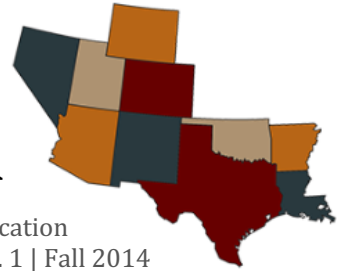


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## Motivating Minors: A content analysis of social motivations in advertisements targeting pre-teens

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**Motivating Minors:**

**A content analysis of social motivations in advertisements targeting pre-teens**

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**Abstract:**

This study is an examination of the social motivations utilized in television advertisements targeting pre-teens. Through the methodology of content analysis, over 200 advertisements targeting children were gathered and analyzed using 18 accepted social motivations. The study examines which social motivations appear most frequently in children's advertisements, and finds that there are different motivations used to target males, females, and unisex audiences. These findings are then discussed based on the theories of social observation learning, priming, and cultivation. The differences between motivations used to target males and females in particular are discussed through the lens of gender schema cultivation.

In 2000, children 12 or younger in the United States spent over \$28 billion of their own money (Gunter, Oates, & Blades, 2005, p.2). This included money acquired as allowances, gifts, or in a variety of other ways. According to the same study, in that same year children controlled or influenced over \$250 billion of family spending. Similar statistics have also been found in Europe (Lawlor & Prothero, 2002) and China (McNeal & Zang, 2000). Additionally, some studies estimate that children view, on average, around 40,000 television commercials per year (Victor, 2001; Wilson & Weiss, 1992), are very unlikely to use time shifting technology like DVRs (Ofcom, 2011), and have difficulty making clear cognitive distinctions between commercial advertisements and entertainment programs (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Combined, this indicates that children today wield an unprecedented amount spending and purchasing power within developed nations, are likely to view a very high amount of commercial messages designed to persuade them where and how to exercise that power, and have a limited amount of filters protecting them from overt manipulation. Capitalizing on this, advertisers targeting children have developed deceptively complex methods by which to influence children, utilizing many of the same social motivations commonly at play in ads targeting adults.

This study examines advertisements targeting pre-teen audiences and seeks to quantify the frequency of major social motivations advertisers use to sell products to this audience. Calling on previous research focused on advertising that targets children, and operating within the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory and priming, this study explores the scope of appeals utilized in advertising to children. It is postulated that through repeated exposure to mediated commercial messages, children are primed

toward a consumerist worldview in which products, emotions, and social acceptance are inextricably linked.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The advertising industry invests billions of dollars each year in cutting-edge research focused on human behavior and persuasion (Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005). A great deal of the research focuses not only on how to sell a particular product to a particular audience, but also how to prime consumers to be more receptive to future messages. This is often accomplished by linking products with social, emotional, or psychological satisfaction. By effectively framing a product as a potential gateway to things like acceptance, succorance, status, or intrinsic happiness advertisers have discovered they can circumvent the skepticism many adults have developed toward overt advertising claims (Obermiller et al., 2005). Additionally, when products are framed as a means to an end and not an end unto themselves, consumer disappointment is made more abstract and detached from the product itself thus mitigating cognitive dissonance.

While a great deal of research and concern has orbited around the study of the techniques and strategies advertisers use when targeting adults, there has been even more concern in both academia and in society as a whole about the effect of advertising on children. As previously stated, children tend to watch an exceptionally large number of television ads compared to other age groups (Victor, 2001). Research has also indicated that children have a reduced skepticism toward ads and tend to make less definite delineations between commercial messages and entertainment programming (Gunter, Oates, & Blades, 2005). The use of popular characters in advertisements, and more

recently the creation of entire programs built around products or commodities, make it even more difficult for children to parse the two (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Programs like *Pokémon*, *G.I. Joe Renegades*, *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, and *Transformers Prime* effectively blur the line between advertisement and entertainment to the point where the two forms of content are arguably one and the same (Gunter et al., 2005, p.8)

The real concerns about advertising to children, however, typically involves the idea that by showing children a world in which products are directly linked to the attaining or maintenance of social and emotional viability, ads are creating expectations and preconceived notions of normality they will take into adulthood. Albert Bandura, in his social cognitive theory (2009) argued that human beings learn a great deal about the society in which they live and their role therein through observation of their environment (p.98). He referred to this process as social observational learning. With respect to children and television advertising, this theory is extended to argue that value-expressive advertisements targeting the young may have the effect of teaching children that products and emotions are naturally connected. It would then follow that children oriented in this way would grow into adulthood maintaining a consumerist point of view, which would be greatly advantageous to advertisers. Thus a cyclical dynamic is created.

