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THE PORTRAYALS OF FAMILY IN ADVERTISING: CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

by

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THE PORTRAYALS OF FAMILY IN ADVERTISING:

CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

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University of Nebraska, 2012

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Children are exposed to over 25,000 advertisements each year just on television. Research has demonstrated advertising's effect on children's preferences and perceptions including gender roles. With the changing structure of family now including diverse family types such as same-sex parents, childfree couples, single-persons, and transracial adoptive families, we do not yet know if advertising is changing with the times and how children perceive these family groups. This study seeks to determine how children perceive family in advertising and its effect on their concept of family through a content analysis of children's television advertisements and data collection from children in the Midwest. While family is not a prevalent theme within children's advertising, is it present. Images may suggest a nontraditional household, but no concrete clues substantiate the suggestion. Age was found to be a significant predictor of identifying nontraditional groups as families, but gender influenced affect to a greater extent.

Keywords: advertising, children, family, family structure

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Introduction

Advertising to children has been an important topic in society for the past four decades. Children's media consumption reached an astounding high with children ages two through five spending approximately 32 hours per week and children ages six through 11 spending approximately 28 hours per week watching programming, movies, and video games on the television screen (McDonough 2009). Increasing media consumption leads to increased exposure to advertising. Children ages two through 11 are exposed to over 25,000 advertisements per year, and children ages 12 through 17 are exposed to over 31,000 advertisements per year (Holt et al. 2007). Traditional gender roles have been perpetuated in society and in the media despite changing gender roles within the population. Children's high exposure to media and advertising also exposes them to these stereotyped gender roles, which can influence their attitudes toward and perceptions of gender (Moschis and Moore 1984). With the structure of family in the United States changing to include diverse family types, we must wonder whether or not families are also portrayed in a stereotypical manner and how children perceive family via media and advertising. This study seeks to understand how family is portrayed through a content analysis and how advertising may be influencing children's perceptions of family through data collection from children ranging from first through sixth grade. Existing literature on family structure changes, advertising to children, gender roles in the media, and family portrayal in advertising are presented in the following section,

followed by the theoretical framework for this study and then data collection and findings.

Literature Review

Changing Family Structure

> "Despite the legacy of diversity, however, media images and mainstream theories of how families exist and develop over time still privilege the view that families are composed of a husband, a wife, and their biological children; that the activities that occur within families are individually, relationally, uniquely, and independently devised; and that the resulting patterns of family structure, composition, and activities are functional for society." (Allen and Walker 2000)

Over the past few decades, the family structure in the U.S. has changed drastically from the traditional heterosexual, monoracial couple with two children. The standards for both describing and researching families have been built on two basic assumptions, which we now know to be less universally true. First, families are created around a lifelong heterosexual marriage, and second, intergenerational relationships provide the means to continue the family (Allen and Walker 2000). In the United States, from 1970 to 2007, marriage rates have declined by 20%, cohabitating couples have increased, divorce rates increased but have plateaued in the past five years, single-parenthood has

increased to 23% of households with children, the size of families has decreased from 3.1 to 2.6, married couples with children have decreased 17%, and dual-career parent families have increased to two-thirds of all households with children (Kreider and Elliott 2009). Additionally, approximately 43% of adults in the U.S. are considered single with 61% of them having never been married (CNN 2010). These data represent increased divorced families, step-families, single-parent families, childless/childfree families, singles, and dual-career parent families. According to Popenoe (1995), these changes are causing the existence of the American family to fall into decline.

Several types of families face a status stigmatized by society today, though the numbers of these families are growing. These types include same-sex households, adoptive families, and biracial families. Though the U.S. Census statistics are not comparable across decades, same-sex households have increased and are estimated at over three million (Gates et al. 2007). The number of children being raised by a homosexual parent is not accurately collected through U.S. Census data, so the estimates of this number vary greatly. According to the National Health and Social Life Survey, approximately 80,000 children are being raised by same-sex parents through adoption and foster care (Laumann 1995), whereas a joint project by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law and the Urban Institute estimates that there are between one and nine million children being raised by a homosexual parent (Gates et al. 2007). The discrepancy may be partially explained by biological children raised by divorced parents who are now in a same-sex relationship. There are nearly two million adopted children in the United States and over 250,000 of those adopted children were adopted

internationally (Kreider 2003). Adoption into the U.S. from another country tripled from 1991 to 2004 (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 2002). International adoption oftentimes indicates visible adoption, where the adoptee is not recognizable as the adoptive parents' biological child, usually because the adoption is also transracial. These families may deal with a stigmatized status both due to adoption and due to race and ethnicity differences (Docan-Morgan 2008; March 1995; Miall 1987). Finally, biracial couples and families constitute an increasing trend. In 2010, there were over three million biracial children in the U.S., which is 5.4% of the nearly 74 million children total (2010).

The structure of families in the United States is clearly changing and evolving. The forms of family vary widely and the definition of family may no longer be based on structural relationships but instead through a sense of a support system. Consequences of these changes for consumers also vary and include the changing influence of children on family purchase decisions (Flurry 2007), consumption patterns of nontraditional families (Allen and Walker 2000), and reflections of family in the media (Prinsloo 2006).

