

**A Longitudinal Analysis of the Changing Roles of Gender in Advertising: A
Content Analysis of Super Bowl Commercials**

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Abstract

Although the prevalence of gender stereotypes in advertising is well established, relatively little research has examined gender stereotypes in the context of Super Bowl that is arguably the most important event in US television advertising. This study systematically examines gender representations across various product categories in Super Bowl commercials over a 20-year period (1990-2009). Our findings detect and discuss shifts in the cultural notions of gender constructed in advertising messages targeting the largest and the most demographically diverse audience in US television. The paper concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of our findings.

Keywords: Gender Portrayals, Female Stereotypes, Male Stereotypes, Super Bowl Advertising, Content Analysis, TV advertising

1. Introduction

Despite the growth of social media, television advertising is still the dominant form of advertising in the US. In 2014, advertising spending on television reached \$68.54 billion (Statista 2015) and recent research suggests that TV advertisements are those that drive consumers' brand perceptions (Jin and Lutz 2013). Within advertising in general, and television advertising in particular, no single event underscores the centrality of advertising in U.S. culture like the Super Bowl, the final game of the American football season (e.g., Kelley and Turley 2004; Kim and Cheong 2011; King 2012). Commercial time during the Super Bowl is the most expensive in the world (King 2012) and the cost of a 30-second commercial reached \$4.5 million in 2015 (Tadena 2015). Furthermore, the 2015 Super Bowl was the most watched broadcast in US TV history with an audience of 114.4 million viewers (Pallotta 2015), and recent research suggests that the audience is as interested in watching the commercials as they are in watching the game (Siltanen 2014; Tadena 2015).

Because of the importance of Super Bowl advertising to marketers and consumers alike, prior research has primarily focused on understanding the effectiveness of Super Bowl advertising (e.g., Chung and Zhao 2003; Jeong, Kim, and Zhao 2011; Newell and Wu 2003; Yelkur et al. 2013). There is limited research on the cultural notions of gender that are constructed through the ads (King 2012), and how these cultural notions of gender have evolved (or not) over time (Verhellen, Dens and Pelsmacker 2014). The importance of cultural notions of gender in advertising has been highlighted on a number of occasions (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger 2010; Gentry and Harrison 2010; Kilbourne 1999), and the shifts in gender portrayals is key to understanding potential shifts in power, in status quo and in socially accepted gender roles and trends (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger 2010). Thus, an important

gap in prior research is the lack of longitudinal studies that examine shifts in gender portrayals in Super Bowl advertising.

A longitudinal investigation of Super Bowl advertising is important in understanding changing gender stereotypes for two reasons. First, sports represent a site where gender ideologies are articulated (Messner 2010) and television coverage of sports events in general, and Super Bowl in particular, plays a crucial role in the social construction of gender roles (Buysse and Embser-Herbert 2004; Kane and Parks 1992). Second, Super Bowl is the most watched TV program in the US, with an audience characterized by a steadily increasing diversity across demographic characteristics (Monteiro 2015). Although the proliferation of cable and satellite channels has resulted in audience fragmentation, Super Bowl is the only TV program that has defied media fragmentation (Kelley and Turley 2004; Monteiro 2015). As recent data suggest, the event now attracts a 46% female audience, and more women watch the game than the Oscars, Grammys, and Emmys combined (Brazile 2014). Managerially, a longitudinal investigation will help in understanding changing ideals of gender-related behavior and will provide useful guidelines for managers' advertising decisions.

A second gap in prior research on Super Bowl advertising is the absence of a systematic and comprehensive framework that includes a variety of female and male stereotypes. A study by Messner and Montez de Oca (2005) was a first step in this direction. This study, however, examined only a limited number of stereotypes, a single product category, and was conducted at a time when the Super Bowl audience consisted primarily of men –i.e., 2002 and 2003. A comprehensive framework, however, has been developed and used in several studies investigating gender stereotypes in print (e.g., Lysonski 1985; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Zotos and

Lysonski 1994) and online advertisements (e.g., Plakoyiannaki et al. 2008) and has enabled a systematic investigation of gender stereotypes in advertising.

A third gap in prior research on Super Bowl advertising is the lack of studies that examine how specific stereotypes have changed over time and across different product categories. Several studies have suggested that female and male stereotypes in advertising vary across product categories (e.g., Ganahl, Prinsen, and Netzley 2003; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Verhellen, Dens and Pelsmacker 2014). However, none of the aforementioned studies examined if the longitudinal changes in the use of gender stereotypes vary across different product categories.

