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Masculinity Within Automobility Advertising

Stereotyping in general has been and still is a social issue within society to this day. There are many forms in which stereotyping takes place, even within daily life which people have become blinded to. This is key in understanding the role media and advertising plays in stereotyping within automobility and society today.

Farkas shows that “propaganda includes instruments of shaping public opinion through mass media” (Farkas, 3). Through shaping public opinion based on a certain product or target audience, the media blindly influences stereotyping in this way. This is due to stereotyping itself being caused by the fact that “when people think, they do not work with real objects, but only with their concepts, meanings, and representations” (Markina, 2). When describing stereotyping in this fashion, Markina continuously relates stereotyping to simply being an idea in relation to a real object, but not a real object in itself. In this sense, the same goes for advertising as well. Advertisements, on the cover, are simply persuasions for someone to purchase a certain object being put out by a company. This object must then have it’s own “idea,” or identity that differentiates itself from competition to be purchased by consumers. The job of an advertisement is to create and express this “idea” that makes the product different from others in order to connect with the consumer in hopes of selling the product. When these “ideas” both within stereotyping and advertising overlap, mass media’s large role in stereotyping is created and shown in multiple ways.

Within automobility, this overlap is shown within the stereotyping of picturing a certain type of person driving a certain type of car based on the car’s build. This idea is sarcastically supported within a Goliath article by Jack Sackman showing that “we’re pretty sure that you can’t buy a Dodge Grand Caravan unless you can provide proof that you have at least two kids

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under the age of 13” (Jack Sackman, *15 Things Your Choice Of Car Says About You*). In this sense, the object would be the minivan itself while the idea would be represented by a person who has multiple kids being the only person who can drive this type of car.

Masculinity is a massive stereotype often associated with strength, sexuality, and toughness. All of these qualities have also been associated with car models ever since propaganda began to take over. Through propaganda influence, these qualities have shaped what the “man car” is supposed to look like and this topic is what will be explored within the following advertisements.

Possibly the most popular form of stereotyping within masculinity is strength. Strength within masculinity and automobility each have multiple ties the same way stereotyping and propaganda had ties as well. The most popular form in automobility is shown by the “strength” of a car’s engine. As described in Figure 1, the Tornado’s “engine is the strongest Rocket ever built” (Figure 1, 1968 Oldsmobile: *Separates the men from the boys*). This ad digs into forming a stereotype for the car build in multiple different ways. In fact, this ad is one of the most obvious forms of stereotyping masculinity into a car I could find. The ad explicitly describes the car as the perfect build for a person who is looking to open their masculinity and manhood. This leaves the object, the car, with only one idea, which is that a strong man is the only person capable of driving and purchasing the car. Within doing so, the ad simultaneously closes off any other target audience despite that of a stereotypical male. This then leads to stereotyping beyond the realms of simple automobility, which will be seen in the other advertisements as well. Because only a strong man can drive the car, the media describes women, or anything but a strong man, incapable of doing so. This places limitations upon anyone besides who the advertisement is

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targeting which further reinforces the shaping of people's associations with the body of the Tornado in a stereotypical form.

The second quality of masculinity in which automobility advertisements have emphasized is sexuality. Men have been seen to characterize themselves by how many women they can actually get. In knowing this, the automobility industry has often been seen using women as bait towards buying a car. As shown in Figure 2, Dodge satirically shows a female questioning if "you really think you can get to me with that long, low, tough machine you just pulled up in" (Figure 2, Dodge, *Mother Warned me...*). Within sexualizing the woman in the advertisement comes multiple forms of stereotyping in the advertisement. With the Dodge Charger being the subject in this case, the idea presented from Dodge and gathered from a consumer standpoint is the fact that the car will bring girls to a guy who drives it. This emphasizes to consumers that first of all a defining quality of a male is his sex status on top of showing that women should only be used as sexual objects as well. In fact, as shown in *Advertising Dangers: Racial Stereotyping, Inequality, Sexualization, Panel Says*, the "portrayal of women as sex objects influences the way that many males learn to see women: as a pretty package, something to behold, but not necessarily to respect" (*Advertising Dangers: Racial Stereotyping, Inequality, Sexualization, Panel Says*). This statement directly identifies with what is being displayed by the media in this form of propaganda due to the fact that the producer is playing a large role within the "learning" of people who are seeing the ad. Males who have the car will learn that their masculinity relies on what type of car they have, and those without the Charger will be forced to question their masculinity simply due to what is learned and compared in the advertisement. On top of this, it forces women who drive this Charger into a minority group due to driving a car that is made for men who want sex, rather than sticking with a family

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car that women are mostly portrayed as driving. The way women are portrayed in automobility advertising imprints the way both males and females see themselves sexually and nonsexually simply based on the car they drive.

Lastly, toughness is a quality often seen within both automobility and within masculinity. In terms of automobility, toughness is often seen with a car that can handle damage while also pushing forward. Within advertising toughness, automobility often turns towards masculine features in order to show this sort of toughness in a car build. These features are shown through objects such as the narrator having a deep voice, solitude, and it can be shown through music in the advertisement as well. For this piece of advertisement, I wanted something more current, which uses no words to get the point across to the consumer. Within the Ford F-150 Raptor commercial, Metallica's "Enter Sandman" plays through the speakers of the truck anytime the man steps into the car. The heavy metal associated with being inside the car is used by Ford in order to make a connection between masculinity, the car, and music being played in the car. The central idea being presented by Ford surrounds the truck with toughness, while also excluding any feminine features someone could think of within the truck. The only character being shown is a man on his own, driving the truck in the middle of nowhere, blasting heavy metal in the truck. Again Ford only leaves the consumer with one thing to be learned, which is that all of those qualities pertain to a man not a woman, including the car.

After digging through each advertisement, there is something to be learned from each. Each shape of propaganda, in their own way, highlights a point which is intended to create a masculine association with the people within the piece of propaganda itself and within the consumers in which the propaganda is presented to. This forces the consumer, as Markina shows, to generate these "concepts, meanings, and representations" (Markina, 2) in only one way which

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is to see the perfect male that the advertisements target. This vision imprinted in society's head still holds true to this day for many stereotypes even outside of automobility and media control.



Figure 1. *Separates the men from the boys*



Figure 2. *Mother Warned me...*

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I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who
has not.

/s/ AJ Evanczyk