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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes a series of advertisements that depict men as lower forms of animals, and it interprets the ways in which male viewers may resist or internalize such depictions in order to construct or reconsider their own sense of self. Specifically, the depiction of men as wolves serves as a metaphor that destabilizes masculine subjectivity. The man as wolf may be predatory, but he is isolated from community; advertising seeks to tame his wilder urges. Survival is linked to obedience which, from an advertising perspective, means the way back into community is through the acquisition of goods.

Over the past twenty-five years there has been a significant amount of research regarding the analysis of gender in advertising focused mainly on the analysis of women in magazine advertisements (Kolbe and Albanese 1996). Little research, however, has been accomplished in the area of masculine gender identity in advertising; in particular, there is little research on masculine gender identity and television advertising (Elliot and Elliot, 2005). Despite the lack of research regarding the analysis of television advertising within an extended definition of normative constructions of masculine gender identity, the medium of television remains one of the largest areas of expenditure for advertising budgets.

There may be practical reasons for avoiding the study of television commercials as television is a more dynamic medium than print which includes speech, music, sounds, motion, time and special representation (Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver 2004). Additionally over the years television commercials have become increasingly abstruse, relying heavily on image and metaphor. “Visual arrangements are such that the advertised goods often drop into the background while highly abstract connections are made between the models, a lifestyle and the brand” (Schroeder and Zwick 2004, 25). The signs within television advertising have, perhaps, become increasingly more difficult and complex for consumers to interpret, as the surface of an advertisement gives way to a more symbolic representation that summons forth variability in consumer interpretation, including the possibility that some advertisements may be rendered meaningless with regard to product information they may be attempting to convey. Advertisers and researchers increasingly acknowledge the polysemic nature of advertising, however, research needs to look more closely at the variability of meanings that may or may not be present for an
individual within a target audience that is multifarious in the ways in which gender identity is constructed. In other words, how do television commercials re-presents masculine gender identity to individuals within a targeted audience? And, how might viewers, given the multiple ways in which gender identity may be constructed, likely interpret if at all a given advertisement?

The Human as Animal: Advertising’s Appeal to the Primitivist

The use of primitivism—humanized animals as an advertising technique has its roots in the emergence of 19th century consumer culture. It was during the 1880s that historian Jackson Lears says advertisements were full of humanized animals. Lears (1994) points out that patent medicine advertising was steeped in a primitivist appeal to nature. The aim of those advertisements was to elicit amusement through incongruity (a rhetorical technique still in use today), but also from a Darwinian perspective, many people at that time may have been anxious about the line that separated humans from beasts. Advertisements of that time period, therefore, may have served among other purposes to remind consumers of the difference between “them” and “us.” Similar concern for the “wild beast” that existed inside of men was expressed in other forms of popular culture in the early part of the twentieth century. The Tarzan stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, for example, served as an antidote to “humiliations of a frustrated, insignificant white-collar worker” (Kasson 2001, 159). Such yearnings were present in advertisements that spoke directly to readers concerned about their inadequacy, in particular the loss of manhood. Advertisements for correspondence courses, for example, emphasized the need and reflected a desire to get ahead among white male Protestants. “Such advertisements offered opportunities to shore up their social position against otherness: African Americans, agrarian and industrial radicals, feminists, socialists, and anarchists” (Kasson 2001, 179).

Schroeder and Zwick maintain that “Contemporary ads that depict men’s bodies in compelling and provocative ways suggest a change in the limits posited by the traditional male gaze of advertising” (2004, 25). The depiction of men as wolves—the focus of my research is rooted in a larger subset within advertising; the use of anthropomorphized animals. This technique operates on a continuum in which at one end are domestic animals, like dogs and cats (like us) and at the other, cows and pigs (unlike us). Such a construct begins in children’s literature which we utilize in order to “teach them (children) to be good humans” (Hirschman 1994, 625). It is somewhat paradoxical to move forward to the current manifestation that is the subject of my research wherein differences between humans and “lower” animals are diminished in order to show similarities between “them” (lower animals) and “us.” Within such depictions advertisers may inadvertently offer a critique of middle-class white life and the world of work and social responsibility (Hirschman 1985, 1994; Stern 1993, 1996; Stern and Schroeder 1993). While much has been written about primitivism in art, little has been written about pop primitivism outside of the world of popular music (White 2002). My aim here is to collect evidence to demonstrate the existence of this phenomenon as part
of a pattern in contemporary advertising to contain and control masculine identity.