Another point of view concerning the impact of advertising, and media in general, on the development of children's cognitive worldview involves the concept of priming. Priming is the process of orienting individuals in a particular way through exposure to some stimulus (Roskos-Ewoldsen, D.R., Roskos-Ewoldsen, B. & Carpentier, 2009). Research has found that priming through advertising not only has measurable effects, but in some cases effects that are quite dramatic (Di Nucci, 2012; Gollwitzer et al. 2011;

Huttenlocher, 2004; Iyengar, Peters & Kinder, 1982; Kirsh & Olczak, 2002). One study found that sexually demeaning female imagery, stereotypes, and language in video games led to an immediate, measurable decrease in sensitivity of male players to such objectifying elements in other areas of life (Yao, Mahood, & Linz, 2010). This study found evidence pointing to the possibility that playing sexually-oriented video games prime consumers not only to have more sexually explicit thoughts, but to be more open and accepting of “negative gender schema of females as sex objects” (p.85). Other research has found similar dynamics occur with exposure to violent content (Carnagey & Anderson, 2005; Josephson, 1987; Kirsh & Olczak, 2002). Many of these study show that after priming exposure to violent content consumers are not only more likely to be accepting of additional violent imagery, but in the case of children actually tend to prefer it (Carnagy & Anderson, 2005; Josephson, 1987). An even more dramatic example of priming was demonstrated in a study by Harris, Bargh, and Brownell (2009) which examined food advertisements as a priming mechanism to influence eating behavior. Conducting two experiments involving both children and adults, they found that food advertisements had a direct, immediate, and significant effect on how much a viewer consumed and what type of food they chose to consume. While they found that the priming effect had some influence whether the ads were for healthy or unhealthy food, they discovered that the priming effect was most dramatic when the ads linked food to fun and social acceptance.

This study builds on the previous research that indicates that priming viewers, particularly young viewers, to accept the link between products and social or emotional benefits can have measurably dramatic effects on their worldview and behavior. In the

hopes that future research might further expand on this concept, this study is designed to inventory those social motivations used in ads targeting children.

This study replicates certain aspects of a study performed in 1976 by Jib Fowles. Fowles' study sought to examine motivational content in advertisements featured in *Life* magazine. His goal was to analyze value expressive advertisements featured in the magazine as a means by which to forecast the values that would be normalized through the 1970s and 1980s. To do this Fowles relied on Henry A. Murray's 18 Social Motivations (Fowles, 1976, p. 87-89). This was list of 18 motivations that Murray believed were central in most decision-making processes. Murray compiled this list by conducting extensive interviews and surveys, and his final list was considered, "probably more widely useful than any other comparable classification" (Hall & Lindzey, 1970, p.203). This list is also used in this study due to its comprehensive nature and empirical utility. Table 1 is a full, operationalized list of all 18 social motivations.

Table 1

Henry Murray's Social Motivations (Fowles, 1976)