To the best of our knowledge, this research is the first to address these gaps by using a systematic framework and conducting a longitudinal study over a twenty-year period (1990-2009) to examine how the depictions of female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials have changed over time for the most advertised product categories.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the first section discusses prior research on Super Bowl advertising that is relevant to the purpose of this study, an overview of the framework used in this research, and our research questions. The second section describes the methodology used in this study. In the results section, we describe how gender stereotypes have evolved over time and across different product categories in the context of Super Bowl. The paper concludes with a summary of the findings, their theoretical and managerial contributions, and directions for future research.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Questions

2.1 Super Bowl Advertising

Given the importance of Super Bowl advertising to marketers and consumers alike, several prior studies have examined the effectiveness of Super Bowl commercials (Newell and Wu 2003; Kelley and Turley 2004; Jeong, Kim and Zhao 2011; Yelkur et al. 2013).

A great deal of research has focused on brand recall. For example, Jeong, Kim, and Zhao (2011) have examined the effects of TV clutter on brand recall in Super Bowl commercials. Their results suggest that TV clutter, such as other ads, on-air promos and TV billboards have a negative impact on the recognition and recall of the advertised brand. In another study, Chung and Zhao (2003) have examined the effects of humor on memory and attitude towards the ad. They found that the degree of perceived humour of a Super Bowl commercial is positively related to both aided and unaided brand recall and positively associated with attitude towards Super Bowl commercials. Newell, Henderson, and Wu (2001) have investigated whether arousal levels of Super Bowl viewers affect advertising recall. The results of their study suggest that programs that evoke strong emotional reactions, such as the Super Bowl, inhibit the recall of advertisements.

Prior research has also examined the effect of the placement of commercials during Super Bowl and has found lower levels of brand recall for services (Newell and Wu 2003). In a similar vein, Kelley and Turley (2004) have found higher levels of affect for products rather than services in the context of Super Bowl advertisements.

Lastly, in a series of studies, Tomkovick and his colleagues examined predictors of likeability of Super Bowl commercials (e.g., Tomkovick, Yelkur, and Christians 2001; Yelkur et al. 2013). The results of these studies suggest that humor and the amount of product information are significant predictors of ad likeability.

Specifically, there is a positive relationship between humor and Super Bowl advertisement likeability, whereas the amount of information provided in the commercials is inversely related to ad likeability. These studies have also found that the presence of children and the presence of animals significantly impacted the likeability of Super Bowl advertisements. Furthermore, commercials for food, beverages, and restaurants scored the highest on Super Bowl ad likeability (Tomkovick, Yelkur, and Christians 2001; Yelkur et al. 2013).

While there has been extensive analysis of the effectiveness of Super Bowl advertising on a variety of metrics such as advertising recall and liking, there is a limited number of studies that have examined the construction of gender identities in Super Bowl commercials and how these cultural notions of gender have evolved (or not) over time. Prior research, however, has highlighted the importance of studying gender representation in Super Bowl commercials (e.g., King 2012; Green and Van Oort 2013). A thorough examination of female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials is important for two reasons: First, sports represent a site where gender ideologies are always contested, negotiated, and articulated (Messner 2010) and television coverage of sports events plays a significant role in the social construction of gender roles and gender relations (Kane and Parks 1992; Buysse and Embser-Herbert 2004). Furthermore, for many years, sports and especially football were considered a “male preserve”, in which women were marginalized (Dundes 1978; Dunning 1986; Dunning, Birrell, and Cole 1994). American football players have been regarded as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity (Anderson and Kian 2012). As a result, in popular culture, Super Bowl has been considered as a site for the transmission and reproduction of masculinity (Green and Van Oort 2013). Prior research suggests that masculinity is the product of historical, social, and cultural

processes and a response to changing roles of femininity (Kimmel 1987). Hence, an examination of gender representation in advertisements requires the consideration of both female and male stereotypes (Hanke 1990).

Second, Super Bowl has evolved into the most watched broadcast in U.S. television and the only event that defies media fragmentation (Kelley and Turley 2004; Monteiro 2015). The event has now reached a 46% female audience (Brazile 2014). Given the changing nature of the demographics of the Super Bowl audience, and specifically the increasing number of women who watch the event, a longitudinal investigation of female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials is timely.

In the following section, we review the studies that have examined gender stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials and identify a series of issues that are yet to be addressed.

2.2 Gender Stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials

One of the early studies that examined gender representations in Super Bowl commercials was conducted by Drowniany (2003). In this longitudinal study - from 1989 to 2002 -, she reports an overrepresentation of men compared to women in Super Bowl commercials. Out of the 585 commercials with gender stereotypes analysed in her study, 349 commercials portrayed a male stereotype, while only 94 commercials featured a female stereotype. In addition to the overrepresentation of men in the commercials, Drowniany (2003) has noted the persistence of traditional stereotypes such as “men as voices of authority.”

