more like a political commentary on the contemporary socio-political climate. Consequently, it ridicules White old men at the top of institutions, be it political or corporate, and stultifies them by repeating the archetype and stripping them of any indication of social status or power.

Finally, in the illustrations published in 1975, women are portrayed in their changed social position much more overtly and the cover depicting graduating women and men (Figure 6) illustrates the more egalitarian attitudes that had emerged in the 1960s. This is the first narrative that directly addresses women's intellectual and professional achievements, and gender roles are not as demarcated or divided into the public or private domain as in the decades of the first half of the 20th century.

Shifting social roles create uncertainty in society because responsibilities are less defined, which then sparks a backlash against progressive ideologies (Chafe, 1991). In the illustrations from 1985, the return to traditional gender roles in American society (Leslie, 1993) is reflected by a visual language similar to that of 1945. While the yearning for domestic tranquillity translated into depictions of the countryside in 1945, the sampled covers in 1985 are defined by references to nature. In 1985, as opposed to the covers in 1945, the city remains present in the narratives, which may allude to a moderation of the longing for traditional tranquillity due to an appreciation of the social change attained by the feminist movement. Furthermore, the illustrations show men as much as women in the context of nature and the images no longer emphasise masculinity exclusively (Figure 7 and 8). The hierarchy between men and women that was clearly defined in the illustrations from 1945 seems largely erased, and the individualism prevalent in the 1980s (Leslie, 1993) is accentuated. Despite a return to traditional values, the previous power asymmetry between men and women is not fully restored. The radical changes that occurred since 1945 seem to have had a lasting effect and women and men are portrayed as comparatively equal in 1985.

Gender roles addressed in the illustrations sampled in 1995 exhibit some ambivalence. Women are depicted as mothers and partners like they were last in 1965, however, they possess unparalleled agency and independence, which may be explained by the paradoxical attitudes held towards the responsibility of women in society (Corda, 2016). Even though working women had become the norm, society supported them less than in the previous decade and endorsed traditional gender roles in the home instead (Donnelly et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the absence of a clear hierarchy in the illustration of the couple calling with other people on their date (Figure 9) is remarkable and alludes to the fact that women were increasingly seen as equal. The woman and man are not talking to one another, but the man's distraction from togetherness is less surprising due to the widely held stereotype that women are more romantic than men (Harrison & Shortall, 2011). Yet, the woman does not wait for the man to hang up the phone but is otherwise engaged herself. While this renders the relationship between the woman and the man more casual, they are mirrored images of each

other and are thus represented as equals. This flavour of equality gained throughout the last half of the 20th century, which was afforded by the stabilising economic self-sufficiency and sexual liberties (Corda, 2016), is also salient in the following decade in the sample.

The illustration showing a female reinterpretation of the iconic E. Tilley in 2005 (Figure 10) exemplifies the progress made towards the emancipation of women. Dressed in feminine clothes, she is occupying a space previously reserved for the man. Her revealing clothes do not sexualise but feminise her highlighting women's agency, independence, and power. It illustrates that the Millennium Woman was now able to embrace both traditionally feminine and masculine attributes (Corda, 2016). This was afforded by third-wave feminism that readopted typically feminine traits previously connoted with male oppression to demonstrate female liberation (Rampton, 2008/2015).

Despite women's gained emancipation in visual representation presented thus far, many illustrations published in 2015 return to the depiction of women as mothers. Figure 11 showing a mother with her child in a runner's stroller reads as a social commentary on women's pressure to fulfil societal expectations (Corda, 2016) of the good mother, the pressure to be an object of desire and the productive employee who squeezes sport and childcare into her morning routine before going to work. It must be noted that the character is a woman of colour, making this not only a commentary on gender roles but also promoting racial equality and the representation of women of colour in visual culture.

Accordingly, the sampled covers in 2023 include a more diverse range of characters both in terms of gender and ethnicity. These most recent covers seem to take notice of the public debates on intersectionality and persistent social inequalities (Randev, 2023) caused by gender and racial differences, which had been addressed by social movements such as fourth-wave feminism (Rampton, 2008/2015) and Black Lives Matter. Yet, the activities the protagonist women engage in reproduce some stereotypical notions of femininity.

In conclusion, the results show that – except for 1925 – women were assumed to be little more than wives and mothers in the first half of the 20th century in TNY cover illustrations. However, the narrative of the wife changes significantly in the second half of the 20th century and beyond. From these findings emerges that the single woman is particularly prominent in the decades after a feminist wave. The single, independent woman adorns the covers in 1925 after the suffragette movement, then again in 1975 and 1985 after second-wave feminism, in 2005 following the third feminist wave, and lastly, in 2023 after fourth-wave feminism. Similarly, women's portrayal as mothers had its heydays mid-century but after the second-wave feminist movement, the image of mothers subsided, and the woman

discovered a rich diversity of activities to occupy herself with for a while. The mother, however, prominently returned in 1995 and 2015, but she now offered more multi-faceted, autarch, and inclusive representations of motherhood. Even though women today have more autonomy and freedom to choose their lifestyles, domestic labour is still viewed as a form of female oppression (Corda, 2016). These results illustrate how the representation of mothers and wives has evolved towards a more egalitarian perception, but their representation seems to fall behind the most progressive ideas of its time.

The representation of men's role in society remains quite consistent and the only observable shifts occur between 1945 and 1985. While men emanate masculinity by being depicted as soldiers, performing manual labour on farms, or as head of the family in 1945, they subtly adopt attitudes traditionally deemed feminine in the following decades, like being present (albeit passive) in the domestic sphere in 1955, or caring for plants in a greenhouse in 1985. Masculinity is particularly under scrutiny in the illustrations published in 1965 and men are satirically feminised or over-masculinised in their role as partners or business executives.

A noteworthy pattern that emerged from the analysis is the translation of society's return to conservative norms into the visual language of TNY. The magazine withdraws into idyllic illustrations of countryside bliss that communicate tranquillity and a more traditional order of gender roles. The then editor William Shawn preferred non-topical covers and the anesthetisation of upper-middle class life in the countryside (Mouly, 2000). However, he only retained his position from 1952 to 1987 (Mouly, 2000) which reveals that symbolic representation seemed to change more broadly because the countryside depictions also fall outside this time frame of Shawn's employment. The editor's preference alone cannot explain the occurrence of idyllic country life in 1945 and the period between 1955 and 1975 in which references to nature were much rarer. Whereas the narratives illustrations from 1945 emphasise masculinity, those in 1985 seem to operate with more progressive frameworks of masculinity and femininity.

To conclude, these findings show that TNY reflects the change in gender roles on their cover illustrations but is not necessarily at the forefront of challenging old or defining new gender narratives. Even though TNY is a progressive magazine, it needs to operate with a visual language that is recognisable for its readership. When reviewing the change of gender representation throughout the decades in TNY, the current art editor of the magazine, Françoise Mouly, said "Patience: I can't do the cover before the world changes. No one will get it." (Gottschalk, 2017). Only when the reader's ability to relate is stimulated can the message be understood (Vara Sánchez, 2022). Moreover, it must be noted that the

overwhelming majority of women portrayed in the sampled cover illustrations are young. Older female bodies are often underrepresented in visual culture (Tortajada et al., 2018), which TNY does not challenge. The romanticisation of young women on its covers arguably renders the magazine more attractive to the consumer. Men, on the other hand, appear to be young as often as middle-aged, and old men are represented more than twice as much as older women, which further confirms the iniquitous treatment of women's aging bodies in visual culture (Tortajada et al., 2018).

5.2. Conceptual structures

5.2.1. Suits and dresses

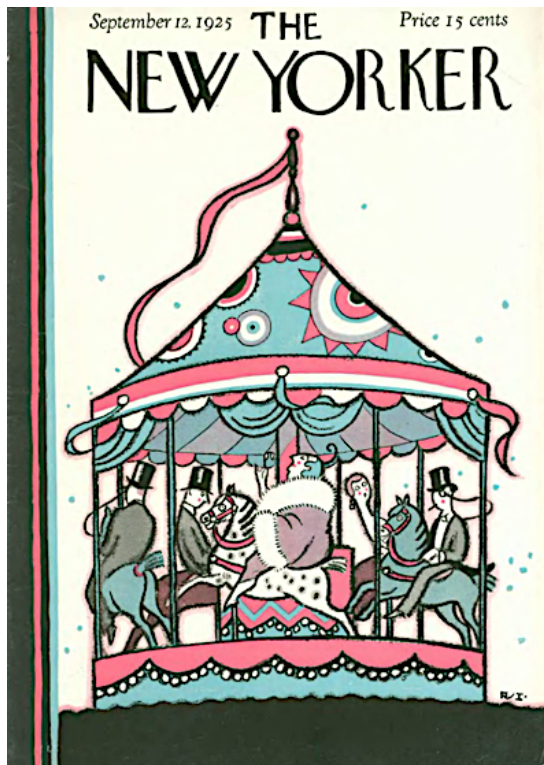
Costume refers to the explicit markers that indicate gender identities (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020) and includes cultural and bodily attributes, such as clothes and hair. They are informed by gender norms and trends prevalent in their specific cultural and historical context. In the cover illustrations of TNY, the dominant fashion for men is suits while women are depicted wearing dresses and skirts throughout the last hundred years. Men are mostly depicted wearing suits and ties until cover illustrations in 1975. TNY covers echo the rising popularity of casual wear in public contexts, but the suits continue to be men's main dress code with a slightly changed meaning as formal wear or uniform up until 2015. Similarly, dresses and skirts remain women's main dress code in the sampled TNY illustrations until 2005, despite the magazine's recognition of their replacement by trousers in social reality.

Figure 12 published in 1925, shows three men and two women riding a carousel. The men wear dark suits with bow ties and topers fashionable at the time (Hollander, 1994/2016) which turns them into a homogeneous group devoid of any individualism. Contrarily, the two women are depicted with much more complexity than the men. The women's diversity in cultural as well as bodily attributes, i.e., dress and body shape, provides them with individual identities. Their uniqueness suggests that women still relied on clothes to distinguish themselves while men were able to express their affiliation to a certain class through their profession (Veblen, 1984/2011); indeed, the attention of the viewer is drawn to the women as protagonists in the illustration.

