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Themes and Gender Portrayals in Saturday Morning Children's Television Advertisements

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Themes and Gender Portrayals in Saturday Morning Children's Television Advertisements

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Sara C. Karpan

June 1997

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

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Chairperson Jeremy H. Pischke
Date June 24, 1997

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the content of advertisements directed toward boys and girls ages six to twelve. Gender portrayals, settings, activities, themes and types of advertisements were variables analyzed in the sample. Data collected from the advertisements were taken from a random sample of four Saturdays of children's programming between 6 a.m. and 12 p.m. CBS, ABC, and FOX were the three networks and Nickelodeon was the cable channel used in the study.

Out of 1079 advertisements observed in the sample, 220 were not repeated. Results revealed that the most frequent types of advertisements viewed sold food (54 percent) and toy products (44 percent). More advertisements directed toward girls contained inside settings and passive activities, compared to those directed toward boys, which contained more outside and fantasy settings and active activities. Dominant themes in boy advertisements were adventure and conflict, while many of the advertisements directed toward girls were humorous.

Social and observational learning theories explain how and why children model characters in the advertisements they view. Because gender roles and behaviors are apparent in advertisements directed toward children, it is important to examine exactly what they are watching between their favorite programs.

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Chapter I Introduction

Over the last several decades, the disciplines of communication, psychology, sociology, education and child development have generated a number of studies on children and television advertising (Pecora, 1995). Scholars in these areas began to research the issue of children's advertising as early as 1950, when advertisers began to recognize children's economic value as consumers.

Even though children met the requirements of an avid audience during this time, they did not appear to be in the market as consumers of the goods television was selling (Alexander & Morrison, 1995). As a result, advertisers had little interest in sponsoring their programs (Alexander & Morrison, 1995). During this era, advertisers mainly considered children extensions of their parents' purchasing power (Pecora, 1995; Creech, 1996).

By the early 1970s, however, this scenario had drastically changed and advertisers' recognition of children as a separate audience was apparent. This was largely due to the way the television networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) grouped most of their children's programs on Saturday mornings, a time many children were likely to be watching (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). This development created an opportunity for advertisers to target children as a special audience. The types of advertisements developed for this special audience were, for the

most part, gender-specific.

As children mature, they acquire their gender identity from parents, peers and teachers. The media, specifically television, play a major role in teaching children gender-appropriate behaviors. Television advertisements in particular have a significant influence in shaping children's views of gender. In many cases, advertisements selling children's products stimulate desire for certain kinds of toys, games and clothing (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

At very early ages, children have learned to differentiate these products and are able to associate which kinds are appropriate for specific genders (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Advertisements made for children are most often designed to be sex-appropriate; with girls typically shown playing with dolls and boys with cars and trucks.

Children soon begin to display stereotyped toy preferences and behaviors based on which gender category they have acquired (Caldera, Huston & O'Brien, 1989). As a result, sex role stereotypes, which are culturally shared assumptions and expectations about sex differences in abilities, personality traits, activities and roles begin to develop (Weinraub, Pritchard, Clemens, Sockloff, Ethridge, Gracely & Myers, 1984). In fact, by age five, many children in our culture hold sex role stereotypes similar to those of adults (Weinraub, et al., 1984). In general children who have sex-typed toy preferences are aware that

there are two categories of people, realize the category into which they fit and can distinguish males and females in advertisements (Weinraub, et al., 1984).

Background

It did not take long for concern to develop in response to advertisers' new role of "captivator" during children's programming. In fact, by the mid 1970s, the topic of television advertising and children emerged as an important public policy issue, with results of research indicating that young children did not comprehend television advertising in the same ways as adults (Kunkel, 1992). This led to involvement by many agencies and pro-children's groups, including the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and Action for Children's Television, (ACT) all of whom have played major roles in this area.

Children are an important target audience for advertising because they represent nearly twenty percent of the population in the U.S. (Snyder, 1995). They spend between \$7.2 and \$8.8 billion of their own money and greatly influence the \$132 billion their parents spend on food, play items and clothes per year (Snyder, 1995). These factors have made children and television advertising a multi-million dollar industry, with advertising dollars targeted at children skyrocketing from approximately \$325 million in 1987 to \$575 million in 1992 (Snyder, 1995).

The amount of time that children watch television has also steadily increased since the medium was introduced in the late 1940s (Comstock, 1989). As of 1990, the average child watched between 1500 and 1800 hours of commercial television annually; one in five minutes of which was devoted to advertising (Van Evra, 1990). The percentage of commercials during children's programming that advertise toys and games has more than tripled since the late 1970s (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). In terms of behavioral effects, these alarming statistics regarding children and television advertising present a great deal of concern.

Due to the significance of the children's television industry, the Federal Communications Commission has had a long interest in imposing restrictions against overcommercialization (Snyder, 1995). The FCC literally determined the structure of American television by setting the rules that broadcasters followed (Comstock, 1989).

In 1974 the FCC set forth a policy statement with specific guidelines for broadcasters, including diversified programming, programming that furthered the educational and cultural development of children, and more programming on the weekdays (Comstock, 1989). These guidelines also called for broadcasters to limit the amount of advertising during children's programming and to clearly separate program content from commercial messages targeted toward children,

otherwise known as host-selling. (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Five years later, however, evidence indicated that these guidelines had largely been ignored (Wilson & Weiss, 1992).

Congress went one step further and established the *Children's Television Act of 1990*. Effective October 1, 1991 the act set forth commercial limits of no more than 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends and no more than 12 minutes per hour on weekdays of programming to viewers under the age of twelve (Snyder, 1995). Under this act broadcast stations were also required to air programming specifically designed to serve the educational and informational needs of children sixteen and under (Snyder, 1995).

The act itself does not establish specific programming requirements, instead it directs the FCC to consider if a broadcast station has served the educational and informational needs of children through their overall programming (Corn-Revere, 1994). The FCC exercises its power to consider whether broadcasters have met these requirements during a station's license renewal time (Corn-Revere, 1994; Creech, 1996). In administering this act, it was the goal of the FCC to combine the broadcasters' interests and resources with the local community's perceptions of its needs (Davis & Weist, 1993).

Theoretical trends in gender differences among children

Many theorists believe that as infants mature and begin to internalize with

their surroundings, they start to develop a specific gender identity (Wood, 1994). Psychoanalytic theory explains that the process of children becoming aware and beginning to identify with their own gender is one which develops as a result of different kinds of relationships existing within their environments (Wood, 1994). Object-relation theory also suggests that these relationships are central to the development of human personality and gender identity (Wood, 1994). According to this theory, early relationships that infants develop are the primary basis of their sense of identity (Wood, 1994).

In general, gender is related to a culture's social roles, positions and values. Children are taught to be either masculine or feminine depending on the culture they are born into. A cultural script of what gender males and females should become is composed before an infant is even born and as he/she matures, is communicated through family, peers and teachers (Wood, 1994). These individuals in a child's life teach him/her the characteristics and expectations of their specific gender from the moment he/she is born (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

For the most part in the United States, young boys and girls learn specific personality traits and gender roles which they are encouraged to follow. Girls are taught to be nurturing and dependent, which will help them to become good mothers and wives, while boys are taught assertiveness and

independence, which will aid them in pursuance of fatherhood and bread-earner roles (Wood, 1994). The majority of scholars believe that children acquire gender identity and begin to learn their specific gender roles between the ages of six months and four years (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

Social learning theory, which was developed by Mischel, Bandura and Walters in the mid-1960s, suggests that children initially acquire sex-typed behaviors as a function of reinforcement and modeling (Weinraub, et al., 1984). This theory also claims that gender labeling, gender identity and sex-typed toy preferences can be reliably observed in children by age three (Weinraub, et al., 1984). At approximately this age, children begin to notice that some activities and possessions are more commonly associated with one sex or the other (Weinraub, et al., 1984).

Between ages three and four, some children also start to realize that men and women wear and use different things. They realize that men wear suits, shirts and hats and believe that certain tasks, such as truck-driving, fire-fighting and car repairing are more characteristic of men (Weinraub, et al., 1984). Conversely, children realize that women wear dresses and blouses and complete tasks such as cooking, cleaning and washing (Weinraub, et al., 1984). As children age and mature, social learning theory suggests that they learn to distinguish the sexes more accurately and begin to acquire information about

socially approved behavior for each (Fagot, Leinbach & Hagan, 1986). This theory reveals the impact that the nature of advertising can have on children between the ages of two and five.

Bandura developed another theory concept to the social learning theory which he called the theory of observational learning. This theory, in which individuals integrate information encountered through exposure to models, can also be used in examining the nature of sex-typed toy advertisements (Grusec, 1992). These kinds of advertisements can have a powerful influence on children's play behavior as well as their personality characteristics and cognitive development skills (Smith, 1994). According to Bandura's theory, power and attractiveness of the gender of the model is vital in capturing and holding children's attention (Grusec, 1992). Research has revealed that when children view sex-typed toy advertisements they tend to imitate or model that behavior (Grusec, 1986). Therefore, examining the nature of such advertisements can help researchers, educators and parents gain important and valuable insight into the type of adults and consumers today's children will become.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the types of television advertisements directed toward children between the ages of six and twelve. Specifically, it analyzed what types were directed toward boys and girls. It

identified gender differences in the types of advertisements by examining content such as: humor; adventure; conflict and brand characters that were present. In addition, the study indicated the kinds of characters portrayed, the activities they engaged in (passive or active) and the surroundings in which they occurred (outside, inside or fantasy). Associations were also made between the type of product advertised and the gender of the characters in the advertisements.

Research has indicated that advertising has had profound consequences for consumers of all ages, due to its manipulative and persuasive nature, stereotypical portrayals, preoccupation with materialism and consumption and lack of information that it provides (Treise, Weigold, Conna & Garrison, 1994). This is true especially for children, whose intellectual development attitudes, preferences and entire value systems can be significantly affected (Courtney & Whipple, 1983).

Specifically, exposure to television advertisements has disturbing consequences when as of 1994, the number of television commercials viewed by children between the ages of two and eleven was approximately 40,000 per year (Boush, Friestad & Rose, 1994). This is a tremendous increase from 1967, when the number of commercials viewed by the same age group was slightly under 1,000 per year (Schramm & Porter, 1982). These types of advertisements,

which were targeted to vulnerable groups, such as children, produced harmful effects in a variety of ways.

Based on this evidence, the amount of exposure that children obtain from television advertisements as they mature could have a great impact on the type of consumers they become later on in life (Boush, et al., 1994). Because today's advertising industry is saturated with visual images that convey socially relevant messages about gender stereotypes, young boys and girls typically view the models in advertisements and incorporate the gender roles for the types of products that they represent (Smith, 1994).

The goal of the current study was to provide more insight on the types of advertisements that are viewed by young children and the gender differences that they incorporate.

Chapter II Literature Review

Television has provided children an "early window" on the world (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). However, since television operates as a commercial venture, its early window has also brought the nation's youth face-to-face with our system of private enterprise, much sooner and to a much greater degree than ever before (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991).

This medium actually takes advantage of children in two ways. First, it draws them into the audience and sells them to the advertisers and then, through programs (the bait) and commercials (the hook) television sells the sponsors' products (Robertson & Rossiter, 1977). This process is one of the most pervasive and compelling common set of lessons that our children learn.

I. Issues in Children's Television Advertising

The Development of Television Advertising

Beginning as early as 1960, the content of commercials directed toward children employed aggressive, hard-selling approaches, using appeals incorporating peer populations and exaggerated claims about the qualities of advertised products (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). As advertising's persuasive strategies intensified, child-oriented marketing campaigns emerged and flourished, employing an unprecedented number of advertisements designed specifically for young viewers (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). At the same time, the amount of time devoted to commercials on Saturday morning, a prime-time viewing period for children, also increased (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991).

In this era, broadcast networks began to increase the amount of advertising during children's programs above levels found during other types of content (Kunkel and Roberts, 1991). Children and advertising became an important consideration within the community and public concern soon surfaced about the increasing commercialism on children's television (Pecora, 1995).

Research had begun to document the vulnerability of young children to the manipulative and deceptive nature of advertising, which gained wide attention in the press. This exposure prompted the formation of a public interest child-advocacy group in Boston in 1968. Action for Children's Television, or ACT, which was founded by Peggy Charren, focused on the problems involving television advertising, such as the quantity of commercials and the persuasive nature of advertising to an audience barely able to comprehend its true intentions (Comstock, 1989).