<b>For Achievement</b>	To accomplish something difficult. To master, manipulate or organize physical objects, human beings, or ideas. To overcome obstacles and attain a high standard. To excel one's self. To rival and surpass others.
<b>For Acquisition</b>	To gain possessions and property. To grasp, snatch, or steal things. To bargain or gamble. To work for money or goods. To keep what has been acquired.
<b>For Affiliation</b>	To draw near to another and enjoyably cooperate or reciprocate. To win affection. To adhere and remain loyal to a friend.
<b>For Autonomy</b>	To get free, shake off restraint, break out of confinement. To resist coercion and restriction. To avoid or quit activities prescribed by domineering authorities. To be independent and free to act according to impulse. To be unattached, irresponsible. To defy convention.
<b>For Cognizance</b>	To explore. To ask questions. To satisfy curiosity. To look, listen, inspect. To read and seek knowledge.
<b>For Deference</b>	To admire and support a superior. To praise, honor, and eulogize. To yield to another. To emulate an exemplar. To conform to custom.
<b>For Dominance</b>	To control one's human environment. To influence or direct the behavior of others by suggestion, seduction, persuasion, or command. To dissuade, restrain, or prohibit.
<b>For Exhibition</b>	To make an impression. To be seen and heard. To excite, amaze, fascinate, entertain, shock, intrigue, amuse, or entice.
<b>For Harm Avoidance</b>	To avoid pain, physical injury, illness, and death. To escape from a dangerous situation. To take precautionary measures.
<b>For Inviolacy</b>	To prevent depreciation of self-respect, to preserve one's good name, to be immune from criticism, to maintain psychological distance.
<b>To Nurture</b>	To give sympathy and gratify the needs of someone who is weak, disabled, tired, inexperienced, etc. To feed, help, support, console, protect, comfort, nurse, heal.
<b>For Order</b>	To put things in order. To achieve cleanliness, balance, arrangement, organization, neatness, tidiness, precision.
<b>For Passivity</b>	To relax, loaf, ruminate. To be disinclined to exert oneself physically and mentally.
<b>To Play</b>	To act for 'fun' without further purpose. To like to laugh and make jokes. To seek enjoyable relaxation from stress. To participate in games, sports, dancing, drinking, parties, cards.
<b>For Recognition</b>	To excite praise and commendation. To demand respect. To boast and exhibit one's accomplishments. To seek distinction, social prestige, honors, or high office.
<b>For Sentience</b>	To seek and enjoy sensuous or aesthetic impressions.
<b>For Sex</b>	To form and further an erotic relationship. To have sexual intercourse. To be in love. To hold hands, embrace, kiss.
<b>For Succorance</b>	To have one's needs gratified by sympathetic aid. To be nursed, supported, protected, loved, advised, guided, indulged, forgiven.

In addition to compiling a quantifiable list of the social motivation appeals appearing in advertisements targeting pre-teen children, this study seeks to answer two basic questions. First, do certain motivational appeal stand out as statistically more significant than others? Fowles (1976) found that the appeal described as “For

Affiliation” appeared at dramatically higher frequency than others. This study hypothesizes that the same will be true in current children’s television advertisements. If the Affiliation motivation is introduced and utilized in advertising to young audiences, then it is also theoretically possible such an appeal would be highly effective as those young audiences became adults. This theory is the basis for the hypothesis. Second, this study seeks to examine if there is any difference in the type and frequency of social motivation appeals used to advertise to males and females. If a significant difference does appear between the motivations used to target males and females, this could indicate some perception of gendered expectations or gender role stereotyping.

**RQ1:** Which social motives appeared most frequently in the sampled children’s ads?

**H1:** Affiliation will be the most frequently used social motive in the sampled ads.

**RQ2:** Is there any significant difference in the type and frequency of motives based on the sex of the target audience?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study sampled 204 unique advertisements. Ads were collected from programming on *Cartoon Network*, *The Hub Network*, and *Nickelodeon*. A random sample was drawn from one randomly selected week of programming per month from December 2012 through March 2013. During a sample week, three-hour programming blocks from 3pm to 6pm on all three networks were captured via DVR. These times were chosen because the programming content on all three networks during this period targeted pre-teen audiences (under 13 years of age). Blocks of programming were collected and all child-oriented advertisements were extracted for coding. These ads were

the unit of analysis for this study. Ads were determined to be child-oriented if they featured products that would be desired primarily by children and/or specifically addressed children in their messages. While ads for adult-oriented products did appear on all three networks during the sample periods, these ads were not examined in these stories as the tone, content, and messages of such ads were significantly different than those ads targeting children. It took 4 months to collect at least 200 unique ads, which was the desired minimum. This was in large part because of the tendency of all three network to run the same sets of ads numerous times each hour and every day. Similarly, some ads were run on all three networks thereby further reducing the number of unique ads per week. Thus, the dynamic was created where Mondays garnered a great number of ads, while Tuesday through Friday of the sample week garnered relative few new unique advertisements.

