Global Gender Stereotypes In Advertising: A Review of Gender

Stereotypes In Advertising On A Global Scale

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the ways in which gender stereotypes in advertising occur on a global scale in print and commercial advertising for a variety of products, as well as to understand the affects that these representations have on men and women across the globe regarding their views on gender roles. Articles are examined that address the ways in which gender represented, utilizing men as a source of humor, and incompetent in ads for childcare and domestic products, while women are most often represented as homemakers and primarily in charge of child care, or used for sexual appeal. Articles that address advertising of certain products being marketed as more masculine or feminine are reviewed, as well as, research on the impact that advertising depicting *real men* as being muscular, young, and physically desirable, has on the self esteem and body satisfaction of men. Research on advertising depicting women as needing to be thin, white and typically blonde, with perfect hair, skin, nails and teeth are also reviewed with regards to the impact that this type of advertising can have on the drive for thinness and body satisfaction of women and adolescent girls.

**Statement of Purpose and Overview of Content**

There is a surplus of information and a vast amount of attention given to the ways in which men and women are treated, how they are stereotyped, and the representations of both men and women in popular print and commercial advertisements. Men however, are generally not given as much attention when it comes to the stereotypes of their gender in advertising. We typically see men as young, physically attractive, muscular, powerful, and successful when being presented in print and commercial advertising. Not only are men presented in idealistic manner, they are also exclusively used in advertising campaigns to represent a specific product. Traditional roles of men and women state that women should be caretakers and stay at home to care for children and the home, while men, should venture into the work force to bring home money to support his family. Not only are men expected to support their family, popular ad campaigns also dictate that men should make more than enough money to support a family comfortably, and they should be highly successful and wealthy to be considered a *real man*. Equally restricting stereotypes exist in the depiction of women in popular commercial and print advertising. Women are consistently told they need to be thin, with near perfect hair, skin, and nails to be considered desirable, and they are often used in advertising as either a sexual object to make a product more appealing, or they are used in a more domestic, child caring role, having a possible impact on self esteem, drive for thinness, and body satisfaction among women and adolescent girls on a global scale.

According to Mann (2002) the term globalization refers to the extension and intensification of social relations across the globe. I want to examine the ways in which men and women are represented in commercial and print advertising for a variety of products across the globe, as well as to understand the affects that these representations have on real men and women on a global scale. I want to know exactly how commercial and print advertising are constructing masculinity and femininity, and possibly, what influences or impacts may this have on men and women across the nation that are being exposed to these advertisements. I question whether certain products in the market being advertised as masculine or feminine products, and review the impact that this has on both men and women. Advertising campaigns, whether they are print or commercial, are often something that in every day life, we tend to easily look over and simply examine the advertisement for what it is, what product is being marketed to us, and if we feel that we have a need or a want for that product. We don’t often think about the roles that models in the advertisements are taking on and what message is being sent to the public via the mass media about the roles of men and women in society.

In addition to examining the impact that global gender stereotyping in advertising can have on ones self esteem and body image, I also examine how social cognitive theory can provide insight into why these narrow depictions have become such a strong influence in the drive for thinness as well as the unhealthy and inaccurate views on gender and gender roles of men and women across the globe. While social cognitive theory, and the concept of perceived self-efficacy, can provide insight into low self esteem, inaccurate views on gender and the drive for thinness in relation to media exposure, I will also be examining how the concept of McDonaldization has impacted global views on gender by invoking western culture ideals and positions on gender and gender roles for men and women.

Media exposure is something that has become almost unavoidable over the last decade. With the introduction of Smartphone’s, individuals now have access to all types of media on a 24/7 basis right at their fingertips. The ability to communicate with one another and to gain access to media content of all types on a 24/7 basis was not previously available to the public on a global scale and in the mass quantity that it is today. According to Besley (2008), media exposure, specifically entertainment television, the Internet, and other sources of entertainment media, is linked to value orientation. The amount of advertising, among other types of media, that individuals are exposed to in has a direct impact on the values that they internalize, including thinness and overall body image and satisfaction. Easy access is not only available for adults, but also for children and adolescents, making it more difficult for individuals to filter the images that they are exposed to in both commercial and print advertising depicting men and women in a very narrow and idealized manner that typecasts their roles in society on a global scale.