Because of ACT's successful petitioning of children's programming, Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Chairman Dean Burch promoted a "Notice of Inquiry," and proposed rule-making on children's television in 1971 (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974). The fundamental policy issue raised focused on whether a commercially-based broadcasting system was capable of serving quality programs to a sensitive audience such as children (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974).

The Federal Trading Commission (FTC) also became heavily involved with this issue in 1973. Chairman Lewis Engman stated that the time had come

for advertisers and broadcasters to develop a voluntary code with government and the public, which specified what was and was not acceptable in advertising directed toward children (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974). He announced the formation of a joint subcommittee composed of industry and consumer group representatives, who would work together under the FTC to devise such a voluntary code (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974). He planned to address such problems as visual distortion of product performance, product comparisons and advertising appeals to children concerning the use of program characters and heroes (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974).

In 1974, FCC Chairman Richard Wiley adopted a position parallel to Engman's by calling for self-regulation by the broadcast industry (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974). Although Wiley spoke of considering every option available within the confines of the FCC statutory authority, he stated that he had no intention of impinging the structure and stability of the children's television industry (Melody & Ehrlich, 1974).

Even though Engman and Wiley concluded that a ban on children's advertisements would threaten the future viability of their programming, they did attempt to balance the interests of children vulnerable to persuasive advertising and broadcasters who rely upon advertising as a primary source of revenue, by pursuing a "policy of limitations". (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). The main limitation enforced through this policy was host-selling. This type of commercial refers to the inclusion of a program character in an advertisement aired during or

adjacent to the program in which the character is featured (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). The FCC's policy was based on the principle that the public interest requires broadcasters to maintain a clear separation between program and commercial content during children's programming (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993).

An example of this type of selling would be an advertisement starring Fred Flinstone promoting *Fruity Pebbles* cereal which is aired during programming of *The Flintstones* cartoon (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). This type of advertisement is likely to be both appealing and confusing to children because the cartoon character (Fred Flinstone) is also selling the cartoon rather than a physically distinct product (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). Engman and Wiley felt that advertising of this nature, which has been effectively prohibited since 1974, blurred the distinction between programs and commercials for young children (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993).

Also in the 1970s, broadcasting and advertising industries began to strengthen the self-regulation of television advertising to children (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). During this time, The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) introduced a self-regulatory code which added limitations on the amount of advertising time permissible during programs for children (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). The National Advertising Division (NAD) helped to establish these limitations and created the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) in 1974 to oversee and enforce them (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993).

The CARU, which is funded by contributions from the advertising industry, relies upon the cooperation of advertisers to accomplish its work (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). The unit developed eight guidelines to encourage truthful and accurate advertising sensitive to the nature of children which included: product presentations and claims; sales pressure; disclosures/disclaimers; comparative claims; endorsements by program characters; premiums; safety and special standards for recorded telephone message services (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). These self-regulatory guidelines are the current industry-wide policy for children's advertising and the only NAB and NAD limitations that still remain in effect today (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993).

By the 1980s, however, the FCC had reversed many of its earlier policies in accord with the federal government's de-regulatory philosophy, arguing that marketplace forces should determine the acceptable amount of commercial content allowed during children's programming (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). The Business Roundtable, an organization comprised of business executives with active roles in public policy debates, advocated de-regulation during this time (Dye, 1995). Established in 1972, this group of elites began to heavily influence policy makers' decisions during the Reagan era. In the 1980s they gave policy makers something to consider - whether the cost of the regulations was worth the improvements they would bring (Dye, 1995).

Even though Mark Fowler, the 1986 FCC Chairman concluded that television advertising to children was a legitimate cause for concern, he

determined that there were no practical remedies open to federal policy-making (Comstock, 1989). He did not believe that government regulation was the broadcaster's proper guide as to what constituted public interest (Boyer, 1986). His deregulatory views on this issue may have resulted from influences of the Business Roundtable.

The Children's Television Act of 1990

Aside from these self-regulatory ventures, the FCC has recently again begun to become involved in the area of children and advertising. During the 1980s, the FCC was virtually ineffective in attempting to establish and enforce any policies regarding this issue. However, at the beginning of this decade, after considering the harsh toll that the advertising industry was having on children, the FCC encouraged Congress to take action (McAvoy, 1993). The *Children's Television Act of 1990*, which limits the amount of advertising during children's programming and requires broadcasters to further their intellectual and emotional development (through educational programming), was passed by Congress with the hopes of improving the quality of television advertising that children view (McAvoy, 1993).

The act put a 10.5 minute per hour commercial limit on weekends and a 12 minute per hour commercial limit on weekdays of programming to viewers twelve and under (McAvoy, 1993). However, the act did not require the FCC to set quantitative guidelines for educational programming, instead it required the commission to base its decision upon an evaluation of a station's overall service

to children (Corn-Revere, 1994). According to Congressman Ed Markey, then Chairman of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee, the law actually gave parents and citizens the ability to demand more educational children's programming (Corn-Revere, 1994).

Between 1991 and 1992, initial successes from the act found that most markets had not only reduced the number of commercials aired per hour by one commercial but also reduced their average commercial time by approximately thirty seconds per hour (Snyder, 1995). These positive responses did not continue, however, and by 1994, the average number of commercial minutes and commercials per hour had returned to the pre-act averages (Snyder, 1995). The FCC took actions against stations who ignored the act's provisions by issuing of harsh fines (McAvoy, 1993).

The repeated violations of the rules by stations and the lack of increase in children's educational programming were not what Congress envisioned when passing this act (Markey, 1994). It has been noted that the main reason for the failure of this act was due to unclear definitions of what constitutes as educational programming along with the amount of it that broadcasters are expected to provide (Markey, 1994).

Without a clear understanding of educational programming, current FCC Chairman Reed Hundt found that television producers often tried to retrofit sitcoms and cartoons to be "educational" rather than develop creative new formats (Silver, 1994). With broadcasters and FCC regulators at odds over what

qualified as a children's educational television program, many television producers claimed such programs like *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, *Yogi Bear* and *The Jetsons* had educational value (McConnell, 1995).

In a 1996 study conducted by Wilhelmi, the educational value of the Power Rangers show was addressed. She researched the aggressive nature of the Power Rangers and their effects on children. Even though she discovered characters in the program use a great deal of violence, there were also certain episodes she analyzed which showed characters engaging in non-violent problem-solving as a means of handling confrontational situations (Wilhelmi, 1996). In addition, her research revealed that characters engaged in pro-social behaviors, which she defined as actions and words used to benefit other characters in the show (Wilhelmi, 1996). Although many critics claim the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* is a violent show, the pro-social and non-violent actions that its characters act out, further blur the dispute that broadcasters and the FCC have over what is considered "educational" programming.

Other programs some broadcasters have tried to justify as educational include animated shows such as *Back to the Future* and *Fievel's American Tails* (McConnell, 1995). CBS claimed that *Back to the Future*, a series following characters through adventures into the past and future, introduced principals of science, advanced vocabulary and provided them with facts about historical events and cultures (McConnell, 1995). CBS also believed that the series *Fievel's American Tails*, which followed the experiences of an immigrant mouse

through America, provided a look at an important period in American history and promoted values such as generosity, personal responsibility and cooperation in non-violent problem solving (McConnell, 1995).

If network broadcasters consider a cartoon which incorporates problem-solving methods into its plots to be educational, they may also believe that they have sufficiently provided children with this type of programming for several years. This is evident in the results of Marigrace Powers' thesis on the depictions of old age in Saturday morning cartoons, which concluded in 1992 that forty per cent of the cartoons shown on Saturday mornings contained problem-solving techniques in their plots (Powers, 1992).

Hundt said that attempts of broadcasters to label programs as educational stretched the meaning of what qualifies as educational programming to the very limit (McConnell, 1995). He suggested that the FCC rely on academics in the future to judge the educational merit of shows (McConnell, 1995). He proposed that the television networks state what those educational programs are and then have social scientists evaluate in a rational, empirical manner how effective those shows are in teaching children (McConnell, 1995). Peggy Charren agreed with Hundt's view and said that the networks know exactly what educational programming means, but try to see how little education they can get away with to still have it qualify (Rice & Littleton, 1996).

Recent FCC Policy Guidelines

Since the *Children's Television Act of 1990* was passed, consumer advocates have criticized the existing rules for allowing broadcasters to stretch the definition of educational programming (Landler, 1996). However, beginning in April of 1995, Hundt kicked off a children's television programming campaign, which set the issue in a more positive direction towards defining what qualifies as educational programming (McConnell, June 24, 1996). Hundt said that broadcasters would comply with the 1990 act to a greater extent if they had an explicit understanding of the standard for what constituted as children's educational programming (McConnell, January 29, 1996).

The campaign focused around newly appointed FCC commissioner Susan Ness' "processing guideline plan," which called for establishing a weekly three-hour standard on educational programming for broadcasters to follow (McConnell, July 15, 1996). Specifically, the proposed guidelines, which met opposition from FCC members James Quello and Rachelle Chong, would make stations identify their "core" educational programs (McConnell, August, 12, 1996).

Quello, the longest-serving member of the FCC, expressed grievances with the proposal, saying that he thought the rules would "put broadcasting in a regulatory straitjacket" (Landler, 1996). He originally said he would support the plan as long as broadcasters were given some leeway on how to meet the requirements (Landler, 1996). However, he decided to retract his vote for the

rule when Hundt attached more regulatory provisions in his revised guideline plan (Landler, 1996).

For most of his twenty-two years as an FCC commissioner, Quello has opposed requiring broadcasters to carry a specific number of hours of children's programming (Landler, 1996). He said that they ought to be able to fulfill the requirement by other methods, such as through financing of public television programs or by producing public forums on issues like drug abuse or education (Landler, 1996). Quello does, however, agree that three hours is a reasonable renewal standard, but only if it comes from the industry and not the government (Landler, 1996). He claimed that he would only support a quantified standard if it came from the broadcast industry rather than the FCC (McConnell, June 3, 1996). Like Quello, Chong also opposes putting any set number of hours on children's programming. She said that a quantitative approach to programming content could start the FCC down a slippery slope of undue government intrusion (McConnell, August, 12, 1996).

Despite months of debate between the opposing commissioners and Hundt over the children's television programming issue, FCC commissioners ended their battle in early August 1996 by establishing a three-hour programming standard which will make stations identify their core educational shows (McConnell, August 12, 1996). The standard, which called for broadcasters to notify program-guide publishers of the shows and of their target age groups beginning January 2 1997, received a unanimous vote that

implemented the agreement (McConnell, August 12, 1996).

The three-hour "processing guideline," which will take full effect in the fall of 1997, took into consideration Quello's and Chong's arguments by allowing broadcasters to make up approximately thirty minutes of the three-hour standard through a collection of alternative programming efforts, such as public service announcements (McConnell, July 15, 1996). Media Bureau staff members will approve such applications as long as the alternative efforts are equivalent to regular core programming (McConnell, July 15, 1996). Broadcasters who fall short of the requirements by more than thirty minutes and do not bring an extraordinary alternative effort to the FCC, will go before the commissioners to discuss their license renewal (McConnell, July 15, 1996).

Hundt said that the new guidelines affirm that market values are not the same as family values and in this case, the public interest requires asking broadcasters to take steps that will not necessarily maximize their profits (McConnell, August 12, 1996). The action should, however, improve children's television programming.

The Nature of Broadcasting

Since the medium of television was introduced in the mid-1940s, networks and broadcasters have gone through many changes. For the most part, up until 1965, individual advertisers sponsored an entire program, usually running one-minute commercials (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Network advertising was so expensive, however, that many advertisers realized they could not afford the

steady weekly costs of full program sponsorship (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Because of this, full program sponsorship rapidly began to disappear as participating or shared advertising spread through day-time and prime-time hours (Sterling & Kittross, 1990).

Research also revealed that a thirty-second commercial sold goods and services almost as well and was less expensive than the minute commercial (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). As a result, the long-standard one-minute commercials gave way to the thirty-second spot (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). With this innovation, the total amount of time devoted to advertising did not increase, instead, the number of commercial messages rose sharply with two thirty-second commercials replacing a sixty-minute one (Sterling & Kittross, 1990).