In a more recent study, King (2012) presented a comparative content analysis of Super Bowl commercials over a ten-year period. Specifically, she examined how

gender and race are depicted in Super Bowl commercials and how these depictions have changed over time. The results of this study show that women continue to be underrepresented. However, women seemed to gain ground since they are depicted more and more frequently in business settings and as frequently as men in promoting high-value products.

Although these two studies offer important insights on gender representations in Super Bowl commercials, they focus on the frequency with which women and men are depicted and do not use a systematic and comprehensive framework that incorporates a variety of female and male stereotypes. A comprehensive framework, however, has been developed and extensively used in prior research on gender representations in print and online advertisements and can provide valuable insights on the type of female and male stereotypes used in Super Bowl commercials (e.g., Lysonski 1985; Plakoyiannaki et al. 2008; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Tsihla and Zotos 2015; Zotos and Lysonski 1994). Furthermore, the studies on gender stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials discussed above do not examine how gender representations may vary across product categories, although prior research has suggested that gender stereotypes are likely to vary across product categories (e.g., Ganahl, Prinsen, and Netzley 2003; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Verhellen, Dens and Pelsmacker 2014).

An attempt in this direction is a study by Messner and Montez de Oca (2005) that examined beer and liquor advertisements in Super Bowl commercials and *Sports Illustrated* advertisements in a two-year period – i.e., 2002-2003- to explore tropes of masculinity that prevail in these ads. The results of their research show that male portrayals in beer and liquor Super Bowl ads are situated within a larger historical context, where social changes have led to shifting patterns in male representations in

Super Bowl advertisements, such as the depiction of men as losers. Building on this study, Green and Van Oort (2013) examined the changing construction of masculine identities in Super Bowl commercials during the 2010 Super Bowl. Their findings suggest that the loser depiction is still present, but instead of being lovable and happy, he is depicted as pitiful and stupid.

Although these two studies examine various types of female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials, they focus on a single product category –i.e., beer and liquor- (Messner and Montez de Oca 2005) or a very limited number of commercials –i.e., three commercials – (Green and Van Oort 2013). Further, their analysis is limited to a subset of the gender stereotypes that have been identified in the broader literature.

In sum, although these studies offer important insights on gender representations in Super Bowl commercials, one can highlight a number of issues that merit further investigation:

- a) The need for longitudinal studies that will allow us to understand the evolution of gender stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials over time.
- b) The need for a systematic and comprehensive framework that will identify various types of male and female stereotypes.
- c) The need to investigate how female and male stereotypes vary across product categories.

In the present study, we address these gaps by building on prior research on gender stereotypes in print and television advertisements.

2.3 Framework for Gender Stereotypes in Advertising and Research Questions

Researchers have studied gender stereotypes in advertising since the early 1970's (e.g., Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976; Courtney and Lockeretz 1971) with an emphasis on the portrayals of women (Gentry and Harrison 2010). Initially, female stereotypes focused on women's working roles (Courtney and Lockeretz 1971) but they evolved over the years to include a variety of representations. Male stereotypes were studied systematically for the first time in a study by Lysonski (1985).

Our study adopts a framework that has identified a comprehensive list of female and male stereotypes and has been extensively used in prior research to examine gender stereotypes in print advertisements (e.g., Lysonski 1985; Zotos and Lysonski 1994; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Tsihla and Zotos 2015) and online advertisements (Plakoyiannaki et al. 2008). The stereotype of the "man as loser" was added to the pre-existing framework given its important role in prior research on gender stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials (Green and Van Oort 2013; Messner and Montez de Oca 2005). Tables 1 and 2 list the stereotypes examined in the present research.

[Place Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Several important findings have emerged from this framework and help us to understand differences in gender stereotypes. Research on female stereotypes in advertising (Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia 1977; Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Zotos and Tsihla 2014) suggests that the images of women have changed very modestly over time. Advertisers have been largely portraying women in traditional roles (Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz 1993), in non-working roles, and as having limited purchasing power. Women are portrayed mainly

in decorative non-functional capacities and are predominantly shown as housewives or concerned with their physical attractiveness (Lysonski 1985). Sexism is prevailing not only in traditional media (Theodoridis et al. 2013; Zimmerman and Dahlberg 2008) but also in the context of online advertisements (Plakoyiannaki et al. 2008).

The framework also identifies a variety of male stereotypes and helps us to gain insights in the depiction of male stereotypes. For example, male stereotypes in advertising portray men as “authority figures”, using non-domestic products outside of the home (Knoll, Eisend and Steinhagen 2011). The theme of “authority figure” seems to prevail in early studies in print advertisements (Lysonski 1983; 1985). Furthermore there is a focus on the occupational roles of men (Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz 1993; Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund 1995; Wolheter and Lammers 1980) and emphasis is given on physical characteristics (Kolbe and Albanese 1996). Overall, men are portrayed as authoritative and independent in both professional and recreational roles (Furnham and Mak 1999; Eisend 2010). Masculinity is represented via discourses concerning physical appearance (strength), behaviors (violent, assertive), and occupations (subordination of women) (Ricciardelli, Clow, and White 2010). Recent studies in the US report that men are increasingly portrayed in decorative roles (Paek, Nelson, and Vilela 2011) and in suggestive poses (Mager and Helgeson 2011).