An Advertising Metaphor: Man is Wolf

Among the various roles animals play in the lives of humans is that of an extension of the “consumer’s self” (Hirschman 1994, 618). Animal behaviors and traits may be absorbed into the individual; however, as Hirschman points out, “animals are permitted more leeway in their behavior” (1994, 618). In this way the predatory wolf may be a projection of the masculine individual constrained by social conventions, but granted the opportunity within a television commercial to behave in an otherwise uncivilized manner. In this way, the advertisement serves as a kind of fantasy that allows “man’s” wild nature to come out. With regard to masculinity, Patterson and Elliot argue that some contemporary advertising images “invert” the male gaze: “Men are increasingly encouraged to view their own bodies as sites of identity management: ‘consumers’ bodies are the products of labor (body work) that necessitates consumption and the use of consumer goods, and simultaneously, through visualization, their bodies act as advertisements for such labor” (2002, 234). With regard to the man is wolf metaphor, Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver reported on an in-depth analysis of consumer interpretations of a Chanel No. 5 perfume commercial based on the children’s tale Little Red Riding Hood. “From the allegorical fairy tale, we know that Red Riding Hood was being warned of the dangers of predatory men (‘a fate worse than death’) and that the wolf represented the man” (Salda 1995, in Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver 2004). The metaphor represents the isolated solitary man who lacks the social skills (domestication) and is relegated to the outside (unsafe). The rhetorical question is raised: How can an animal of the outside (a wolf), who may be dangerous or faced with danger from other predators achieve, “inside status” (Hirschman 1994, 627)?

In line with Patterson and Elliot’s position, Kimmel (1996) pointed out that masculinity proceeds from men’s bodies. Traditionally, in Western culture men were judged based on their physical strength, athletic ability, and the power to which I earlier referred. The eroticized male, for example, is a newer masculine position in which the male is put on display (Rohlinger 2002). Man as wolf is, however, a curious form of presentational self in which the focal point is a male or metaphorical representation thereof in nature isolated from the camaraderie of other humans. Rohlinger claimed, regarding the depiction of the eroticized male, that “because the man’s body is emphasized in the image, the setting is typically plain, blurred, or otherwise unclear” (2002, 67). When the male is depicted as a wolf, as in the advertisements discussed in this research, often parts of the male (genitalia, in particular) may be obscured or overemphasized. This may be a representation of what Susan Faludi (1999) described in her book Stiffed as “incomplete masculinity.” This she pegs to the loss of jobs and men’s diminished ability to play the traditional role of family breadwinner. Faludi’s description echoes Erhenreich’s (1984) earlier work that traces the long-term changes in masculine identity.

When Faludi began writing her book, the U.S. economy was in a recession. She
claimed that traditional men feel emasculated when their lives as wage earners are threatened. But she found that as the economy improved, “the men I was talking to were still stricken with a sense that they had been betrayed, and that the betrayal went much deeper than a paycheck” (in Halpern 1999). This is because:

Where we once lived in a society in which men in particular participated by being useful in public life, we now are surrounded by a culture that encourages people to play almost no functional public roles, only decorative or consumer ones. Ornamental culture has no such counterparts (Faludi 1999, 35).

Patterson and Elliot maintain that inverting the male gaze provokes psychological reflection: “when the gaze is turned on itself, men are more likely to move through a range of responses such as rejection, identification and desire” (2002, 241), although Schroeder and Zwick counter that the gaze has “expanded, rather than inverted” (2004, 26).

This discussion raises questions about the images that are present within television advertisements that depict men as wolves. How do these images work between traditional or normative views of masculinity and newer views, such is the case with eroticized males? What are the psychological implications of such images as they are repeatedly presented to male viewers of television commercials? What are the socio-cultural implications within the broader framework of masculine identity operating within Western culture and society? The current literature does not provide a clear understanding of the ways in which the images conveyed and the meanings individuals make of them interact to help us understand the broader question regarding the work advertising does in the culture and the work we do with it. In the following section, I will analyze the content of commercials that depict men as wolves, and I will follow with a discussion of the varying ways in which males might respond to the repetition of such images within the context of their gender wounding and trauma.