By the 1970s, Saturday morning network programs were regarded as the 'benchmark' of the entire industry, with networks enjoying a virtual monopoly on original first-run children's programming (Kunkel, 1992). Their only competition came from independent stations which were largely limited to re-runs of programs previously broadcast by the network stations (Kunkel, 1992).

Almost a decade later, however, the scenario was much different. The number of independent broadcasters competing for a share of the audience had increased tremendously; almost doubling in size (Kunkel, 1992). Even though cable emerged as a major competitor in the late 1980s, by 1990, the 'Three Big Networks' (CBS, NBC and ABC) still led the industry in children's programming (McConville, 1995). However, in the years since then, NBC as ceased broadcast

of children's programming and CBS and ABC ratings are a fraction of what they were at the beginning of this decade (McConville, 1995). This decline is largely due to the increase of children's programming on cable networks such as *Nickelodeon* and *The USA Network*, two stations that exclusively target child audiences.

Nickelodeon, the cable network which has attracted more children ages two to eleven to its Saturday morning shows than any of the three big networks, has attributed its success to creative marketing and programming (Mifflin, 1996). It presents children's programs twenty-four hours a day, which give young viewers a destination channel to tune into regardless of what other shows are on at a given hour (Mifflin, 1996). Broadcast networks have trouble competing against *Nickelodeon* because most of them only televise children's shows on Saturday mornings (Mifflin, 1996).

One particular program shown on *Nickelodeon* is entitled *Rugrats*. This five-year old cartoon series airs thirteen times a week and is *Nickelodeon's* top-rated program, reaching an estimated seventeen million children weekly (Benezra, 1996). *Rugrats'* is currently selling licenses to manufacturers that will make toys, clothing and other merchandise based on its popular characters (Benezra, 1996).

Maureen Taxter, the vice-president and general manager of *Nickelodeon's* consumer product division, has already successfully marketed *Rugrats'* T-shirts, pajamas, backpacks and socks and envisions deals with

packaged goods, fast food and beverage partners in the future (Benezra, 1996). She feels that *Rugrats*, which was created by Arlene Klasky and Gabor Csupo, is a humorous animated series that connects its characters to both children and adult audiences (Benezra, 1996).

With a series that reaches millions of children each week and sells a variety of related character merchandise to its viewers, it is not hard to imagine how *Nickelodeon* has surpassed the three big networks in viewer ratings over the last several years.

II. Gender and Children's Advertising

From its biological creation, a fertilized egg develops into either a male or female fetus. However, after a child is born, he/she acquires his/her gender through interaction in a social world (Wood, 1994). Even though infants are classified as either male or female at birth, they spend their first few years of life learning to be either masculine or feminine.

Gender, which is composed of socially endorsed views of masculinity and femininity, is taught to children as they grow through a variety of cultural means (Wood, 1994). A culture's values, beliefs and preferred ways of organizing a collective life shape an infant's gender from the moment he/she is born (Wood, 1994). Depending on the type of society that an infant is born into, he/she is encouraged to conform to the gender their culture prescribes soon after birth (Wood, 1994). The practices and structure that a culture defines as socially appropriate have been carried down for hundreds of generations. Parents in the

1990s learned their gender identity from their parents and so on through the centuries.

Aside from cultural values and perceptions, a child's relationship with his/her primary caretaker (usually their mothers) is the most fundamental influence over their life (Wood, 1994). However, because a mother herself is gendered, distinct relationships are formed between her male and female children. Consequently, male and female infants follow different developmental paths, usually depending on the specific relationship they have with their mothers (Wood, 1994).

Girls' identification processes are more continuously embedded in and mediated by their ongoing relationship with their mothers (Chodorow, 1978). Boys' identification processes are not as likely to be embedded in or mediated by relationships with their fathers, however (Chodorow, 1978). A boy must learn his gender identification even though he may not spend as much time with his father than he does with his mother. Because most boys are primarily raised by their mothers, they must make a shift in identification to attain expected gender roles, which can be more complicated and difficult than girls' gender identification (Chodorow, 1978).

This internalization, which occurs at a very young age, determines how male and female infants define their identities (Wood, 1994). Research conducted in this area has revealed that mothers tend to interact more with their daughters and keep them physically and psychologically closer than their sons

(Wood, 1994). Mothers also tend to encourage more and earlier independence in their sons than daughters (Wood, 1994).

In many cases, parents even describe their infants in different ways, which reflects the sexual stereotypes of our culture. Scholars have indicated through several studies that parents described their daughters as delicate, softer, smaller and more fine-featured compared to their sons who they said were firmer, stronger and more alert (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Parents with both male and female children also described their daughters to be neat, quite, easily upset and frightened and more likely to help out around the house than their sons (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Their sons, however, were described to be noisy, rough at play and fond of mechanical things (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

From these descriptions, it can be assumed that parents are also likely to treat their sons and daughters in ways consistent with how they view the sexes (Wood, 1994). Fathers tend to rough-house with their sons and play gentle with their daughters. Studies have also shown that as infants become toddlers, parental interaction with them continues to be sex-differentiated (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

Gender-typed Advertisements

In addition to incorporating sex-differentiated behaviors from their parents, children also witness and absorb sex-typed behaviors from advertisements on television. A 1974 content analysis study by C.G. O'Kelly investigated gender roles of children in television advertisements and

discovered that girls assumed traditional gender roles, such as cooking and cleaning (O'Kelly, 1974). In the advertisements examined, O'Kelly also only found 10 per cent to show girls engaging in physical activities (O'Kelly, 1974).

Another 1983 study by Courtney and Whipple on the content of children's commercials also found traditional sex roles to be the norm. The researchers discovered that girls played with dolls and wanted to be beautiful, while boys played with airplanes and other mechanical toys and sought power, speed and physical action in their toy preferences (Courtney and Whipple, 1983).

A 1979 study conducted by Welch, Huston-Wright, Wright and Plehal found that commercials directed towards boys were more likely to show toys being used more actively with many scene changes (Van Evra, 1990). Commercials directed toward girls, however, had more fades, background music and other features that conveyed gentle, soft and inaccurate stereotypes (Van Evra, 1990).

This research also discovered that in commercials aimed at females, characters were portrayed as quiet and deferential around males but, authoritative in their absence (Van Evra, 1990). In commercials aimed at males, however, the characters were portrayed as authoritative in most instances (Van Evra, 1990). These advertiser techniques may have more impact than the actual content due to their subtle approaches and by the fact that they are absorbed more unconsciously and passively (Van Evra, 1990).

In a review of Stephen Kline's book, *Out of the Garden*, Erin Steuter indicates that children's interactions with character toys is marked by lack of imagination and creativity (girls dress and undress dolls; boys imitate car and technology noises) (Steuter, 1996). Most of the children that Kline observed in his research were highly reluctant to play with the toys in scenarios other than the ones advertised or portrayed in the programming.

Social Learning Theory

The fact that children can at times be reluctant to play with certain kinds of sex-typed toys is related to Mischel, Bandura and Walters' theory of social learning. These individuals developed a theory of learning sexual identity and gender role behavior, where imitation and rewards and punishments for correct and incorrect behaviors play very important parts in a child's life (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). They claimed that children learn to be masculine or feminine through communication and observation with others around them (Wood, 1994). The theory suggests that communication with individuals in a child's environment teaches them appropriate gender behavior through imitation and modeling (Wood, 1994).

Social learning theory is not the only theory used to analyze the socialization processes and gender development of individuals. However, since this theory's main focus is with children, it was appropriate for the purpose of this study.

Social learning theory claims that toddlers begin to learn about their gender by modeling the behavior of others. Throughout their first few years, children continue to imitate the behaviors that bring them positive communication and reinforcement from loved ones and peers (Wood, 1994). Because children prefer rewards to punishments or neutral responses, they are likely to conform to what others around them approve or praise as appropriate behavior (Wood, 1994).

There are many examples of parents' reactions to their child's behavior that illustrate this theory. Young girls tend to be rewarded by their mother and father for being considerate, quiet, loving and emotionally expressive; qualities generally associated with femininity (Wood, 1994). These females tend to get less positive responses when they are boisterous, independent and competitive; qualities generally associated with masculinity (Wood, 1994).

Parents play a major role in shaping their daughters' gender identity when they reinforce behaviors that are considered feminine and discourage those that are masculine (Wood, 1994). Parents also influence their sons' masculinity by communicating approval for being aggressive, independent and emotionally controlled and criticism for acting in feminine ways (Wood, 1994). This reinforcement process continues through a young child's life into early adolescence, at which point his/her gender identity is typically set (Wood, 1994).

Cognitive Factors Regarding Children and Advertising

In addition to gender, age is an important component in how children are

able to deal with commercial information. Many studies have indicated that childrens' comprehension of television advertising and its persuasive intent increases with age, presumably as a result of their increased exposure to and experience with commercials (Van Evra, 1990). Research has also indicated that childrens' greater ability to understand advertising's nature is based on cognitive factors (Van Evra, 1990).

Most children under the age of five have trouble distinguishing fantasy, reality, lying and pretending, showing very little awareness of what a commercial actually is (Van Evra, 1990). They tend to treat all television content as undifferentiated types of messages and do not begin to discriminate between the dimensions of fantasy and reality until early elementary years (Kunkel and Roberts, 1991). Children in this age group are more likely to watch programs using animation, animals and other rapidly-paced material (Van Evra, 1990). Because of this, advertisers tend to rely on similar techniques to appeal to their audience (Van Evra, 1990).

Young children also do not have the critical viewing skills that older children and adults use (Van Evra, 1990). This along with their inability to understand more subtle cues and messages can make them extremely vulnerable to certain advertising techniques (Van Evra, 1990). Older children, however have the ability to view commercials more critically and objectively (Van Evra, 1990).

Social science researchers initially assumed that children had minimal comprehension of the intent of advertising, however, nonverbal measures have demonstrated they do understand that commercials want them to buy a product (Alexander & Morrison, 1995). Even with this discovery, most younger children still remain confused about the value and function of money for customers and cashiers and do not grasp the idea that store owners make a profit from the products they sell (Van Evra, 1990).

Action for Children's Television felt that advertising was unfair to most children under the age of five because they experienced difficulty distinguishing program content from commercials, frequently identifying ads as part of the show (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). Peggy Charren, argued that toy-based programs and the related advertisements for toys were unfair to young children because the tactics obscure the differences between a sales pitch and a story (Boyer, 1986).

One experiment conducted in 1988 found that although 91 per cent of children between the ages of three and five could correctly apply the label of "commercial" to advertising content, only 31 per cent recognized that a commercial just viewed was not part of the adjacent programs' story line (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). When asked to retell the story of the commercial, most of these children wove the commercial scene into their sequence of program story events (Kunkel & Gantz, 1993). Even though the ability for children to detect a perceptual difference between an advertisement and a program emerges by the age of five, a conceptual understanding of advertising does not occur until a few

years later (Wilson & Weiss, 1992).

The cognitive development of children is also an important factor to consider in evaluating the effects that advertising has on them. Below age six, the vast majority of children cannot articulate the selling purpose of advertising and lack the abilities required for mature processing of commercials (Wartella, 1984). Beyond early elementary school, however, (usually around age seven or eight) children begin to develop a more complex and fuller understanding of the persuasive intent of advertisers (Wartella, 1984). In fact, negative and even mistrustful predispositions toward advertising are well established by age eleven or twelve (Boush et al., 1994). Until children truly understand what an advertisement is, however, they can be strongly persuaded towards buying particular products.

Influences and Effects of Television Advertising

Because most children below the age of six do not employ the cognitive skills to properly evaluate television advertisements directed toward them, their influence began to create concern. As a result, the issue of television advertising and its influence on young children was placed on the public agenda in the late 1960s by many public interest groups, including Action for Children's Television, (Comstock, 1989). Traditional research on this issue has focused on the attention and comprehension that advertising has on children (Alexander & Morrison, 1995). This research is highly significant because, on a daily basis, parents tend to play a small role in monitoring their children's television viewing

or in discussing commercials with them (Comstock, 1989). Under most circumstances parents become mediators in their childrens' viewing habits only when product requests occur and disappointment or anger develops when these requests are denied (Comstock, 1989).