**Literature Review**

**Impact of Gender Representations in Advertising on Body Image**

According to Tiggemann (2006), claims that the media sends a negative message to young girls and boys with regard to body image and self-esteem have been circulating for a significant period of time. The mass media, including TV, the Internet, movies, and magazines, pervade the everyday lives of those living in western societies (Tiggemann, 2006). The general population has expressed that the images presented via various media outlets of beauty, attractiveness, and appealing represent an incredibly narrow part of the population that exist in both the United States, and throughout the world, specifically when it comes to images of women’s bodies. With the emergence of new media outlets, such as Web 2.0 and Smartphones, it has become almost impossible to avoid the sexually charged messages and images of incredibly thin and lean female bodies delivered to the public via various media outlets.

While we are aware that gendered advertising exists, it is critical to acknowledge that this type of advertising can have a substantial affect on the self-esteem and body image of men and women. Research on how male representations in advertising affect male body image, self-esteem and behavior, as well as that performed for the female population is substantial. Garst and Bodenhausen (1997) seek to determine if gendered advertising, depicting men as only being young, and physically fit, has an affect on men and how they behave, as well as how they view themselves. Posing the question, does this create an unreal and unattainable image that men need to portray to be considered masculine?

Garst and Bodenhausen (1997) put together a total of 212 men and presented them with advertisements from popular magazines, including men’s magazines, women’s magazines, and androgynous, gender neutral magazines to determine if they exhibit any behavioral changes after examining the advertisements. The advertisements contained male models that were the same age or much older than the viewers, in an attempt to determine if the age of the model had any impact on how the viewers felt about the ad. The study found that men who had initially been less traditional had actually espoused more traditional attitudes than any other group of men examined after having been exposed to the advertisements (Garst & Bodenhausen, 1997). The men who participated in the study were also being presented with advertisements containing male models exhibiting a more traditional role, versus non traditional, to determine if this would have any sort of behavioral impact on the men participating in the study. Ultimately, findings suggest that nontraditional men are more unstable and susceptible to these types of momentary influences that advertising can provide, as opposed to men who already had more traditional attitudes and behaviors (Garst & Bodenhausen, 1997).

Garst and Bodenhausen (1997) also found that in traditional men’s magazines, such as Esquire, GQ, and, Field and Stream, the proportion of advertisements depicting men in what would be considered more “manly” roles did not decrease as much as it did in women’s magazines such as Cosmopolitan, and Vogue. In fact, the study found that the more current advertisements portray a masculine ideal, encouraging men to exhibit strength, power and dominance, which are some of the more traditional male gender roles that exist for men. Current advertising for men also encourages men to repress and downplay any feminine traits that they may have and act as dominant, powerful, and strong men who will never project any display of emotions. These findings draw a parallel with the core of social cognitive theory, in that men are part of a culture that dictates to them that they should act in a rugged, emotionless, and dominating manner to be considered part of the culture of *real men*. Advertising further reinforces this culture, in its consistent depictions of men acting as powerful, dominant, and successful beings, not in need of anyone’s assistance, and drives the concept of McDonaldization, an idea that claims that the ideas and traditions of western culture are spreading across the globe, and becoming the norm of other societies that once had their own unique culture. According to Barber (1995, p. 4) the concept of McDonaldization is compared to pressing nations into one homogenous theme park, powered by fast music, fast computers, fast food, and organizations like MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald’s, creating one McWorld tied together by information, communications, entertainment, and commerce.

**Social Cognitive Theory**

According to Bandura (1986, p.266) human behavior is often explained in terms of unidirectional causation, in that behavior is shaped and controlled either by environmental factors and influences, or by internal dispositions. Social cognitive theory also explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation, so that ones view of self and society, personal determinants, behavioral determinants, and environmental determinants all operate as interactional determinants that influence each other. Considering that we spend much of our time in the presence of others, we are likely to perform similar activities or exhibit similar behaviors to those that we experience and share social aspects of our lives with. The media is also a significant sociocultural influence on our lives, according to Bandura (2001), and because we spend much of our lives exposed to messages in the media, we tend to imitate, and behave in a manner that is consistent with what the media dictates as normal and/or acceptable.

According to Bandura (2001, p.266) “People are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental events or inner forces. Human self-development, adaptation, and change are embedded in social systems.” Social cognitive theory suggests that communication is a reproduction of social order and that individuals will communicate in ways that are analogous to the society and the culture that they have been primarily exposed to throughout their lives. People will communicate with one another in a manner that is considered the cultural norm for communication in a sociocultural context and individuals will follow the rules of that culture for all communication practices. Bandura (2002, p.270) also introduces the concept of perceived self efficacy, stating that whatever factors serve as motivators in ones life, they are all rooted in the belief that one has the power to produce desired results in ones life as a result of ones actions, otherwise one has little incentive or drive to act and protect themselves in the face of difficulty. Bandura (2002, p.270) further states that self-efficacy beliefs control human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional process. They have a direct impact on whether individuals think in self-enhancing, or self-debilitating ways, as well as how they motivate themselves and successfully persist in the face of difficulty, the quality of their emotional life, as well as choices that they make at crucial decisional points in their lives that may affect their future.