Even though the variety in colour and shape of dresses affords female characters more individuality than their male counterparts in the illustrations in 1925, post-WWII decades saw a return to societal ideals prevalent in the Victorian era (Chafe, 1991). Especially the silhouettes of the 1950s have been argued to re-mystify women's bodies, which means that it

Figure 12

September 12, 1925



Note. Illustration by Rea Irvin. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 13

October 6, 1945



Note. Illustration by Constantin Alajalov. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

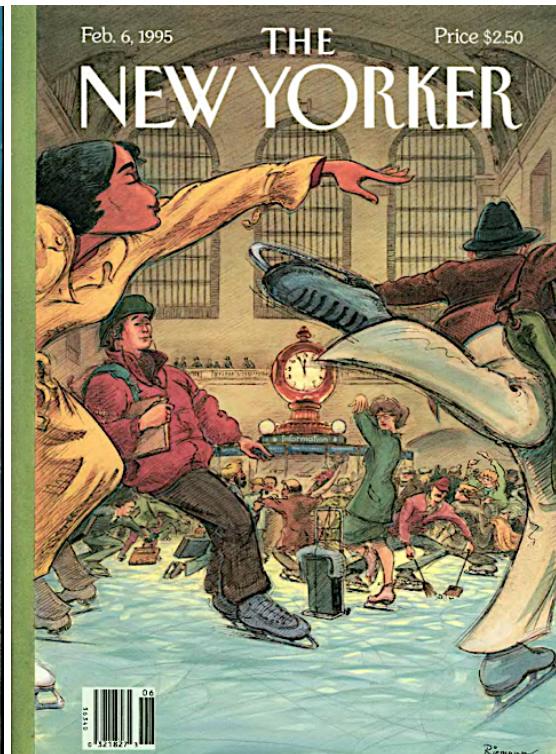
forced a certain shape onto the body rather than complement its natural form (Hollander, 1994/2016). An illustration published in 1955 (Figure 13) exemplifies the revival of “old constrictions” (Hollander, 1994/2016, p.110) of the waisted dress with a hemline under the knee. The reintroduction of Romantic ideals turned women into dolls (Friedan, 1963/2017) with slim waists and large petticoats which is particularly evident in the silhouette of the mother standing at the bottom of the image.

Like the dress, the prevalence of the suit does not subside in the decades after 1925 and on a previously discussed illustration (Figure 4) from 1955, a middle-aged man in suit and tie is reading a book in the living room. The fact that he wears the suit in the context of the home exemplifies the normality of the suit in public as well as private spheres. However, this also strengthens the argument of men’s passivity in the domestic sphere made above and their role as the breadwinner in the family. Its presence in informal (albeit passive) contexts supports its dominance in male fashion as a versatile item (Edwards, 2011).

Nonetheless, the suit is replaced by ordinary clothes in informal contexts in the illustrations published in 1965. Working-class wear like jeans became more common in the

Figure 14*September 4, 1965*

Note. Illustration by Ilonka Karasz. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 15*Grand Central Rink, February 6, 1995*

Note. Illustration by George Riemann. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

1950s and 1960s for both men and women (Voss, 2021) as a revolt against the fashion industry that was seen as patriarchal and oppressive (Hollander, 1994/2016) which coincided with the second feminist wave (Rampton, 2008/2015). This trend is visible in the sampled illustrations that first introduce women wearing trousers in 1965 (Figure 14) but it remains the exception to the rule thus far. The singular representation of women in trousers in 1965 may be explained by the fact that this illustration was the only one drawn by a woman in the sample of 1965.

On the contrary, men are increasingly depicted in ordinary clothing in the following decades. Despite the popularity of the power suit (Edwards, 2011), none of the covers sampled in 1985 feature a man in a suit, further accentuating the remarkably egalitarian representation of men and women for a decade defined by traditional values (Leslie, 1993).

In 1995, the image of women and men wearing suits coexists with casual wear in the same illustration. Figure 15 shows a young man ice skating in anorak and corduroy trousers, while a man in a suit skates behind him (left). The suited man seems to be on his way to work, as he is carrying a briefcase and rushing through Grand Central Station. As opposed to the illustration from 1925 presented above, men no longer appear in a homogenous mass of

suits. Suits are now less common and have become an even stronger symbol of social distinction and indicative of a professional affiliation. In addition, it visualises the blurring boundary between public and private spheres as public contexts have become more informal compared to the illustration from 1925.

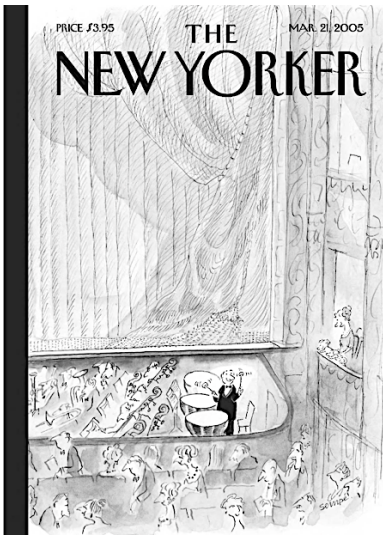
The green outfit of a woman in the same illustration (right) resembles the Chanel suit (Newman, 2023). This woman looks significantly more professional than the woman closest to the viewer and seems to commute to work as well, further cementing the meaning of the suit as corporate wear, but now also available for women (Hollander, 1994/2016). Having said this, it references a fashion for women that would have already been considered conservative in this year of publication. Introduced in the 1950s as a reinterpretation of men's suit for women, the Chanel suit posed no threat to the patriarchal order as it emphasised women's femininity through its soft silhouette and the adaptation of the skirt rather than masculinising them (Hollander, 1994/2016). Although the pantsuit, which referenced men's suits more directly than the Chanel costume, had been popularised at the end of the 1960s (Newman, 2023), this cover depicts a woman in the more traditional and unthreatening feminine Chanel costume. This corresponds with the ambivalence towards women's roles in American society of the 1990s. This decade experienced a decrease in egalitarian attitudes that disfavoured working women who had become a normal feature of American life (Donnelly et al., 2015).

This example shows that fashion does not simply vanish but changes its cultural meaning (Hollander, 1994/2016) and the suit has become tied to specific professions and special occasions (Edwards, 2011) for women and men. Yet, both suits as well as dresses and skirts continue as the dominant dress code until 2015. In 2015, four of the nine sampled cover illustrations contain women depicted from head to toe, and on three of them, women wear exclusively dresses or skirts. Similarly, the male suit is featured on three out of the four illustrations that depict men in 2015 and two connote a profession.

The male suit as uniform in the professional sphere appears most regularly with occupations that take place on a stage. Worn for stage performances throughout most decades, suits are almost indistinguishable from the attire of the male audience attending the performance and those in it. Especially men playing instruments in an orchestra are depicted in suit and bow tie. The uniform does not seem to have changed significantly over the decades as both the chorus men on an illustration in 1925 (Figure 16), and the drummer in Figure 17 from 2005 wear the same outfit apart from the topper. When one ignores higher contrast of the suit used to emphasise the protagonist in the latter example, the similarities

Figure 15*October 17, 1925*

Note. Illustration by Max Ree.
Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 17*Bursting with Pride,**March 21, 2005*

Note. Illustration by Jean-Jacques Sempé.
Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 18*Open House**May 29, 2023*

Note. Illustration by Marcellus Hall.
Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

between the dress code of orchestra members and male audiences becomes evident; the suits and bow ties are structurally identical. In 2023, the suit seems to exclusively indicate an occupational function, while in 2015 it still alluded to both profession and status. On a cover in 2023 (Figure 18), two men gatekeep the entrance to an apartment building. Their suits identify them as bouncers to humorously illustrate the housing shortage and real estate competition. The suit, then, is used as a marker to indicate a certain type of man that asserts authority, like a bouncer, conductor, or the star of the show.

In conclusion, these findings illustrate the shift in the perception and use of the suit, which signifies the change in attitude towards masculinity. Once affording conformity, it remains a fundamental element of men's wear that symbolises authority, masculinity, and wealth, distinguishing itself from women's dresses (Edwards, 2011). The illustration from 2023 (Figure 18) reflects that the suit loosens its grip on society and is ousted to the occupational realm of the public sphere and sophisticated cultural consumption as ordinary clothing is becoming more common, which supports Hollander's historical analysis of the suit (1994/2016). Nonetheless, the continued depiction of suits far into the 21st century creates an elitist image as it evokes nostalgic ideas about the city's cultural and intellectual prosperity, which suggests that the magazine cherishes the suits as a way to hold on to a sense of tradition and prestige.

The persistence of the dress and skirt on female characters on TNY cover illustrations of the last hundred years corresponds with the findings of gender representations in children's books (Yang, 2016), but the evolution of women's dress in TNY elucidates on the change of gender roles in American society in a more nuanced way, as evidenced by the Chanel costume. The covers seem to reflect – with some delay – societal changes rather than shape them and even this shift is met with some resistance as dresses and skirts retain their position as hegemonic clothing for many decades after the 1960s. In American society, ordinary clothing had replaced the “enlightened modern look” (Hollander, 1994/2016, p.132) of the suit and dresses. Yet, TNY illustrations hang on to the traditional dress code that has come to be associated with constraint and rigid gender roles (Hollander/2016; Newman, 2023). The here-presented evolution of the gendered dress codes in the illustration of TNY covers demonstrates the changing meaning of gender markers such as clothes. While the dress and skirt ought not to be demonised solely as a carrier of outdated gender roles, the consistency of dresses and skirts despite the common appearance of the trouser in more recent reality is noteworthy. The retention of traditional dress codes in the magazine's illustrations could be explained by the fact that it caters to an 'elite' middle- and upper-class readership, which is said to hold on to traditional values for longer (Corda, 2016).

5.2.2. The declining explicitness of gender markers

Similar to dresses and suits, bodily attributes such as breasts, pregnant bellies, and facial hair, never cease to explicitly refer to a specific gender in the illustrations published on the cover of TNY due to their dependency on biological predispositions. Other gender markers, however, do not enjoy the same timelessness and are instead subject to such tremendous change that they potentially become unintelligible as gender indicators. One such marker is the length of hair which has been found to explicitly indicate gender identity in children's book illustrations (Yang, 2016) and is also strongly made use of in the TNY covers throughout the century.