Building on prior research on gender stereotypes, we investigate the various types of female and male stereotypes depicted in Super Bowl commercials and how these stereotypes vary across products categories. We consider a twenty-year period (1990-2009), ten years before and ten years after the millennium. Our goal is to detect shifts in the cultural notions of gender constructed in advertising messages targeting the

largest and the most demographically diverse TV audience in US television. Our research questions are formulated as follows:

RQ1: How do female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl advertisements before the millennium (1990-1999) compare with those after the millennium (2000-2009)?

RQ2: Have female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl advertisements changed before and after the millennium for any of the examined product categories?

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample of Super Bowl Commercials

A content analysis approach was adopted as it is widely accepted for the scientific, quantitative, and generalizable analysis of advertising messages (Kassarjian 1977). The primary strength of content analysis is that it provides a concise and replicable coding scheme with explicit coding rules and allows for systematic coding and analysis (Treadwell 2014). Furthermore, content analysis is a suitable method for reflecting cultural patterns of societies and describe trends in advertising content (Weber 1990), and as recent research suggests, a useful tool for investigating gender roles in advertising (Fields, Swan, and Kloos 2010; Neuendorf 2011). In addition, content analysis was the method of investigation in prior research on gender stereotypes (e.g., Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Zotos and Lysonski 1994).

The Super Bowl commercials were content-analysed for two time periods, 1990-1999 and 2000-2009. These Super Bowl commercials were retrieved from Adland, an independent organization that hosts the world's largest collection of Super Bowl ads

(Adland 2014). At the beginning of this research, we identified several product categories based on prior research in the area (e.g., Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009) and the types of product categories that were featured in the Super Bowl commercials. We adopted Kim, Cheong, and Kim's (2012) approach and excluded movie trailers and network show promos from our sample since they reflect stereotypes conveyed by the films and TV programs and their analysis has little to add to our understanding of cultural changes. Our sample consists of the five most advertised categories. The ads in these five product categories accounted for 74% of the total number of ads retrieved. The product categories selected for this study are: (1) Food and drinks (non-alcoholic), (2), Alcoholic beverages, (3) Services, (4) Auto and related products, and (5) Financial Services. Our sample consisted of a total of 447 commercials that included at least one female or/and a male stereotype. Of the 447 commercials, 408 commercials featured a male stereotype and 215 featured a female stereotype.

3.2 Coding Procedure

The content analysis instrument used in this study is based on the typologies of gender stereotypes described and validated by prior studies (Lyonski 1985; Zotos and Lyonski 1994; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009). The coders were trained to content analyse the commercials and assign them into specific categories of analysis and product categories. All coders received a list of all gender stereotypes with their definitions, a list with all product categories, and written instructions on how to perform the categorization procedure. Prior to the main study each coder was trained on a sample of 200 non Super Bowl commercials to ensure the reliability of the coding process. In the main study, each one of the coders analysed approximately 210 commercials. Each commercial was analysed by two coders (a male and a female).

The coders worked independently in order to determine whether each commercial involved one or more gender stereotypes. Each coder watched each commercial twice. Inter-coder agreement was estimated based on Cohen's conditional Kappa (Cohen 1960). Inter-coder reliability coefficients ranged between 80% and 89%. Discrepancies amongst the coders were resolved by the authors. Female and male stereotypes were coded as dichotomous variables with values 0 (absence of the stereotype) or 1 (presence of the stereotype). Because the variables were binary in nature, a series of chi-square tests were conducted to examine whether the proportions of female and male stereotypes have changed before vs. after the millennium. A Fisher's exact test of independence was used instead of a chi-square test when a cell's expected value was less than five.

4. Results and Discussion

Our main objective was to investigate how the depiction of female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials has changed before vs. after the millennium and how these changes vary across different product categories. Although not predicted by our research questions, our data show that male stereotypes are more frequently used than female stereotypes in both time periods. Specifically, 90% male vs. 47% female stereotypes were used in 1990-1999 and 92% male vs. 49% female stereotypes were used in 2000-2009 (Table 3). These findings are consistent with prior studies in Super Bowl advertising (Drewniany 2003; King 2012) that pointed out the underrepresentation of women in Super Bowl advertisements. It appears that Super Bowl is still considered to be a male territory (Duncan and Hasbrook 2002), despite the fact that female Super Bowl viewership has significantly increased in the

last decade (Nielsen 2009). In the section below we discuss our findings as they apply to our research questions.