**Men’s views on Body Image**

Concurring with the previous study concerning how body image and self esteem can be affected by male representations in advertising, a study by Bottamini and Ste-Marie (2006) seeks to determine how men feel about body image and if they feel pressured to look a certain way based on what they see on a daily basis in all forms of media, not just commercial and print advertising. Eleven males between the ages of 18 and 25 participated in a study in which they were put at a round table and presented with images of three different men who had three distinctly different body types and then were asked to comment on each picture concerning the body type of each of the men. The goal is to understand how men feel about body image and what they feel the most ideal body type is for a male. The study also wanted to determine if men correlate a certain body type with masculinity, as women tend to do with femininity.

All of the men who participated in the study, with the exception of one, participated in some type of sport, not only for the joy of the sport but also to stay in shape and maintain a fit and masculine body. The participants were asked to state what they think is the ideal body type for a man. The majority of participants responded using words such as “tall”, “muscular”, and “lean”. However, they also wanted to ensure that the researchers understood what they meant by those words and that they were not seeking to obtain an Arnold Schwarzenegger, body builder, type of body, but they wanted to be fit and muscularly defined (Bottamini & Ste-Marie, 2006). The majority of the participants also admitted that they wished that they did have a more muscular physique, with more defined arms, chests and abdomen areas (Bottamini & Ste-Marie, 2006). All but three of the participants claimed that they desired to change their current body shape and become more muscular and masculine in shape, largely influenced by what they see in advertising as being the ideal male body (Bottamini & Ste-Marie, 2006). The men in the study also admitted that their biggest influences to look more muscular and lean comes from the mass media, mainly print advertising, commercials, and movies that are projecting an idealized male figure that many men feel they need to obtain in order to be considered attractive. Not only do men feel pressure from the media, specifically advertising, but they also claim to receive pressure from their peers as well which they claim is what drives them even more to obtain a more ideal male body shape (Bottamini & Ste-Marie, 2006).

**Magazines Impacting Adolescent Girls**

According to Chow (2004) popular teen magazines and various other media outlets have an enormous impact on adolescent girls and their perceptions of the world, and themselves. Magazines that are geared toward beauty and sex are available at book stores, convenience stores, corner shops, news stands and various other locations, making it almost unavoidable for adolescent girls to see the thin ideals promoted by the popular reading material. Chow (2004) sought to study the messages of health and health-related material in popular magazines from the perspective of teen girls utilizing such magazines as Teen, Seventeen, and YM to discuss. Chow (2004) concluded that popular teen magazines promote very specific expectations about health and health-related activities and they promote the message of perfection by using models with perfect skin, teeth, eyes, and bodies. Participants noted that the images in teen magazines promote ideals of thinness and present them as being attainable by the everyday girl or woman. Participants also stated that the magazines suggest that girls need attention from boys in order to achieve self-satisfaction, approval from peers, and companionship. Chow (2004) also found that in terms of health and lifestyle messages in teen magazines, adolescent readers see female perfection, female posturing, weight loss, and male attraction and attention as being the most prevalent messages in teen magazines. The girls used in this study stated that they set the same standards for thinness and attractiveness that they saw in magazines for themselves, however perceived their bodies as defective and in need of repair (Chow, 2004, p. 135). The girls used in this study indicated that they were unsatisfied with their bodies, because they don’t match up to what is depicted as attractive in the media (Chow, 2004).

**Men Represented as Objects in Advertising**

While women are most often seen as sex objects or victims in print advertisements for fashion, perfume, cologne, or beauty products, men can be presented in the same manner when they are modeling for these types of advertisements, whether in commercial or print advertising. In a study published in the Journal of Marketing Communications, Elliot and Elliot (2005) sought out to determine the reactions of men, when exposed to the bodies of male models portrayed in a sexual or naked pose in advertisements. The study used approximately five advertisements and presented them to men between the ages of eighteen and thirty one from a traditional UK university to determine if the exposure to these images would have an affect on how men feel about their own bodies. Results show that six major themes, two of which were negative, were identified between the men in the experiment in reaction to the advertisements that they were exposed to. Two negative themes that were observed were homophobia, with participants claiming that the model in the ad looked gay, or were engaged in an act that was interpreted as homosexual, and therefore turned them off of wanting to purchase the product that was being advertised (Elliot & Elliot, 2005 p.10). The second negative theme was that the ad’s were gender stereotyping men, presenting them as being muscular, tan, attractive to women, dominant, and strong (Elliot & Elliot, 2005 p.10). The majority of men that participated in the study claimed to be satisfied with their bodies, stating that body consciousness was a trait of females, and is not espoused by many men. Most men in the study legitimized these representations of men stating that they are a marketing ploy to sell a product, and nothing more, as well as stating that they have a disassociation with unattainable muscular body ideals, vastly different from the reactions and affects that advertising has on the female body image. (Elliot & Elliot, 2005 p.13).