**METHODOLOGY**

The depiction of men as wolves will be examined through a purposive selection of seventeen television commercials that aired in the United States and Great Britain from 1996 to 2005. A web-based advertising database (ad-rag.com) was utilized with appropriate search terms (wolf, wolves, wolfman, wolfboy, Big Bad Wolf, Red Riding Hood) were employed to identify television commercials that depict the phenomenon under study. Additionally this researcher drew on examples viewed by keeping an eye open to this phenomenon. This is not a representative sample, and therefore no claim is made regarding generalizations within the analysis. These examples are meant to be illustrative. However, the claim could be made that the trend is accelerating as 57% of the commercials aired during 2004 and 2005.

The advertisements provide a means to enter into the discussion of masculinity and advertising, but they do not provide definitive answers. It is also important to note that while advertising is developed with a particular target audience in mind, this research is more interested in the
iconic and atypical nature of the subject within the advertisements. The weight of the analysis is therefore more toward the cultural impact of these advertisements than their ability to market products. In the descriptions and interpretations that will follow, I am concerned with the rhetorical use both visual and verbal of the wolf as metaphor for masculine subjectivity. The analysis follows the text interpretive approach described by McQuarrie and Mick (1996; 1999; 2003). The analysis is applied to these advertisements in order to provide understanding of likely interpretations of male viewers based on the fluidity of masculine gender identity. I will discuss how masculinity is represented within advertising, reflected outward to viewers as a representation of Western culture, and how it may be internalized by viewers.

The seventeen television commercials identified below included wolves as a metaphor. The advertisements aired from 1996 to 2005. Most of the commercials aired in the United States; a few aired in Great Britain. The commercials represent five broad themes in which wolves were utilized as an advertising technique including: man is wolf, wolf as predator, Red Riding Hood, Three Little Pigs, and transformative werewolves.

### Man is Wolf: Wolf as predator

Republican National Committee (2004)  
Mountain Dew (2004)  
Toyota Highlander (2001)  
Quiznos (2003)  
Outpost.com (1998)  
Toyota Four-Runner (1996)

### Red Riding Hood Three Little Pigs

Peanut Butter Cookie Crisp Cereal (2005)  
Halls (2005)  
ADT (2001)  
Quaker Chewy Milk Bars (2004)  
Pepsi One (2001)  

### Transformative Werewolves

Chanel No.5 (1999)  
Capital One (2003)  
Eclipse Gum (2005)  
PlayStation2 (2002)

### TEXT INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS

For the present study I will limit my analysis to the two categories man is wolf and transformative werewolves. The other representations utilize the wolf metaphor based on children’s fairy tales or as in the case of the wolf as predator category it is not gender specific, but does provide a generalized view of wolves as an evil threat. And while the commercials in these other categories have some implications for gendered identity construction, the present study will be limited to those that directly depict men as wolves.

### Man is Wolf Metaphor

A television commercial for the Honda Pilot SUV begins with the voice-over of a wife saying: “It’s true. My husband was raised by wolves.” The commercial proceeds, with humor, to visually depict her husband literally engaged in wolf-like activities. For example, as the commercial demonstrates the off-road capabilities of the SUV, a series of shots
depict her husband romping in front of the Honda Pilot out in the wild with other wolves. The phrase that begins the commercial, “It’s true...” contains a declaration that overcodes the phrase in a way that signifies the depiction is unbelievable. Therefore, the verbal queue destabilizes the text, and this becomes stronger when it is overlaid on the visual of the husband romping with wolves. The use of the visual representation of her husband as a wolf breaks the rules of convention and demonstrates the advertisement’s deviance. As McQuarrie and Mick suggest with regard to the way rhetorical figures do their work in advertising, in the case of television commercials, viewers will “search for a context that will render the violation intelligible” (1996, 426). The viewer might interpret the ad to mean that men are wolves. That may mean a variety of things: they are predators and wild, among other explanations. Resorting to the visual configuration of the man as wolf jumping from the car and romping in the wild with a wolf pack, forces the viewer to work with a number of considerations in order to render the commercial comprehensible. It is the impossibility of the literal translation and its lack of plausibility that encourages further elaboration. The image of man as wolf forces the question of the very idea of what it means to be a man and opens up the idea of normative behavior for discursive consideration.