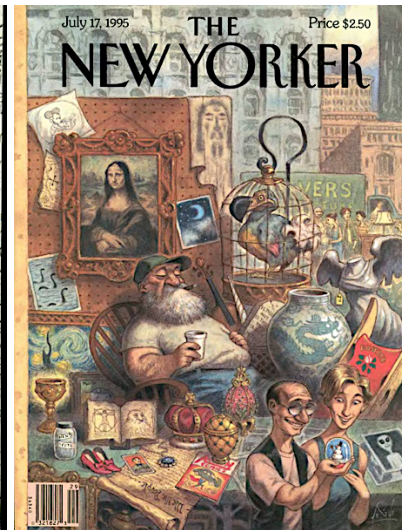
Women are as often portrayed with semi-long hair (between eye height and right below the chin) as they are with long hair (any length below the chin). Haircuts are subject to fashion trends (Hollander, 1994/2016) and therefore particularly vulnerable to societal changes. Nonetheless, they are often used as the primary indicator of gender identity (Yang, 2016), as can be seen on an illustration from 1925 (Figure 19). A man, a woman, and a boy are dabbling in water, but the woman turns away. Since the man's and woman's swim

Figure 19*June 27, 1925*

Note. Illustration by Julian De Miskey. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 20*May 5, 1975*

Note. Illustration by Edward Koren. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 21*The Treasure, July 17, 1995*

Note. Illustration by Peter de Sève. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

costumes do not exhibit any differences, the only information that identifies the character on the right as a woman is the swimming cap with a bow that covers up her hair. While it does not depict hair directly, its allusion to (semi-)long hair connotes femininity decisively enough to answer the question unequivocally.

Short haircuts came into fashion in the 1920s on the New Woman's head (Newman, 2023) – a manifestation of her newly attained independence and legal autonomy. Even though the era is often characterised by an embrace of hedonism and liberation that encouraged women to adopt more unconventional styles including shorter haircuts, it was still perceived as unfeminine (Corda, 2016). The flapper with short hair is featured on two sampled covers in 1925 (cf. Figure 12), but the short hair for women quickly came out of fashion again as it was seen as a threat to male dominance and the favoured traditional gender roles (Corda, 2016). This is evident in the sampled cover illustrations as short hair on women disappears again after 1925 until the millennium.

Short haircuts are the male norm in reality as well as on TNY covers, but long hair on men experiences a small surge in 1975 in the illustrations (Figure 20). Notwithstanding the temporality of these trends, hair becomes powerless in expressing gender identity by the turn of the century. Figure 21 shows an illustration of a flea market scene in which an old man sells unique items and a couple walks away from the booth with their newly acquired snow globe. The woman of the couple is not only taller than her boyfriend but also wears her hair short enough to be mistaken for a man by conventional standards. One could argue that her

facial features or emotional expression may be a little softer than that of her male counterpart or that the gesture with which she puts her hand to her heart emanates femininity. This example demonstrates that in instances in which explicit gender markers such as hair cease to have expressive power, one must resort to alternative cues. Finally, the only attribute that unmistakably identifies her as a woman is the shape of her chest indicating breasts, but this bodily attribute is often more concealed than hair, which underlines hair as a primary explicit gender marker.

One is confronted with a similar dilemma reviewing an illustration published a decade later in 2005. In Figure 22, an audience viewed from behind is applauding a tree growing its first spring greenery on a theatre stage. Hair fails to decisively indicate the gender identity of many audience members. One can convincingly ascribe a gender identity to those characters whose faces are partly visible, and to those whose heads are balding (which is genetically atypical among women). The residual members of the audience, however, remain anonymous in relation to their gender identity as women with (semi-)short hair and men wearing their hair to shoulder length had been normalised by the 1990s (Hollander, 1994/2016). The absence of any other gender markers, explicit or implicit, renders men and women in the

Figure 22

Bravo, Spring, May 2, 2005



Note. Illustration by Bruce Eric Kaplan. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 23

On the M Train, October 9, 2023



Note. Illustration by Nicole Rifkin. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

audience virtually indistinguishable. This is not to say that the pattern of women wearing long and men wearing their hair short does not persist to this day and it must be noted that some haircuts have retained their indicative power for gender identity. It does, however, demonstrate the necessity of additional gender markers as hair ceases to have the infallibility it used to have.

Another gender marker that has arguably lost this power entirely is the trouser. After replacing suits in 1985 in TNY cover illustrations, trousers themselves quickly lose their signifying power as gender markers. Women appear in trousers for the first time on a cover illustration from 1965 (Figure 14), which depicts people at an observation tower in the countryside. Even though this scene takes place outside, it is in the private context of what could be a weekend trip destination with family or friends. Although the small size of the three women wearing trousers in this illustration renders those depictions rather unobtrusive, it introduces a trend for the following four decades.

In the 1970s, women gained more financial and social independence (Chafe, 1991) which translated into the changing perception of trousers as they became increasingly common on women (Voss, 2021). In each of the following decades, one illustration respectively explicitly depicts individual women in trousers, but the majority of women still wear dresses or skirts. Nonetheless, these societal processes permanently formed society's gender norms until finally, in 2023, most women prominently wear trousers instead of dresses in the illustrations. It is due to the normalisation of trousers for men *and* women as casual wear in social reality (Hollander, 1994/2016) that the trouser lost its normative association with masculinity in illustrations. In Figure 23, a young woman in jeans sits on the tube and the trousers do not masculinise her (Zerubavel, 2018). Instead, she still emanates femininity which is due to other conceptual structures like posture and gesture further elaborated below.

The processes which hair and trousers underwent throughout the century illustrate that the explicitness of gender markers has the potential to decline and become ambiguous which will be discussed later. This may increase the importance of implicit gender markers that build on behavioural conventions because gestures and positions are more informative about character traits and overall narratives. This speculation corresponds with the post-modern rejection of prescribed gender roles and the dismantling of the binary understanding of gender. That illustrations rely on the unambiguity of established norms to communicate messages clearly may explain why a magazine, even one as progressive as TNY, is not at the

forefront of reshaping those conceptual norms but operates within existing systems of representation and thus predominantly commits to suits and dresses.

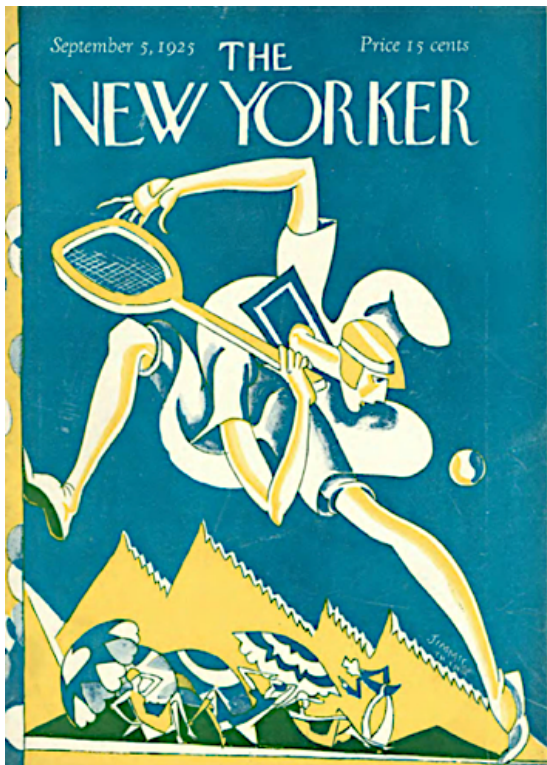
5.2.3. Scripted hierarchies

Scripts refers to traits, behaviours, and postures that are taught and adopted through socialisation processes (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). These scripts are implicit indicators of gender identity and power position within specific social contexts. Due to their signs' situatedness, scripts are only intelligible in connection to the social and cultural framework that produced them. The scripts in TNY illustrations were analysed in correlation with the dimensions Goffman (1988) identified in his seminal study on advertisement. *Relative size*, *rituals of subordination*, and *function ranking* address power dynamics present in pictured interactions between men and women and will be discussed in the following.

In terms of *relative size*, the sampled cover illustrations only partly exhibit the patterns Goffman (1988) found in advertisement. In 1925, women occupy significantly more space in the images and often seem to possess more agency than men. Figure 24 features a woman playing tennis at the beach. She is much larger than the other characters in the

Figure 24

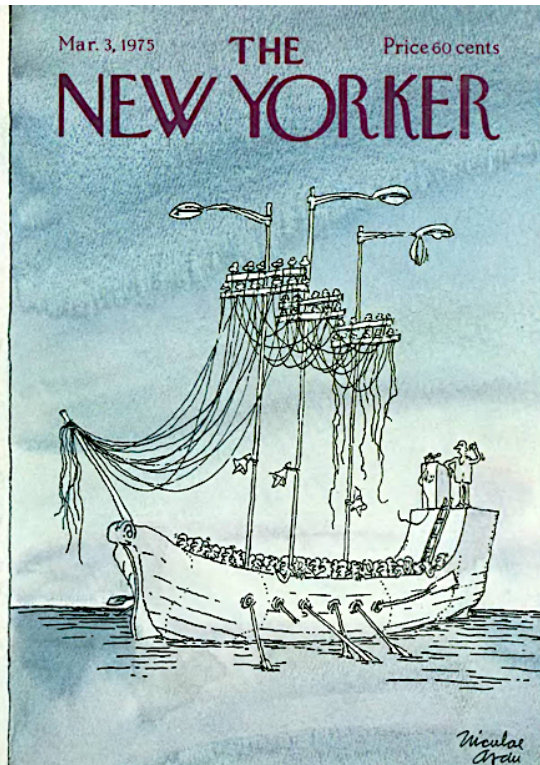
September 5, 1925



Note. Illustration by Jimmy the Ink. Courtesy of The New Yorker

Figure 25

March 3, 1975



Note. Illustration by Niculae Asciu. Courtesy of The New Yorker

background and fills the whole image with her dynamic posture. This representation coincides with the idea of the New Woman who is active and has obtained unprecedented freedom which she exerts through her provocatively 'male' behaviour (Corda, 2016). Covers between 1935 to 1955 confirm Goffman's concept of *relative size*, but 1965 already offers some illustrations of groups in which women are depicted as both smaller and taller than men as well as the same height.

This trend continues throughout the following decades until women regularly appear taller than men on the illustrated covers of 1995. Figure 21, discussed before, shows a couple that purchased a snow globe from an old man who sells odd items. The man of this couple is shorter than his female partner, which challenges Goffman's (1988) argument about *relative size*, as its nonconformity with traditional norms does not serve a comedic effect. Instead, the comedic effect is engendered by their purchase of a kitsch object in contrast with the otherwise offered unique items like the Mona Lisa, a living Dodo, and a Fabergé egg. Men's height seems to no longer be a subject of ridicule, even if the social norm that women prefer taller men has not changed (Stulp et al., 2013). Women's growing height throughout the illustrated decades reflects the increasing egalitarian attitudes prevalent in American society since the 1990s (Corda, 2016). The medium of illustration permits the use of visual techniques that deviate from realistic perspectives and enable radical deconstructions of normative sizes. Except for the illustration with the female tennis player (Figure 24), the TNY cover illustrators rarely take advantage of this potential.