Even though men are often seen as sex objects in many fashion and beauty advertisements, they are not presented in this light quite as often as women. A large majority of advertising targeted at men for cologne and fashion present a near naked male model in a sexually suggestive pose, either alone or with a female model. If the male model is not in a sexually suggestive pose, than he is typically giving very seductive eye contact. The previous study shows that these advertisements tend to have little affect on the self esteem and body image of viewing men, however, a study published in the North American Journal of Psychology found different results.

Baird and Grieve (2006) performed a study on 123 college students, all of whom were males, enrolled in an introductory level psychology class, to determine if exposure to the bodies of male models had any type of impact on the body perception and acceptance of male viewers. All participants were assessed using the Body Assessment, Magazine Advertisement Questionnaire, and one of two sets of magazine advertisements. The first set included advertisements for either cologne or clothing, while the second set consisted of advertisements for cologne, and clothing, only featuring a male model in their advertisements. In contrast to the study that was published in the Journal of Marketing Communications by Elliot and Elliot (2005) on a very similar subject, the male participants in this study who viewed the advertisements with the male models present, displayed an increase in body dissatisfaction, while men who viewed advertisements of cologne and clothing without the image of a male model in the advertisement, showed no change in body satisfaction or perception (Baird & Grieve, 2009, p.119). The study also suggests that these findings may offer an explanation for other outcomes of body dissatisfaction in men such as the use of anabolic steroids, eating disorders, and body dysmorphia.

**Internalization of Appearance Ideals**

According to Tiggemann (2006), though naturally occurring media exposure cannot be manipulated, it is tempting to interpret correlation results as showing that a substantial dose of thin idealized messages and images can result in body dissatisfaction, low self esteem, or eating disorders, it is far too simplistic. In a two part study executed by Tiggemann (2006) it was found that the reading of appearance magazines and watching soap operas predicted the internalization of appearance ideals, appearance schemas, and a drive for thinness over a one year period of time, consistent with social cognitive theory’s claim that as humans, we are highly influenced by external sociocultural factors, including the media, and we will shape our standard and behaviors based on what we are exposed to. The purpose of this study was to prospectively determine the relationship between media exposure, specifically the viewing of popular print and commercial advertisements, and negative body image habits among adolescent girls over a one-year period of time. The viewing of sexually charged messages and images seen in popular soap operas, as well as images presented in print advertisements in popular magazines can in fact have an impact on how one will internalize ideals of appearance and a drive for thinness. Tiggemann (2006) also found that for adolescent girls between the ages of 13.98 years and 14.92 years, media exposure and body image do in fact co-occur, however neither one is a precursor to the other. While total television viewing time was not related to the internalizations of appearance schemas and ideals of appearance, soap opera viewing emerged as a prime correlate of these internalizations.

**Sociocultural Influences On Body Dissatisfaction**

Researchers in Hong Kong also found themselves concerned that sociocultural influences, such as commercial and print advertising, may be playing a fundamental role in body dissatisfaction and dieting among Hong Kong girls. Lam, Lee, Fung, Ho, Lee, and Stewart (2009) sought to determine the relationship between sociocultural influences that promote thinness, such as parents, peers, the media, and individual value for modernity, and body dissatisfaction and dieting. Self reported height and weight measurements were obtained by researchers and body mass index (BMI) was then calculated. The Multidimensional Media Influence Scale, developed by Cusumano and Thompson (2001), was administered to determine the level of perceived media pressure for thinness. The 11-item instrument is designed to assess internalization of what is presented in media images as personal standards of attractiveness, as well as their awareness of the thin ideal that is portrayed in media messages, and perceived pressure to be thin from the media. Results showed that age, body mass index (BMI), peer, parental and media pressures for thinness when looked at individually, are associated with body dissatisfaction and dieting, consistent with social cognitive theory. Modernity was also found to have influenced body dissatisfaction, however it did not reach a level of significance in its influence on dieting. Ultimately, Lam et al. (2009) concluded that adolescent girls are significantly impacted by sociocultural influences such as commercial and print advertising, family, and peers, to be thin. These sociocultural influences also have an impact on body dissatisfaction and dieting among adolescent girls between the ages of 11 and 19, according to Lam et al. (2009), drawing a parallel with social cognitive theory. These results are also evidence of the spread of McDonaldization. Primarily western ideals such as thinness and dieting associated with body dissatisfaction have spread across the globe, and are now affecting adolescent girls in Hong Kong through the media, specifically commercial and print advertising. These representations and stereotypes are influencing people of all ages, both male and female, to not only want to be thin themselves, but to also put pressure on others, specifically adolescent girls in this article, to be thin as well.