After sample ads were extracted from the program blocks they were then coded based on the sex of their target audience (male/female/unisex), and Murray's social motivations. Three coders were used in this study. This included the author and two independent coders. Intercoder reliability was established through pre-coding training of coders using a series of ads not included in the sample. During this testing each coding variable was explained and demonstrated in advertisements. Coders were instructed to mark all applicable variables in the given ads. Training continued until consistent Intercoder reliability over 90% was achieved with the mode number of selections being one per ad

In the actual study, each coder was similarly instructed to code each ad for as many motivations as applicable with the expectation that, similar to the findings of

Fowles' (1976) study, some ads would utilize more than one motivation. Independent coder code sheets were then combined with the author's coding. Only motivations with at least two out of three coders agreeing were accepted in the final data set, but of the 338 included observations all three coders agreed on 82% (n=277) of the final observations. In the final analysis, only a small number of ads featured three to four agreed upon motivations, with the mode being only one. In fact of the 204 total ads, 118 ads were identified to have one major motivation while 86 were identified as having two or more combined motivations.

## **RESULTS**

For the sample of 204 ads in this study, there were 338 agreed upon motivations observed. The motivations were also filtered for the target audience of the ad with 52 ads being identified as targeting females and 65 targeting males. 87 ads were not clearly targeting males or females exclusively and were categorized as unisex. The presence of more observations than sampled ads indicates that most of the ads featured more than 1 observed motivation. The obtained chi-square goodness of fit statistic for the overall findings (271.44, with 17 degrees of freedom) was significant at the .001 level, the critical value of 40.79 being surpassed. Table 2 shows the individual frequencies observed of each social motivation and expresses these frequencies as a percentage of the overall observations. By examining the results in this way, it is easy to observe which motivations were most prevalent for each of the filtered categories.

Table 2

Observed Frequencies of Social Motivations (in numbers and % of total observations)

Motivation	Overall		Female		Male		Unisex	
	Observed Frequency	%	Observed Frequency	%	Observed Frequency	%	Observed Frequency	%
For Achievement	13	3.85%	1	1.37%	7	6.19%	5	3.29%
For Acquisition	5	1.48%	1	1.37%	2	1.77%	2	1.32%
For Affiliation	50	14.79%	18	24.66%	13	11.50%	19	12.50%
For Autonomy	45	13.31%	8	10.96%	22	19.47%	15	9.87%
For Cognizance	20	5.92%	2	2.74%	3	2.65%	15	9.87%
For Deference	21	6.21%	2	2.74%	9	7.96%	10	6.58%
For Dominance	25	7.40%	0	0.00%	21	18.58%	4	2.63%
For Exhibition	25	7.40%	9	12.33%	10	8.85%	6	3.95%
For Harm Avoidance	3	0.89%	0	0.00%	3	2.65%	0	0.00%
For Inviolacy	1	0.30%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.66%
To Nurture	13	3.85%	6	8.22%	0	0.00%	7	4.61%
For Order	6	1.78%	2	2.74%	0	0.00%	4	2.63%
For Passivity	8	2.37%	4	5.48%	0	0.00%	4	2.63%
To Play	59	17.46%	16	21.92%	15	13.27%	28	18.42%
For Recognition	8	2.37%	1	1.37%	6	5.31%	1	0.66%
For Sentience	27	7.99%	2	2.74%	2	1.77%	23	15.13%
For Sex	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
For Succorance	9	2.66%	1	1.37%	0	0.00%	8	5.26%
<b>Total Observed</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Expected Average	18.78	5.56%	4.06	5.56%	6.28	5.56%	8.44	5.56%
Total Ads	204		52		65		87	

**Overall**

RQ1 asked analyzed the results of this study by asking which social motives appeared most frequently in the sampled children’s ads? It was hypothesized that, similar to Fowles’ study, Affiliation would be the most frequently observed motivation. Overall, in this study, the motivation with the highest frequency was Play, constituting 17.46% ( $n=59$ ) of all observed motivations. Affiliation was the second most frequently utilized motivation, constituting 14.79% ( $n=50$ ) of all motivations. Autonomy was the third most common motivation, appearing 13.31% ( $n=45$ ) of the time. In considering these numbers, the hypothesis is not corroborated as Affiliation ranked second overall in frequency.