Aside from *relative size*, Goffman (1988) identified *ritualisation of subordination* as another visual technique that establishes women's inferiority in encounters with men. In the sampled illustrations of TNY, rituals of subordination are seldom reproduced. Overall, approximately as many sampled illustrations depict women sitting as they do men. Since most of illustrations with more than one character show women and men in similar positions, it can be concluded that these rituals play a negligible role in these editorial illustrations.

Whereas *relative size* and *ritualisation of subordination* are used little on the magazine covers, *function ranking* plays a rather important role. One of the activities almost exclusively reserved for men is instructing, directing, giving a speech, or expressing authority through their stance towards women, men, entire audiences, or orchestras. On the sampled cover illustrations, men appear in executive positions of power once every decade from 1925 to 1975. Upon closer examination, however, it is evident that this display of power is not absolute and most of these men are ridiculed in one way or another. One example of this is the illustration of the men holding a council in the water discussed above (Figure 5). On

another cover, published in 1975 (Figure 25), a man stands at the helm of the ship on an elevated platform in front of a microphone, overlooking the crew. These elements consolidate him as an authority figure ‘in power,’ probably a politician. However, the ship has broken spotlights instead of sails and the wire of the microphone to the speaker’s desk is cut. Additionally, the sailors are visibly discontent, and their paddles broken, which render the one man ‘in power’ effectively ‘powerless.’ The politician’s power is undermined by the disaggregation of the ship and his unpopularity among the passengers and is thereby presented as incompetent. This allegory is likely to be a social commentary on the contemporary political instability. In spring of 1975, New York City was facing a detrimental economic crisis that changed the city’s politics permanently (Reagan, 2021).

While functional ranking in TNY illustration reflects men’s theoretical power in society, their satirical portrayal criticises their incompetence and it is important to note that their alleged assertion of power is directed towards other men and not women. The fact that the illustration of men in power abates after 1975 supports that the ideas of second-wave feminism resonated with illustrators and editors of TNY. Even though men have been in positions of power for most of the periods discussed, the magazine never directly references men in power as ‘powerful’ but humorously appropriates the concept of function ranking to abstractly contest their sanctity.

The only representation in the sample of a woman taking on tasks of instruction appeared in 2023 (Figure 18). This illustration has been mentioned before to discuss the suits two bouncers wear to indicate their occupation, but the woman of colour next to them must not be ignored. She, like the two bouncers, stands behind barriers with a list in her hand and before her, a queue of couples has formed on the sidewalk. The scene takes place in front the entrance to a highrise on which a sign announces “[Apartments] for rent.” Even though the bouncers are taller than her, it is evident that she has the directive power holding in her hand the list of eligible applicants. She is the gatekeeper who does not emanate physical strength like the bouncers but symbolic power (yet connected to the home, even if not hers). Unlike men, this woman’s position of power is not subverted through a comedic effect.

Women’s participation in the workforce had already been normalised in the 1970s and women had increasingly occupied ‘male’ professions (Chafe, 1991), but inequalities in the labour market persist to this day (Randev, 2023). This inequality translates into the here presented illustrations and the woman in high position – especially a woman of colour – remains an exception in the sampled illustrations. This illustration seems to respond to the voices of fourth-wave feminism that call for more institutional action to decrease gender

inequality and draw attention to intersectionality (Rampton, 2008/2015). The limited range of professions women are depicted in compared to men is consistent with Hamilton et al.'s (2006) findings in children's books published between 1995 and 2001, even though TNY art-editor Mouly who has been in office since 1993 (Mouly, 2000) aspires to publish images that subtly challenge hegemonic assumptions through imaginative scenarios (Gottschalk, 2017).

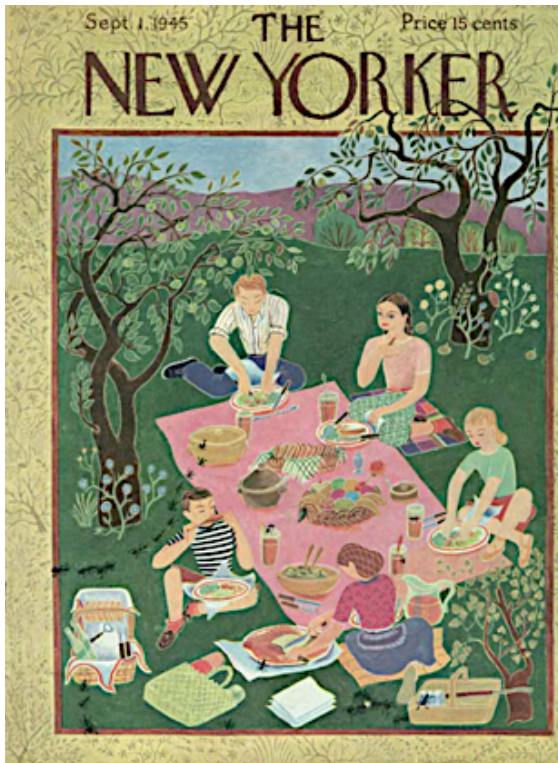
5.2.4. Feminine timidity

The scripts found in TNY illustrations that relate to Goffman's (1988) concept of the *nuclear family*, *feminine touch*, and *licensed withdrawal* are discussed in the following. These compositional strategies apply to the representation of women specifically and do not always necessitate a man's presence in the image but have been argued to ultimately lead to the infantilisation of women in advertisement.

The *nuclear family* appears in an illustration in 1965 and 1975, but most prominently in 1945 in the sample of TNY covers and consists of two parents and one or two children. According to Goffman (1988), the arrangement of the nuclear family establishes stronger bonds between mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons respectively through physical

Figure 26

September 1, 1945



Note. Illustration Ilonka Karasz. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 27

Mirror, December 7, 2015



Note. Illustration by Chris Ware. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

proximity which was not observed in TNY cover illustrations. Instead, the children's connection with the parent of the opposite gender seems to be highlighted through matching explicit markers such as hair colour or dress.

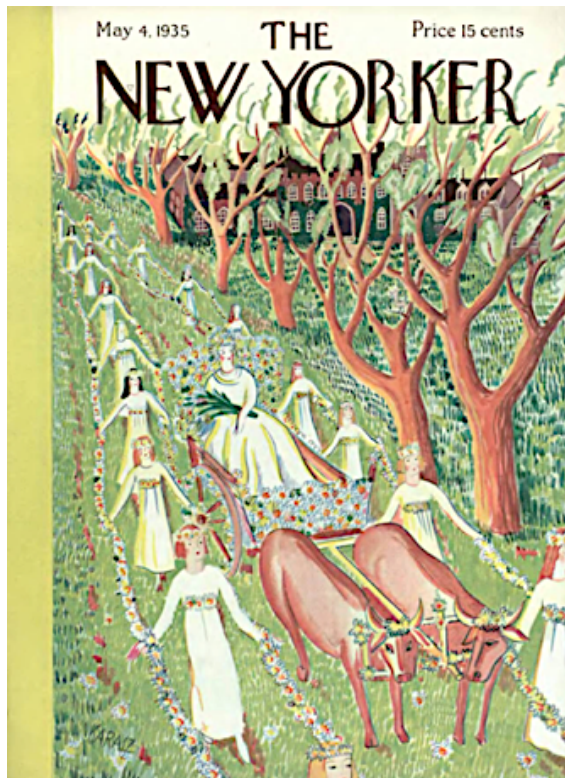
The salience of the nuclear family in 1945 can be explained by the return to domestic tranquillity after WWII and the concomitant emphasis on the traditional family (Chafe, 1991). On one illustration (Figure 26), the daughter has the same blonde hair as the father and the son has the mother's brown hair. While the children's physical proximity is closer to the parent of the same gender, the distance is too large to draw a parallel to Goffman's (1988) findings in advertisement. On the one hand, this diversion from visualisation techniques used in advertisement may be explained by the absence of facial features that often clearly communicate the genetic connection between parents and their children. The reductive nature of illustration (Spaulding, 1956) causes these nuances to be unintelligible and requires the use of alternative markers to establish affiliation.

On the other hand, on another illustration from the same year discussed above (Figure 13), a daughter and mother are separated by the father standing in between them and the only element connecting the two is the blue dress they both wear. This example confirms Goffman's (1988) finding that daughters are often presented as their mother's younger self. A similar narrative can be identified in an illustration published 70 years later. A cover from 2015 (Figure 27) features a mother and daughter standing in front of a mirror putting on red lipstick. Both with brown hair and clothes in similar shades of blue, the daughter seems to symbolise the woman's younger, more excited self. The unprecedented complexity in the relation between mother and daughter in the last example confirms the increasingly nuanced representation of motherhood in the most recent decades (Corda, 2016) discussed before.

Women touching their face – with make-up or without – has also been identified as a pattern in advertisement which falls under the notion of the *feminine touch* (Goffman, 1988). Gestures of the feminine touch can be observed primarily between 1925 and 1945 and again from 1985 to 2023 in the sampled TNY covers, of which the former time frame coincides with more conservative periods in American history of the last century, and the latter with the period following third wave feminism that reappropriated 'typically' feminine behaviour to symbolise emancipation (Rampton, 2008/2015). While women are only sometimes depicted touching their bodies, their gesture holding any object in these decades is defined by gentleness. The object they most commonly hold are flowers or plants which occurs once in almost every decade between 1935 and 2023 as illustrated by the following examples. Figure

Figure 28

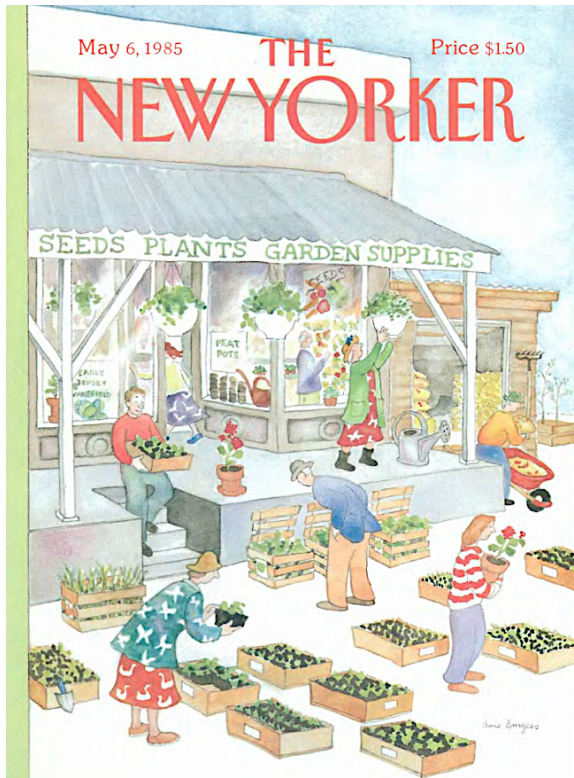
May 4, 1935



Note. Illustration by Ilonka Karasz. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 29

May 6, 1985



Note. Illustration by Anne Burgess. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

28 from 1935 shows two rows of women in white dresses forming a parade to accompany a woman, also in a white dress, sitting on a bullock cart, possibly depicting a wedding procession on the countryside. The women on the sides hold onto garlands of flowers while the bride in the cart tenderly carries a bouquet. Similarly, on a cover in 2023 (Figure 23), a young woman is sitting on the tube and carefully holding a single flower in her hand. The feminine touch refers to a caressing engagement with an object that then reflects fragility and valuableness onto its executor (Goffman, 1988) and due to its association with femininity, it has the power to undermine a man's masculinity who acts the same. Men are also depicted carrying plants (Figure 20) and in an illustration from 1985 discussed above (Figure 8), a man carefully brings pots of seedlings on a tray into his lush greenhouse. The feminine touch holding the young plants instils him with femininity. His dedication towards his plants does not necessarily break the normative script but subjects him to the associations of femininity created by the script. Not all men carrying plants acquire a feminine demeanour as can be seen in Figure 29 published the same year. A man carrying a box of seedlings down the stairs in front of the plant shop retains his masculinity because his manner of carrying the

box does not resemble the gentleness of the *feminine touch* but a utilitarian grip. Furthermore, men carry plants and not flowers, i.e., men occupy themselves with things that require work while women dedicate themselves to decorative objects.