**Masculinity Defined by Advertising**

Stereotypes of women in advertising are given much more attention than those of men, however stereotypes of men are still incredibly prevalent in advertising. Popular print and commercial advertising presents an image of what it is to be a man, just as it does for women, and men are often expected to live up to the similar almost unattainable expectations that women are. In an article published in Media and Values magazine, Nakayama (1989) examines the ways in which men are presented in popular advertisements, and discusses how the ads present an image to men of how they are supposed to look, behave, and even think in order to be considered a real man in American society.

The author states that modern advertising narrows the definition of what it means to be a man (Nakayama, 1989). According to the advertisements that were examined in the article by OASIS (Men Organized Against Sexism and Institutionalized Stereotypes) men are presented as in charge, alone, and self contained. When they are presented in an ad with another man, they appear ready to unleash their aggression at any moment, and when presented with another woman, they must appear as dominant over that woman (Nakayama, 1989). Men are often being presented as cowboys, successful businessmen, construction workers, sophisticates in tuxedos, and muscle men. In general, the concentrated ways in which men are presented in advertising has a negative affect on men and what it means to be a man in today’s American society, and it also helps shapes men’s views of what it means to be a man, as well as how they measure up to the male role models that they see in advertising as evidenced in the research reviewed pertaining to males and their body image.

**Men As a Source of Humor**

In television commercials we generally see a particular gender acting out a specific role, with regards to the purpose of the commercial and the product that is being sold. In commercials that are advertising more masculine products such as car parts, tools, sports gear, or outdoor home chores such as lawn maintenance, typically a male actor will play the role in that commercial. However, when a commercial is advertising cleaning products, furniture, child care, or cooking there is typically a female actress playing the lead role in that commercial. In an article that was published in the spring 2006 issue of Mass Communication and Society, Sharrer, Kim, Ke-Ming, and Zixu, (2006) attempt to address the issue of gendered roles in commercial advertisements, and more specifically, the ways in which men are portrayed in what would typically be considered a commercial geared towards women. The article also addresses the issue of whether traditionally defined gender roles for men and women are reinforcing the stereotypes that we see in commercial advertisements, coinciding with Bandura’s (2001) explanation of social cognitive theory in that because we spend much of our lives exposed to messages in the media, we tend to imitate, and behave in a manner that is consistent with what the media dictates as normal and/or acceptable.

The article addresses the fact that more women are obtaining bachelor’s degrees today than men, as well as entering into the workforce (Sharrer et.al., 2006). Therefore why is it that commercials are still consistently depicting women as being in charge of cooking, cleaning, and childcare, and men only engaging in more masculine activities? Most imperatively, the article addresses the issue that when men are placed in commercials in which they are advertising products for cooking, cleaning, or childcare, they are portrayed humorously and entirely inept and unsuccessful at accomplishing the task (Sharrer et al., 2006). Therefore tasks of this matter are better left to a woman to be accomplished successfully, as opposed to a male. Men are also portrayed as being incompetent in commercials geared toward what would stereotypically be considered a females role, presenting the image to viewers that men are not capable of cooking, cleaning, or taking care of children and a household and therefore, the job of doing so should be left to a woman.

**Gender Roles In Sports Advertising**

Sports advertising is also a field of advertising that utilizes different sex roles in advertising, depending on whom their advertisements are marketed towards. Men and women play different roles in sports advertising than they would in a domestic advertisement, considering that they are catering to a different activity, and therefore want to portray both sexes in a different light to make their product more appealing to the public. According to Cuneen and Cluassen (1999) Sports advertising can include men and women in advertisements together, as well as by themselves, and includes models actively engaged in some type of activity, or the specific sport being advertised. Sports advertising can also contain models that are not engaged in any activity at all. Companies will also utilize elite models in their advertising campaigns to more quickly grasp the attention of the public. Non-elite, or models that are not celebrities in the sports and/or entertainment industry, are also utilized in the sports advertising industry (Cuneen & Claussen, 1999)

The research of Cunnen and Claussen (1999) shows that more often than not, women do not take notice of sports advertisements. Of 199 women, more then half of them did not notice sports advertisements with men or women playing a particular team sport. They also did not notice ads of men or women playing an individual sport, and they did not notice ads of men or women engaged in any type fitness activity (Cuneen & Claussen, 1999). Of 152 men, more than half of them did not notice ads of men or women engaged in any type of sport, or physical activity (Cuneen & Claussen, 1999). Overall however, the percentages of men that did not take notice to the advertisements were slightly lower than those of women, perhaps because men stereotypically tend to be more interested in sports, and more visual than women, making them more inclined to take notice to advertising campaigns that depict female models engaging in some type of physical activity.