Steuter's review of *Out of the Garden* also noted Kline's concern for the manipulation of childrens' play culture by toy marketers and the television industry (Steuter, 1996). According to her, Kline's primary claim throughout the book was that the promotion of toys such as action figures aimed at boys and fashion dolls aimed at girls distorted the natural and spontaneous creative process integral to childrens' play (Steuter, 1996). Kline demonstrated that children who were familiar with television advertising and programming played in a manner that substantially mirrored the forms and content of the marketer's agenda (Steuter, 1996)

Advertising Retrieval Cues

The impact that advertisements have on children depends not only on their cognitive abilities, but also on their recognition skills (Van Evra, 1990). One of the most important features of advertisements is that they are repeated, often several times a day. According to many researchers, continuous exposure to advertisements by children has been considered the most important factor in how they remember particular products (Cullingford, 1984). Because commercials are repetitive in nature, childrens' abilities to recall them is much higher, especially when a 'catch phrase' is repeated several times in one

advertisement (Cullingford, 1984). 'Catch,' or unusual phrases often stay in childrens' minds and, in many cases, become the symbol of the entire advertisement (Cullingford, 1984). Research has shown that along with gimmicks and humor, children derive pleasure from the jingles that they hear on television commercials (Cullingford, 1984).

Most children like advertisements because they find them entertaining in their own way (Cullingford, 1984). They tend to pick out something in the advertisement that was funny, contained interesting characters or involved a curious incident (Cullingford, 1984). In fact, children's favorite advertisements often contain an identifiable character, usually in cartoon form (Cullingford, 1984). Studies have also indicated that children show the least liking for advertisements that directly insist on the message or compare the product to similar brands in their promotions (Cullingford, 1984). For example, commercials for washing detergents are often criticized by children due to their high-pressure sales talk and absence of humor (Cullingford, 1984).

Another interesting element of advertising is children's ability to retrieve cues from commercials. As visual retrieval cues, brand characters such as *Tony the Tiger* and *Trix the Rabbit* have proven to have a significant effect on young viewers in influencing brand evaluations and intentions to request a purchase (Macklin, 1994).

Children's Skepticism Toward Advertising

Through cognitive development, children learn how television advertising attempts to influence their purchasing behaviors and begin to attribute persuasive intent and influence to advertisers. As they mature, children become better able to critically view commercials and tend to resist their deceptiveness to a greater degree (Van Evra, 1990). Once they understand the purpose of advertising, they may even start to feel like they are being manipulated and could begin to reveal negative attitudes (Van Evra, 1990).

Children's maturity usually accompanies their awareness of the persuasive intentions of advertisements, and as a result many begin to express negative attitudes (Van Evra, 1990). In fact, a 1974 study conducted by Robertson and Rossiter indicated that children's overall attitudes toward commercials significantly declined with age, from 69 per cent in first grade to 25 per cent by fifth grade (Rossiter, 1979).

Skepticism may indicate that older children and adolescents have the confidence to rely on their own judgement and the knowledge needed to separate advertising truth from hype (Boush et al., 1994). Attitudes of skepticism toward advertising are also linked to childrens' personality traits as well as their understanding of specific advertiser tactics (Boush et al., 1994). A study conducted by Boush, Friestad and Rose found higher levels of knowledge about advertiser tactics to be positively related to children's skepticism about advertising (Boush, et al., 1994).

Research has also indicated that children tend to develop "schemer schema" beliefs about the tactics that advertisers and marketers use to try to persuade them (Boush et al., 1994). The development of these persuasion-related knowledge structures are partly dependent on changes in children's information processing abilities, which increase with age (Boush et al., 1994).

Cognitive development researchers have generally found that substantial changes in these abilities usually occur between late childhood and early adolescence or between the ages of eleven and fourteen (Boush et al., 1994). From early adolescence on, thinking tends to move from concrete to abstract and becomes increasingly more self-reflective (Boush et al., 1994). In regards to advertising, adolescents have an advantage over younger children to allocate attention, take a variety of perspectives and develop decision-making competence (Boush et al., 1994).

Adolescents who exhibit a cognitive defense also have the ability to understand the selling intent of advertising (Wartella, 1984). These young teenagers have a stronger disbelief in advertisements and are usually less influenced by the information they provide (Wartella, 1984). This cognitive model of persuasion suggests if one can teach adolescents about advertising's persuasive intent and make them more critical or wary consumers, they will be less persuaded or influenced to want the advertised product (Wartella, 1984).

Recently attention has also focused on children's abilities to understand, evaluate and use the information related to making product decisions (Macklin,

1994). Encoding strategies as well as recall and recognition of advertising claims are important, especially for children, in helping them access elements of products and in making purchase decisions (Macklin, 1994).

The Deceptive Nature of Television Advertising

Children who do not understand the selling intent of advertisements are, however, more likely to perceive them as truthful messages and express greater belief in the products (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). It is sometimes difficult for children to consider that commercials are created for purposes other than to entertain or inform them, and without knowledge of buying and selling, appreciation of an advertiser's motive is hard to understand (Henriksen, 1996).

Perhaps the best measure of advertising's effects on children involves their attempts to influence parental purchase decisions. Generally, greater purchase influence attempts are made by younger children who have viewed commercials for toys and child-oriented food products (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). Even though these kinds of commercials may instill intentions or desire for an advertised product, children must make purchase requests to their parents in order to execute these intentions (Rossiter, 1979).

Younger children who fail to recognize the persuasive intent of commercials are also more easily influenced by advertising because they do not fully understand that product claims may be exaggerated or biased (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). In order to comprehend these intentions underlying our advertising industry, children must be able to recognize that the source of the

advertisement has perspectives and interests other than those of the receiver, that the source intends to persuade and that the persuasive messages are biased (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). Children who lack a clear understanding of these concepts are the most powerfully persuaded, and almost all advertising aimed at them can be viewed as unfair or misleading.

Although it may not be evident in many cases, the primary goal of advertising is not always direct persuasion (Van Evra, 1990). In certain scenarios advertisers want to put an awareness of a product in the viewer's conscious mind and have them associate it with something good or desirable (Van Evra, 1990). Their aims are to create images or impressions rather than to provide information and to persuade through emotional rather than rational arguments (Van Evra, 1990). For example, a commercial that contains many of the same features as a popular cartoon could be easily misperceived by children as an entertainment rather than a persuasive message (Wilson & Weiss, 1992).

In most advertisements directed toward children, there is a relative lack of hard product information such as material, price and performance; more reliance is currently being placed on action, appearance and humor (Van Evra, 1990). Many of the special effects in children's advertisements such as fast-cutting visual techniques and music appear to be largely designed to create moods, images and impressions rather than to convey accurate information about a product (Van Evra, 1990). This practice of using live action to fill time that could have been used to view the actual product and its uses can be potentially

harmful to children because it serves no legitimate informational purpose and tends to mislead them about the product (Van Evra, 1990).

Overall, advertising aimed at young children can be deceptive because they have neither the experience nor the cognitive abilities to evaluate the messages (Wartella, 1984). Older children who understand the intent of advertisers tend to be more skeptical and distrusting of claims, using knowledge of bias as a cognitive defense mechanism (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). As they mature, children use this mechanism against advertisers' sales pitches and become more selective in how they view advertisements (Van Evra, 1990).

Social Comparison Theory

Advertisements with highly attractive models can also have negative effects on children and adolescents. These effects are related to Festinger's social comparison theory which deals with accurate self-evaluation and the drive that individuals have to evaluate their abilities and satisfactions in comparison with other people (Martin & Kennedy, 1993).

The study of social comparison is of significant importance during childhood because this is a time when initial self-conceptions are formed (Martin & Kennedy, 1993). Once children have defined their capacities and characteristics, subsequent social comparison information is likely to have less impact because such information is interpreted in terms of concepts already formed (Martin & Kennedy, 1993). As children grow older, they increasingly focus their comparisons on attributes they regard as personally important (Martin

& Kennedy, 1993).

Media depictions of women can both reflect and reinforce the importance of physical appearance in female's lives (Henderson-King, 1997). In fact, research on the effects of stereotyped gender representations in the media has shown that exposure to television is linked to more stereotypical views of gender roles (Henderson-King, 1997).

A study conducted by Martin and Kennedy found that female preadolescents' and adolescents' exposure to idealized images raised the subjects' comparison standard for physical attractiveness and resulted in lowered satisfaction with their own attractiveness (Martin & Kennedy, 1993). This research obtained similar results to another study conducted by Richins, dealing with college females' comparison to models in advertisements (Richins, 1991).

The above mentioned research has shown that the nature of advertising can have a direct impact on children. It can influence purchase decisions, give them a false sense of security or support and intentionally deceive them into wanting a particular product, without them even realizing it.

Types of Advertisements

The type of advertisement that children observe can also influence their purchase decisions and effect how they view the entire concept of advertising. Program-length commercials are one particular kind that can leave a positive impression on young viewers and are used regularly by the advertising industry.

Reinstated by the FCC in 1984, program-length commercials are once again allowed in programming by advertisers as part of their deregulation policy of the 1980s (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). These types of commercials, which feature a program and product simultaneously, were originally banned along with host-selling as part of the FCC's 1974 policy to clearly separate program content from commercial messages (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Even though these commercials closely resembled the concept of host-selling, (which is still banned by the FCC) the FCC still believes that the marketplace should guide broadcasters toward what the public wants (Boyer, 1986).

In this type of advertising, programs are associated with products and toys are sold through heros of the show, which tend to make separation of the program and advertisement even less clear (Van Evra, 1990). In many cases, television programs that feature heros and villains are developed in conjunction with the marketing of similar products (Boyer, 1986). A toy featured in its own show not only gains publicity, but also a valuable sales gimmick: a story line that can enhance the toy's appeal (Boyer, 1986).

Critics of program-length commercials claim that even though the shows offer an engaging story, their real purpose is to sell the product (Boyer, 1986). Many contend that the programs themselves constitute a sales pitch and that children do not have the elaborate knowledge about the nature of the commercial world to realize advertisers' true intentions (Boyer, 1986).

Huge merchandising profits are the main reason why many advertisers use this kind of programming. For example, in 1985 Mattel's *He-Man* line of toys, which was featured in its own television series, brought in an estimated \$350 million in sales (Boyer, 1986). In this type of programming, the producers of the show share in the toy profits and the toy company shares in the program's revenues (Boyer, 1986).

Toy companies have discovered that there is a market out there and if they have a toy and a budget, they can move into the television world (Boyer, 1986). Generally, the process begins by a toy company's desire to share the costs of making an animated series (Boyer, 1986). The producer then makes a deal with the syndicator, who sells the show to stations (Boyer, 1986). The station, who gets the show for little or no cost, relinquishes time to the syndicator for sale to advertisers (Boyer, 1986). The syndicator then returns some of that money to the producer to cover production costs (Boyer, 1986).

The only stipulation is that an advertisement for a toy can not be aired immediately before or after a program featuring that character, it instead must be separated from the program by some portion of an unrelated program (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Examples of programs' characters developed with corresponding products are *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *The Care Bears*, *He-Man & the Masters of the Universe*, and *My Little Pony* (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Thus, an advertisement for a Ninja Turtle toy must be separated from the cartoon by some portion of an unrelated program (Wilson & Weiss, 1992).

Peggy Charren, who resigned from ACT in 1992, also said that these types of advertisements tend to interfere with children's recognition of the selling intent of advertisements (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Still the chief spokeswoman for improving children's programming, Charren feels that advertisements of this nature, which link toys to popular cartoon characters, are likely to be appealing and persuasive to young children (Wilson & Weiss, 1992).

Aside from program-length commercials that incorporate products with cartoon characters, gender-specific toys can also be extremely appealing for children. Studies reveal that advertisements selling these types of toys teach children about a culture's gender roles (Caldera, et al., 1989). Research has also indicated that, from a very young age, children learn to differentiate toys that are appropriate for each gender (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

A study conducted by Caldera, Huston and O'Brien discovered that masculine toys, such as trucks and adventure figures tend to promote motor activity and generate high levels of force and aggression, while feminine toys like dolls and barbies foster nurturing, social proximity and role play (Caldera, et al., 1989).