RQ2 asked what, if any, significant difference in the type and frequency of motives appeared based on the sex of the target audience? When filtering the data based on sex of the targeted audience, chi-square tests also found significance at the .001 level for females (123.52, with 17 degrees of freedom), for males (143.62, with 17 degrees of freedom), and for unisex audiences (138.39, with 17 degrees of freedom). All of these tests surpassed the critical value of 40.79. This indicates that there was strong significance in the findings both overall and individually based on the sex of the target audience.

**Females**

Of the 52 sampled ads targeting females, 73 motivations were observed. The top motivation observed was Affiliation (24.66%,  $n=18$ ). The second most frequently occurring motivation in ads targeting females was Play, constituting 21.92% ( $n=16$ ) of the observed motivations. Exhibition, or using a product to show off or draw attention to oneself, was the third most frequently observed, constituting 12.33% ( $n=9$ ) of observed motivations targeting females. Beyond these were Autonomy (10.96%,  $n=8$ ) and Nurture (8.22%,  $n=6$ ). All other motivations were mostly inconsequential making up close to 5% or less of the overall observed motivations targeting females.

**Males**

In the 65 ads identified as targeting males, there were 113 observed motivations. The top motivation observed was Autonomy (19.47%,  $n=22$ ). This is the message that by using the product, a consumer either achieves or exercises control over their environment. The second most frequently identified motivation was Dominance, which constituted 18.58% ( $n=21$ ) of the overall motivations targeting males. This is the message that use of

a product or service may provide an individual with the means by which to overpower, control, or otherwise dominate others. Play (13.27%,  $n=15$ ) and Affiliation (11.50%,  $n=13$ ) followed with all other motivations each making up less than 9% of the overall motivations targeting males.

**Unisex**

Of the 87 ads that were not identified as obviously targeting male or female audiences 152 motivations were observed with the top three being Play (18.42%,  $n=28$ ), Sentience (15.13%,  $n=23$ ), and Affiliation (12.50%,  $n=19$ ). This indicates that besides simple fun and play, one of the primary elements used to appeal to an all pre-teen audience regardless of sex is that of pleasurable tastes, smells, and feelings. Many ads featuring this appeal were for fast food restaurants or soft, plushy toys. All other motivations constituted less than 10% each.

**Older Appeals**

In addition to the primary study, coders noted the presence of a large number of ads featuring actors or characters that were significantly older than the presumed target audience. For example, many advertisements for Nerf products featured actors that appeared to be late teens, early twenties, or even adults. Finding this interesting, the data was recoded and recalculated to include the additional category of Older Appeal. This was defined as the motivation that a product would make the user appear older, or that the product was endorsed by older individuals. It was operationalized as ads using overtly and obviously older characters than the target demographic in roles that would be vicariously appealing to children. Adding Older Appeals brought the total number of observed motivations in the 204 ads to 388. The new calculations still achieved a strong

statistical significance. Using the chi-square goodness of fit analysis (251.98, with 18 degrees of freedom) results were significant at the .001 level, surpassing the critical value of 42.31. After recalculating for the new variable, it was determined that Older Appeals were proportionately as frequent as Affiliation overall. Under the new calculations, Older Appeals and Affiliation tied for the rank of second in frequency, constituting 12.89% (n=50) of all observed motivations. This breaks down to Older Appeals ranking third in observed motivations in ads targeting females (10.98%, n=9), third in ads targeting males (12.40%, n=16), and second in ads targeting unisex audiences (14.12%, n=25). The full recalculated observations and frequencies including Older Appeals are expressed below in Table 3.