In a similar attempt to use the literal depiction of man as wolf, a commercial for Quiznos a purveyor of sandwiches depicts two young men sitting outside on a bench apparently eating their lunch. One turns to the other who is not eating a Quiznos sandwich and says, “What, were you raised by wolves?” The verbal scheme forces the question toward the absurdity. If the young man was not literally raised by wolves, which is highly implausible, then who raised him? The next scene depicts the young man who is subject to this ridicule cuddled up with his sibling wolf cubs all of whom are being fed by mother wolf. The visual/verbal juxtaposition implies that if one does not choose to eat a Quiznos sandwich, one is less than human, at the very least deviant or uncivilized. The deviation making the familiar strange of the visual is destabilizing and thus invites through its incongruity attention. It is the very deviation from normative constructions of masculinity that breaks the limits regarding what it means to be a man and thus the commercial problematizes, or at least opens up or extends masculine representations.

This deviance and incomprehensibility of the commercial is important when considering that a fundamental aspect of advertising is that no one has to pay attention to it or take much time to figure it out. Similar to the Honda Pilot spot, the viewer is encouraged to make the commercial intelligible; otherwise the communication fails. The commercial uses the wolf-like behavior of the young man who has not chosen Quiznos to encourage the viewer toward alternative interpretations: one is either primitive/animal (eating from the mother wolf) or civilized/human (eating a Quiznos sandwich). Paying attention to the advertisement, liking it, or being able to recall the advertisement are only partially dependent on the use of rhetorical figures. It is important to emphasize that consumer responses will not likely be uniform, but will be considered based on the viewing context.
and the mode of psychological reflection employed by the individual.

The Mountain Dew commercial depicts a sled dog race in which two competing sled dog teams are coming to the end of their race. The visual is offered up as a rhetorical reversal in which one sled dog team is led by a man (normative construction), the second team replaces the dogs with men, and instead of a man as the musher, a dog is offered as a replacement. Similar to a dog race on a track where the hare is held in front of the dogs to motivate them forward, the dog-led man team is being motivated toward winning the race by a can of Mountain Dew hung forward of their pace. The implication holds out the possibility that the soft drink will provide the energy to perform in a winning manner. The man leading the dog team, directing his speech to the viewer in reference to the way the men/dogs performed says, “Those guys win every year.”

Typically sled dogs include Siberian Husky, Samoyed and Alaskan Malamutes, and although they are not wolves, dogs bred for sledding are not typically pets. What is the viewer to make of this visual pun? The destabilizing force renders the meaning indeterminate, and as such there is no easy way to resolve the visual inconsistency. Similar to the other examples offered for Quiznos and Honda, pleasure is derived by having to work through the incongruity toward some resolution; such a process relies heavily on the viewer. In this case the paradox of juxtaposing the actual sled dogs against the man/dogs can only become true through reinterpretation of what is visually presented. There is, of course, a fine line that advertisers walk as an overly complex advertisement will render it incomprehensible, and an overly simplistic one requires too little work to make it memorable. These contemporary visual representations of masculinity extend the limits of what it means to be a man, they reflect tensions that exist for the individual male, and they reflect tensions regarding man as a social being. Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes validate that reversal such as the one described above are becoming more common in advertising (1999). Rather than presenting the male as powerful, social, successful, etc, the male depicted as wolf offers up a set of contradictions presenting men as outside, lacking social graces, and lacking organizational power.

Man is Werewolf Metaphor

The werewolf represents the transformation of the body from human to wolf. It has been demonstrated in many movies and in children’s and adult literature. This concern with the human-animal boundary has also been used to explain medieval Europeans’ fear of werewolves, beings that metamorphosed back and forth between human and animal (Cohen 1994, 65 in Mullin 1999, 204). In advertising the werewolf is a demonstration of, as Patterson and Elliot (2002) suggest, the body as project. The werewolf literally is the body transforming itself, but not in an attractive manner. Therefore, how is one to understand this depiction of the body as something that is commodified? In postmodern culture the werewolf represents not only the fascination with the other, but also the desire to break out of cultural borders, to transgress boundaries of gender identity and by becoming animal-like stretch the boundaries of humanity. In these
advertisements, the werewolf represents temporary transcendence. The werewolf represents, among other things, a barricade against that which is not macho; this trope offers a temporary trench in which to express anger, disappointment, and the like.