Similar to the feminine touch, the concept of *licensed withdrawal* (Goffman, 1988) occurs among women in the first half of the 20th century as much as in the four most recent decades in TNY covers at hand. As opposed to expressions of strong emotion found in advertisement, licensed withdrawal appears exclusively in the form of daydreaming in TNY illustrations. Women are repeatedly illustrated gazing off, like the woman on the tube in Figure 23 presented above. Goffman (1988) argued that this portrayal leaves women unoriented and therefore dependent on the protection of others, especially men. The woman on the tube, however, neither seems unoriented nor fragile, instead her femininity reads as a source of strength and confidence rather than an instance of weakness due to her raised chin which signals pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Although she seems to daydream and gently holds a flower, her posture and gaze are alert. A similar rendition of the licensed withdrawal can be identified in the illustration of the female Eustace Tilley from 2005 (Figure 10). While this finding confirms women's portrayal as dreamy or absentminded in the sampled illustrations, it challenges Goffman's conclusion of female infantilisation through licensed withdrawal.

Considering that the decades in which women are not depicted daydreaming (1965-1985) spans a socio-historical period in which women's emancipation was a prominent topic of public debate (Rampton, 2008/2015), the temporary absence of licensed withdrawal among women may be an indication of the magazine's effort to avoid infantilising women and to contribute to their equalisation in visual culture. Feminist efforts to improve women's role in society was met with conservative counter reactions in the 1980s (Chafe, 1991), which the sampled illustrations do not reflect regarding licensed withdrawal. It may be argued that the magazine's progressive political position makes them resist the "new traditionalism" (Leslie, 1993, p.690) a little longer than mainstream society.

5.3. Gender ambiguity

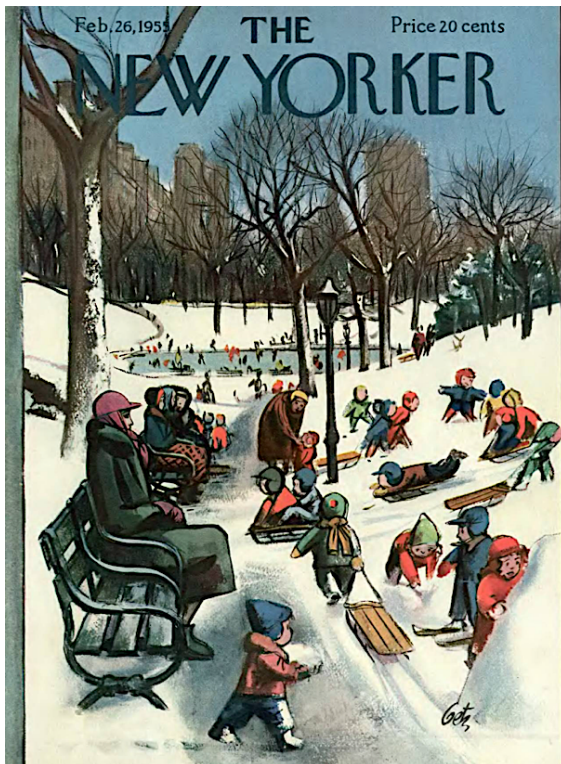
While the presented conceptual structures that build onto explicit and implicit gender markers reinforce the binary gender categories of feminine and masculine in the cover illustrations of TNY, their occasional ambiguity prohibits the definite allocation of gender to some characters. This ambiguity is particularly evident in the representation of children

because, even though the gender markers for adults also apply to children to a large extent, they are not consistently employed in the sampled illustrations. What constitutes a child in the illustrations here discussed is engendered by the narrative that is produced through their relatively small size, a softer silhouette, the activities they engage in as well as how they are positioned in relation to other characters in the image. Even though the demarcation between children and young adults cannot be clearly defined in illustration, the presence of a parent emphasises their position as a child. In line with this, young adults depicted without a parent present have been interpreted as adults.

Children are featured in all decades since 1925 on at least one sampled illustration in each decade. Most of the children depicted throughout the century can be identified based on costumes and scripts. In the illustrations discussed above that depict the nuclear family in 1945 (Figure 13 and 26), for example, one can recognise the children as daughters and sons based on their clothes and hair. Especially in 1955, illustrations depict children in larger groups without decisive gender identity and Figure 30 does not provide the same recognisability. In the illustration, children play in the snow-covered Central Park, while their chilly mothers watch from a bench. One might argue that the colour of the children's clothes

Figure 30

February 26, 1955



Note. Illustration by Arthur Getz. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 31

March 17, 1975



Note. Illustration by Laura Jean Allen. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

suggests specific gender identities since individual colours connote gender identities in specific cultural contexts (Yang, 2016). However, the allocation of colour to one gender is not definitive and therefore does not allow for an unassailable conclusion. The conventions for children in terms of costume and script are not as clearly gendered as they are for adults. Hollander (1994/2016) argues that children have been dressed identically since the 1950s because neither their activities nor “their thoughts” (p.129) are meant to socially separate them based on their gender.

Gender ambiguity does not only appear in relation to children but also adults in the sampled illustrations. A cover from 1975 (Figure 31) depicts visitors in the Guggenheim Museum looking at paintings. Most of the visitors cannot be assigned a gender identity due to a lack of informative markers. From this observation follows that the categorisation of gender depends on the unambiguousness of costumes and scripts. If the overwhelming majority of the gender markers are congruent with one gender, a gender identity can be established. But when gender markers are mixed as they are in this example, the allocation to one gender is obstructed by the lack of “social information” (Goffman, 1988, p.2). Having said this, the

Figure 32

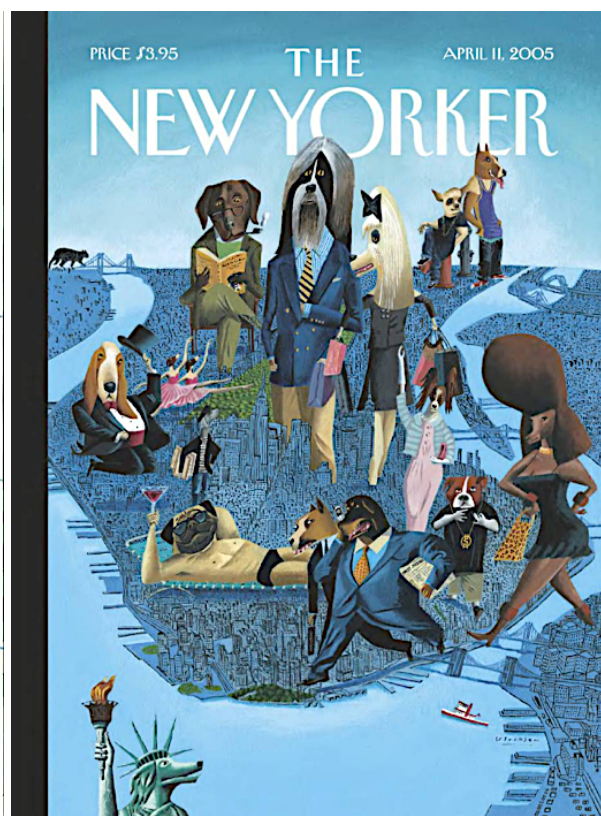
October 20, 1975



Note. Illustration by Saul Steinberg. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

Figure 33

City Dogs, April 11, 2005



Note. Illustration by Mark Ulriksen. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*

gender of the audience is arguably unimportant in the narrative of this illustration, which would render it a successful portrayal of gender ambiguity regardless of the artist's intention.

The lack of expressive markers can, however, also have the opposite impact on processes of reading gender. Another cover from 1975 (Figure 32) depicts a collection of 20 illustrated characters that stand in relation to New York City or the US in one way or another. Even though most of these characters lend themselves well to an analysis of markers to identify a gender identity, there are two characters of particular interest for the discussion of gender ambiguity due to the absence of markers: The character at the bottom right who looks like a round stick figure and the character in the row above that looks like an expressionist drawing of a ghost. Based on the arguments made thus far, these characters' gender identity should be ambiguous, meaning they could be both male or female or neither. This logic, however, does not apply here – instead, they are read as being male.

The absence of any gender marker – implicit and explicit – does not communicate gender ambiguity, because the body is not neutral but a carrier of normative knowledge (Jackson & Gee, 2005) and so their un-markedness indicates a masculine gender identity. Processes of social marking enable the presentation of one category as the default by clearly marking its contrasting category. The sociocultural framing of gender hierarchies presupposes men as the “*socially generic*” category, the default, while women constitute the semiotically oppositional category of the “*socially specialised*” other (Brekhus 2023a, p.33; Zerubavel, 2018). This necessitates female characters in visual texts like in other areas of culture to be explicitly marked with specialised costumes and scripts that symbolise femininity, e.g. dresses, long hair, breasts, softness, care, etc. Specialised cues evolve into stereotypes (Brekhus, 2023b) which are the most incontestable indicators of gender identity that build on a system of knowledge informed by social norms, culture, and history. This not only perpetuates reductive gender expectations, but it also maintains the dominant position of maleness as the natural and taken-for-granted norm (Zerubavel, 2018). In a society built on male dominance, the social marking of women as the specialised other alienates women (Silveira, 1980) and thereby reproduces and perpetuates social inequalities (Brekhus, 2023a).