**Table 3**

**Observed Frequencies of Social Motivations plus Older Appeals (in numbers and % of total observations)**

Motivation	Overall		Female		Male		Unisex	
	Observed Frequency	%	Observed Frequency	%	Observed Frequency	%	Observed Frequency	%
<b>OLDER APPEALS</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>12.89%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10.98%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12.40%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14.12%</b>
For Achievement	13	3.35%	1	1.22%	7	5.43%	5	2.82%
For Acquisition	5	1.29%	1	1.22%	2	1.55%	2	1.13%
For Affiliation	50	12.89%	18	21.95%	13	10.08%	19	10.73%
For Autonomy	45	11.60%	8	9.76%	22	17.05%	15	8.47%
For Cognizance	20	5.15%	2	2.44%	3	2.33%	15	8.47%
For Deference	21	5.41%	2	2.44%	9	6.98%	10	5.65%
For Dominance	25	6.44%	0	0.00%	21	16.28%	4	2.26%
For Exhibition	25	6.44%	9	10.98%	10	7.75%	6	3.39%
For Harm Avoidance	3	0.77%	0	0.00%	3	2.33%	0	0.00%
For Inviolacy	1	0.26%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.56%
To Nurture	13	3.35%	6	7.32%	0	0.00%	7	3.95%
For Order	6	1.55%	2	2.44%	0	0.00%	4	2.26%
For Passivity	8	2.06%	4	4.88%	0	0.00%	4	2.26%
To Play	59	15.21%	16	19.51%	15	11.63%	28	15.82%
For Recognition	8	2.06%	1	1.22%	6	4.65%	1	0.56%
For Sentience	27	6.96%	2	2.44%	2	1.55%	23	12.99%
For Sex	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
For Succorance	9	2.32%	1	1.22%	0	0.00%	8	4.52%
<b>Total Observed</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Total Ads</b>	<b>204</b>		<b>52</b>		<b>65</b>		<b>87</b>	

## DISCUSSION

Sut Jhally, in *Advertising and the End of the World* (1998), stated that advertising was a major culture-transmitting vehicle within American society. He pointed out that advertising does not simply sell products, but ideas. Ads don't just tell consumers the specifics of products, but create intricate and detailed myths about the benefits of using products. Combining this perspective on advertising with the theory of cultivation (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, (2009) and Bandura's observational learning theory (2009) makes the fact that children are exposed to significantly more ads than adults with drastically fewer filters highly troublesome (Gunter, Oates, & Blades, 2005; Victor, 2001). Bandura argues that humans learn a great deal about dealing with the world around them through observing the roles and relationships of people and objects therein (2009, p. 98-101). Similarly, the theory of cultivation argues that when humans are exposed to uniform, repetitive depictions of the world, over time they are likely to assimilate those depictions into their worldview even if they conflict with personal experiences (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009). This is a process referred to as mainstreaming.

While adults are certainly susceptible to the influence of advertisements, they also have a variety of mitigating elements including developed ad skepticism or the simple ability to use time-shifting technology to avoid ads all together. Conversely, children lack many of these elements and thus are theoretically much more easily influenced by ads (Gunter, Oates & Blades, 2005 p. 9; Oates et al., 2003). Children have limited experience with the world and thus are often open to suggestions regarding how to

achieve happiness, pleasure, or acceptance. For this reason, examining what motivations advertisers use in targeting children becomes very important.

In response to RQ1, this study found that Play was the most common motivation utilized overall, followed by Affiliation. While technically this means that the hypothesis was not confirmed, it must be noted that Play and Affiliation were only separated by only 2.67% in the overall motivations. For this reason the hypothesis, based on assumptions drawn from Fowles' 1970s study, should be viewed as somewhat substantiated. This study and Fowles' differed in several ways, but the difference in sample demographic is probably most responsible for the differences in results. Fowles' study examined ads targeting adults while this study examines ads targeting pre-teens. It is noteworthy that Affiliation, which was the most frequently observed motivation in Fowles' study by a large margin, was still featured at a much higher frequency than most other motivations in this study combined. Though it averaged fifth in Fowles' (1976) study, the fact that Play made up the largest percentage of observed motivations in children's ads is not truly a surprise. It was not hypothesized as it did not correlate with Fowles' original study. Another example of the difference in sample demographic coming into play in this study is in the motivation of Sex. While Fowles' original study averaged Sex as the fourteenth most frequently appearing motivation, there were no cases of Sex being used in this study. This is an obvious example of how the demographic of target audience has had an effect on the difference in findings between the two studies.