These types of advertisements not only sell gender-specific products, they also promote certain commercial themes. Toys designed for boys, such as tool sets, toy trains and action figures tend to encourage creativity, while toys for girls, such as dish sets, toy oven and sewing machines tend to be idealistic of what many will do later on in life (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

Other toys, such as dolls, can even create false impressions for both girls and boys. If a boy wants a doll after the age of four or five, it is often considered babyish or sissy-like. However, many females keep dolls they received as children their entire lives. Barbie dolls can also give young females idealistic views of what women should become. They are created and many girls consider them to be models of appropriate feminine bodies due to their long legs, skinny waists and elaborate outfits they are advertised in (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Even unisex equipment for boys and girls, such as bicycles are sex-differentiated by style and price. These kinds of "larger toys" are usually more expensive and designed to be more sturdy than those made for girls (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

Commercial themes in food products

Along with toys, food products account for about three-fourths of all commercials targeting children today (Kunkel, 1992). Children often seem to emphasize and prefer certain brand names among these types of products based on particular characters associated with them (Macklin, 1994). Advertisers of very similar products are constantly approaching children with sales messages that, in many cases, are only distinguishable by their brand name or character (Macklin, 1994).

In particular, cereal as a product category, constitutes for the largest percentage of advertisements for food products, most of which have brand characters associated with them (Kunkel, 1992). Parents generally see most of

these products as very similar or substitutable, but also ones that children insist upon at the point of purchase, simply because they recognize a character on the box.

Commercials that associate a brand character with a particular product also often feature stories in their promotions. RajECKI and McTAVISH defined a commercial story as an account, action or exchange having a fixed beginning, middle and end that involves characters or actors (RajECKI & McTAVISH, 1994). Although not all commercials show character stories and dialogue to the same extent, they do contain the same basic dramatic ingredients: a problem is posed, someone suggests a solution, there is an insightful moment or turning point followed by a happy ending (Van Evra, 1990). In most commercial scenarios for food products, themes such as achievement, conflict, dependence, trickery and concern are often used.

In the majority of these plots initial doubt or concern is supplanted by success, which is predicted on consumption of a food product (RajECKI & McTAVISH, 1994). One well-known ad for *Frosted Flakes* cereal features a girl practicing hurdles who takes a hard fall and doubts she will be ready for her next meet. Tony the Tiger says, "We'll try again after a complete breakfast including my vitamin-packed Frosted Flakes" (RajECKI & McTAVISH, 1994). Tony continues by saying that they bring out the tiger in you and the next scene shown is the girl winning the race (RajECKI & McTAVISH, 1994).

Even though this ad seems harmless, the majority of children's food stories have been labeled as socially negative due to their heavy reliance on conflict in their themes (Rajecki & McTavish, 1994). In the past, advertising has most likely relied so heavily on these themes because they are central to a lot of what children see in the programs that they watch on television. The themes and messages in these commercials dealing with emotion, stability and social support may simply present children with familiar messages that they view everyday in other programs.

These ads have also been viewed as negative due to the mood alteration or enablement motifs that they employ, which seem to offer young consumers an automatic packaged "fix" for life's daily grind or tedium (Rajecki & McTavish, 1994). Trickery or deception themes, which are also commonly used in commercials, are familiar to children because in many cases, they are the first competitive strategies manifested by them (Rajecki & McTavish, 1994). Since most children practice deception and lying to a slight degree when they are younger, they might have little trouble appreciating food ads in which these themes are shown.

Other commercial themes in advertising can also have an impact on the health and well-being of children. Specifically, advertisements selling tobacco and alcoholic products have been criticized for being manipulative in nature and having the ability to influence children's behaviors and perceptions (Burmeister, 1995). Commercial stories with *Old Joe Camel* smoking a cigarette or *Spuds*

Mackenzie drinking a beer, could give older children the impression that smoking and drinking are acceptable. Even though these advertisements sell adult products, the cartoon characters and animals incorporated in them may tempt children into experimenting with alcohol and cigarettes.

Lois Smith's Content Analysis on Children's Advertisements

In a 1991 study, Lois Smith attempted to examine this issue by investigating gender differences in the content of children's advertising (Smith, 1994). She researched the nature of toy advertisements directed toward children by making associations between the type of product sold, the sex of the characters used and the kind of activity they engaged in during the advertisement (Smith, 1994). Her study revealed that children can learn a great deal about gender-typed behaviors from television advertisements and are attracted to the models in them, which supports the social learning theory (Smith, 1994).

The purpose of Smith's study was to explore differences in the nature of advertisements aimed at girls and boys. She conducted a content analysis on several aspects of advertisements including: the sex of the narrator's voice in respect to the gender positioning of the advertisement; how the advertisements were positioned; and the settings in which the advertisements took place (Smith, 1994).

Summary

According to Comstock, the most quoted statistic about children and advertising is that by the time the average child graduates from high school, he/she will have spent more hours viewing television than in the classroom (Comstock, 1989). The frightening reality is that a good portion of that time will also be spent viewing advertisements.

Comstock also cites statistics about how the public feels regarding the impact of television advertising on children. He reveals that approximately three-fourths of the public believes that there are too many commercials, two-thirds think that they are too long, more than one-half feel that they are in poor taste or annoying and one-half think that children view things in advertisements that they should not (Comstock, 1989). In addition he notes that a majority of the public believes advertising aimed at very young children and the advertising of heavily-sugared products should be banned and restricted (Comstock, 1989).

Even though some improvements have been made concerning the issue of advertising and children, disputes between what the public and advertisers believe the FCC should do to resolve this problem is likely to continue due to unchanging circumstances (Comstock, 1989). Hopefully, when the new guidelines go into effect in the fall of 1997, they will be able to solve some of the problems concerning the children's programming issue. The communication revolution has the potential to dramatically change our society by bringing new educational and entertainment opportunities to audiences of all ages (Comstock,

1989). However, without the contributions and cooperation of broadcasters and advertisers, the scenario will more than likely remain the same.

By examining the types of advertising directed toward children, the current study focuses on various elements from several studies mentioned in the literature review, including Smith's. The following research questions are proposed:

1. What is the overall content of the advertisements?
 - a. How many advertisements contain humor?
 - b. How many advertisements contain adventure?
 - c. How many advertisements contain "brand characters"?
 - d. How many "program-length" advertisements were shown?
 - e. How many advertisements contain conflict?
 - f. How many advertisements contain "catch phrases"?
 - g. What percentage of the advertisements sell food products?
2. What types of advertisements are directed toward male and female children on Saturday morning television?
 - a. Are more of a certain type of advertisement directed toward a particular gender?
 - b. Do the advertisements directed toward children show more girl characters engaged in passive and indoor activities compared to boy characters?
 - c. What type (game, toy, food/drink or other) and how many gender-specific (either all boy or all girl) advertisements are shown?
3. What were the ten most repeated advertisements in the sample?

Chapter III Methodology

Sample

Advertisements analyzed for this study were videotaped during Saturday morning children's television programming on the ABC, CBS, FOX and Nickelodeon networks between February 1st and April 26th, 1997. Out of a possible thirteen Saturdays between those dates, a random sample of four (February 1st, March 8th, March 22nd and April 5th) were examined. The thirteen dates were written on separate pieces of paper and placed into a hat. Four dates were selected out of the hat by the researcher and used in the random sample.

The advertisements were taped from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. on each network during the four Saturday's selected for the study. One video cassette was used for each channel during the six hour taping period on the four Saturday's in the sample. Use of three major networks (ABC, CBS and FOX) and a cable channel (Nickelodeon) dedicated to children's programming allowed for a diverse sample of advertisements to be researched.

Procedures

Method of Data Collection

Thirty-second advertisements shown during children's programming on FOX, ABC, CBS and Nickelodeon were used in the sample. Data collected from the advertisements that were not repeated were placed in Tables I-V. Repeated advertisements were also compiled and frequencies of the ten most repeated

advertisements were placed in Table VI. Public service announcements, previews for programs, station promotions and local commercials were not computed into the total number of advertisements used for this study.

Coding

Two coders viewed all of the advertisements taped during the four Saturday's. The coders used a Coder Instruction Sheet (Appendix A) as the instrument to collect data from the advertisements in the sample. For each advertisement viewed, the coder used one instruction sheet.

Scott's pi was the reliability formula used to measure the amount of agreement between the coders. In this formula $\pi =$

$$\frac{\% \text{ of observed matches} - \% \text{ of expected matches}}{1 - \% \text{ of expected matches}} \quad 2$$

Developed in 1955, *Scott's pi* is used most often in studies where there is nominal data, the sample size is extremely large and exactly two coders are used (Krippendorff, 1980). This formula takes into account that some coder agreement occurs strictly by chance (ie: a two-category system should obtain 50 percent reliability simply by chance (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983). *Scott's pi* also corrects for the number of categories used and for the probable frequency of use (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983).

Pre-test

A pre-test was conducted using a random sample of ten advertisements shown on Nickelodeon on Monday, April 7, 1997 at 5:30 p.m. during the *Tiny*

Tunes Adventure cartoon. To measure the amount of reliability between the coders, the test was used to help predict what results from the entire sample would reveal. Setting and theme variables were used in the pre-test and data collected from two coders were calculated into *Scott's pi*. Data collected from the researcher was not used in the pre-test, but was used in the actual study whenever disagreement between the coders occurred. A 70 percent level of agreement between the coders was predicted for this pre-test sample and results indicated a 65.5 percent level of agreement for setting and a 70.3 percent level of agreement for theme. (Detailed coding results are located in Appendix C).

Additional coder training was conducted based on the pre-test results regarding the level of agreement. To increase the reliability between the coders, the questions in the categories were changed to a "yes/no" format, examples were included and definitions for each category were further explained. The coders were then re-trained on how to use the instruction sheets.

Another pre-test was conducted before coding for the actual study began. A random sample of ten advertisements were taken from the same channel, during the same cartoon used in the first pre-test and coded on Monday, April 28, 1997. On Saturday, May 3, 1997, the coders re-coded the same ten advertisements to check for intra-coder agreement.

Even though there was a period of five days between the first and second coding of the advertisements in the second pre-test, intra-coder reliability was

100 percent. The coders did not change the selections they made on the coder instruction sheets between April 28th and May 3rd. Inter-coder reliability results using Scott's *pi* indicated a 94,3 percent level of agreement.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Frequency tests were conducted for the data collected from the advertisements and the results were placed in Tables I-V. Variables used for these tests were *gender*, *type*, *setting*, *activity* and *theme*. Cross-tab and Chi-square tests were also conducted on *gender*, *setting* and *activity* variables. Table V answered research questions 1a, b, c, d, f and g. Table II answered research questions 1e, 2a, b, and d. Tables III and IV answered research question 2c. Table VI was used to compile data for the top ten advertisements that were repeated in the sample and also answered research question 3.

Qualitative Analysis

A content analysis was conducted depicting the major themes, types, activities and gender portrayals used in the advertisements.

Treatment of Data

After all of the advertisements were coded, the results were entered into frequency tables I-VI. The amount of reliability was also determined for each variable using *Scott's pi*. When there was a disagreement between the coders, data collected from the researcher was used in the tables as a tie-breaker.

Chapter IV Results

Introduction

This study was conducted to answer the following questions: What is the overall content of the advertisements? What types of advertisements are directed toward male and female children? What are the ten most repeated advertisements in the sample?

A total of 1079 advertisements from CBS, ABC, FOX and Nickelodeon were examined for this study. Out of those 1079 advertisements, only 220 were not repeated. Data from each of the 220 advertisements were entered into frequency tables I-V. The majority of the advertisements observed contained and were directed toward children who appeared to be between the ages of six and twelve.

The coder instruction sheet was the instrument used to collect data from each advertisement and the results were placed in frequency tables I-VI. Coder reliability results were also calculated for each variable and a 70 percent level of agreement was selected for this sample. The following percentages indicate *Scott's pi* results for each variable: gender 95.5 percent; type 98.4 percent; setting 85.3 percent; activity 87.2 percent and theme 74.4 percent.

Table I
Gender N=220

<u>Gender of Ad</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Both boy and girl	86	39.1
Boy	56	25.5
Girl	46	20.9
Neither boy or girl	32	14.5
Total	220	100.0

As Table I reveals, 39.1 percent of the advertisements contained both boy and girl characters. Among the advertisements directed toward a specific gender, 25.5 percent contained boy only characters and 20.9 contained girl only characters. The data also indicates that 14.5 percent of the advertisements coded did not contain boy or girl characters. Advertisements in this category either did not have any characters or the characters were portrayed in cartoon form.