The stick figure illustrates the male bias embedded in linguistic and visual languages and the reciprocal relationship between signifier on the signified, as it resembles a snowman. While it may be argued that the signifier (the label snowman) influences the gendered reading of the snow character, the male reading of the ghost can only be explained by the male bias towards unmarked categories. Markedness can, however, shift due to changes in conventions of what is perceived as normal or common (Zerubavel, 2018). Visual cultures, especially

periodicals such as TNY, thus have the capacity to contribute to the normalisation of social and cultural realities (Brekhus, 2023b) and promote egalitarian attitudes because they are objects of mundane and routine consumption practices and thereby have the power to render the extraordinary ordinary through habituation (Brekhus, 2023a).

At this point it is worth noting that, the use of unambivalent scripts and costumes may be of particular importance for the gendering of anthropomorphic animals. Both explicit and implicit gender markers are possibly amplified to morph an animal into a humanlike character with a distinct gender identity. Two covers in 1965, one in 1975 and 1985 respectively, and two in 2005 portray animals with humanlike attributes and the here-presented narrative structures and conceptual representations are used to create a comedic effect. This study focuses on the conceptual and narrative structures of gender representations in illustrations of all characters and thus considered anthropomorphic animals in the same category as human characters. In Figure 33, dogs are dressed in human clothes (predominantly suits and dresses), exhibit human demeanour (standing upright, linked arms), and engage in human activities (reading, shopping, dancing, etc) and it is these narrative and conceptual structures that create the specific archetypes which satirise the inhabitants of socially and culturally stratified New York City's districts.

Having said this, the interpretative layer that emanates from the choice of specific animal will not be discussed as it exceeds the scope of this paper. For the comprehensive assessment of gender markers employed with anthropomorphic animals specifically, a more focused sample would be appropriate. Furthermore, for a competent comparison of stereotypes or gender representations between anthropomorphic animals and humans, a more balanced sample with equal representation of humans and animals would be necessary.

6. Conclusion

This study constructively answers how gender identities are represented and how representations have changed throughout the last hundred years in editorial illustration on the example of *The New Yorker* (TNY) covers. The investigation confirms that gendered *narratives* have evolved in accordance with societal attitudes towards more egalitarian gender norms in the United States. From the results emerges that *conceptual structures* are used to indicate gender identities, but the social meaning of costumes has changed throughout time and the scripts found in advertisement do not consistently correspond with those formulated in the here-presented editorial illustrations. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the lack of expressive gender markers can generate *gender ambiguity*, whereby unmarked illustrated characters are read as male.

The results show that women's role as mother and wife dominates the *narratives* of the cover illustrations in most decades. While the prominence of mothers over father confirms Brugeilles and colleagues' (2002) findings in children's books, it contradicts their observation that especially mothers do not play major roles. This implies that editorial illustrations possibly do mothers more justice than children's literature, which seems appropriate considering the target audience of adults. The findings on narrative structures are consistent with Hamilton et al.'s (2006) observation that activities outside occur similarly as often among men as women but also that women's nurturing tasks are emphasised in illustrations.

This being said, the representation of mothers and wives has become increasingly complex and inclusive, especially in the most recent decade. The evolution of gender narratives in the illustrations of TNY presents a pattern of waves coinciding with feminist movements. However, the discussion of the narratives produced by the illustrations in nexus with their socio-cultural context reveals that the illustrations reflect the shift of gender roles in society with some delay rather than overtly challenging them, which contradicts the magazine's aspirations of contemporariness and progressiveness (Mouly, 2000). Nonetheless, the magazine's illustrations contribute to the discourse of gender equality through the proliferation of increasingly egalitarian representations.

The analysis shows that social norms and the evolution therein substantially influence *conceptual* representations. The scripts in the illustrations here presented partly challenge the visual strategies Goffman (1988) identified in advertisement. Concepts that are believed to denigrate women in visual culture have been found primarily within illustrated scripts that

exclude men, which means that the ‘inferiority’ of the woman in editorial illustrations is less constructed in direct relation to men but through connotations of tenderness and femininity that may today actually connote strength and pride. Furthermore, the inconsistency of Goffman’s conceptual structures throughout the past hundred years suggests that TNY illustrations are less complicit in the portrayal of women as inferior beings than advertisement. While Hamilton et al. (2006) detected some parallels between Goffman’s dimensions and children’s book illustrations, the here-presented results show that the compositional structures notably differ between advertisement and editorial illustrations. It must be noted that, in their study on advertisement of the late 1990s, Bell and Milić (2002) revisited Goffman’s dimensions and found that compositions of subordination had become less pronounced, which suggests that gender representations in visual culture have generally become more subtle as overt sexist stereotypes no longer go uncontested (Hamilton et al., 2006).

The investigation of costume as explicit gender markers revealed clothes to be the most consistent sources for gender categorisation, which on the one hand confirms Jackson and Gee’s (2005) and Yang’s (2016) findings in children’s book illustrations. On the other hand, it has been expounded how the social meaning of costumes changes throughout the time period under study. It is thus that the magazine’s insistence on suits and dresses in its illustrations far into the 21st century insinuates an aspiration to hold onto notions of prosperity and cultural elitism. More importantly, the results demonstrate the extent to which markers’ ability to indicate gender identities in illustrations has the potential to decline. This observation challenges previous research on children’s book illustrations, especially in reference to hair. Jackson and Gee (2005) recorded that no men with long hair were depicted in children’s books between 1950 and 1995 despite its popularity in the 1960s. These fashion changes are indeed reflected in TNY illustrations, and it is thus that their power of expressiveness vanishes in accordance with trends in social reality, which admits the magazine the partial success of resisting gender stereotypes. As a consequence of the vicissitude of gender markers, the use of inconclusive scripts and costumes can generate ambiguous gender identities, whereas the absence of expressive markers has been shown to connote maleness by default.

Even though the presented study built onto several quantitative examinations of gendered illustrations in children’s books, the nuanced transformation of narratives and concepts that construct gender representations accentuates the importance of qualitative methods for the investigation of gender constructs in visual culture. By capturing their

mutable meanings within visual languages, gender constructs and roles can be comprehensively made sense of to deliver substantial accounts of dominant systems of representation and their evolution towards more egalitarian attitudes. Moreover, Goffman's (1988) seminal findings on advertisement were useful in the understanding of the power dynamics between men and women in illustrated media, but it emerged that they do not consistently correspond with the concepts employed in illustrations for adult audiences. It is thus, that the here-presented study hopes to encourage further research on editorial illustrations with a revised framework specifically tailored towards this medium.

Editorial illustration has proven to be a revealing area for studying the evolving representation of gender in visual culture and its implications for social reality. In response to the expanding views on gender, one could hypothesise that if explicit gender markers (bodily and cultural attributes) eroded entirely, the reading of gender identities would solely rely on implicit markers (behaviours and gestures). These intangible notions are grounded in the nuanced performance of gender, making them arguably more subject to polysemic associations and increasingly dependent on socio-cultural contexts. The blurring boundaries between masculine and feminine elements enable societal perceptions of gender to evolve, potentially weakening entrenched social expectations.

Investigations into how visual culture addresses the societal shift from a binary understanding of gender to the recognition of queer identities may offer relevant insights into the potential of a new status quo that transcends the binary separation of society. Often enough the representation of women has been measured against that of men, but now that representational structures within the binary have been established, they can be used to measure the representation of non-binary and trans identities in illustrated media. For such a study, however, queer identities must be more prominently represented in illustration to offer substantial data for its analysis, which they currently do not seem to be.

The decisions producers of visual culture make in portraying gender identities reflects but also shapes broader societal understandings and norms. Especially the findings on the ambiguity of gender offer insights particularly relevant for artists and publishers to challenge stereotypical gender representations. The synthesis of vaguely feminine and masculine indicators has the potential to offer equivocation in narratives in which gender identities are irrelevant. On the one hand, gender bending can be achieved through subtle adjustments to advance broader understandings of masculinity and femininity in society. On the other hand, this paper hopes to offer a framework for artists to engage in the representation of gender identities that fall outside the binary of male and female through creative appropriations of

the narratives and concepts discussed to enhance gender diversity in visual culture. Having said that, the discussion of the unmarked gender appeals to producers and distributors of visual culture to evade ‘neutrality’ as the un-markedness of a character runs the risk of being read as male due to the male bias. These accounts hope to inspire additional research on the applicability of the unmarked gender in visual culture so that taken-for-granted realities can be dismantled to establish more equal representations of male, female, and queer gender identities.

6.1. Limitations

This research was subject to three limitations important to disclose. Firstly, it needs to be pointed out that this study focused on the illustrated covers of an individual magazine published within a specific cultural context and thus, does not claim to be representative of editorial illustrations in general. The focus, however, enabled the detailed and comprehensive examination of the evolution of gender representation within one cultural product in relation to the socio-cultural contexts it was produced in. Hence, the here-presented results should be understood as an introduction to the underrepresented field of illustrations for adult audiences considering the limited research available.

Secondly, the material presented is polysemic in nature and no inferences can be made about the meaning intended by the artist, nor the interpretations of a specific audience. The detailed and thorough semiotic analysis of the illustrations nonetheless delivers substantiated discernment of the investigation at hand. Having said this, future phenomenological research into the variety of interpretations by audiences may offer fruitful insights into the different readings of these illustrations among diverse groups of people.