The forms of family discussed above remain in the minority, but are growing. Their stigmatized status may be reduced through continued exposure to alternative families in the media. Children especially may learn about these changes through socialization processes. But, what influences how children understand and identify family? Advertising is one of many sources of influence on children's perceptions. The next section summarizes the relevant literature on children and advertising.

Children and Advertising

During the 1970s, advertising to children became a hot topic that led to debate in society and research in academia (Adler 1977). Research during the decade led to the establishment of the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) in 1974, which is part of a partnership among the four primary advertising associations and is also a part of the National Advertising Review Unit (NARU) (CARU 2008). CARU reviews both advertising directed to children and online privacy practices related to children. Since its founding, the organization has created and periodically updated guidelines for firms advertising to children. In 1978, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) proposed a ban on advertising to children younger than eight. The research regarding parental attitudes toward a ban on children's advertising is inconclusive with mixed findings, that most parents want regulation as well as that most parents do not want regulation. One study indicated that 64% of mothers agreed with taking television commercials targeting children off the air (Cosmas and Yannopoulos 1981) while an earlier study indicated that 65% of parents agreed that regulation in some form was needed (Feldman, Wolf, and Warmouth 1977). Atkin (1975), however, found that over 50% of mothers were opposed to and less than 30% of mothers were in favor of banning commercials during Saturday morning cartoon programming. An advertising campaign by the FTC to help develop the knowledge of child consumers was suggested as an alternative solution to regulation (Enis, Spencer, and Don 1980). The eventual defeat of the proposal, however, did not dampen the appeal of the topic, and researchers as well as parents remain interested in advertising targeted toward children.

Extant literature has focused primarily on the effects of advertising to children, specifically advertisements for food (Dietz Jr and Gortmaker 1985; Lewis and Hill 1998; Story and French 2004) and toys (Pine and Nash 2002; Robinson et al. 2001) as most advertisements to children fall within these categories. The literature, though, has nearly ignored how children perceive the elements and content of the advertisements themselves. Much of the research has suggested that children are affected and persuaded by advertising. Even in the 1950s, children asked parents to purchase products seen on television in 90% of households surveyed (Munn 1958). Pine and Nash (1998) found that the more children are exposed to television advertisements, the greater number of toys they asked Santa for Christmas. Additionally, children who watch more television and pay more attention to commercials are more likely to ask parents for grocery products when taken along on the shopping trip (Galst and White 1976). Despite parental concern regarding purchase requests that reference advertising, Kay (1974) suggests that parental indulgence and society's adoration of youth are also to blame. How then does more exposure influence the perceptions of content in media?

Extant research has also examined the various media used by advertisers targeting children, though primarily television (Goldberg 1990; Kunkel and Gantz 1992). There is consistent support that television advertising affects children’s product preferences (e.g. Adler 1977; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2000; Gorn and Florsheim 1985; Gorn and Goldberg 1982; Munn 1958; Roedder, Sternthal, and Calder 1983). Additionally, children tend to watch more television and are more vulnerable to television advertising

than parents report, with parents displaying a social-desirability bias when it comes to reporting their control of children's exposure (Rossiter and Robertson 1975).

A key concern for many parents and advocates against advertising to children is the dark side of the practice. A debate that is currently raging among Congress, lobbyists, schools, and parents revolves around the prevalence of childhood obesity in the U.S.; according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, over 33% of children are considered overweight or obese (Ogden et al. 2010). The influences of marketing on this issue are in question and are being studied by academics around the country. In the 1990s, advertising's influence on cigarette smoking by minors was demonstrated (Andrews and Franke 1991; Koplan and Eriksen 1994; Pollay 1996). Advertising for another controversy-causing product, alcohol, was shown to affect children through attitudes toward the product (Smart 1988). Another core subject in the advertising-to-children literature base studies how children comprehend advertising. This will be discussed further in the theoretical framework section.

Over forty years of research has been conducted on advertising to children. Advertising influences product preferences, product requests, and behavior. As will be discussed in the following sections, children learn from many sources including the mass media. Perceptions of societal norms such as gender roles are affected by media sources and advertising.

Portrayal of Gender Roles in Media

Children learn from varying sources including family members, educators, and the media. The media have been examined in terms of many types of knowledge and behavioral learning including both sex-role socialization and consumer socialization. Much of the sex-role research is housed in the psychology, sociology, and broadcasting disciplines. Overall, this research concludes that media are an important and influential source of information for children and adolescents related to sex-roles, though males and females can be affected in different ways as described in further detail below.

According to Brim (1957), "role prescriptions include the behavior believed by society to be the instrumental means to the achievement of some desired result" (p. 346). By three years of age, children can distinguish between adult sex roles (Carlson 1981). Kagan (1964) found that children's commitment to a sex role is determined by the age of seven, and Moschis and Moore (1979) found that sex-role expectations are formed by adolescence, specifically regarding decision making responsibility in traditionally gendered activities. Television can play an important role in the development of sex-role perceptions (Moschis and Moore 1984). Thus, it is a logical extension that television can play an important role in family structure perceptions.