Table II
Type N=220

<u>Type of Ad</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Food	118	54
Toy	96	43
Game	4	2
Other	2	1
Total	220	100.0

As Table II indicates, 54 percent of the advertisements in the sample sold food products, the majority of which contained both boy and girl characters. Data collected also reveals that 43 percent of the observed advertisements sold toy products, while only 2 percent sold games.

Table III
Gender by Setting

<u>Gender</u>		<u>Setting</u>		<u>Row Total</u>
		<u>Inside</u>	<u>Outside</u>	
Boy	n	15	24	39
	Row %	38.5	61.5	27.1
	Column %	20.0	34.8	
	Total	10.4	16.7	
Girl		31	9	40
		77.5	22.5	27.8
		41.3	13.0	
		21.5	6.3	
Both boy and girl		22	32	54
		40.7	59.3	37.5
		29.3	46.4	
		15.3	22.2	
Neither boy or girl		7	4	
		63.6	36.4	
		9.3	5.8	
		4.9	2.8	
Column Total		75	69	144
		52.1	47.9	100.0

= 16.6; $p < .001$

Data from Table III indicates that 52.1 percent of the advertisements coded took place inside and 47.9 percent took place outside. Among the boy only advertisements, 61.5 percent contained outside settings, compared to 38.5 that contained inside settings. Results also reveal that 77.5 percent of the advertisements directed toward girls took place inside, while only 22.5 took place outside. The majority, 59.3 percent, of the advertisements that contained

both boy and girl characters took place outside, while the majority, 63.6 percent, of the advertisements that contained neither boy or girl characters took place inside.

Table IV
Gender by Activity

Gender		Passive	Active	Row Total
Boy	n	12	44	56
	Row %	21.4	78.6	25.5
	Column %	15.8	30.6	
	Total	5.5	20.0	
Girl		32	14	46
		69.6	30.4	20.9
		42.1	9.7	
		14.5	6.4	
Both boy and girl		23	63	86
		26.7	73.3	39.1
		30.3	43.8	
		10.5	28.6	
Neither boy or girl		9	23	32
		28.1	71.9	14.5
		11.8	16.0	
		4.1	10.5	
Column Total		76	144	220
		34.5	65.5	100.0

= 32.1; $p < .001$

Table IV displays the types of activities shown in the advertisements compiled for this study. Coders chose either an active or passive activity category and results reveal that 65.5 percent of the advertisements observed contained active activities, while 34.5 percent contained passive activities.

Among the boy only advertisements 78.6 percent were active, while only 21.4 were passive. Table IV also indicates that the majority, 69.6 percent, of the advertisements directed toward girls were passive, compared to only 30.4 percent which were active. Advertisements that contained both boys and girls and neither boys or girls were primarily active in nature.

Table V
Theme

<u>Theme of Advertisement</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
No theme	147	66.8
Adventure	94	42.7
Conflict	50	22.7
Humor	39	17.7
Brand Character	34	15.5
Program-length	11	5.0
Catch Phrase	<u>4</u>	<u>1.8</u>
Total	*379	*172.2

* Percentages for this variable do not add up to 100 percent due to the fact that the coders were allowed to select more than one category for each advertisement

Table V reveals that 66.8 percent of the advertisements in this study did not contain a theme, most of which were directed toward girls. Data collected from the sample displays that 42.7 percent of the advertisements viewed contained adventure scenes, the majority of which were directed toward boys rather than girls.

Table V indicates that 22.7 percent of the advertisements observed contained conflict scenes. Results from the sample also found that almost all of the conflict scenes were in advertisements for boys instead of girls. Data collected from the study reveals that 17.7 percent of the advertisements

contained humor. Coders also found more of the humorous advertisements to be directed toward girls compared to boys.

Coders determined that 15.5 percent of the advertisements contained brand characters. The majority of the advertisements in this category sold food products and were directed toward both boys and girls. Table V indicates that 5 percent of the advertisements contained catch phrases. The majority of the advertisements in this category sold food products and were directed toward both boys and girls.

Sample results found that only 1.8 percent of the advertisements in the study were program-length. All of the advertisements in this category used cartoon characters and, as a result, were coded as not containing boy or girl characters.

Further analysis of Tables I-V are displayed in Chapter 5.

Table VI
Top Ten Repeated Advertisements

Name	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
1 McDonald's	45	4.1
2 Burger King Kids Club	37	3.4
3 COD	25	2.3
4 Star Wars	23	2.1
5 Ring Pop	21	1.9
6 Captain Crunch	20	1.8
7 Frosted Flakes	17	1.5
8 Kool-Aid	13	1.2
9 Angel Barbie	9	.83
10 XP 105	5	.47

Table VI reveals the top ten most repeated advertisements in the sample. These advertisements, which are numbered 1-10, are ranked from most to least repeated. The following describes each of the 10 ads in detail.

McDonald's

In this advertisement, Ronald and Hamburgler were engaged in a conflict scene. Throughout the advertisement, they were shown chasing each other through a maze while the girl character was sitting off to the side laughing. This could give children the impression that males are more aggressive and females sit back and wait to be rescued. Ronald's character saved the day for the girl who wanted to get her cheeseburgers back.

Burger King's Kid Club

The babysitter shown in this advertisement was a female, which may reinforce to children that females (not males) take care of children. Words such as "cool" and "kids only" were used in this advertisement to grab children's

attention, make them feel special as well as make Burger King seem like a fun place for kids to be.

COD

Girls were the only characters shown in this advertisement. Stereotypical roles of motherhood were emphasized throughout the advertisement with characters feeding, holding, loving and taking care of the COD doll. The advertisement primarily took place inside, which also stresses that mothers stay at home with their children. Soft music and singing also accompanied this advertisement.

Ring Pop

Even though both boy and girl characters were used in this advertisement, only girls were shown wearing the Ring Pops on their fingers. One scene displayed a boy character giving a Ring Pop in a box to a girl. Children watching this advertisement may believe that it is a male's responsibility and role to propose to a female.

Crunch Berries

Fantasy was the setting used in this advertisement. Throughout the advertisement, berries were shown in different forms such as a character's eyes or hair. A boy character was shown driving a Crunch Berries van, which may suggest to children that males drive the vehicles in the family. The final scene showed girls holding huge berries chanting "go berries," which could remind children that girls, (not boys) are cheerleaders who sing, dance and perform for

a sports team.

Frosted Flakes

Face-paced music was played throughout this advertisement. It showed a boy in an adventurous sport with Tony the Tiger telling viewers that eating Frosted Flakes will bring out the tiger in you. When used in an advertisement with a boy character, this phrase could indicate that males are tigers or aggressive and strong, which may reinforce to children traditional male roles.

Kool-Aid

“Cruisin’ with the big man,” (not woman) is the phrase used in this advertisement. This could emphasize to children that men are powerful and in control. Another scene showed a male shooting a basketball through a hoop, which could tell children that sports are male dominated. Perhaps the most sexual or stereotypical phrase in the advertisement, however, referred to the Kool-Aid man picking up a babe. This statement could make females feel inferior or less superior to males.

Angel Princess Barbie

Soft music and singing accompanied this advertisement which used only girl characters. It also discussed the issue of little girls’ dreams coming true. Even though girls are shown flying in the air in this advertisement, the scene took place in slow motion, which made the commercial appear passive.

XP 105 Super Soaker

This advertisement showed many combative and fighting scenes between boy characters, which could indicate to children that males are aggressive in nature. A male military figure was the spokesperson for this advertisement, which also reinforced that males (not females) participate in the military. The sergeant yelled throughout this ad while boy characters screamed, which could suggest that males are less calm and have louder voices than females.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Girl Advertisements

Findings from the advertisements directed specifically toward girls indicated that most of the products sold were baby or barbie dolls. *Potty Training Kelly, Baby Wiggles and Giggles, Workin' Out Barbie and Hula Hair Barbie* were examples of dolls shown in the advertisements for this sample. In all of these advertisements, girls were shown playing with or taking care of a doll or barbie in an inside setting. These particular advertisements also showed girls engaging in passive activities such as holding, hugging and feeding a baby doll or brushing a barbie doll's hair or changing her outfit. These advertisements could reinforce to children the traditional roles that females have in our society.

Based on social learning theory, young girls who watch these sex-typed behaviors could associate the roles and tasks they see girls in advertisements engaging in and begin to model what they see. These advertisements, which incorporate passive, non-aggressive behaviors could indicate that females' main responsibilities are to love, nurture and care for their children inside the home. Children who model this behavior could accept it as appropriate for the female gender.

The theory of observational learning also plays an important role when examining the behavior of girls in these advertisements. Female children may start to become aware of their physical features and what an ideal female looks

like by watching advertisements that sell barbie dolls. These advertisements could make children start to consider other issues such as beauty and weight. Observing girl characters combing a barbie doll's hair, putting make up on her or getting her skinny body dressed up could also effect the personalities of female children by influencing them about the importance of beauty and thinness.

The advertisement for *Potty Training Kelly* takes place inside a girl's room and is shown with a miniature potty chair. The opening scene showed a girl feeding "Kelly" a bottle and putting her on the potty chair, both of which were considered passive activities. This advertisement may express to girls that mothers are responsible for feeding and potty-training their babies.

The *Baby Wiggles and Giggles* advertisement also takes place inside a home and girls are shown in passive activities; nurturing and holding the product. Throughout the advertisement girls smiled and laughed when the doll wiggled and giggled. This advertisement can emphasize how rewarding it is to be a mother who loves and takes care of her baby.

Being thin and in shape is stressed in the advertisement for *Workin' Out Barbie*. This advertisement showed a barbie doll dressed up in an exercise outfit doing stretches inside. Even though the barbie was shown exercising, it was coded as a passive activity because she was moving slowly. This could give girls the idea that females do not take exercising as serious as males and do not sweat or put any effort into their work-out regime. Showing a barbie wanting to look toned and thin can also give girls the impression that those are features

males look for in females.

The advertisement for Hula Hair Barbie emphasized the importance of beauty to girls. It took place inside and the only activities girls in the advertisement engaged in was brushing and styling the barbie's long hair. The doll is shown in a skimpy Hawaiian outfit, which can suggest that females wear certain types of clothing to be more attractive. Girls may see how beautiful *Hula Hair Barbie* is and think that females need to put on seductive clothes and be concerned with how their hair looks in order to impress males.

The primary theme observed in all of the advertisements directed toward girls was humor. Many of the advertisements showed girls laughing, smiling and having a good time taking care of their babies. Very few of the advertisements directed toward girls contained adventure or conflict, which could indicate that girls are less serious and lead less exciting lives than boys.

Boy Advertisements

Unlike the products observed in advertisements directed toward girls, many of the advertisements for boys' products consisted of action figures and vehicles such as: *Batman and the Shadows of the Empire*; *Beast Wars*; *Hot Wheels* and *Mega Rig*.

These toys emphasized power, strength, control and aggressiveness; characteristics that are stereotypical of males in our society. Other toys advertised for boys such as *Working Bench* and *Bubble Mower* were mechanical in nature or emphasized the tasks that males do. Even toys that both boys and

girls play with such as *Legos* and *Better Blocks* only used boy characters in their advertisements. These advertisements may reinforce to children that only males are capable of building, constructing or fixing things.

The majority of the advertisements for boys showed characters engaging in active activities. The label "action figure" that describes the types of toys made for many boys' toy products could explain why there is a great deal of action in these advertisements. Most of the advertisements were fast-paced and showed characters running, jumping and climbing in various scenes.

The advertisement selling *Batman and the Shadows of the Empire* showed boys playing with the product outside. The characters engaged in active activities throughout the advertisement as they ran with the figures and jumped in the air, landing "Batman" in his Batmobile. Rough terrain was also incorporated into this advertisement when the Batmobile crashed into a rock. This could indicate to boys that males like to play rough in rugged territories.

Beast Wars, which are creatures with monster-like features, were also observed outside engaging in active combat scenes. Boys were shown fighting, hitting and knocking-out the creatures in a war-like scenario. This may suggest that males have a aggressive and competitive nature and fight in wars.