For example, the commercial for the PS2 video game, based on low-level animation, demonstrates how the protagonist expresses his yearning to become the Wolfman. The voice over, in a British accent, says “I was sitting in my huge leather armchair watching tele and thinking how marvelous it would be to be a werewolf.” The scene cuts to a long shot of the fractured hero flying in the air above the town. He says, “How fantastic and different my life would be to go beyond human.” At this point the man transforms into a wolf, and he says, “To be a man/dog…a hairy person…look at me” We see a growling wolf as the voice over says, “I am teeth, I am fur, I am dribble.” He declares, “I am the Wolfman,” as he rides off into the distance. He repeats through several quick scenes that demonstrate aggressive behavior, “I am the wolfman. I am the wolfman.” As the wolfman travels into oblivion, superimposed on the screen are the words, “In the third place, be whatever (the word is transformed to) ‘whoever’ you want to be.” A wolf’s howl leads out the commercial. The protagonist publicly expresses his desire to break out of the expectations set forth in standards of conduct and appearance. The objectified appearance of the male body as it transforms into a werewolf suggests that in their everyday lives men are increasingly conscious of their presentational selves.

The Eclipse gum commercial is a postmodern twist on the werewolf theme. The commercial is about making a werewolf movie. The spot opens in a darkened room with eerie music in the background. The woman moves forward toward the camera; the camera taking the point of view of the viewer and the werewolf that enters the room as the woman screams. At this point, the director yells “cut, hold your positions” and the viewer is let in on the fact that this isn’t a “movie” but the making of a movie. The female actor then asks the werewolf, “Do you want to have some dinner.” To which he says, “I already ate.” He continues, “I was famished.” She asks him what he ate and he lists several halitosis inducing foods. She then begins to say, “How come your breath is...” But before she finishes the werewolf interrupts her to say with emphasis, “so sexy.” The contradiction between the werewolf--hairy face, big ugly teeth--and the comment “so sexy” requires some reconciliation in order to make meaning of the absurdity. The commercial offers up Eclipse gum as the explanation. The director yells, “quiet” in order to declare that the next shot is about to begin. The werewolf growls and the female looks toward the werewolf and says, “control yourself.” To which he responds in a highly affected tone, “vicious…aghrrrrr (as in growling wolf).” In this commercial the werewolf indicates that identity is in process. In order to find meaning in the commercial the viewer must understand that this is an actor playing a werewolf; identity is highly constructed. As the werewolf moves between his actor “self” and his werewolf “self, the viewer observes him move between different subjective positions, underscoring the fluidity of gender identity.
In the Capital One commercial, shot initially in black and white, a man is looking at his credit card bill as ominous sounding music plays in the background. The man says, as he wrenches his necktie, “Would you look at this credit card bill.” The man gasps for air and falls to the floor. As he recounts the issues with the credit card, he jumps up on top of the desk and transforms into a werewolf. At that moment, the scene turns from black and white to color as his wife enters the room and in an assured manner with arms folded says, “Easy big guy. I switched our balance to the no hassle Capital One card.” As she describes some details of the credit card, the man still crouched on top of the desk transforms back to a man, although he still has a wolf paw instead of a hand with which he scratches his head. In this commercial the protagonist reacts to his threatened position as he moves from passive male to hypermasculine werewolf in order to defend his position as “bill payer.” The metaphor signifies his partial retention of normative masculine identity.

In all three of these werewolf-based commercials, the wolf may represent the “inner man” desiring to be free from standards of conduct and empowered to act without constraint or control. The transformation alleviates his masculine burden based on normative constructions of masculinity. The appeal therefore isn’t based on the positive visual expression of a “new man” that is sexualized. Rather, the vision turns from the newer construction of the non-traditional male and replaces this vision with a view of masculinity that appeals more toward primitive instinct. In other words, the male finds his power through transformation; not transformation toward the “new man” concept, but an appeal to the less than perfect primitive male. In this way “Narcissistic identification [therefore] allows the male spectator to retain a sense of power and control…” (Patterson and Elliot 2002, 237). Advertisers may understand the need for male viewers to defend their masculinity and thus provide them with the opportunity. By appealing to primitive animal instincts, male viewers may at the same time be rejecting the feminine. But when men look upon this vision of the masculine self, it may become problematic. “As a result, in an effort to protect themselves, males may pursue what Hirschman and Thompson (1997) refer to as critical interpretations of male-directed advertising that utilizes images of male bodies” (Patterson and Elliot, 2002, 237). Although the male body becomes a spectacle in these advertisements, it is not one that is desirable because of its physical perfection or beauty. The power of looking comes not from the visual appeal. The appeal is unconventional in that metaphoric man as werewolf connects to the powers of personal transformation. This destabilizing feature suggests that masculine gender identity is quite complex and multidimensional.

