

-Kathy Hart
kh201141@regiscollege.edu

The J Crew Club: Members Only

When the J Crew catalogue comes in the mail, a feeling of excitement rushes through my body. It sounds ridiculous, but it is enjoyable to flip through a catalogue and dream of all the clothes I would buy if I had all the money in the world.

J Crew is a catalogue that is in a world of other catalogues such as Delia's, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Alloy. They all target the teen population. J Crew represents itself with fresh faces and clothes reminiscent of a cool, crisp October day. Many of the clothes have either an outdoor style or a preppy style. It also doesn't hurt that J Crew is the official outfitter of Dawson's Creek. Dawson's Creek is probably best described as a primetime teen soap opera. It focuses around this high school student named Dawson and his little group of friends. J Crew provides the right kind of clothing for the show. The show takes place in New England, so it fits the type of background that J Crew uses in the magazine. It ties the show all together, joining the outdoor and preppy style. Without the clothes, the show would lack the kind of atmosphere, which it has now.

Many catalogues these days resort to movie and television stars to sell their product. Not only do they think that their product won't sell on its own, they believe that in order for the youth of America to buy their products they have to have stars wear their clothes. The youth of America believe that in order to be cool they have to wear a certain brand of clothing. Many uninformed youths may very well think that if they wore the same clothes, as lets say Katie Holmes (Joey) of Dawson's Creek that they in fact will become like her or her character. To give you an idea of what Joey on Dawson's Creek looks like, think of that girl in high school that wore the khakis and the plain shirts, sometimes sporty. Virtually the girl that looks like she could have been plucked out of the pages of a J Crew catalogue. The thing that kids don't understand is that clothes don't make the person, all they do is give people a first impression of you. Just like the models in the J Crew magazine they portray a certain image, but the consumer only sees the person, they can't actually talk to them. Therefore, you can't say that the models look intelligent because you're just looking at what they are wearing and making an assumption based on that.

The clothes a person wears is also a sign of his or her status in society. For instance, in high school many people are judged by what they wear. It goes without saying that if you wear a pair of J Crew jeans, you're a whole lot cooler than if you wear a pair of Gitanos. What you wear is not only important in high school but also in adult life. For instance, a man who wears a Gucci suit to a meeting will probably be more respected then a man who is wearing a no-name suit. It's also quite noticeable that J Crew tends to portray upper-middle class to rich people in their catalogue layouts. It is very rare to find an African American or Asian in the pages of a J Crew Catalogue.

Looking at the Fall 1999 catalogue, the first thing you see is the cover which has a blue, button-down shirt that looks masculine. The

caption says "What to Wear to Work". Is this cover trying to say that only men should be concerned with what to wear to work? What about women, don't they work too? Right away you get the message that J. Crew feels that men are more important than women. The next plausible thing to do would be to open the first pages, if you haven't already thrown the catalogue across the room, because of its blatant sexual discrimination! In the first pages is a spread of men's clothing with the caption "Business Casual. Our Monday thru Thursday guide and. . . ."

" of course it's intriguing, so the obvious thing to do would be to flip the page. Upon doing so, you find the rest of the caption that says "the manual on casual Fridays in a language you can understand." So, obviously it is already apparent that most of the focus on this issue is business wear and it is directed to men, as if women aren't even considered workers. Not only does having the men's section come first send a message to the consumer, but something that I find very offending is that the women's section comes directly after the men's underwear and sleep wear section! Have women fought for equality all these years, only to come after the men's underwear section in a catalogue, I think not! Beside the point that it comes after the underwear section, is the fact that it has no title or captions that indicates you are now looking at the women's section. If there wasn't a picture of a woman you would think that you were simply looking at the affeminen section of a men's catalogue. These points of the J Crew catalogue send the message that J Crew is a sexist and racist magazine, very reminiscent of a country club, full of white, preppy, rich and bias people. They are obviously trying to sell to the male population.

Moving on to the women's section you can see the message of male superiority continued. For example, the caption "Impulse is like the seed of all great ideas" is this caption putting down women? This caption seems to be saying that women are very impulsive and do things on a whim, like buy clothing. Many of the pages have the caption "Get Ready" which leads you to think that all women do in their life is get ready for this and that, like get ready for a date, get ready for work, etc.. Woman do so much more then fuss about their hair and clothes! Finally, the woman's underwear section actually has females modeling the underwear, unlike the male underwear section, which has no male models. Once again the catalogue seems to be aimed more toward the male population, why would women want to see other women in underwear?

The type of clothes, the colors of the clothes, and the scenery that is used in the catalogue can also say a lot. J Crew sells clothes that are geared for the office and clothes that you can wear on the weekend. Mostly, though, the clothes are very conservative, there really aren't that many daring outfits. The colors also say a lot, most of the colors are the traditional black, white, gray, navy, but they also throw in some colors to make it less bland, like lavender, pink and light blue. Usually they incorporate some of the trendy colors of the season, so they can be considered "in". The scenery in the layout of the catalogue looks like they took a bunch of private school kids from New England outside and photographed them.

On the surface, J Crew seems to be depicting a certain club, one that you can join if you are middle to upper class, a fresh-faced youth, and white. Instead of entitling their catalogue J Crew, maybe they should call it J Crew Club (poor, elderly, and non-whites need not apply)