For young children, cartoon characters in children's programming can be perceived as gender stereotyped, providing children with role models of traditional gender behaviors (Mayes and Valentine 1979). This finding was supported by an updated study nearly two decades later, but the more recent study did find a reduction in gender stereotyping between cartoon programming before and after 1980 (Thompson and

Zerbinos 1995). One of the few studies involving television commercials in non-marketing literature resulted in similar findings that gender stereotyping was still prevalent in the 1980s (Lovdal 1989). Not only does gender stereotyping exist in children's programming, but the frequency with which male characters appeared in children's programming was nearly double that of female characters (Sternglanz and Serbin 1974); even decades later, more male characters were present in children's programming than female characters and gender-stereotyped behavior was still present as well (Barner 1999). Morgan (1982) found that adolescent females' degree of sexism, or the expression of sexist attitudes, is more likely to be influenced by television viewing than their male counterparts. Additionally, male characters are twice as likely to be seen in children's picture books, where gender stereotypes are also prevalent (Hamilton et al. 2006).

Literature on sex-roles in the marketing literature has not focused on children's programming or children's advertising, but has instead focused primarily on general advertising (Gilly 1988b; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia 1977b; Schneider and Schneider 1979). Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia (1977a) conducted a content analysis of gender roles in advertising and found that gender roles are apparent. Women characters in advertisements are portrayed as younger, and more likely to be unemployed and inside homes than male characters (Schneider and Schneider 1979). Though women were predicted to make three-quarters of consumer purchase decisions, they only appeared in television commercials 43% of the time (McArthur and Resko 1975). Over ten years later, many of these gender stereotypes remained in advertising (Bretl and Cantor 1988).

Recent work indicated that women are still more likely to be portrayed in the home, while men are more likely to be portrayed outside the home (Bresnahan, Inoue, and Liu 2001). Kervin (1990) completed one of the few studies on male stereotyping in the media; advertising in a men's magazine over five decades was analyzed with masculine stereotyped gender roles perpetuating ads over the entire time period with little change from the 1930s to the 1980s. And finally, a cross-cultural examination of sex roles in advertising found fewer traditional sex roles in Australia and more in Mexico than in the United States (Gilly 1988a), while sex roles in Britain's advertising nearly mirrored those of the U.S. (Livingstone and Green 1986).

In much of the advertising targeted toward children, gender stereotypes are presented and traditional gender roles are reinforced despite the changing roles of men and women in today's society. Children are exposed to inaccurate portrayals of both the demographics of the population as well as the characteristics of the population in terms of gender. Boys are still presented as more aggressive, while girls are still presented as shy and nonassertive (Browne 1998; Davis 2003; Smith 1994). Boys are seen more frequently as subjects in children's advertising (Browne 1998; Smith 1994). Girls tend to be found inside, while boys are usually found outside, especially in advertising toward young boys; in advertising to young girls, there are fewer stereotypes with girls not only playing with dolls but also playing sports (Gentry and Harrison 2010).

Gendered stereotypes in advertising are not being dismissed by children. Ruble, Balaban, and Cooper (1981) found that gendered advertising for traditionally gender-typed toys increased children's likelihood to choose those toys whereas Pike and

Jennings (2005) found that exposing children to nontraditionally gendered advertising for gender neutral toys led to children identifying the toys as made for both boys and girls. Other evidence points to the idea that children may be more attentive to and influenced by ads that have actors who are similar to themselves (Resnik, Stern, and Alberty 1979). For example, Barry and Hansen (1973) found that black children tended to be more swayed by advertisements featuring black actors.

Family Portrayals in Media

Gender roles in advertising have been studied as the gender equality movement has grown into the mainstream over the past few decades. Research has shown the effect of gender stereotyped media upon children. Now, the identity of family is changing, but it is unclear whether or not this is exhibited in advertising, specifically children's advertising. While research on the portrayal of family in terms of family structure is very limited, there is existing research on both motherhood and fatherhood in the media and in advertising. Despite the existence of these two topics in the literature, the concept of the family as a whole in this literature is rare. Epp and Price (2008) represent one of the few articles in the marketing literature beyond motherhood and fatherhood by looking at the family itself as the unit of analysis.

Pleck (1998) suggested that over three decades ago, the image of the traditional father began being overtaken in the media by the concept of "the new father," a father who was involved with his children from infanthood through older years, who

participated in everyday activities and responsibilities, related to his children, and who was equally involved with both daughters and sons. This has not been replicated in the research since. The family man's appearance in commercials is infrequent (Kaufman 1999), and men are rarely seen in the role of a nurturing parent (Cantor 1990; Tsai and Shumow 2011). Men were more likely to be seen in a fathering role with children on networks that target women and children, and furthermore women were six times more likely to be seen in a parenting role with children than men (Tsai and Shumow, 2011). One genre in which men are consistently portrayed as fathers is the comedic sitcom, though due to the comedic nature, they are often characterized as awkward, silly, or incompetent (Petroski and Edley 2006; Prinsloo 2006). Overall, however, it should be noted that the evaluations of television families have been shown to be positive in terms of supportiveness and effectiveness in family relationships (Douglas 1996).

In a content analysis of television commercials, Gentry and Harrison (2010) found few portrayals of men as fathers in advertising on programming for men, women, and children. In the advertising during children's programming, only 3% of commercials displayed fathers and only 8% displayed mothers, no fathers were shown in a nurturing role, whereas nearly half of the mothers displayed were in a nurturing role. Fathers, particularly, are oftentimes offended by the ways in which they are portrayed in advertising as "clueless" about their family and only focused on work (Harrison, Gentry, and Commuri 2009; Salzman, Matathia, and O'Reilly 2005), which is similar to the fathers portrayed in comedic sitcoms. In comic-strips, characters are more frequently parents, but the image of fatherhood has not changed since the 1940s (LaRossa et al.