Several brands were examined in this study including Nike, Reebok, and Wilson and in each brand they were all inclined to use men and women in *gender appropriate* activities, catering to common stereotypes of men and women. Females were used in all sorts of activities in the advertisements that were examined however they were most commonly used in ads for aerobics, golf, tennis, and walking and running, as opposed to rougher sports such as football or even baseball which are more commonly thought of as activities for men. This is also most likely associated with Metheny (1965) and Hall’s (1985) theory of “female sport” and “male sport” in which women are more commonly seen in such sports as figure skating and tennis, where as men are more commonly seen engaging in sports such as football, wrestling, and shot putting, consistent with social cognitive theories claim that communication is a reproduction of social order and that individuals will communicate in ways that are analogous to the society and the culture that they have been primarily exposed to throughout their lives, including messages that are communicated via the media, specifically commercial and print advertising.

**Advertising of Gender Specific Products**

Some products however are advertised specifically to attract a particular gender. Although a product may not be specially designed for a particular gender, such as dust mops for women, or power tools for men, businesses still intentionally target specific genders for their product even though the product itself may be gender neutral in its true form of function. In the study executed by Sharrer et al., (2006), when men were used in domestic advertising they were portrayed as dumb, incompetent and inadequate at performing domestic chores, as opposed women. Sometimes there can even be certain forms of technology that take on a gendered role.

In an article published in the Asian Journal of Women’s Studies, Misu (2001) seeks to determine why it is that the computer has been presented in Korean advertisements as a masculine technology, when in fact, it is a technological instrument that can be, and is utilized by both sexes. In a specific advertisement that was examined in this study, was a short dialogue that was captioned on the advertisement in which it is stated “Those mothers who don’t know about the computer are not cool” and a young boy says that the computer is the first thing that his mother and her friends talk about while a woman, presumably the boys mother, is seated in front of the computer eager to learn how to use the machine (Misu, 2001). The article suggests that women typically don’t know how to use a computer, and if they do, they most likely only know how to use this technology on a very basic level and they are striving to learn more about this technology that is so often associated with intelligent and successful business men. Not only does this article have a negative impact on women, but Misu (2001) was also seeking to understand what kind of affect these types of advertisements had on men and what the advertising of a computer as a masculine technology says about the responsibilities and expectations of men.

In these types of advertisements computer competency is presented as an asset to the male character and men will not progress in the business world if they do not thoroughly understand how to operate a computer. One man, a 42 year old senior manager, was questioned by Misu (2001), about how he felt about this widely accepted social norm, stated that he felt inadequate because of his lack of knowledge about the operations of a computer and he feels that he cannot engage in certain in and out of office activities because of the fact that he doesn’t have a great deal of knowledge about computers (Misu, 2001). He goes on to say that even female staff in his office are more proficient in their use of the computer than he is, simply because they know how to operate a computer, implying that women should never be better or more proficient in any skill than a man. The man adds that this truly hurts his pride as a man, and he can’t engage in certain discussions with his collogues, due to his lack of knowledge about the computer. Another man, who worked as a manager for a department store, claimed that he felt that the computer was more of a feminine technology, and that he viewed the computer as something that was only used by his secretary. The man went on further, to state that whenever he needs something done on the computer he asks his secretary, who is a female, to handle the task for him, and therefore the computer has a feminine connotation for him (Misu, 2001).

Consistent with social cognitive theory, in the case of the computer being advertised as a masculine technology, men must behave and act in a way that is consistent with what society, specifically masculine society, claims is appropriate. Men must present an image that they are fully knowledgeable and skilled with computers in order to be accepted as masculine by those in masculine, as well as feminine societies. In the instance of the man feeling that his pride has been hurt by his lack of knowledge of the computer, he cannot properly act out his role as a masculine being when he is with his collogues, due to his lack of knowledge regarding the subject.