The advertisement for *Hot Wheels* showed boys moving, racing and crashing cars. A race track was set up outside for the fast cars to speed around. When watching this advertisement, boys could think that males like to drive fast cars and have endurance.

Mega Rig is a tractor-like vehicle that destroyed every obstacle in its path during the advertisement. The advertisement took place outside and showed the rig climbing over rocks and other vehicles. Boys were observed in control of the rig as it stood up to whatever it encountered. This advertisement may emphasize that males are strong, destructive and able to operate large equipment.

Adventure and conflict were the primary themes observed in the advertisements for boys. These advertisements incorporated characters on missions or fighting with each other. Aggressiveness and competitiveness were also behaviors observed in many of the adventure and conflict scenes, which may suggest to children that males are in more control and are tougher than females.

Overall, more advertisements directed toward boys took place outside and showed characters engaged in active activities. These boy only advertisements were also more fast-paced, showed more scene changes, had louder, more adventurous music and incorporated more visual effects. The majority of the advertisements directed toward girls took place inside and showed girls engaged in passive activities. Softer music, singing and slow scene changes were also observed. Advertisements selling boys' toy products also had more plots or stories and showed characters yelling or imitating sound effects of fighting and crashing, while girls' advertisements used more pastel colors and showed characters completing a task such as feeding a baby or cooking a meal.

Food Advertisements

Advertisements selling food products comprised the highest percentage in the sample and contained both boy and girl characters. It is reasonable to assume that advertisers would try to use both genders in the advertisements they develop to sell food products since all children eat and enjoy most of the same types of food, regardless of their gender.

Many of the food advertisements observed contained catch phrases or slogans such as Tony the Tiger saying "Frosted Flakes: They're GRRREAT!" or characters in a Trix cereal advertisement saying "You silly rabbit, Trix are for kids." Just as exposure to advertisements that are repeated several times during Saturday morning children's programming help children remember particular products, catch phrases within each advertisement can grab their attention and serve as a retrieval cue for the product.

Brand Characters

Children also tend to remember products by associating them with brand characters used in the advertisements. The majority of the brand characters observed in the sample were cartoon characters in food advertisements. Advertisers may realize that children like to watch cartoons and many use cartoon characters in their advertisements as attention-getting tactics. Even though boy and girl characters were shown in advertisements with brand characters in this sample, it was primarily the brand characters such as *Captain Crunch*, *Tucan Sam (Fruit Loops)* *Kool-Aid Man* and *Count Chocula* that sent the

message to children to buy their particular product.

No Theme

The largest percentage of advertisements in the theme category did not contain any theme, the majority of which showed characters playing with or presenting the product to consumers. In advertisements such as *Kitchen Littles*, *Splash & Doodle Bear* and *Play Doh*, characters did not show any facial expression or emotion; they simply demonstrated how to use the toy.

Kitchen Littles, a miniature kitchen set with a refrigerator, stove and sink, contained girl characters that were shown washing dishes, cooking with pots and pans and putting food in the refrigerator. Instead of enjoying the product, the girls acted like they were more concerned with showing the accessories that were included in *Kitchen Littles*.

Splash & Doodle Bear, a toy made of fabric that children draw on and wash in water, showed girl characters coloring the bear and then washing it in the bathtub. The characters repeatedly demonstrated how the doodles on the bear vanished in water and did not appear as though they were really playing with the product. The advertisement seemed to be more of an “informercial” because characters simply presented a toy and showed viewers how it functioned.

The *Play Doh* advertisement, which contained both boy and girl characters, showed children creating objects and putting the “doh” in various devices. The characters did not interact with one another in the advertisement

and seemed to be serious about what they were creating.

In all of the advertisements coded as containing no theme, the main goal of the characters appeared to be to sell the product. These advertisements were extremely different from the advertisements containing adventure, which showed action or characters on a mission; conflict, which showed characters fighting or in trouble and humor, which showed characters laughing or having fun playing with the product.

Recommendations

Advertisements for the current study were selected from a random sample of four Saturdays during the months of February, March and April. In order to get a larger percentage of advertisements that were not repeated, the sample size could be increased to six months instead of three. New products and new advertisements selling the same product are constantly being developed by advertisers every few months. A sample size taken during a particular season, such as winter, would also be interesting to investigate based on the variety of children's advertisements shown during the Christmas season.

A more in-depth analysis of the repeated advertisements could be conducted as a separate study. It might be beneficial to examine why particular advertisements are repeated more than others. A more extensive study could also be conducted on food advertisements directed toward children and advertiser tactics that are used.

The theme variable in this study could be expanded to include more categories, which might allow for a smaller percentage of advertisements to be labeled as "no theme." A study analyzing the effects of advertisements on children would also be an excellent future research piece.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the literature review, Bandura's social and observational learning theories are used to explain how children develop gender identity and learn gender behaviors. Social learning theory suggests that children learn appropriate gender roles by imitating and modeling individuals in their environments.

The current study found stereotypical gender portrayals in the advertisements directed toward children between the ages of six and twelve. The characters selling products to a specific gender behaved in traditional ways based on the type of toy or food product being sold. The majority of the advertisements containing girl characters were passive in nature and took place inside, while advertisements containing boy characters were primarily active and took place in an outside setting.

Children watching advertisements with girl characters feeding or taking care of a baby doll or boy characters constructing a building with legos could associate masculine and feminine roles with the tasks the characters performed. Advertisements selling barbie dolls were also found to be stereotypical in nature because they contained soft music and showed girl characters taking turns brushing the barbie's hair or changing her outfit. Social learning theory suggests that this type of advertisement could indicate to children that girls should be quite, considerate, loving and share their toys. Young girls could model the type of reserved, feminine behavior they see in the advertisements and begin to

advertisements and begin to develop similar behaviors.

The majority of the advertisements selling cars or action figures contained fast-paced, battle scenes accompanied by loud music and sound effects. Social and observational learning theories suggest that boys watching these types of advertisements could believe males are aggressive, strong and in control. Young boys could imitate the behavior they observe and think it is appropriate for the male gender.

Bandura's theory of observational learning suggests that advertisements incorporating specific masculine and feminine gender roles can influence children's personalities and play behaviors. Boys who watch an advertisement for a baby doll containing girl characters may think that females take care of children and males support the family. This way of thinking could effect how boys and girls play together.

Based on the stereotypical masculine and feminine roles that children observe in advertisements, boys may try to be more controlling or overbearing when playing with girls, while girls may not voice their opinions and do what boys tell them. Characters in advertisements can also influence the types of products that children want to purchase or play with. After observing girls playing with dolls in an advertisement, a male child may be reluctant to play with a similar product because he is afraid of being labeled a "sissy."

Even though social and observational learning theories help explain how children develop gender identities and model the gender behaviors they

observe, the majority of Bandura's research focuses on single gender development. A theory that explains how both males and females learn gender roles together would be helpful in examining how children model and imitate what they see. Currently, the majority of the theoretical research attempts to define how specific genders develop and behave separately. Incorporating ways that both boys and girls learn appropriate gender roles into social and observational learning theories could further explain why children of both genders interact and behave in certain ways.

Since influences from parents/caretakers, peers and educators help shape the type of individuals children become, further theoretical research could allow these individuals to become more aware of how our nation's youth is developing. Parents/caretakers and teachers could also take a more active role in educating children about gender identity and behavior by having conversations about the kinds of masculine and feminine stereotypes in our society. Parents/caretakers should watch advertisements selling children's products with their young sons and daughters and ask how they feel about the content and actions of the characters. Explaining to children that it is appropriate for boys to play with girls' toys and girls to play with boys' toys could influence children's play behaviors.

Educators could develop and facilitate media literacy programs in elementary schools that focus on advertisements for children's products. Children could watch a sample of advertisements and then talk and ask

questions about the gender portrayals they observe. The media literacy program could function much like a reading program in schools where children discuss books they have read. This type of open forum could influence children's interpretations of advertisements, which could in turn have an effect on their gender identity and behavior development.

Because many children are captivated by television, they may want to share with other boys and girls how they feel and what they learn from this expanding medium. The majority of children also consider watching television programs and advertisements a fun pastime. Parents/caretakers and educators should take advantage of the fact that most children like and are willing to talk about their favorite programs and advertisements and use it as a learning experience for your youth.

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Appendix A
Coder Instruction Sheet

One sheet will be used for each advertisement viewed.
Please check the appropriate response.

Advertisement # _____ Date _____

Gender of the Advertisements

1. Were there boy characters in the advertisement?
Yes _____ No _____
2. Were there girl characters in the advertisement?
Yes _____ No _____

Types of Advertisements

1. Name of product _____
- a. Game _____
- b. Food/Drink _____
- c. Toys (dolls and action figures are included) _____
- d. Other (be specific) _____

Setting of Advertisements

1. Did the advertisement take place inside?
Yes _____ No _____
2. Did the advertisement take place outside?
Yes _____ No _____
3. Was the setting of the advertisement in a fantasy/dream world(cartoons included)? Yes _____ No _____
4. Other (be specific) _____

Activities in the advertisements

1. Did the advertisement contain active (exerting quick, physical motion, ie: running) activities?
 Yes _____ No _____
2. Did the advertisement contain passive(not exerting a quick, physical motion, ie: sitting, standing) activities?
 Yes _____ No _____

Themes of the Advertisements

1. Was there humor (ie: characters laughing, comical situations) in the advertisement?
 Yes _____ No _____
 2. Was there adventure (ie: risk-taking, characters on a mission) in the advertisement?
 Yes _____ No _____
 3. Was there a brand character(s) (ie: Trix the Rabbit) in the advertisement?
 Yes _____ No _____
 Name of character _____
 4. Was the advertisement program-length (ie: Fred Flinstone selling Cocco Pebbles cereal)?
 Yes _____ No _____
 5. Was there conflict (ie: a character in trouble, trying to get a product)?
 Yes _____ No _____
 6. No theme _____
- *Did the advertisement contain a catch phrase ("slogan" or "symbol" describing a product that is repeated more than once)?
 Yes _____ No _____

Appendix B Operational Definitions

<i>game</i> -	contain at least one of the following elements: board, cards, moveable pieces (ie: <i>Monopoly</i> , <i>Memory</i> , puzzles)
<i>toy</i> -	ie: dolls (baby and barbie), action figures
<i>inside setting</i> -	ie: home, building, structure with four walls and a roof
<i>outside setting</i> -	ie: yard, park, street, not surrounded by four walls and a roof
<i>fantasy/dream - world setting</i>	children floating/flying in the air, make-believe, beyond reality (ie: cartoons)
<i>active activities</i> -	exerting a quick physical motion, (ie: running, jumping, climbing, riding a bike)
<i>passive activity</i> -	not exerting a quick physical motion (ie: sitting, standing, sleeping, reading, eating, playing with a doll)
<i>humor</i> -	ie: characters laughing, making funny faces, comical situations
<i>adventure</i> -	risk-taking (ie: climbing a mountain, running from a villain, characters on a mission to get to a villain)
<i>brand characters</i> -	a cartoon or animal representing a product; a symbol for a product (ie: <i>Trix the Rabbit</i>)
<i>program-length - advertisements</i>	an advertisement that sells a product from a cartoon (ie: <i>Fred Flinstone</i> selling <i>Flinstone's Vitamins</i>)
<i>conflict</i> -	a character is troubled or in trouble, wants a product but cannot have it, at odds with other characters (ie: fighting, yelling, upset or crying)
<i>catch phrase</i> -	a "slogan" or "saying" describing a product that is repeated more than once in an advertisement

Appendix C
Pre-test Coding Results

<u>Ad #</u>	<u>Classification</u>	<u>Sara</u>	<u>Coder 1</u>	<u>Coder 2</u>
1	Setting	Inside	Inside	Inside
1	Theme	Conflict Catch phrase	Humor Catch phrase	Conflict
2	Setting	Fantasy	Fantasy	Fantasy
2	Theme	Adventure	Adventure	Adventure
3	Setting	Outside	Outside	Outside
3	Theme	Adventure	Conflict	Adventure
4	Setting	Fantasy	Fantasy	Fantasy
4	Theme	Adventure	Adventure	Adventure
5	Setting	Fantasy	Inside	Fantasy
5	Theme	Adventure	Adventure	Adventure
6	Setting	Inside	Fantasy	Inside
6	Theme	Humor Brand char.	Humor Brand char.	Humor Brand char.
7	Setting	Fantasy	Fantasy	Fantasy
7	Theme	Adventure Brand char.	Adventure Brand char.	Adventure Brand char.