2000). Picture books also under-represent fathers and, when included, fathers are presented as ineffectual, remote parents (Anderson and Hamilton 2005).

Despite the lack of research on family portrayal as a unit, we can look to programming changes by television networks. O'Guinn and Shrum (1991) suggested that television strongly influences individual's perceptions of standards for family consumption. Though traditional families have been the standard in television programming, non-traditional families have increased in appearance over the years. For example, in the 1960s, the number of single-parent families portrayed on television began to increase (Murray 1993). Diverse family structures are portrayed in adult television programming such as on ABC's *Modern Family*, which features a traditional family, a multiracial step-family, and a same-sex couple with an adopted child; Fox's *Raising Hope*, which features a single father and his mother raising his teen daughter (i.e. intergenerational parenting); NBC's *Up All Night*, in which a dual-career couple deals with having their first child; and ABC Family's *Secret Life of the American Teenager*, with multiple unwed teen parents. Children's programming seems to include fewer diverse family types, but they are present. For example, in Disney's *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, the two main characters' mother is present, but the father is never mentioned, and in Nickelodeon's *iCarly*, the main character is being raised by her older brother and her father, who is rarely seen.

Research is warranted to examine the portrayal of family in advertising and media and the perceptions of viewers of these portrayals, but there is a lack of research on the

topic. Children's known propensity to be influenced by advertising makes them a particularly important population for this study.

Research Questions

Sixty-seven percent of children rank family as the most important thing in their lives (Guber and Berry 1993), so as marketers we should be concerned with how advertising may affect children's perception of what family means.

To sum up the gaps in the extant literature emphasized by this study, the research questions this study seeks to explore are as follows:

1. How does advertising influence children's perception of family?
2. How do children perceive the idea of "family" in advertising?
    a. What stereotypes do children perceive, if any?
        i. Gender?
        ii. Parental roles?
        iii. Ethnic/racial?

Theoretical Framework

Socialization

Brim (1966 as cited in Ward, 1974) defined socialization as "the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable them to participate as more or less effective members of groups and the society." Research in this area has focused on family as a primary socialization agent. Other socialization agents, however, can play an important role in the socialization of children. For example, children learn and develop values not only from parents, but also from cultural subgroups (Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith 1982). Television can also serve as a socialization agent; often children's interactions with parents about television programming help children develop important categorization, cognitive, and social skills (Messaris and Sarett 1981). These categorization skills help children create a frame of reference for their everyday life, particularly as consumers (Hirschman and Thompson 1997). For this study, there are several aspects of socialization that are particularly important – impression formation, social perspective taking, and anticipatory socialization, which provide children with the ability to make and understand social comparisons as well as understand their future adult roles. Since this research deals with children's perceptions of a biologically and socially created relationship of the family, these socialization elements stand out as the most important for the basis of this study.

Impression Formation. Impression formation allows children to make social comparisons. As children develop, their ability to make these social comparisons grows more sophisticated. Piaget (1964) introduced a renowned cognitive development model, but for this study several development models will be examined relating to specific developmental skills. Barenboim (1981) introduced a three-stage model of impression formation based on age. Before the age of six, children make concrete statements without comparison. These statements are usually based on physical attributes or behaviors. Between the ages of six and eight, children make comparisons based on concrete characteristics, which is known as the behavioral comparisons phase. It could be this phase during which children begin to understand that families are not the same in composition through both personal and nonpersonal exposure; however, it seems unlikely that children would understand that diverse families are broad phenomenon. In the psychological constructs phase, which is from age eight through age 10, observations begin to be made based on psychological or abstract characteristics, but no comparisons are drawn. Children move into the final phase at age 11, called the psychological comparisons state, at which point they begin to make comparisons based on psychological or abstract characteristics.

Social Perspective Taking. Selman (1980) describes the growth of children's social perspective taking through a five-stage model. From ages three through six, children are unable to take another's perspective and are only aware of their own perspective, which is the egocentric stage. The second stage, the social informational

role taking stage, occurs between the ages of six and eight. In this stage, children realize that others have differing opinions, but they make the assumption that the disparity is based on varying information, not varying perspectives. For the next couple of years, children are in the self-reflective role taking stage, where they can actually think from the other's perspective because they start to comprehend that differing opinions can exist with the same information. Around age 10, children learn to think about their own perspective and another's perspective at virtually the same time, which is the mutual role taking stage. Finally, children move into the final stage, social and conventional system role taking, in which they can take another's perspective and understand how it relates to his or her social group.

Table 3. Impression Formation and Social Perspective Taking Stages

Age	*Impression Formation (Barenboim)*	*Social Perspective Taking (Selman)*
3-6	Concrete observations, no comparisons	Egocentric
6-8	Behavioral comparisons	Social informational role taking
8-10	Psychological constructs	Self-reflective role taking
10-12	Psychological comparisons	Mutual role taking
12-15+		Social and conventional system role taking

Both impression formation and social perspective taking can be applied to the study proposed here. As children develop, they learn to make social comparisons; the knowledge required to make such comparisons is gained through many sources including advertising. Social comparison usually refers to seeking information or affiliating with

others (Helgeson and Mickelson 1995). Social comparison has been used in the children and advertising literature in looking at advertising's effects on children's body image (Gentry, Martin, and Kennedy 1996; Grabe, Ward, and Hyde 2008; Martin and Kennedy 1993). Comparing one's family structure is a likely common comparison children would make; for example, a child might note that her friend has a mother and father, whereas she has two mothers. The reasons for social comparison generally fall into one of the following categories: self-improvement, common bond, altruism, self-enhancement, self-destruction, and self-evaluation (Helgeson and Mickelson 1995). It is easy to see how the example comparison above could be made for several different reasons depending on the context of the situation. However, as children go through the stages of social perspective taking, they learn to make comparisons in a way that is not hurtful or discriminatory to others.

