

MEN AS FATHERS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
FATHER'S DAY ADVERTISEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Through mainstream media, men are often exposed to and expected to adopt stereotypical masculine traits, which include excessive aggression, power and dominance, and emotionless. Studies have shown that the conformity to these gender norms can predict numerous variables, including depression, sexism, aggressiveness, etc. (Addis, Syzdek & Mansfield, 2010). This thesis examines, through qualitative content analysis, the portrayal of fathers within the media through the use of Father's Day advertisements. The Father's Day advertisements were predicted to adhere to the typical masculine gender role. These predictions included that the advertisements would be geared towards dad's personal life (work and play) rather than his family life, would depict men as being strong and tough, hardworking, and breadwinners, and finally, would depict men as being aggressive. As expected, the quantitative content analysis revealed that Father's Day advertisements reflected men as being working men rather than family men, strong and tough, hardworking and breadwinners, and aggressive.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that make up a male and female and is most often assigned at birth by examining the infant's genitalia (sex determination). While sex refers to male and female, gender refers to the social construct of norms, roles, expectations, and behaviors accepted in society, and are often characterized as either masculine or feminine. Persons assigned male at birth are raised and encouraged to adopt the masculine social role outlined by society, while persons assigned female at birth are raised and encouraged to adopt the feminine role.

However, gender cannot be seen strictly as maleness and femaleness, but more as a spectrum. The way a person acts and behaves in society is known as one's gender role (Stroller, 10). This can be the same or different from one's gender identity, which is the conscious and unconscious awareness of belonging to a certain sex and not the other (Stroller, 10). A biological male may portray masculine behaviors, feminine behaviors, or a little bit of both. Also, persons who express masculine and feminine traits equally are called androgynous. Psychological androgyny is the idea or belief that a person can occupy both masculine and feminine qualities (Bem 1974) and is one of Dr. Sandra Bem's many contributions to the vast field of gender studies (Martin, Cook & Andrews, 2016). There are also gender non-conforming and transgender individuals. Persons who are transgender or gender non-conforming feel that their gender identities do not match their biological sex.

The traditional male gender role, however, encases the belief that men should be

strong, tough, emotionless, and aggressive. Moreover, hypermasculinity, which is defined as an amplified portrayal of the traditional and stereotypical male gender role (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984), demonstrates misogynistic views towards women to be inferior and submissive to male dominance.

Men are reared and expected to adopt these masculine traits and are often exposed to these stereotypical masculine ideals through the mainstream media. The media encompasses representations about traditional gender norms and are often stereotypical (Giaccardi, Ward & Seabrook, 2016). Quite often, the media depicts the male gender as excessively aggressive, to have a work role rather than a family role, and to be dominant and superior (Giaccardi, Ward & Seabrook, 2016). This depiction of the masculine portrayal in the media reflects hegemonic masculinity: the epitome of stereotypical masculine norms (Connell, 2005). Though research findings have shown that hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily considered “normal” statistically, being that only a few men encompass it, the idea of hegemonic masculinity is certainly normative (Connell, 2005).

What effect does this gendered social learning have on men? Studies of masculinity, which often use self-report questionnaires measuring gender roles and norms, and the conformity to these norms, can predict many variable, including depression, sexism, aggressiveness, etc. (Addis, Syzdek & Mansfield, 2010). When men are told to hide their feelings, to be strong, and to show superiority, psychological issues are bound to happen. For instance, young boys often grasp, through social learning and

redirection by their fathers, that conveying vulnerable emotions such as sadness will be followed by punishment in the form of mockery and ridicule when this behavior is done in front of dominant males (Addis, Syzdek & Mansfield, 2010).

Masculinity and Femininity

Masculinity and femininity are social constructs describing a person's gender, and is associated with norms, expectations, and behaviors accepted in society based on a person's biological sex. Normally, men are raised and expected to adopt masculine traits, and women are raised and expected to adopt feminine traits. Some masculine traits include being strong, independent, emotionless, confident, sexually aggressive, and tough. On the contrary, feminine traits include being dependent, quiet, submissive, soft, passive, and weak. However, gender does not always correlate with biological sex, and it is important to distinguish between the two.

One of the most used measurements of investigating masculinity and femininity involves the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) produced by Dr. Sandra Bem (Mehta & Dementieva, 2016). This model investigates psychological androgyny by having participants rate themselves on a 7-point scale. The questions that are asked consist of stereotypical masculine traits, stereotypical feminine traits, and gender neutral traits. Research has shown a general increase in women's ratification of traditional masculine stereotypical traits and men's continued nonendorsement of traditional feminine stereotypical traits (Twenge, 1997). Recent research has also shown an even greater decrease in U.S. college women endorsing stereotypical feminine traits (Mehta &

Dementieva, 2016). It is clear to see that femininity, even among women, is considered lesser than to masculinity.

Hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity is a psychological term defined as the exaggerated behavior of stereotypical male gender role beliefs (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). The traditional male gender role is that men should be strong, sexually aggressive, emotionless, and protective. This often leads to misogynistic ideas and sexual aggression. Hypermasculine attitudes have been shown to correlate with sexual aggression towards women (Burk, Burkhart & Sikorski, 2004; Tatum & Foubert, 2009). With the use of the Hypermasculine Inventory (HMI), a study concluded that men who reported being more sexually aggressive and tempted to use force possessed a personality style that was more hypermasculine (Schewe, Adam & Ryan, 2009). Studies have also shown hypermasculinity to be linked to aggression towards other men who do not conform to traditional gender role norms (Parrot & Zeichner, 2008; Seaton, 2007), depression (Magovecevic & Addis, 2008), and even low academic achievement (Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, & Hammer, 1998; Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, & Seaton, 2004).

Role Theory

Role theory has greatly influenced the creation of gender roles in today's society (West & Zimmerman, 1987). With role theory comes a set of norms, expectations, and duties defined by a social construct of categories that are performed throughout everyday life. Moreover, role theory creates a set of role expectations between the sexes.

Conflict arises with role theory, especially in the work force, when a male or female enters a social role typically dominated by the opposite sex (Clow & Ricciardelli, 2011). For instance, there are certain occupations that are marked with a certain gender. Often times, a distinction must be made regarding a male nurse or a female doctor. This is because nursing is associated with the feminine role and the occupation of being a doctor is associated with the masculine role. When a man enters a female-dominated profession, they are generally stereotyped as homosexual, feminine, or perverted (Clow & Ricciardelli, 2011). This creates discrimination and prejudice towards men who choose a female-dominated occupation. Men are thus more likely to conform to the gender role expectations that they are assigned.

This conformity to gender role expectations can be seen even in adolescent behavior. Commonly recognized adolescent masculine gender role norms include aggression, social teasing of young boys who are feminine-appearing or not conforming to the male social role, heterosexism, and the overall avoidance of femininity (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). During adolescence, young boys are often susceptible to “policing” (Reigeluth & Addis, 2016) of behaviors by their peers or by adult male figures, that are seen as “feminine” or “gay.” This creates a fear among adolescent boys and a demand to conform to the masculine social role at a very young age.

Men as Fathers and the Influence of Masculinity

Though fathers have become more involved with child-rearing during the last few decades, it is still apparent that many fathers continue to identify as working men and

breadwinners, or family providers, which are established conventional masculine gender role ideals (Kwon, Oliffe, Bottorff & Kelly, 2014). Moreover, there is a strong indication that mothers tend to be the more nurturing of the parents (Jeynes, 2016) as well as more supportive emotionally. However, when it came to emotional support, when showing it, fathers were more likely to show their emotional support to their daughters rather than their sons (Jeynes, 2016). This thesis examines, through qualitative content analysis, the portrayal of fathers within the media through the use of Father's Day advertisements. I predicted Father's Day advertisements would adhere to the typical male gender role. First, Father's Day gifts would be geared towards dad's personal life rather than his family life. Second, Father's Day advertisements would depict men as being strong and touch, hardworking, and breadwinners, Finally, Father's Day advertisements would depict men as being aggressive.

III. **Method**

Advertisements from the Austin American Statesman were collected on June 12, 2016, the day before Father's Day. A content analysis was then run on the advertisements. To be considered, the page of advertisement needed to have "father," "dad," or something similar. Multiple items on one page were all coded separately as long as a word relating to "dad" was on the same page. The categories in tables 1 and 2 were used to code the pages and products.

There were a total of 42 pages of advertisements and 231 individual products fit the requirements and were analyzed using a rating system that noted the company,

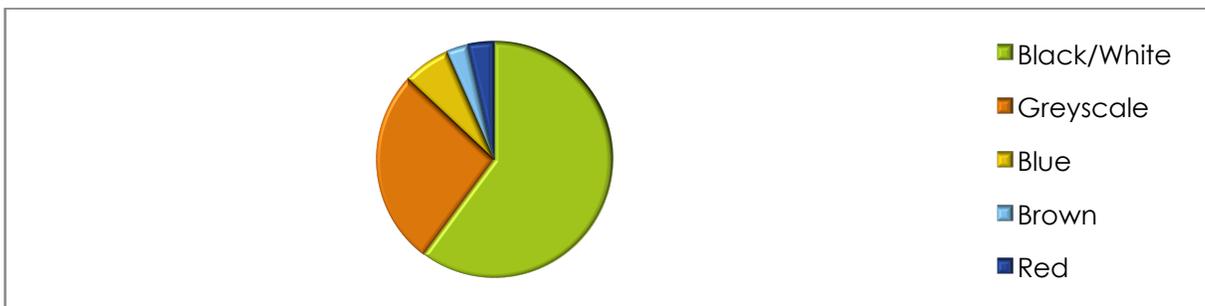
number of products per page, color scheme, ad size, picture, brand, price/savings, product color, product type, and the message that indicated it was a Father's Day Advertisement.