This research also draws a parallel with the concept of McWorld and the McDonaldization that is spreading across the globe. As Barber (1995) states, technology is a driving force behind the spread of McDonaldization. The idea that technology, specifically the computer, can be viewed as a masculine technology, and that men who lack the knowledge of how to use a computer, or who are not tech savvy, are not masculine men can be interpreted by many as a primarily western view. In Korean culture, technology is sometimes viewed as gender specific, and therefore requires gender specific advertising, however this closely correlates with western traditions, specifically American traditions in gender, that state that men go out and work in business and gain experience using computers and various other forms of technology, while women stay at home and care for the home and children and don’t acquire such knowledge, ultimately making the computer, among other forms of technology, a gender specific product. Consistent with Barber’s (1995) explanation of McDonaldization, Kehily and Nayak (2008 p. 328) state that a commonly held view suggests that globalization in the cultural sphere produces western hegemonic structures at the expense of smaller local cultures. Further stating that cultural globalization can be characterized by the flow of ideas, products and practices from the western ‘core’ to the ‘periphery’, or non-western locations.

Indian culture also dictates that women are stereotypically caregivers of their husbands and children, and that they stay at home to care for children and various household duties. According to Ramasubramanian and Jain (2009, p. 254) although an increasing number of women in India are seeking secure employment outside of their homes, more the concept of the ideal Indian wide remains someone who exhibits the nurturing qualities of a care giving mother and domestic housewife, while still maintaining masculine agency and independence in the workplace. Also, consistent with the ideals of western culture and the concept of McWorld, researchers found that the exchange of beauty for wealth by men and women reported in many cultures throughout the world, is prevalent in the Indian context as well according to Ramasubramanian and Jain (2009, p. 257).

**Depression as a Moderator**

In correlation with social cognitive theory, Rodgers, Paxton, and Chabrol (2010) examined depression as a moderator of sociocultural influences on the symptoms of eating disorders in both adolescent males and females in an effort to determine the relationship between depression and eating disorders being influenced by the media. According to Rodgers et al. (2010) depression has sometimes been associated with negative body image and eating disorders. Rodgers et al. (2010) aimed to determine the precise role of depression as a moderator of sociocultural influences on the symptoms of eating disorders. With the permission of school principals, researchers obtained a sample of 509 adolescents, 225 of which were male, and 284 of which were female, with an average age of 16.1 years. Participants were recruited from 3 high schools in the Toulouse (France) area and were of various socio-economical backgrounds. Participants completed self-report questionnaires which assessed depression, body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, bulimic symptoms and sociocultural influences on appearance from the media, family and peers. Both the male and female gender that displayed high levels of depressive symptoms also perceived strong influences on appearance from their peers and the media, specifically commercial and print advertising. For girls in particular, eating disorder symptoms were directly influenced by sociocultural aspects of their lives, specifically the media and advertising, drawing a parallel with social cognitive theory, as well as by depression although depression only played a limited role as a moderator for these relationships in girls. For boys however, depression and sociocultural influences such as the media, family and peers, were not as directly related to eating disorder symptoms.

Gender differences that are present in this study may be a result of the western culture that the participants live in. Considering that men are less influenced by messages in the media, according to Tiggemann (2006), and from their family and peers, regarding thinness and attractiveness, perhaps men have higher self-esteem and body satisfaction than that of women. We may possibly live in a culture that puts more pressure on women to conform to the thin ideals of the media than men. Social cognitive theory helps to provide insight into this issue because it identifies cultural influences as a reason for certain behaviors among individuals

**Changes in Advertisings Use of Gender Roles**

In the United States we still see advertisements, particularly in the fashion industry and home domestic industry; that are incredibly gender biased and stereotypical of gender roles. Not only are both men and women stereotyped in advertisements but often times they are portrayed in unrealistic lights, such as in fashion, where all women are stick thin with pale skin and light eyes, and all men have heads full of thick lustrous hair and six pack abs. These portrayals of men and women are inaccurate and unrealistic for the average American man and woman. Royo-Vela, Aldas-Manzano, Kuster-Boluda, and Vila-Lopez (2007) seek to determine if there have been any changes in advertising, pertaining to gender, in Spanish magazine advertising throughout the last three decades. Gender roles change over time; therefore, the ways in which men and women are portrayed in magazine advertising will also change to cater to the ever-changing culture and norms of a particular country at any given time. Royo-Vela et al., (2007) use content analysis methodology in which they study gender roles and sexism in popular Spanish magazines to determine how these two factors have changed, or grown, over the past three decades. The study uses 1,033 different advertisements that were randomly selected from popular Spanish magazines and ultimately discovered that both male and female portrayals have undergone great changes throughout the past three decades (Royo-Vela et al., 2007).