Anticipatory Socialization. When viewing advertisements, youth gain knowledge that cannot be used until they are older such as when they take on the roles of parents. Termed anticipatory socialization by Riesman and Roseborough (1953), Ward (1974) defines it as "implicit often unconscious learning for roles which will be assumed sometime in the near future." The concept was earlier presented by Merton (1957), who described it as a period in which an individual takes on values of a group in which he or she desires membership. Goffman (1959) looked at anticipatory socialization as the period when what someone has been taught about becomes reality. Anticipatory socialization has been used in a number of predictive contexts including children's

occupational aspirations (Simpson 1962), sex roles (Williams Jr et al. 1987), and parenthood (Steffensmeier 1982) .

Many agents of socialization that come to mind are also often agents of anticipatory socialization as well. Though anticipatory socialization can apply to both children and adults, naturally the focus in this study will be on anticipatory socialization of children. Children learn about adult roles from many sources such as adult role models, formal education, the media, and products.

Toys, for example, can play an important role in the anticipatory socialization of children. According to Ball (1967), toys, often specifically dolls, perform two key socialization functions. The first is that dolls serve as rehearsal vehicle for practicing role behaviors, and the second is that dolls serve as role models. As children view actions and behaviors carried out through other socialization agents, toys can become a way for children to explore the knowledge and develop it more fully by practicing with toys. This may be especially true in cases where children see the roles enacted not only in an advertisement, but in an advertisement for a specific toy. Children who view an advertisement for a Barbie doll in an occupational character-like role as a veterinarian or teacher, may very likely play out the scenarios seen in the advertisement with their own Barbie dolls. Additionally, Barbie's story itself essentially portrays a traditionally structured family. The Barbie character has biological sisters, is involved in a heterosexual relationship with a male character of the same race, and is paired with that male character through costuming and marketing. Similarly, children in commercials for baby dolls frequently model the adult role of a mother. For child viewers of the

commercials, the ad itself may serve as reinforcement of behaviors of the adult role, which are also then re-enacted by the children later. As stated by Ball (1967), "while doll play may involve elements of fantasy, it is a fantasy firmly grounded in the social reality of the people upon which it is modeled" (p. 450).

Viewing television commercials targeted toward adults also prepares children for adult roles. In one study, children's product preferences for future adult products was influenced by advertisements for the products (Gorn and Florsheim 1985). The participants in the research study who watched television commercials for lipstick were more likely than the participants in the control group to think that women should wear lipstick to look beautiful. Here it is clear that these girls are anticipating their future behaviors as an adult woman just as would be expected from anticipatory socialization theory.

Hess and Torney (1967) identified three types of anticipatory socialization: attitudes and values about adult roles, knowledge that cannot be applied until a later age, and general and specific skills that can be used immediately, but also throughout life. Often the family types seen in the media provide knowledge that children will not use until they are creating their own family, making product decisions for their family, and enacting consumer roles related to the family. Alternatively, they may learn about nontraditional family types, learn to identify these types as families, and, through this, begin to give less fuel to the current social stigma surrounding many diverse family types. By viewing varying types of family in advertisements, children can begin to identify that though families are different, the behaviors in all families can be similar.

Consumer Socialization

Consumer socialization is defined as "processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace" (Ward 1974). Factors influencing a child's consumer socialization include family communication (Moschis 1985), parental style (Carlson and Grossbart 1988), mother's communication orientation (Carlson, Grossbart, and Walsh 1990), race (Bush, Smith, and Martin 1999), peers (Thornton and Nardi 1975), and mass media including television programming and advertising (Churchill and Moschis 1979; Moschis and Churchill Jr 1978) among others.

Advertising's role in these processes has been established by marketing scholars along with a wealth of research regarding how children learn to process and comprehend advertising. Moschis and Churchill (1979) found that consumer role perceptions are formed before adolescence, and that television contributes to learning these consumer roles. Roedder et al. (1983) discussed children's comprehension of television advertising from an information-processing perspective. Three types of information processors exist among children. Children older than 12 are strategic processors who can process key information while ignoring secondary information. Cued processors, children ages eight through 12, can only reach a strategic processing level through the use of prompts or cues, and lastly, limited processors consisting of children under age eight cannot reach a strategic processing level even with the use of cues. What this means for advertising to children is that only strategic processors can fully understand both the content and intent

of advertising, and cued and limited processors are unable to fully comprehend television commercials.