Lastly, the choices made concerning the sampling strategy limited the sample to a random selection of 99 illustrations. While this decision was consciously made to obtain a manageable sample from the excessive number of covers produced by the magazine since 1925 and to mitigate a bias in the selection of covers subsequently analysed, it may have caused illustrations particularly relevant and informative for the investigation of gender representations to be ignored. For example, it has been pointed out that the narrative structures in the sampled illustrations do not address the sudden entrance of women to the workforce during WWII, but the selected years only cover 1935 and 1945, which skips war years. Even though covers outside the sample were briefly cross-referenced for the discussion of the female rendition of Eustace Tilley, the discussion of women’s

representation during WWII would have required a purposeful analysis of decades that fell outside the sample. Yet, through this sampling strategy, no decade was prioritised over the other for the purpose of answering the research question that asks for the general evolution of gender representations. A more targeted sample may offer informative insights into more specified research questions that, for instance, focus on women's emancipation exclusively or the use of gender markers with anthropomorphic animals mentioned before.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Overview of units of analysis

The New Yorker cover illustrations

Issue Year	Issue No.	Publ Date	Artist	Title illustration	Description
1925	29	Sep/05	Jimmy the Ink aka James H. Daugherty	/	Woman playing tennis at the beach
1935	9	Mar/09	Rea Irvin	/	Miserly old man writing out expenses.
1945	33	Aug/25	William Cotton	/	Boy Scouts watching soldiers gamble.
1955	16	Apr/23	Abe Birnbaum	/	A crowd of fisherman wearing waders standing in a river.
1965	35	Sep/04	Ilonka Karasz	/	An observation tower on a hill.
1975	29	Jul/28	William Steig	/	A woman with a net chasing a giant butterfly.
1985	11	Mar/25	Paul Degen	/	A man, walking a group of dogs, tries to keep up as they near the corner of the sidewalk.
1995	28	Jul/31	Lorenzo Mattotti	<i>Under the Cloud</i>	Women runs with child in arms away from a mushroom cloud
2005	12	Apr/11	Mark Ulriksen	<i>City Dogs</i>	Different breeds of dog representing different districts and types of New Yorkers, standing on a map of Manhattan.
2015	28	Jul/20	Jean-Jacques Sempe	<i>Under The Same Hat</i>	Aerial view of four women sitting around a table in a garden in wide brimmed hats.
2023	18	May/29	Marcellus Hall	<i>Open House</i>	A line of hopefuls gathers for a new apartment listing in New York City.

1925	34	Oct/10	Ilonka Karasz	/	Theater curtain with a painting of a woman in a robe de style and a skyscraper hat, towering over the city skyline.
1935	34	Aug/31	Harry Brown	/	Couple posing behind painting of airplane in flight.
1945	2	Jan/20	Rea Irvin	/	Ushers shining a flashlight on a woman's stockinged feet in theatre.
1955	6	Feb/12	Perry Barlow	/	Dogs on parade at a dog show.
1965	47	Nov/27	Frank Modell	/	Two turkeys dressed like pilgrims walk side-by-side.
1975	41	Oct/20	Saul Steinberg	/	Different portraits of people
1985	19	May/20	Jean-Jacques Sempe	/	Man and woman repainting a set of chairs in their yard.
1995	5	Feb/06	George Riemann	<i>Grand Central Rink</i>	People ice skating in Grand Central Station
2005	9	Mar/21	Jean-Jacques Sempe	<i>Bursting with Pride</i>	Mother beams from a theatre box as she watches her son playing the drums at a concert.
2015	44	Dec/07	Chris Ware	<i>Mirror</i>	Mother and daughter standing in front of a mirror putting on red lipstick.
2023	11	Apr/03	Luci Gutierrez	<i>Rise and Shine</i>	A woman catches the first rays of Spring sunlight on a stack of furniture
1925	37	Oct/31	Julian De Miskey	/	Audience members on a balcony at opera performance.
1935	25	Jun/29	Barbara Shermund	/	A woman has a drink and smokes a cigarette at a table outside an (old fashioned) drug & soda fountain.
1945	34	Sep/01	Ilonka Karasz	/	A family picnic
1955	45	Nov/12	Perry Barlow	/	Father torn from his book as his daughter plays the piano with gusto.

1965	3	Jan/23	Arthur Getz	/	An orchestra taking their seats in the pit.
1975	17	May/05	Edward Koren	/	People carrying large potted plants on a city sidewalk.
1985	9	Mar/11	Charles Saxon	/	A man walks into his lush greenhouse carrying seedlings.
1995	26	Jul/17	Peter de Sève	<i>The Treasure</i>	A shopkeeper sells odd items and a couple bought a snow globe.
2005	25	Jul/25	Bruce McCall	<i>Tour De Force</i>	Bike messenger racing towards bikers racing in the Tour de France.
2015	39	Nov/02	Ivan Brunetti	<i>Comfort Food</i>	Aerial view of a man in his kitchen having a meal.
2023	17	May/22	R Kikuo Johnson	<i>Perennial</i>	A tree on a city block through the cycle of the seasons.
1925	19	Jun/27	Julian De Miskey	/	A man, woman and child swimming in the sea.
1935	8	Mar/02	Robert J Day	/	Mothers in park their baby carriages in the small sliver of sunlight which breaks through between tall buildings.
1945	40	Oct/13	Julian de Miskey	/	Triangle player in an orchestra does a crossword puzzle while waiting for his part while the rest of the musicians perform
1955	27	Jul/09	Arthur Getz	/	Construction of a large building, as seen from above, across the street from a row of brownstones.
1965	9	Mar/06	Mario Micossi	/	Guests at a vernissage of abstract (expressionist) paintings in a white gallery; drinks provided.
1975	15	Apr/21	Paul Degen	/	Newsprint collage forming a portrait of a woman wearing a hat.
1985	13	Apr/08	Heidi Goennel	/	A girl with a basket is collecting easter eggs in a field.

1995	3	Jan/23	Bruce McCall	<i>King Kong Call</i>	For giant gorillas sitting on rooftops waiting for their turn of audition. Empire State Building in the background
2005	15	Mar/02	Bruce Eric Kaplan	<i>Bravo, Spring</i>	Audience watches the first Spring greenery grow on a tree.
2015	40	Nov/09	John Cuneo	<i>Rolling Out The Gold Carpet</i>	Foliage shoveled onto the path of an affluent couple so they may enjoy Fall in the city.
2023	36	Oct/09	Nicole Rifkin	<i>On the M Train</i>	A woman rides the New York City subway.
1925	35	Oct/17	Max Ree	/	Chorus boys and girls
1935	30	Aug/03	Helene E Hokinson	/	Country auction with a woman in the audience knitting next to her purchases.
1945	35	Sep/08	Alan Dunn	/	Soldiers watching from portholes as their battleship enters New York harbour.
1955	13	Apr/02	Rea Irvin	/	A man's everyday life; a continuous loop in images
1965	36	Sep/11	Charles E Martin	/	Wall Street and Trinity Church superimposed on a page of newspaper.
1975	8	Mar/03	Niculae Asciu	/	A politician steering a broken ship with discontent sailors
1985	29	Jul/29	Heidi Goennel	/	A girl picks yellow flowers in a field near a fence.
1995	17	May/08	Jacques de Loustal	<i>Sweet Nothings</i>	A couple have a romantic dinner with live music but are on their phones.
2005	28	Aug/22	Ian Falconer	<i>Please Hold</i>	Two children play ball on a beach and have to stop for a phone call.
2015	15	Apr/27	Mark Ulriksen	<i>Baseball Ballet</i>	Baseball players, seen from above, all lunging for a popup as a runner slides in to home plate.

2023	9	Mar/20	Sergio Garcia Sanchez	<i>Pulling Ahead</i>	Basketball fans watch a close game between the New York Knicks and the Chicago Bulls at Madison Square Garden.
1925	10	Apr/25	Ilonka Karasz	/	Face card from a deck of playing cards holding a cocktail and a heart-shaped lock.
1935	17	May/04	Ilonka Karasz	/	Girls carrying garlands flanking a woman in an ox-drawn cart filled with daisies.
1945	18	May/12	Edna Eicke	/	Aerial view of flowering trees blooming in a rural neighborhood in the Spring.
1955	10	Mar/12	Ludwig Bemelmans	/	Children at a horseback riding lesson
1965	2	Jan/16	Saul Steinberg	/	An alligator and a flamingo stroll together at night while walking their pet pelican.
1975	12	Ma/17	Laura Jean Allen	/	Visitors in the Guggenheim looking at art
1985	42	Oct/28	Susan Davis	/	Little girls playing jump rope in a school yard.
1995	47	Dec/18	Max	<i>Santa City</i>	Santa gathering, fighting, laughing, etc
2005	40	Nov/14	Barry Blitt	<i>Crossing Over</i>	Chicken with a thermometer in its beak and an ice pack on it's head, standing at a crosswalk waiting for the traffic signal to change to cross the road.
2015	19	Aug/10	Carter Goodrich	<i>Early Start</i>	A mother stretches for her run in the park while her baby sits in a runner's stroller.
2023	2	Feb/23	Pola Maneli	<i>Family Man</i>	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. depicted as a family man with his four children.

1925	41	Nov/28	H O Hofman	/	Men in top hats staring at a flapper.
1935	47	Nov/30	Alice Harvey	/	Woman serving a roasted turkey at a table of guests.
1945	28	Jul/21	Ilonka Karasz	/	Farmers collecting hay as a storm approaches in a particularly stormy July.
1955	44	Nov/05	Roger Duvoisin	/	Man nailing a No Hunting sign to an apple tree.
1965	27	Jul/10	Andre Francois	/	Bold men hold council in sea.
1975	11	Mar/24	Charles E Martin	/	A stretch of benches in the park with cyclists in the background
1985	15	Apr/22	Arthur Getz	/	A man fastens bikes to the roof of a car in which a woman is sitting.
1995	2	Jan/16	Mark Ulriksen	<i>I Had a Dream</i>	Martin Luther King, Jr. kneeling between buildings behind homeless people on the streets.
2005	23	Jul/04	Barry Blitt	<i>Party Of One</i>	Uncle Sam alone at his birthday.
2015	11	Mar/30	Barry Blitt	<i>Clinton's Emoji</i>	Clinton emojis
2023	24	Jul/10+ 17	Sergio Garcia Sanchez	<i>On the Same Page</i>	A woman reads on the steps of New York City's 42nd Street Public Library.
1925	30	Sep/12	Rea Irvin	/	Men and women in formal attire ride a carousel.
1935	14	Apr/13	Barney Robey	/	Women and children standing in front of subway exit/entrance Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall
1945	42	Oct/27	Edna Eicke	/	Children dressed as ghosts on Halloween, open a gate to treat or treat at a spooky house.
1955	8	Feb/26	Arthur Getz	/	Dozens of children play in a snow-covered Central Park, as their chilly parents watch from a bench.

1965	17	May/01	Charles Saxon	/	A man walks down a train station platform holding a beautiful bouquet of pink flowers.
1975	21	Jun/02	James Stevenson	/	Parents photographing their graduating children.
1985	17	May/06	Anne Burgess	/	Scene at a gardening supply store.
1995	31	Aug/21 +28	Lorenzo Mattotti	<i>Diving In</i>	A man dives into a swimming pool at which other people are sitting and one man swims in.
2005	21	Jun/13	Ana Juan	<i>Debut on the Beach</i>	Woman in profile, reading on a beach.
2015	16	May/04	Frank Viva	<i>Golden Hour</i>	A woman riding her bicycle by the water with her basket filled with flowers.
2023	45	Dec/11	Barry Blitt	<i>Special Delivery</i>	A dedicated UPS worker traverses snow-covered roofs to deliver packages during the holidays.
1925	45	Dec/26	Stanley W Reynolds	/	Grid filled with festive images: champagne, cards and gambling chips, money, necklace, top hat and cane, love letters, horn, and flowers
1935	46	Nov/23	Antonio Petruccelli	/	A framed black-and-white photograph of a men's rugby team hanging up on wall.
1945	39	Oct/06	Constantin Alajalov	/	Angel with an overflowing cornucopia spilling cars, bicycles, and appliances over the heads of a family with upturned faces and open arms.
1955	39	Oct/01	Garrett Price	/	Pattern of baseball players and umpires.
1965	34	Aug/28	Abe Birnbaum	/	Sun shining down on various summer scenes.
1975	14	Apr/14	Charles D Saxon	/	A painting of flowers being auctioned.