[Place Table 3 about here]

4.1 Female Stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials: Comparing 1990-1999 to 2000-2009

In our study, an analysis of female stereotypes shows that before the millennium (1990-1999) women were mainly portrayed as “career-oriented” (23%), as being equal to men -“neutral” stereotype- (17.3%), and as “women in non-traditional activities” (16.1%). The same stereotypes seem to prevail after the millennium (2000-2009) (Table 4). Specifically, women are depicted “in non-traditional activities” (28.9%), as being equal to men –i.e., “neutral” stereotype- (21.9%), or as “career-oriented” (15.6%).

Furthermore, the results show that the “women in non-traditional activities” stereotype significantly increased after the millennium (16.1% before vs. 28.9% after the millennium; $X^2 = 4.70$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). For instance, in a Super Bowl commercial (2006) for Michelob Ultra Amber, a group of male and female friends play a game of touch football, a typically male game. A young woman is trying to get the ball into the touchdown zone, when one of the men lays a monster hit on her. However, hours later, she takes her revenge by hitting him back, while he is having a beer with a male friend. The commercial clearly portrays the woman as the winner. Since the early 2000s, several commercials similar to this one have appeared during Super Bowl, indicating a shift from traditional representations of women. In contrast, the

“housewife” stereotype showed a marginally significant decrease from 11.5% before the millennium to 5.5% after the millennium ($X^2 = 2.58$, $df = 1$, $p < .1$).

[Place Table 4 about here]

These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that women are more likely to be depicted in non-traditional roles in advertisements featured in magazines (Tsiehla and Zotos 2015; Zotos and Lysonski 1994) and websites (Plakoyiannaki et al. 2008) targeting a male audience. One could also suggest that the observed changes in the depiction of women coincide with NFL’s increasing focus on women as sports fans, fostering a new culture for women in Super Bowl (Nielsen 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the definition of “non-traditional” has its roots in the early studies of gender stereotypes (Lysonski 1983, 1985) and referred to women engaged in activities outside the home or women engaged in sports, behaviors that in the early 1980s were not considered to be the norm for women. Our results also suggest that the “voice of authority” stereotype (i.e., women as experts) shows a marginally significant decrease, from 10.4% before the millennium to 4.7% after the millennium ($X^2 = 2.55$, $df = 1$, $p < .1$). This finding may be due to the gradual reduction in the use of experts in Super Bowl advertisements in recent years (Hatzithomas, Outra, and Zotos 2010).

4.2 Male Stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials: Comparing 1990-1999 to 2000-2009

An analysis of male stereotypes shows a shift in the depiction of men as authority figures. Specifically, our results show that the most frequently used male stereotypes,

in both time periods examined in this study, were “authority figure” (30.5% before vs. 16.6% after the millennium), “career-oriented” (23.4% before vs. 21.6% after the millennium), and “activities and life outside the home” (15.6% before vs. 20.7% after the millennium) (Table 5). They reflect traditional masculine images that have been used for a long time in Super Bowl advertising (Nelson and Rowe 1994). The results are consistent with prior research in gender stereotypes in print advertising that has shown that men are primarily portrayed as authority figures (Lysonski 1983), as career-oriented, and as being involved in outdoor activities (Lysonski 1985; Zotos and Lysonski 1994). It is also consistent with more recent research suggesting that although male roles have significantly changed since the millennium, advertising continues to portray men in their traditional stereotypical roles (Gentry and Harrison 2010).

It is interesting, however, to note a statistically significant decrease in the representation of men as “authority figures”, from 30.5% before to 16.6% after the millennium ($X^2 = 11.06$, $df = 1$, $p < .005$). It seems that despite the prevalence of traditional stereotypical roles, men lose their status as authority figure. This finding is consistent with recent research that highlights the diminishing power of men in several Super Bowl commercials in recent years (Green and Van Oort, 2013).

[Place Table 5 about here]

4.3 Female Stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials per Product Category: Comparing 1990-1999 to 2000-2009

Table 6 displays the percentages of female stereotypes by product category in the two time periods examined in this study.

[Place Table 6 about here]

The stereotype of “dependency” declined in most product categories after the millennium. In the alcoholic beverages category, the decrease was marginally significant (25% before vs. 3.1% after the millennium; $p < .1$, Fisher’s exact test). In contrast, the theme of “women in non-traditional activities” increased in all product categories. In the auto and related products category, there was a marginally significant increase (15.4% before vs. 47.1% after the millennium; $p = .1$, Fisher’s exact test). This may be attributed to the growing role and participation of women in decision-making surrounding non-domestic product categories such as auto and related products. For instance, the target audience of many automobile Super Bowl commercials in recent years was the so-called soccer mom (Ghizoni 2014; Carter 2013), a North American middle-class suburban woman who drives an SUV or a mini-van and spends a great deal of her time transporting her children to different sporting activities (MacFarquhar 1996).