Even children as young as preschool recognize commercials, and by age eight they understand that there is persuasive intent behind commercials (John 1999). Children who do not understand advertising's persuasive intent tend to believe in the commercial's truthfulness more than children who have developed this knowledge (Martin 1997). Due to the suggestion that children have difficulty understanding the difference between television programming and television commercials, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) require networks to insert a segment between programming content and commercials to provide separation for young viewers during children's programming dayparts; additionally, by law, characters from children's programming are not allowed in children's commercials (Adler 1977; Carlson, Laczniak, and Muehling 1994). A recent study showed that children can distinguish between television commercials and television programming, but that younger children (ages five through seven) may not understand that the programming pauses while the ads run, instead thinking that perhaps the programming is still playing in the background while the ads are running (Mallalieu, Palan, and Laczniak 2005). Older children (ages eleven and twelve) were able to distinguish both the source of the ads and their targeted audiences, which is referred to as cognitive defense (Rossiter and Robertson 1974).

Children as young as preschool can be sophisticated television watchers according to Reid (1979); and their interactions with family members such as parents can affect

their cognitive abilities to understand both the content and persuasive intent of television advertising. Parents who take an active role in discussing advertising seen during co-viewing sessions of television programming can help their children develop this knowledge at an earlier age than has been suggested in other research. More frequent interaction of this type among parents and children can also lead to fewer purchase requests from children (Wiman 1983). Fabes, Wilson, and Christopher (1989) suggest that parents need to better understand the role that television plays in their family's life.

As these findings allude to, parenting affects children's consumer socialization. Carlson and Grossbart (1988) considered four types of parental styles: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglecting. In an extension study, it was suggested that parental style affects how parents socialize their children with regards to the television (Carlson, Laczniak, and Walsh 2001). Television programming and commercials can be important consumer socialization agents. Indulgent and authoritative parents tended to monitor and restrict children's use of the television, which may mediate its effect as a socialization tool. Authoritative parents also tend to be more aware of how the consumer landscape may affect their children and more negative toward television. On the other hand, authoritarian and neglecting parents tend to be less negative and restrictive toward television programs and commercials from the child's perceptive. Authoritative parents tend to rely on themselves to teach their children about and restrict their exposure to advertising whereas authoritarian and indulgent parents tend to favor giving governments or other independent authorities the responsibility of educating their children and neglecting parents support parental supervision the least (Walsh, Laczniak,

and Carlson 1998). Interestingly, adolescents tend to rely more on interpersonal interaction than advertising as a consumer socialization agent (Moore and Moschis 1978).

While skepticism is usually reserved for adults, skepticism and negative dispositions toward advertising may develop as early as the sixth grade according to Boush, Friestad, and Rose (1994) and Andersen (2007). Older children have been shown to have greater marketplace knowledge and greater tendencies to search multiple sources for information prior to making a purchase decision rather than relying on or being fully persuaded by advertising (Moschis and Churchill 1979). Despite the development of skepticism, young consumers can also recognize the value of advertising. Both younger and older children exhibited this by indicating that ads can be helpful and provide valuable information because they show where consumers can shop and teach consumers lessons (Lawlor and Prothero 2008; Mallalieu et al. 2005). Lawlor and Prothero (2008) also found a rather humorous, yet practical, perceived purpose of television commercials by children - convenience. The ads provided a nice break to visit the restroom or grab a snack without missing the television program.

Consumer socialization provides children with valuable knowledge about the marketplace and the actors in the marketplace. Television, specifically, portrays the ways in which products are used, the people who consume them, and the social context of consumption (John 1999). The results of this study may be applied to the latter two. By viewing many types of families in advertising, children will learn that while families may look different, families may have some consumption habits that differ from others as well as some consumption habits that are similar to other families.

Study 1 - Content Analysis

As there is little existing knowledge about family portrayals in advertising targeted toward children, a content analysis was conducted. Children cite watching television as their second key interest or activity after playing (Stipp 1988), so television was the medium chosen for the content analysis. Children's television viewing varies throughout the week, but two time periods were selected for analysis - Saturday morning and weekday afternoons. Saturday morning was chosen for analysis of Saturday morning cartoons. Weekday afternoons were chosen for after school content. In addition, children often watch television while doing their homework (Clurman 1988).

Prior analyses of television and advertising have focused on racial diversity, women, fatherhood, the disabled, and the elderly. Those focusing on women and fatherhood were previously discussed. In a content analysis of Saturday morning cartoons, only three of 20 shows presented a minority in a regular role indicative of low racial diversity, but much more racial diversity was found in the commercials surrounding the programming (Greenberg and Brand 1993). Content analyses examining the portrayal of the elderly on television have shown that the number of elderly characters in television shows and commercials is disproportionately low compared to that of the U.S. population (Kovaric 1993).

Approximately seven and a half hours of Saturday morning cartoons were viewed for the primary phase of the content analysis. Two major networks, NBC and The CW, were utilized for this purpose and the presence of the E/I symbol was verified, which

indicates educational children's programming as required by the FCC (FCC 2012). These two networks were chosen based on E/I programming availability. The major difference between the networks' commercials was the prevalence of public service announcements on NBC. The CW featured only one PSA during three and a half hours of Saturday morning cartoons while NBC featured 21 PSAs, which accounted for 36% of the ads shown during four hours of programming. The PSAs provided messages about saving money, staying fit, reading, values, education, and discovering the forest. Three raters were recruited to view the sessions. The raters were composed of three women, two of which were in the 20-30 age range and the other of which was in the 50-60 age range. Inter-rater reliability was calculated for overall presence of family, including visual and voiceover at 98%. The commercials viewed are summarized in the table below.