1985	28	Jul/22	Edward Koren	/	Monsters buying ice cream cones in a busy ice cream parlour.
1995	18	May/15	Bob Zoell (HA)	<i>Mother's Day</i>	Pregnant woman wearing a dress of bees while birds swoop down towards the dress.
2005	37	Oct/24	Jean-Jacques Sempé	<i>Above All, No Faux Pas</i>	A young ballerina waits on the bench.
2015	36	Oct/12	Bruce McCall	<i>High Standards</i>	Giant of a doorman salutes a tiny man stepping out of a car in front of a modern high rise.
2023	47	Dec/25	Edward Steed	<i>The Flip Side</i>	Colourless New Yorkers and their colourful doppelgangers coexisting on a split page.

Appendix B

Topic list used for semiotic analysis

Appendix B.1

Connotations by cover

Sign	Denotation	Connotation
<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Signifier</i>	<i>Myth</i>
<i>Costume</i>	“	“
<i>Script</i>	“	“
<i>Composition</i>		“
<i>Perspective</i>		“
<i>Interaction with viewer</i>		“

Appendix B.2

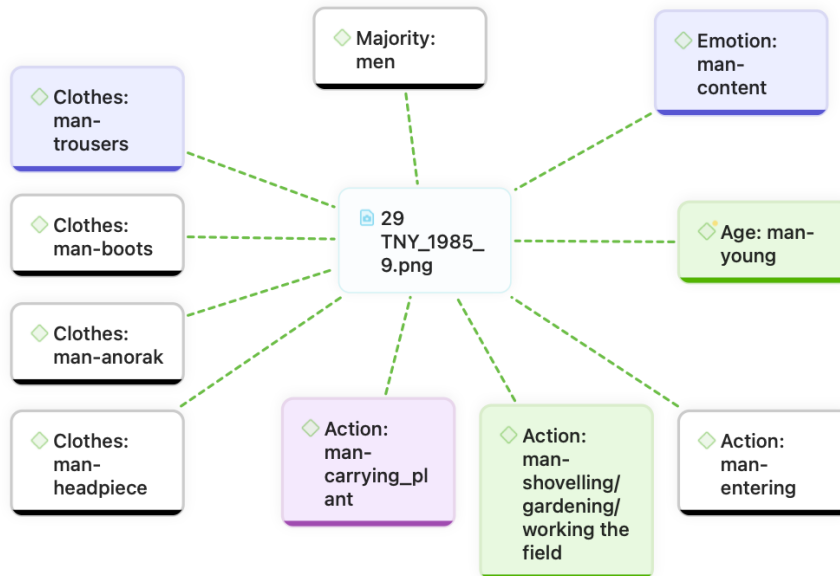
Conventions by year

Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Who is active and who is passive?</i> - <i>Which category constitutes the majority?</i> - <i>What actions do men and women engage in?</i>
Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Position</i> - <i>Size</i> - <i>Gestures</i> - <i>Posture</i>
Interactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Eye contact</i> - <i>Perspective</i> - <i>Involvement/detachment</i>
Exception	
Socio-historical context	
Socio-historical link	

Appendix B.3

Example Figure 8, 11 March, 1985

Coded narrative and conceptual elements in Atlas.ti of Figure 8



Connotations by cover: Figure 8

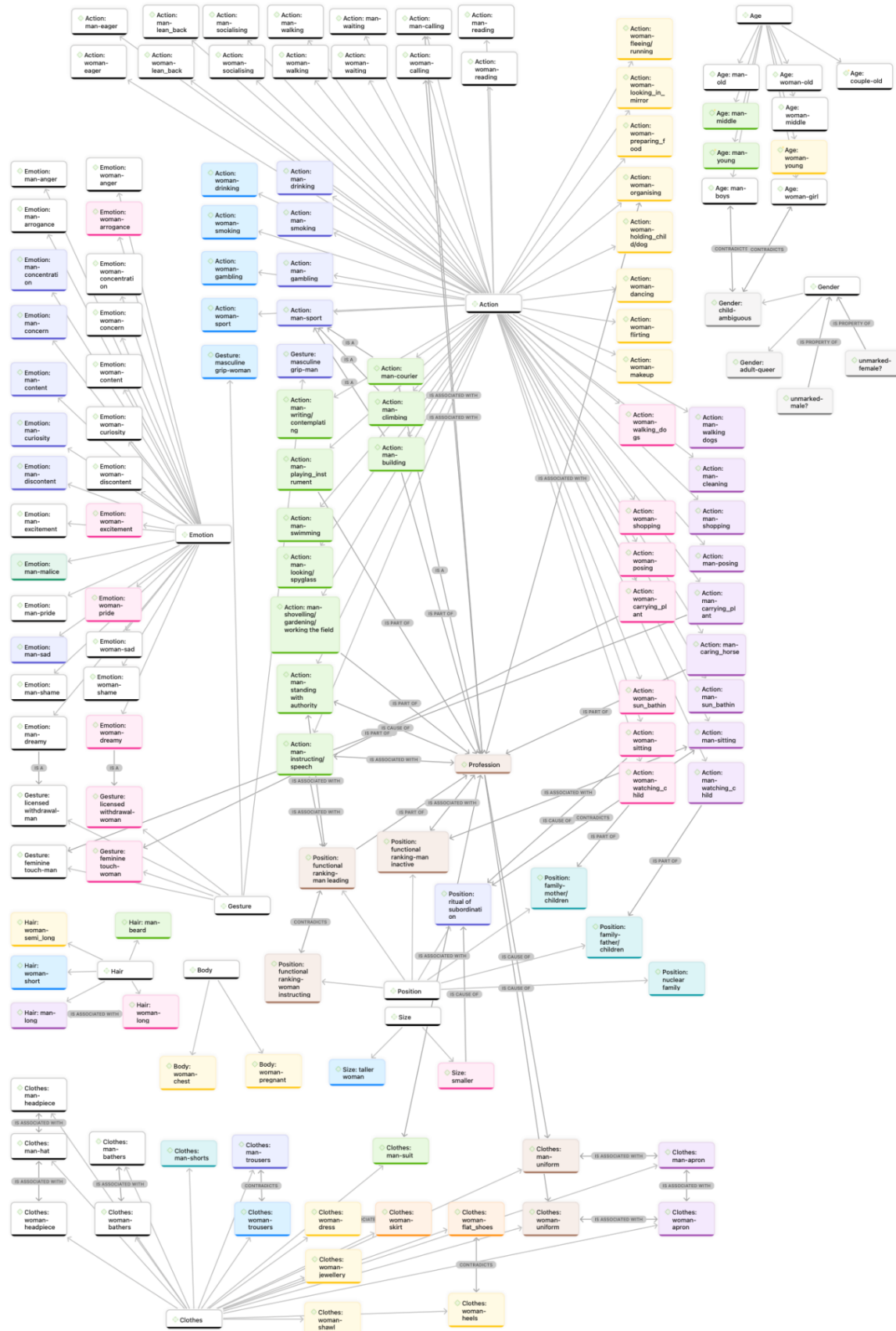
Sign	Denotation	Connotation
Majority: men	One man	Protagonist
Active: man	Walking through door	Entering space, new presence
Activity: Gardening	Carrying seedlings	Care, expansion, planting
Narrative scene: Trees outside Plants inside Flowers inside Glass walls	Leafless trees Green leaves Colourful blossoms Greenhouse	Winter Summer, cozy Fragility, ephemerality, beauty Preservation, warmth
Costume: Winter clothes Work wear	Beanie, anorak trousers, boots	Cold Effort, preparation, expertise
Script: Gestures Posture	holding with both hands Small steps, upright	Soft, careful Concentrated
Composition: Position Size		Centre left Medium large, no one to compare
Perspective: Across the room Behind the plants		Some distance Intimacy, unnoticed viewer?
Interaction with the viewer: Some facial details Foggy glasses		Some involvement No eye contact; detachment

Examples conventions by decade: 1985











Narrative	<p><i>Active:</i> Women and men / <i>Passive:</i> no one</p> <p><i>Majority:</i> Women</p> <p><i>Action:</i> everything outdoors, caring for animals and plants, or leisure</p>
Conceptual	<p><i>Position:</i> tendency to place characters on the left side of the image,</p> <p><i>Size:</i> rather tall single characters, or small characters; when more than one person, equal?</p> <p><i>Gestures:</i> holding objects with dedication, care, love, sensitivity, curiosity</p> <p><i>Postures:</i> mostly upright, standing, immersed</p>
Interactive	No interaction with the viewer, the viewer is somewhat in the scene, but at a distance
Exception	Monsters (Jul 22); neither domestic not family-centred; busy city life
Socio-historical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AIDS pandemic, free love > safer sex (Corda, 2016) - But conservatism (neo-liberal government under Reagan) (Chafe, 1991; Leslie, 1993) - Backlash, feminism became demonised (Chafe, 1991) - Embrace of “typically female attributes such as wearing make-up and attractive clothing to appeal to men” (Corda, 2016, p.80)
Socio-historical link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservatism here: the tranquillity of rural life / life in greenery, longing for nature > not as much escapism in 1945, still more urban - Mostly domestic activities (walking dog, preparing the garden, going on a trip to the countryside) - Children being children, nostalgic childhood values (since drawn from an adult, always an idealisation of their experiences years before?)

Appendix C

Code tree of *narrative* and *conceptual* representation identified in the data



Code tree Legend

 Typically associated with masculinity exhibited by men*	 Typically associated with masculinity exhibited by women
 Typically associated with femininity exhibited by women*	 Typically associated with femininity exhibited by men
 Exhibited by men only	 Exhibited by men only, linked to profession
 Exhibited by women only	 Exhibited by women only, variation
 Exhibited by women and men together	 Connoted neither feminine nor masculine
No colour Ungendered	

*In the category of *Emotion*, the colour indicates if an emotion occurs more often among men or women in the sampled illustrations; no colour means that they occur equally as often for both men and women.