4.4 Male Stereotypes in Super Bowl Commercials per Product Category: Comparing 1990-1999 to 2000-2009

Table 7 displays the percentages of male stereotypes by product category in the two time periods examined in this study.

[Place Table 7 about here]

The “authority figure” theme significantly decreased in both the food and drinks category (from 45.2% before to 20.3% after the millennium; $X^2 = 9.66$, $df = 1$, $p < .005$) and the alcoholic beverages category (26.5% before vs. 11.1% after the millennium; $X^2 = 4.04$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). This finding is consistent with earlier research suggesting that before the millennium several celebrities starred in Super Bowl commercials (Drewniani 2003). In this study, this was mainly apparent in the food and drinks and the alcoholic beverages categories, with brands such as Pepsi Diet (with Shaquille O’Neal) and Doritos (with Jay Leno) using celebrity endorsements in their Super Bowl commercials.

Our results also show a marginally significant decrease in the “career-oriented” theme in the auto and related products category (28% before v. 7.1% after the millennium; $p = .1$, Fisher’s exact test). Since the millennium, men have been often depicted driving cars through urban and rural landscapes, shifting the focus from a career-oriented environment to leisure oriented activities and life outside the home (Thompson 2006). Another marginally significant decrease was observed in the theme of “frustrated male” in the alcoholic beverages category (5.9% before vs. 0% after the millennium; $p = .1$, Fisher’s exact test).

In contrast, the representation of men in “activities and life outside the home” significantly increased in the food and drinks category (11.3% before vs. 24.3% after the millennium; $X^2 = 3.82$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). After the millennium many advertisements in the category of food and drinks portrayed “average Americans” engaging in activities outside the home. For instance, a 2009 Coca Cola Super Bowl commercial featured a male picnicker taking a nap in a park on a sunny day (Zmuda 2009). These two findings are consistent with recent research that suggests that in recent years,

men's frustration with the corporate world is only hinted at and contrasted with the portrayal of men in activities outside the home (Green and Van Oort 2013).

Although we did not find any changing pattern over time it is interesting to point out that the stereotype of "man as loser" appeared with relatively high frequency especially in the commercials in the alcoholic beverages category. As stated earlier, this stereotype was not accounted for in the initial typology introduced by Lysonski (1985) and adopted by subsequent studies (e.g., Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Zotos and Lysonski 1994). However, previous studies in gender stereotypes in Super Bowl have extensively discussed the presence of men as losers, behaving stupidly and being publicly humiliated (Green and Van Oort 2013; Gulas, McKeage, and Weinberger 2013; Messner and Montez de Oca 2005).

5. Conclusions and Implications

Despite ample evidence on the importance of studying gender representations in advertising (e.g., Eisend 2010), there has been limited research on gender representation in Super Bowl commercials (e.g., King 2012). The present study attempts to fill this gap by providing a longitudinal investigation of gender stereotypes based on a systematic and comprehensive framework that has been used in several studies investigating gender stereotypes (e.g., Lysonski 1985; Mitchell and Taylor 1990; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Zotos and Lysonski 1994). Although prior research has highlighted the need for a systematic framework that includes a variety of gender roles when examining gender stereotypes in advertising (Zotos and Tsihla 2014), such a systematic approach is virtually non-existent in Super Bowl studies examining gender stereotypes. More specifically, this study investigates the types of female and male stereotypes depicted in Super Bowl commercials and how

these stereotypes vary across product categories over a 20-year period. Our goal was to detect shifts in the cultural notions of gender constructed in advertising messages targeting the largest and the most demographically diverse TV audience in US television.

Consistent with previous studies (Drewniany 2003; King 2012), we found that women are underrepresented in Super Bowl commercials. Specifically, male stereotypes are more frequently used than female stereotypes in both time periods. Despite the fact that female Super Bowl viewership has significantly increased in the last decade (Nielsen 2009), it appears that Super Bowl is still considered, by advertisers, to be a male territory. Our results did identify shifts in the representation of female and male stereotypes that have occurred after the millennium. Both female and male stereotypes are becoming less traditional and begin to shift away from traditional patriarchal norms towards a somewhat more egalitarian depiction.

The first research question of the present study compared female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl advertisements before the millennium (1990-1999) with those after the millennium (2000-2009). The findings indicate that, after the millennium, women are more frequently represented in “non-traditional activities”. These changes coincide with NFL’s increasing focus on women as sports fans (Nielsen 2009). The findings also show that the portrayal of men as “figures of authority” has significantly decreased after the millennium. This sharp reduction is consistent with the loss of male dominance in family decisions and in several professional areas in American society (Peterson 2012).