The coding process followed by the raters was as follows. The presence of family was indicated by visually seeing a family in a commercial. A traditional family was defined as heterosexual, monoracial couple with a child; a nontraditional family was defined as any other family not following the traditional definition, which included, but was not limited to one parent with a child, a couple with no child, grandparents with children, and interracial parents with children. The mention of family was noted when the voiceover of the commercial included the word or words "family", "parents", and "grandparents". Determining the target for the commercial was a qualitative determination by the consensus of the raters. Key indicators used by the raters were the age and gender of the actors in the commercials.

Table 1. Saturday Morning Children's Advertising Analysis

	Total N	Presence of family	Mention of family
Male-targeted ads	10	0 (0%)	7 (70%)
Female-targeted ads	8	1 (13%)	0 (0%)
Both gender - targeted ads	77	19 (25%)	20 (26%)
Ads targeted to adults	21	11 (52%)	6 (29%)
All commercials	116	30 (26%)	33 (28%)

During these commercials, it is clear that family is not shown often, but does have a presence in Saturday morning cartoon advertising. Family was visually portrayed in nearly a third of the ads and family was portrayed via voiceover in nearly one-third of the ads viewed for the content analysis. Overall, family was portrayed in the ads in either mode approximately 41% of the time. In is interesting to note that while family was not shown in any commercials targeted toward young boys, family was mentioned, usually in the voiceover, in 70% of the ads. Family was portrayed both visually and in the voiceover much more frequently in advertisements targeting both genders than in advertisements targeting a single gender.

The families portrayed were often only shown for a brief part of the commercial and rarely played a key role. Often mothers and fathers were not shown in the same commercials with children, instead mothers were shown with children and fathers were shown with children; there were no gender patterns found when looking at these ads in terms of the gender of the children. This could suggest single-parenting situations, but neither the visual or audio cues provided any concrete clues that would lead a viewer to

assume single or dual parenting. In addition to the commercials in which a family was pictured, several ads featured family in the voiceover as discussed above.

In terms of family compositions in advertising during Sunday morning cartoons, there were a few commercials that may suggest alternative family forms. However, most of these that could suggest nontraditional families, did only that - made a suggestion. Fourteen ads that suggested an alternative family were viewed, which is 12% of all ads viewed and 45% of ads visually featuring a family. Commercials shown multiple times for a family restaurant, Chuck E. Cheese's, and toy products, Cuddleuppets and Dream Lites, showed several groups of mothers and fathers with children separately, which may suggest single-parenting. Three ads, GerberLife, Hoveround, and an education PSA did portray intergenerational family relationships either visually or through the voiceover. No advertisements viewed suggested same-sex parenting. Finally, the most telling advertisements viewed in during the Saturday morning cartoons were a public service announcement sponsored by a state agency advocating the use of family emergency plans and an ad for the Gerber College Plan. The first ad featured a multiracial couple with several children, while the second ad featured both couples and single parents. Though neither ad was targeted specifically to children, youth watching the cartoons were likely to be exposed to both ads.

The content of the programming itself is also important to examine in terms of family portrayals as children are certainly affected by it as well. Out of 11 programs viewed on both networks, intergenerational parenting was featured on four programs, single-parenting was featured on two programs, and adoptive families were featured on

two programs. Only two programs specifically featured traditional families. Of the alternative family forms found on Saturday morning cartoons, most parental figures were not main characters, but were still present. However, one NBC program, Willa's Wild Life, featured a daughter's adventures with her single father and their pets. In a CW program, Dragonball Z Kai, the main character is raised by his adoptive grandfather. Overall, alternative families seem to be much more prevalent in children's programming than in advertisements targeted toward children. These presentations of family are more specific and concrete than those in the corresponding advertising that just provide suggestions of alternative family forms.

For the second selection, a segment of afternoon children's television programming was watched for content of the commercials during the programming. The timing corresponds with after-school programming. The program was a sitcom with young stars as it is the most common type of afternoon program viewed by children ages six through 11 (45%), followed by game shows (31%), sitcoms without young stars (22%), court shows (10%), soap operas (10%), and talk shows (5%) (Schoenwald 1988).

Table 2. After-School Children's Advertising Analysis

	Total N	Presence of family	Mention of family
Male-targeted ads	9 (25%)	0	0
Female-targeted ads	14 (39%)	0	0
Both gender - targeted ads	11 (31%)	1 (9%)	0
Ads targeted to adults	2 (6%)	0	1 (50%)
All commercials	36 (100%)	1 (3%)	0

From the summary above, it is obvious that family does not currently have a place in after school programming, particularly when compared to the ads seen during Saturday morning cartoons. Only one commercial targeted toward children showed a family. None of the advertisements mentioned family in the voiceover, and only one ad targeted to adults during the programming breaks mentioned family.

The first study explored the presence of family in children's advertising and programming, but did not shed light on children's perceptions of family in advertising. A second study was conducted with this purpose in mind.