8	Setting	Inside	Inside	Inside
8	Theme	None	None	None
9	Setting	Inside	Inside	Inside
9	Theme	None	None	None
10	Setting	Fantasy	Fantasy	Fantasy
10	Theme	Program length	Program length	Prog. length

Coding Results Calculated into *Scott's pi*

<u>Category</u>	<u>% of Agreement Between Coders</u>		<u>% of Agreement Square</u>	<u>Results</u>
	<u>Coder 1</u>	<u>Coder 2</u>		
Humor	20%	10% = $\frac{30\%}{2} = 15\%$	.15 x .15	.0225
Adventure	40%	50% = $\frac{90\%}{2} = 45\%$	.45 x .45	.2025
Brand char.	20%	20% = $\frac{40\%}{2} = 20\%$	.2 x .2	.04
Program length	10%	10% = $\frac{20\%}{2} = 10\%$	.1 x .1	.01
Conflict	10%	10% = $\frac{20\%}{2} = 10\%$	.1 x .1	.01
Catch phrases	10%	0% = $\frac{10\%}{2} = 5\%$	.05 x .05	.0025
None	20%	20% = $\frac{40\%}{2} = 20\%$	.2 x .2	.04
Total				.3275

The % of expected matches is calculated by adding the number of times each coder selected a particular category, adding the number of selections from coder 1 and 2, dividing that number by 2 (because there are two coders) and then squaring that number. After the results from each category are calculated, they are added together. The total equals the % of expected matches.

The % of observed matches is the number of total advertisements the coders agreed on, which was 80 percent or .8 for theme.

$$\text{Scott's } \pi = \frac{\% \text{ of observed matches} - \% \text{ of expected matches}}{1 - \% \text{ of expected matches}}$$

$$\frac{.8 - .3275}{1 - .3275} = \frac{.4725}{.6725} = .7026 = 70.2\%$$

There was 70.2 percent level of agreement between the two coders for theme.

Inside	40%	40%	$= \frac{80\%}{2} = 40\%$	.4 x .4	.16
Outside	10%	10%	$= \frac{20\%}{2} = 10\%$	.1 x .1	.01
Fantasy	50%	50%	$= \frac{100\%}{2} = 50\%$	.5 x .5	.25
Total					.42

The percentage of observed matches = 80 percent or .8 for setting.

$$\text{Scott's } \pi = \frac{.8 - .42}{1 - .42} = \frac{.38}{.58} = .6551 = 65.5\%$$

There was a 65.5 level of agreement between the two coders for setting.

Appendix D
Transcripts of the Ten Most Repeated Advertisements

1: McDonald's

Ronald: "Ready for a McDonald's cheeseburger?"

Girl: "Can't wait Ronald."

Hamburgler: "Can't wait Ronald." (He steals the cheeseburgers)

Ronald: "Hamburgler!"

Girl: "He took our lunch."

Hamburgler: "See ya!" (He runs into a maze)

Ronald: "Don't worry, I'll catch him!"

Hamburgler: "Hee hee."

Ronald: "Come back here." (Ronald chases Hamburgler into the maze)

Hamburgler: "Hee hee."

Girl: (Laughs)

Hamburgler: "Oh!" "Yikes!"

Ronald: "Oh!"

Hamburgler: "Bye bye." (He goes into McDonald's with the cheeseburgers)

Girl: "He's getting away!"

Ronald: "He'll pop up." (Hamburgler pops up from underneath a McDonald's sign)

Ronald: (Takes the cheeseburgers away from Hamburgler)

Ronald/Hamburgler/
Girl: (All eat the cheeseburgers)

Kid's singing: "Ronald makes it magic."

2: Burger King Kids Club

- Mom: "Kids, come meet your new sitter."
- Sitter: (Gives kids a mean look)
- B.K. Cartoon Man: "Looks like a good time to check out Burger King."
- Kids: "Wow, yea!" (Kids are transported to Burger King through a fantasy world)
- Boy Annoc: "Yes they're here at Burger King." (M & M characters pull up in a limo)
- M & M: "Burger King, cool." "Get my good side." (M & M's in the spotlight get their pictures taken)
- Boy Annoc: "New M & M toys." "You can get a cool M & M's toy and a fun size M & M chocolate candy with every Burger King Kids Club Meal."
- M & M: "That was smooth."
- Boy Annoc: Burger King Kids Club: Great food, Cool stuff, Kids only.
(B. K. Cartoon Man zaps sitter into outer space)

3: Cuddle on Delivery

- Stork: "When your mail-in is a stork, a baby's on the way."
(Stork flies to front door of house with girl waiting to receive the package)
- Girls: (Singing) "COD, means Cuddle on Delivery." "I love them."
"COD, lots of fun discoveries." (Girls hugging and kissing dolls)
- Girl: "Pink - A girl - She's Erin Nicole."
- Girls: (Singing) "COD."
- Girl: "I'll fill her baby book with stamps." "And look, her mail box turns into a high chair."
- Girls: (Singing) "COD."
- Girl: "Dinner." (Feeds doll)
- Girls: (Singing) "Means Cuddle on Delivery."
- Stork: "Sent by me."
- Female Annoc: "COD, mailbox-highchair with doll." "All other dolls sold separately." "All dolls have their own special names."

4: Star Wars Action Fleet Vehicles

- Male Annoc: "Hold onto your seat." (Boy's window in room opens up to outer space)
- Boys: "Wow!"
- Male Annoc: "These Micro Machines are bigger." "They're new Star Wars Action Fleet Vehicles from Micro Machines." "All action-sized." (Boys move figures through space)
- Boy: "Look out Luke or you will be lunch for the Raincore." (Boy knocks down another action figure)
- Male Annoc: "The new Star Wars Action Fleet vehicles are here with new rebel and imperial forces just like in the movies."
- Boy: "Take this Lord Vador." (Boy kills Vador with a sword)
- Male Annoc: "New Star Wars Action Fleet vehicles with the all ne Valacro from Shadows of the Empire." "More action from the action fleet."
- Male Annoc: "New Star Wars Micro Machines Action Fleet vehicles figures and creatures come with two features." "Each sold separately." "New from Galoob."

5: Ring Pop

- Female Annoc: (Singing) "You can wear a ring around your finger." "Ring Pop." (Shows girl with a Ring Pop on her finger)
- Female Annoc: (Singing) "It's the juicy jewel flavor - Oh Ring Pop." "It's the lolly pop without a stick." "A ring of flavor you can lick."
- (Boy has Ring Pop in a box and gives it to girl like he is proposing)
- (Many different colors of Ring Pops shown)
- Girl Annoc: "In wacky and sour flavors too."
- Female Annoc: "Oh Ring Pop."

6: Crunch Berries Cereal

- Captain Crunch: "I've made Crunch Berries cereal even more exciting with new blue and purple crunch berries." "What will people think?" (Crunch Berries floating into huge cereal box)
- Boy: "Blue?" "Purple?" (Eyes bug out)
- Captain Crunch: "He likes it."
- Girls: "I love this blue." "I love this purple." (Girls' hair turns blue and purple)
- Boy: "I'm very excited by these new Crunch Berries." "Very excited." (Driving a Crunch Berries van)
- Captain Crunch: "Everyone loves my blue and purple Crunch Berries." "Amazingly delicious with even more countable crunch." (Berries floating around in a swirl)
- Girls: "Go berries." "Go berries." (Doing a cheer with huge berries)
- Captain Crunch: "They're a tasty part of this balanced breakfast."
- Male Annoc: "New Crunch Berries from Captain Crunch."

7: Frosted Flakes

- Tony the Tiger: "Want to know what it takes to make the team?" "For 15-year old in-line skater Calvin Sayles it's simple." (Tony and Calvin skate)
- Calvin: "Simple?"
- Tony the Tiger: "The 180', the set flip, the Miller flip and of course the dig in (Calvin digs spoon into bowl of Frosted Flakes)
- Calvin: "Always use a spoon."
- Tony the Tiger: "Calvin has earned his strips so how about you?"
- Male Annoc: "Practice and soak up with a good breakfast and you can kick it with the sweet crunch of Frosted Flakes."
- Tony the Tiger: "They're GRREAT!"
- Male Annoc: "You can join the team and bring out the tiger in you."

8: Kool-Aid

- Male Annoc: (Singing) "Cruisin' with the big man." (Kool-Aid car coming down the street)
- "Kool-Aid is cruisin' with so many flavors." (Boys riding in a car)
- "Givin' you the freedom to choose." (Kool-Aid man driving the car)
- "So many ways to pick up a babe." No way you can lose." (Boy playing basketball)
- Kool-Aid Man: "Your cruisin' with the big man." (Boy and girl drinking)
- Boys/girls: (Scream) "Kool-Aid!" (Fruits and colorful flavors of Kool-Aid splashing all over)

9: Angel Princess Barbie

- Female Annoc: "There once was a princess who made wishes come true (Girls whispering into barbie's ear)
- "One girl wished to fly, so what did the princess do?"
- "Surprise!" "Wings - reach for the sky." (Barbie's wings come up and girls look at her with amazement)
- Girl: "Wow!" "Now you're an angel."
- Female Annoc: (Singing) "Angel Princess Barbie, Sparkle through and through." (Barbie slowly flying through the air)
- "On rainbow wings you guide us and make our dreams come true."
- "Angel Princess Barbie, you're magic in the air."
"Flying everywhere." (Girls pretend to fly in air)
- Female Annoc: "You can make Angel Princess Barbie doll fly and you can take off her wings to make her a princess."

10: Super Soaker XP 105

Male Sergeant: "This is one of the world's most powerful soakers."
"The new Larami Super Soaker XP 105." (Boy gets squirted with XP 105 and screams)

Male Sergeant: "Twice the drench of the original super soaker." "Less pumps to power than before." (Boys squirting each other)

"XP power gauge shows how much power your packing."

"The new Larami Super Soaker XP 105." "Wetter is better!"

Appendix E

Recommendations for Educating Children about Television Advertisements

Most children do not realize that the ultimate goal of an advertisement is to sell a product. Young boys and girls are often dazzled by the advertisements they watch selling their favorite toy or food product. Since it is practically impossible for parents/caretakers to monitor every advertisement their children watch, the following suggestions may make a difference in how their sons or daughters view and interpret a particular advertisement.

- Have children draw pictures of the tasks and behaviors that particular genders engage in during advertisements. This could help illustrate to parents/caretakers how boys and girls interpret what they observe. Talk about the pictures and ask children to describe what the drawings mean. This could lead to important topics involving gender roles.
- Have children act out an advertisement for a favorite product. It would be interesting to see how boys and girls role-play the character portrayals they see in advertisements. This type of activity could also allow parents/caretakers to recognize stereotypes that they may not be able to see by simply talking about the advertisement.

Along with parents/caretakers, educators have a unique opportunity to influence how children learn gender roles by facilitating media-related activities in the classroom. The following suggestions may give children a better understanding of the nature of advertisements.

- Have children form co-ed groups and develop a particular product. They could use a product already on the market, such as toothpaste or peanut butter and create a name and slogan for it. The groups could then develop and present the product to the class. This could allow boys and girls to learn about advertising tactics and techniques. They may also begin to realize that advertisements are not real-life and that the goal of most advertisers is to make a profit.
- Have children create a product on a Macintosh program called *Kid Pix Slide Show* currently available on CD Rom. In this program children pick an object to create, such as a bike or toy; color it; cut and paste it on the slide and type one or two sentences that

describe its features. The program allows children to create five slides for their object which, when shown in sequence, resemble an animated presentation. The entire process is like creating an advertisement from scratch, which gives children an idea of what is involved with its production.

- Have teachers invite representatives from advertising agencies to schools to talk to children and show them what goes into the production of a television advertisement. This could help children realize that the characters in the advertisements are not real; they are simply playing a role to help sell the product.

All of these suggestions for parents/caretakers and educators are hands-on activities to help children interpret and comprehend what they observe in advertisements. Discussions and activities involving gender roles and behaviors will hopefully give children a better understanding about their own gender identities.