A second research question examined by the present study is whether female and male stereotypes in Super Bowl advertisements have changed over time across five major product categories. Significant changes are detected in three out of five product

categories that were examined; namely in food and drinks, alcoholic beverages and auto and related products. Both alcoholic beverages and auto and related products are considered to be traditionally “male” product categories. According to Brennan (2009), however, when launching new products in these categories, companies develop advertising campaigns targeting women, because of their growing purchasing power. The findings of the present study are consistent with this approach. After the millennium, in the commercials of alcoholic beverages, women are depicted less often as “dependent” upon men, while men are portrayed less frequently as “authority figures”. In addition, in the commercials of auto and related products, women are more often depicted as involved in “non-traditional activities”, while men are less frequently portrayed as “career-oriented”. In the food and drinks product category, after the millennium, men are more frequently portrayed in “activities and life outside the home” and less frequently portrayed as “authority figures”.

The study findings have important implications for academic researchers and advertisers. First, the present study provides a longitudinal investigation of gender stereotypes across product categories in Super Bowl commercials. To the best of our knowledge, this is the longest time period of systematic monitoring of gender stereotypes in Super Bowl commercials recorded so far. As advertisements in general and Super Bowl advertisements in particular are slow in adapting to social changes, a longitudinal approach is necessary in order to identify how cultural notions of gender are constructed in Super Bowl commercials (e.g., King 2012) and how these cultural notions of gender have evolved (or not) over time (Verhellen, Dens and Pelsmacker 2014).

Second, this research investigates gender stereotypes across five product categories over a twenty-year period. Although prior research suggested that gender

stereotypes do vary across product categories (e.g., Ganahl, Prinsen, and Netzley 2003; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009; Verhellen, Dens and Pelsmacker 2014), prior research on Super Bowl commercials has neglected to examine whether gender stereotypes vary across different product categories. Our results suggest that shifts in gender stereotypes are more likely to occur in certain product categories and highlight the importance of considering several product categories over several years in order to identify shifts in the cultural notions of gender in Super Bowl advertising.

Given the large expense and the magnitude of impact of Super Bowl commercials, understanding shifts in gender representation is critical for advertisers. Our results suggest that advertisers might lag in terms of responding to the changing audience mix as well as to cultural trends. Understanding shifts in gender representation will enable advertisers to better adapt to the current environment and create more effective advertising messages (Gentry and Harrison 2010, Weinberger, Gulas and Weinberger 2015). Advertisers should also take into consideration the product context since, as our result suggest, shifts in gender portrayals vary across product categories.

6. Future Research Directions

This study provides us with important insights into gender representations across product categories in Super Bowl commercials and suggests several avenues for future research. First, future research could examine additional product categories and a longer time period. This study focused on the most advertised product categories in a 20-year period. It is however possible that other product categories become more prominent in a different time frame. Second, Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) refer to consumer choice between hedonic and utilitarian products indicating that hedonic

products might be of greater value than utilitarian products when making forfeiture choices. Extending prior research (Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009), it would be interesting to examine whether the hedonic or utilitarian nature of a product affects gender representation in Super Bowl commercials. Third, future research could enhance the existing framework by refining the definitions of the existing gender stereotypes and perhaps the addition of new stereotypes, in order to address changes in the current socioeconomic and cultural environment. Fourth, it would be interesting to replicate this study in the context of other major sports events that attract worldwide attention such as the Olympics, in order to identify potential differences in gender representations in TV advertising.

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Tables

Table 1: Categories for Female Stereotypes*

Stereotypes	Description
Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on male's protection • In need of reassurance • Making unimportant decisions
Housewife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's place is in the home • Primary role is to be a good wife • Concerned with tasks of housekeeping
Women concerned with physical attractiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To appear more appealing (e.g. youthful) • Concerned with cosmetics and jewelry products • Concerned with fashion
Women as sex objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex is related to product • Sex is unrelated to product
Women in non-traditional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in activities outside the home (e.g. buying a car) • Engaged in sports (e.g. golf, tennis, skiing, swimming)
Career-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional occupations • Entertainer • Non-Professional (e.g. clerical, bank teller) • Blue Collar
Voice of authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expert
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman shown as equal to man
None of the above categories	
*Adapted from Lysonski (1985) and Zotos and Lysonski (1994)	

Table 2: Categories for Male Stereotypes*	
Stereotypes	Description
The theme of sex appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macho man (e.g. physical strength, prowess, “cool”) • Womanizer (e.g. physical attractive, active seeker)
Dominant over women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man protects woman • Man is in control • Man offers reassurance to woman
Authority figure (product representative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the expertise (i.e. the expert) • Celebrity • Voice of authority
Family man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities at home • Conventional activities
Frustrated male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrated in work • Frustrated in life
Activities and life outside the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned about his own needs • Shown in activities and sports (e.g. golf, hunting) • Seeking gratification outside the home
Career-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional career orientation
Non-traditional role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing performing non-traditional activities (e.g. washing dishes, changing baby’s clothes)
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man shown as equal to woman
None of the above categories	
* Adapted from Lysonski (1985) and Zotos and Lysonski (1994)	