**DISCUSSION**

Masculine gender identity, already in flux, is visually represented in multifarious ways within television advertising. It makes sense for advertisers to utilize metaphors like wolves, werewolves, and the like in television advertising, as they invite elaboration on the part of those who are consuming the advertisements. From an advertising perspective, McQuarrie and Mick report that “Findings have shown that rhetorical
figures can enhance ad recall and produce more positive attitudes” (2003, 579). McQuarrie and Mick argued that the use of “rhetorical figures encourage elaboration because their style is based on artful deviation, that is, a swerve from expectations” (1996). Furthermore, when it comes to the use of wolves as metaphors, viewers have to know that men are not wolves in order to understand this depiction as a metaphor. However, at the same time, the use of wolves as metaphors in television advertising raises questions based on what Barthes (1985) referred to as “world knowledge.” Rhetorically, if not wolves, what, then, are men? Raising this question makes masculine gender identity problematic for viewers of television advertising.

If the advertisements under study were constructed as mere entertainment to gain and hold the attention of the viewer inviting elaboration, the analysis would be simple (Newland 2001; Marling 2002; Walker 2002; Stanley 2002; Garfield 2003; Press, 2003). “The heightened elaboration is presumed to create multiple cognitive pathways back to the originating message which then increases the probability of ad recall. Similarly, elaboration on the meanings set in play is expected to foster a pleasurable aesthetic experience, which then improves the attitude toward the ad” (McQuarrie and Mick 2003, 579). However, by depicting men as beasts, advertisers may isolate the individual denying him the camaraderie of others. The individual viewer may identify with the image, standing alone and like a cornered animal there is no escape (Stern 1996). Gratification therefore comes from moving toward the advertiser’s position. This position is consistent with the assertion of McQuarrie and Phillips that indirect claims, like the use of metaphors in advertising, “may be advantageous because they render the consumer more receptive to multiple, distinct, positive inferences about the advertised brand. In addition, an indirect metaphorical claim presented in a picture enjoys a further advantage because such inferences are more likely to be generated spontaneously at the time of ad exposure” (2005, 7).

It may be that meanings are negotiated in the ways in which Hall (1980) described. Depending on their subjective position, male viewers may adopt the advertiser’s intended meaning, reject the advertiser’s meaning or develop a negotiated position. Making the process of consumption more complex, it is possible that an individual may attend to an advertisement only to find its content so abstruse as to render its meaning obscure. The consumer, nevertheless, may be left with a visceral reaction to the advertisement. In this way the meaningless content of a commercial becomes meaningful as it is responded to emotionally by the consumer.

In Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver’s study of consumer responses to the Chanel No. 5 television commercial that utilized the Red Riding Hood theme, one female respondent appeared to recognize the masculine/feminine power inversion the wolf being directed by Red Riding Hood was doing what it was told in the commercial, but didn’t recognize the connection between the powerful female and the product/brand (2004). Although twice as many (58 percent) of their focus group participants mentioned “power and control” over other themes within this commercial, Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver concluded that “The linkage
between the wolf and other types of predators (men) was rarely mentioned” (2004, 11). Craig (1992) suggested that advertisers structure gendered images in their commercials to match the expectations and fantasies of their intended audience. “Gendered commercials, like gendered programs, are designed to give pleasure to the target audience, since it is the association of the product with a pleasurable experience that forms the basis for much American television advertising...Advertisers therefore portray different images to men and women in order to exploit the different deep-seated motivation and anxieties connected to gender identity” (Craig 1992, 4). However, as Ang reported, it is difficult to control who sees a commercial as audiences that are specifically targeted seem to be illusive (1991). Moreover, controlling for gender alone does not account for the multiple ways in which masculine gender identity is likely to be negotiated.

What makes this phenomenon so intriguing is that the messages within these advertisements serve to deny the subjective power of those depicted in the commercials (Boon 2003). The potential for gender wounding (Silverman 1992) is significant given that the image of man as beast is replicated across commercials and that each commercial is repeated multiple times. The notions of incomplete masculinity and ornamental males, described earlier in this paper, provide only partial explanations for what is going on in advertisements in which men are depicted as wolves. Psychoanalyst Lynne Layton (2000) confirmed that the generalized view of masculinity that is evident in Faludi’s description of the ornamental male is based on hierarchical categories in which the general reference to masculinity is to white heterosexual males who must maintain, according to normative constructions of masculinity, “a continuous vigilance against getting caught being a girl-getting caught and being shamed” (Layton 2000, 65). Gender wounding as Layton (2000) described it plays a role in the formation and perhaps reformation of male viewers of television commercials. The research on gender wounding points out is that males are subject to historical contingencies (Ehrenreich 1984). Such contingencies may constitute a form of trauma that cause “the kind of psychic pain that issues a dynamic unconscious conflict” (Layton 2004, 38). Ainslie and Brabeck suggest that “traumatizing experiences activate defensive processes aimed at containing and/or distancing an individual from overwhelming feelings” (2003, 46).