Table one noted the advertisement page, while table two noted the individual products for each page. For a better representation of what was coded for product type, I will go over some subtypes that showed up frequently. For clothing, some subtypes included professional attire (ie. suits, ties, dress shoes, etc.) socks and underwear, t-shirts, and athletic wear. Technology subtypes included DVDs (mainly action or violent), CDs, televisions, game consoles and video games (mainly video games that consisted of racing, shooting, fighting, etc.), mp3 players, and phones. Tools and sports subtypes included screwdrivers, hammers, wrenches, etc., and also game day attire and essentials. Grooming subtypes included razors and shaving cream, body wash, shampoo and conditioner, and soap. Cooking and appliance subtypes included grills and coolers. Food/drink subtypes included beer, soda, uncooked meat, and chips. Finally, décor subtypes included picture frames and wall hangings.

IV. Results

There were 11 total companies and 196 total brands listed in the 42 pages of Father's Day Advertisements. 51% of the products were clothing items, 19% of the products were technology, 13% were tools/sporting, 10% were grooming, 0% were cooking/appliances, 3% were food/drinks, and 3% were décor. As far as color scheme, 60% were black/white, 27% were greyscale, 6% were blue, 3% were brown, and 3% were red. Of the clothing products (51%), over 90% were professional attire (suits, ties,

slacks, etc.) Of the technology products (19%), roughly 65% were TVs, game systems, and violent video games and DVDs. 87% of the advertisements were black/white or greyscale. The number of products per pages averaged at 5. 51% contained no person pictured, 24% contained a man pictures, 17% had a man + child, and 7% had a family pictured. Some of the advertisement quotes included “gear up for dad’s day,” “celebrate dad with a cold one!” and “Father’s Day is Sunday, June 19th.”



V. Discussion

Each major category that I came across seemed to relate somewhat to the stereotypical male gender norm. Clothes, though at face value may seem relatively gender neutral, depicted men as being working individuals and providers because of the types of clothing being advertised. 90% of the clothes that were advertised were

professional attire. When a man was pictured in these certain ads, the majority were holding briefcases or taking phone calls as if conducting business. Of the technology products, almost all of the DVDs and video games advertised were action themed or violent. Tools and sporting equipment, making up 13% of all products advertised, relate to the “macho personality” related to masculinity. The vast majority of grooming products being advertised had “for men” stamped on the end. Some examples include “Dove for men” and “Gillette for men.” It seems as though, because grooming products can often be seen as a feminine, the companies took an extra step to say that it was for men and not women. I found this interesting. It seems that there are two types of grooming products: grooming products and grooming products of men. It is either Dove soap or Dove soap for men. Grooming products are deemed socially feminine, so it seems important to distinguish between the two. This is much like role theory. For example, the term “nurse” is socially deemed feminine, so it isn’t out of the ordinary to refer to a nurse who is male as a “male nurse” rather than just a nurse.

As expected, the Father’s Day advertisements portrayed fathers as being working men and providers (by advertising suits and ties), strong and tough (by advertising tools, sports-related products, etc.), and aggressive (by advertising violent video games and DVD’s). Even for Father’s Day, many of the advertisements focused on the traditional roles involving employment, sports, and aggression, rather than on a more nurturing, parental role. Our analysis supports the thought that mainstream media portrays traditional male gender norms that are often stereotypical (Giaccardi, Ward & Seabrook, 2016), which can be seen through the products being advertised for Father’s Day. Only

24% of the Father's Day advertisements pictured a man with a child or family. I believe further research could be done by comparing my findings to Mother's Day advertisements.

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Table 1

Rating sheet of each page of Father’s Day Advertisements

Pictures Excluded: *Use only first occurrence of same picture. Has to have “father,” “dad,” or something similar on same page.*

<u>Page</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u># of Products</u>	<u>Color Scheme</u> ¹	<u>Size</u> ²	<u>Picture</u> ³	<u>Other</u> ⁴

¹Color Scheme: 1=black/white, 2=greyscale, 3=blue, 4=red, 5=green

²Size: 1=full page, 2=1/2 page, 3=1/4 page, 4=anything less

³Picture: 1=adult man, 2=adult woman, 3=man+child, 4=woman+child, 5=family, 6=no person present

⁴Other: Message/Description containing “dad,” “father,” or something similar

Table 2

Rating of each product displayed on each page of Father's Day Advertisements

Page	Brand	Price/Savings	Product Color ⁵	Product Type ⁶

⁵Product Color: 1=black/white, 2=greyscale, 3=blue, 4=brown, 5=red

⁶Product Type: 1=Clothes, 2=Technology, 3=Tools/Sporting, 4=Grooming, 5=Cooking/appliances, 6=food/drinks, 7=decor