Table 3: Sample Description			
	1990-1999	2000-2009	Total
Number of ads including at least one female or male stereotype in all five product categories	186	261	447
Number of female stereotypes	87 (47%)	128 (49%)	215
Number of male stereotypes	167 (90%)	241 (92%)	408

Table 4: Female Stereotypes Across Years		
Female Stereotypes	1990-1999 % N=87	2000-2009 % N=128
1. Dependency	5.7	2.3
2. Housewife	11.5	5.5*
3. Women concerned with physical attractiveness	3.4	4.7
4. Women as sex objects	8.0	11.7
5. Women in non-traditional activities	16.1	28.9**
6. Career-oriented	23.0	15.6
7. Voice of authority	10.4	4.7*
8. Neutral	17.3	21.9
9. None	4.6	4.7
<i>*p<.1, **p<.05</i>		

Table 5: Male Stereotypes Across Years		
Male Stereotypes	1990-1999 % N=167	2000-2009 % N=241
1. The theme of sex appeal	4.8	6.6
2. Dominant over women	1.2	2.5
3. Authority figure	30.5	16.6***
4. Family man	3.6	4.6
5. Frustrated male	3.6	1.7
6. Activities and life outside the home	15.6	20.7
7. Career-oriented	23.4	21.6
8. Non-traditional role	0	0.8
9. Man as loser	7.8	10.0
10. Neutral	9.0	11.6
11. None	.6	3.3
*** $p < .005$		

Table 6: Female Stereotypes Across Years and Product Categories

Female Stereotypes	Food & Drinks		Alcoholic Beverages		Services		Auto & Related Products		Financial Services	
	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009
	% N=35	% N=40	% N=8	% N=31	% N=19	% N=16	% N=13	% N=17	% N=12	% N=24
1. Dependency	5.7	0	25.0	3.1*	0	0	0	5.9	8.3	4.2
2. Housewife	5.7	2.5	0	3.2	26.3	6.2	7.7	11.8	16.7	8.3
3. Women concerned with physical attractiveness	2.9	7.5	0	6.5	5.3	6.2	7.7	0	0	0
4. Women as sex objects	14.3	15.0	0	16.1	0	12.5	0	5.9	16.7	4.2
5. Women in non- traditional activities	17.1	22.5	25.0	29.0	10.5	12.5	15.4	47.1*	16.7	37.5
6. Career-oriented	25.7	15.0	12.5	6.5	36.8	37.5	15.4	5.9	8.3	20.8
7. Voice of authority	17.1	15.0	0	0	0	0	15.4	0	8.3	0
8. Neutral	11.4	22.5	25.0	22.6	15.8	25.0	30.8	17.6	16.7	20.8
9. None	0	0	12.5	12.9	5.3	0	7.7	5.9	8.3	4.2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* $p < .1$

Table 7: Male Stereotypes Across Years and Product Categories

Male Stereotypes	Food & Drinks		Alcoholic Beverages		Services		Auto & Related Products		Financial Services	
	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009	1990-1999	2000-2009
	% N=62	% N=74	% N=34	% N=72	% N=24	% N=37	% N=25	% N=28	% N=22	% N=30
1. The theme of sex appeal	3.2	5.4	5.9	5.6	0	2.7	8.0	7.1	9.1	16.7
2. Dominant over women	0	2.7	2.9	4.2	0	0	0	3.6	4.5	0
3. Authority figure	45.2	20.3***	26.5	11.1**	12.5	18.9	24.0	14.3	22.7	20.0
4. Family man	4.8	4.1	0	2.8	8.3	5.4	0	10.7	4.5	3.3
5. Frustrated male	0	0	5.9	0*	4.2	5.4	4.0	0	9.1	6.7
6. Activities and life outside the home	11.3	24.3**	20.6	22.2	16.7	13.5	16.0	28.6	18.2	10.0
7. Career-oriented	19.4	24.3	17.6	20.8	45.8	29.7	28.0	7.1*	13.6	20.0
8. Non-traditional role	0	0	0	0	0	2.7	0	0	0	3.3
9. Man as loser	8.1	5.4	14.7	19.4	0	2.7	4.0	14.3	9.1	3.3
10. Neutral	6.5	12.2	5.9	9.7	12.5	10.8	16.0	10.7	9.1	16.7
11. None	1.6	1.4	0	4.2	0	8.1	0	3.6	0	0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .005$