Savran (1996) said that while men may no longer serve as the primary “breadwinner” in the family, however, according to the dominant fiction they are obliged to be responsible within an increasingly fluid family dynamic. This instability simultaneously inspires—if only in his fantasies—the individual to deny or work through his perpetually misplaced virility. But what happens as in the case of advertising in which men are repeatedly depicted as lower animals? Rather than serving as compensation, such repeated exposure may operate within the unconscious of the traditional male, for example, as fractured hero, victim or spectacle of humiliation. It would be expected that the individual would react toward the masculine figure or action as measured against his own subjective position. However, when there is no hero or positive image through which to be compensated for one’s
misplaced virility, the individual is left only to his narcissistic fantasy world in which to cover or perhaps not recover his place. In other words, the ambiguity creates tension there is nowhere to run for either the image on the screen or the individual viewer that may increase their receptivity to the advertiser’s message.

Changes in society including the fashionable male and the stay-at-home dad are among the reasons advertisers construct, as Hanke suggested, a hegemonic masculinity that naturalizes “social and historical relations of power and privilege” (1998, 185). Hanke does suggest that studies of masculinity need to consider how that masculinity connects to “lived forms of patriarchy within everyday life” (1998, 186). Other research (Barthel, 1988 and Clarke, 1995) extends our understanding of advertising’s image of a “new man” and a “gayification” within advertising. Males depicted as wolves and other lower animals may not be such an odd representation of the “new man” when considered within the concept of an ambiguous, vague or ambivalent masculine identity as a potentially effective communicative tool of advertisers. In this sense, the depiction in advertisements of males as wolves is like being in a dream state that serves “as a signifier of condensation of subjectivities of the individual” (Hall 1996, 11). Being a wolf, along with the other representations, problematizes masculinity within the multiple ways in which masculine identity is presented to the culture and the variable ways in which males subjectively interpret advertising texts. As such, the category, masculinity, is not one thing. As is the case with race and class, masculinity may not be defined as that which is not feminine as it takes on various other cultural meanings and significance.

**CONCLUSION**

The present study relies on a text-interpretive analysis of advertisements. The particular interest has been the presentation of the wolf as metaphoric expression of masculinity. The research, however, did not collect responses to the advertisements under study from consumers. The research is therefore limited because it does not, as McQuarrie and Mick advocate, “map onto the responses of consumers” (1999, 38). Future research should consider viewer-responses to these advertisements with particular regard to gender identity of viewers as they interpret these advertisements. Context, it appears, is an important factor as Palan suggested “the use of qualitative methods in this line of inquiry may be very fruitful, especially since gender categories are blurring” (2001, 3). Such an approach is exemplified in Mick and Buhl’s meaning-based model that looks holistically at consumer interactions with advertising and the ways in which they (consumers) utilize advertising to “negotiate their lives” (1992, 336).

Accompanying “decreased gender role stereotyping” in advertising that Garst and Bodenhausen claim began in the late 1950s (1997, 552), has been the growth in complexity of gender representation in contemporary advertising. McQuarrie and Mick suggest that the pleasure one derives from consuming an advertisement is in the “successful resolution of incongruity, and the amount of incongruity, and hence the degree of resolution possible, is a function of the extent of deviation” (1999, 40).
Ambiguity as an advertising technique may work well within this construct, but in addition to the advertisement’s message, other contextual elements come into play, namely gender identity, among others. The analysis of text and the attempt to root the text in potential responses by male viewers suggests there is an opportunity for future research to span both traditions of textual analysis and viewer-responses to those texts. McQuarrie and Mick (1996) attempted to do so by linking textual structures what they referred to as style and meanings that link content to brand attributes in magazine advertisements. The present study represents a step toward describing and explaining those textual structures in television advertising.

REFERENCES


McQuarrie, Edward and David Mick (1999), “Visual Rhetoric in Advertising: Text-Interpretive, Experimental, and


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