Stereotypes still exist in the most recent advertisements that were examined in the study, however, according to Royo-Vela et al., (2007); research shows that there has been a significant move away from situational gender roles that were played by both men and women in magazine advertisements. Men and women are no longer playing the more traditionally accepted roles in advertisements for their particular gender. The study also found that the highest amount of advertisements featuring men and women in more traditional roles in Spanish magazine advertisements was in 1975 and has been on somewhat of a rollercoaster since then, with those numbers peaking again in 1985 and 1995. Research also revealed that no differences in percentages could be found in men and women being depicted in an independent manner, nor could any differences be found in the levels of sexism at which men and women were portrayed (Royo-Vela et al., 2007). This may be an indication that although the McWorld culture may be spreading across the globe at a rapid rate, it is changing the overall views on gender throughout the world as well by slowly making progress in the advertising industry in its representation of gender. Creating a more androgynous and even playing field in the representation of both men and women in popular commercial and print advertising as we are entering a time where equality among men and women is more prevalent and critical than ever before appears to be more popular in the advertising industry.

**Discussion**

Sociocultural influences, such as popular commercial and print advertising, do impact a drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction among men, women, and adolescent girls, as supported by social cognitive theory. Individuals tend to be more likely to attempt to emulate what they see in their everyday lives from family, friends, coworkers, and the media. Social cognitive theory offers clarification as to why individuals are likely to be impacted by the body images and thin ideals that they see on a daily basis in the media. Because we spend so much of our time exposed to various forms of media, as well as the company of others, we are more prone to behave in ways that are analogous with what we see in our daily lives, and for the purposes of this paper, specifically print and commercial advertising. According to social cognitive theory, people learn from watching what others say, do, and what they look like, including, but not limited to, what they see in the media. Knowledge acquisition is directly related to the observation of others within social contexts and media influences (Bandura, 2001). This helps to provide some background and insight into why both men and women feel pressure from the media, specifically advertising, to look, speak, and behave in ways that are consistent with what they see as normal, acceptable, and appealing for their gender as communicated to them via popular print and commercial advertising. The media has proven to play a significant role in the self-esteem, and body image of adolescents girls, and adult men and women alike, and although many are aware that the images presented to them via the media of what is considered attractive and desirable is unrealistic and nearly unattainable, many still strive to achieve that look every day.

There has been a tremendous amount of research done on women and how they are represented in print and commercial advertising. Specifically, women are thoroughly examined in print fashion advertising because of the provocative and shocking manner that they are posed. Women are generally represented as sex objects in the vast majority of print fashion advertising, and this has had a substantial impact on the body satisfaction and self esteem of women, not only in the United States, but also across the globe. Due to this negative representation of women, there have been decades worth of research dedicated to determining the impact that this type of advertising may have on women. More recently however, there has been more research on the representations of men in advertising and it’s impact on the male ego, self-esteem, and body image. With men being presented as a source of humor in commercial advertising for products that would stereotypically be considered feminine products, I aimed to determine if there was a substantial or noticeable impact that this negative representation may have on men in general, both in the United States and throughout the world. Men are not incompetent, or incapable of performing tasks that are traditionally performed by women, just as women are not incapable of performing tasks that are traditionally performed by men. However, popular commercial and print advertising presents an image that there cannot be a happy medium, and men cannot do what women can do, just as women cannot do what men can do.

Overall, research has shown that, regardless of how far we have come as a society that promotes equality, there are still very fine lines that dictate gender roles, and gender appropriateness. Popular print and commercial advertising dictates that women should stay home and care for their children and the household, while men venture out into the workforce to be successful breadwinners for their families. Holding true to these traditionally assigned norms of society, when the roles are reversed in advertising campaigns, it is typically meant to look comical to their consumer, and make them laugh at the fact that men and women are not performing their traditionally assigned gender roles. The roles depicted in advertising are adapted by the public in every day life, even to the extent that certain technologies have been assigned genders, consistent with social cognitive theory, and the concept of McWorld.

Traditional roles state that men should be engaged in business and play a large role in corporate America. Technology often plays a part in that, as Misu (2001) claims in her study about the computer being presented as a masculine technology in Korean advertisements. Similar to how men reacted to popular advertising images of other men with ideal perfect bodies, one man revealed that his ego and masculine pride was hurt by his not being able to properly use a computer. Drawing a parallel with how men felt about male images in advertising, in that popular advertising campaigns have the ability to bruise the male ego, and self esteem. According to research reviewed in this paper, the advertising industry doesn’t seem to be slowing down in its traditional, and perhaps archaic, representations of both men and women in advertising, although it is not necessarily increasing these practices either.

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