In addressing RQ2, significant differences in frequency were found between the ads used to target females versus those used to target males or unisex audiences. In examining both what was most frequent, and what was least frequent, a pattern appeared.

Ads targeting females utilized the motivations of Affiliation, Play, and Exhibition most frequently, while ads targeting males used the motivations of Autonomy and Dominance. These results indicate that advertisers target young females with the message that the most important motivation in their lives should be to use or consume the right products in order to achieve affiliation with desirable individuals. Additionally, advertisers propagate the message that girls should be playful and often flippant and while showing off affluence. It is interesting to contrast these dominant motivations with the fact that none of the ads targeting females used the motivations of Dominance, Inviolacy, or Harm Avoidance. Thus, the overall message targeting young females is that consuming and showing off is the way to achieve affiliation with the right people, but that they should not seek to be too powerful in their social spheres.

By contrast, ads targeting males featured little or no use of the motivations of Inviolacy, Nurture, Order, Passivity, and Succorance. This means that the most prominent motivations advertisers use to target males deal with gaining or asserting power, while the least common are those dealing with passiveness, nurturing, compassion, or interrelating with others. In recognizing this trend, it becomes clear that certain hegemonic tropes of gender roles and characteristics are at play. Females are appealed to with messages arguing that the right product will open the door to friendship and fun, but dominance, power, and caution are not part of the conversation. Conversely, males are targeted with ads that place power, control, aggressiveness, and influence as a priority, while saying little about the importance of caring for others or being passive.

These characterizations mirror results reported in a 1984 article which surveyed many studies examining active versus passive depictions of males and females in

advertisements (Macklin & Kolbe, 1984). These studies almost uniformly found that males are far more likely than females to be shown in active and dominant positions within advertisements. Conversely, females were found to be much more likely to be in positions of submission or passivity. Another study in 1994 found similar results in ads targeting children with most boys being featured on adventures or in other active positions (Smith, 1994). Roughly 70% of girls featured in ads, however, were shown at home taking part in passive domestic activities.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The results of this study support the idea that advertisers are actively targeting children with messages that are highly gender role-supportive. In what motivations they use to target males and females, and what motivations or characterizations they avoid, it is clear that they endorse certain social scripts regarding gender and ignore others. By featuring such limited messages combined with powerful persuasive arguments, it is entirely possible that children are being primed to be both enthusiastic consumers and participants in stereotypical gender roles.

Future research should examine these same motivations in contemporary television advertisements targeting adults to determine if Fowles' data from the 1970s is still valid today. By reproducing this study with adult-targeted ads, some perspective regarding the difference in perceived priorities between children and adults could be derived as well. If similar results are found in ads targeting adults, then it could be surmised that long term priming effects could be in play. If drastic differences are found then further investigations could take place to identify the cause of such a dramatic shift between those ads that are effective at targeting children and those effective at targeting

adults. It is the author's hypothesis, based on evaluation of similar research, such studies would find similar results and corroborate the perspective that constructs that are placed in positions of priority to children, are the ones that are carried into adulthood and continue to hold sway throughout one's life.

Another topic for future research should be the older appeals observed herein. While the older appeals observed in this study were defined as overt use characters or actors that were older than the perceived target demographic, the argument could be made that even some of the initial 18 social motivations might have elements that could be construed as aspirational. This is to say that some of the original 18 motivations could also be playing on a child's aspiration to look, feel, or be perceived as older or more mature. By slightly modifying some operationalized definitions these older appeals could be examined specifically.

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