Study 2 – Survey

The second study focuses on how children of varying ages perceive the concept of family. It utilizes advertising as a stimulus for both traditional and alternative family structure. It seeks to provide insight into the questions: *What do children perceive as a family? What role does advertising play in socializing children's perceptions of family?*

Sample

This study seeks the perspectives of children, so classes at three different grade levels in the Midwest were recruited. The varied grade levels will be used for comparison purposes and were chosen based on Barenboim's (1981) impression

formation theory and Selman's (1980) social perspective taking theory. This is a convenient and purposeful sample. The table below provides the details on each of the groups. Additional demographic information was collected from the students and parents prior to the time the study was administered. School district and school principal permission was granted. Informed consent was obtained from the parents of each student before the data was collected. Additionally, child assent was sought as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires children age seven or older to provide assent. Yarrow (1960) suggested that data collection must be adapted to the age of the children participating, and so the child assent form was adapted such that the youngest participants in the study could comprehend it. The sample was separated into an aggregate sample and a treatment sample; the treatment sample was exposed to different treatment conditions as described below whereas the aggregate sample includes all participants.

Demographic and behavioral data were collected from both the participants and their parents. Parents provided some information with the parental consent form, and students were asked a few demographic questions in the survey including class, grade, and age. The participants were also asked about their television watching habits. The parents provided information including television viewing habits, family rules for television viewing, who the participating child typically watches televisions with, and a description of the structure of the family. The television viewing answers and family description were coded for data analysis (Coding Tables in Appendix). The profiles for the aggregate and treatment samples are presented in the tables below.

Table 3. Aggregate Sample Profile

Grade	*# of Students*	*Traditional Family*	*Avg. TV hrs/day*
1st	13	41.7%	1.19
4th	29	53.6%	1.49
6th	33	66.7%	1.90
	75	56.7%	1.61

Table 4. Treatment Sample Profile

Grade	*# of Students*	*Traditional Family*	*Avg. TV hrs/day*
1st	13	41.7%	1.19
4th	23	59.1%	1.43
6th	18	73.3%	1.54
	54	59.2%	1.41

The demographic profile of the sample shows that, even though the participants are from a rural Midwestern city, they are raised in a variety of households. Just over half of the aggregate sample is from a traditional family structure. Of the remaining half of the aggregate sample, 15 students (20%) were from a divorced or blended household, six students (8%) were being raised by a single mother, two by a single father (3%), two by grandparents (3%), and three by a parent in a same-sex relationship (4%). Surprisingly, only one student was identified as interracial.

The aggregate sample also appears to watch less television than the average youth, but this may be explained by a social desirability bias of the parent reports, which is not uncommon when reporting television usage (Lin and Atkin 1989). Most of the participants themselves reported watching at least two television shows per day, with nearly a third watching more than seven daily. The treatment sample characteristics nearly mirror those of the aggregate sample participants. Most of the parents of the participants indicated that while they do restrict their children's television viewing, their families also spend too much time watching television. The participants primarily watch television with siblings and/or parents.

Methods and Data Collection

Collecting data from children can be a challenging process. Key methodological issues that researchers must take into consideration include lack of articulation and language skills, lack of knowledge, limited reasoning skills, limited writing and/or reading skills, and greater self-centeredness when comparing child subjects with adult subjects (McNeal 1987).

Options for collecting data from children include surveys, drawing, collages, sorting, and narratives. Drawing was used by McNeal and Ji (2003) in the examination of cereal packaging. The drawing method "offer[s] a window into feelings that kids may not have the words to express" (Guber and Berry 1993). Collage methodology has been used with both adults (Zaltman and Coulter 1995) and children (Chaplin and John 2007;

Chaplin and Roedder John 2005; Norris et al. 2007). Sorting activities have been effectively used to in data collection from children as well (Mauthner 1997). Martin's (1997) meta-analysis of children's comprehension of advertising suggests nonverbal response techniques, especially for younger children. This study utilized the data collection method of a classification activity as described in the following section.

Sorting/classification. The sorting/classification piece was administered to the participants by the researcher and a research assistant over the last three weeks of the school district's spring semester. The sorting and classification activity was designed to provide insight into what types of family structure children recognize as 'family' and the influence that advertising had upon these determinations. The participants in each class were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Participants in the treatment conditions were exposed to brief videos composed of three commercials targeted toward the relevant age group that include the element of family (either traditional or nontraditional); the control condition also watched a video with three commercials targeted to children without the element of family. Both before and after viewing the advertising segment, each participant was presented with pictures of possible family compositions varying in race/ethnicity, age, size, and overall makeup of family. Since children have a limited ability to understand abstractions, and Wells (1965) found that pictures and models help children visualize concepts, photos were used to provide the most concrete way to illustrate each family structure. The use of photos also serves as a reminder list as children often have difficulty responding in terms of recall (Wells 1965);

if asked what kinds of family structures the child considers a family, he or she would likely have difficulty naming variations. Other researchers have also suggested utilizing photos when collecting data from children (Parker 1984) and Morland (1976; 1981) has often used photos in his work on racial/ethnic identity. For each picture, the participant chose if the picture represented a family or not as well as responded to an affect scale of how the much he or she liked the picture. Within the pictures, there were 14 family compositions (see appendix A for picture list). A traditional family was defined as a heterosexual, monoracial family with children.

As mentioned above, for each photo, the participants indicated their liking for the picture. Using picture scales with children has been suggested by a number of researchers (Colwill 1987; Kroll 1990; Moskowitz 1985; Wells 1965). A facial affective scale adapted from Wells (1965) with adapted verbage from the Peryam and Kroll scale developed by P&K Research for use with sensory testing with children (Kroll 1990) was used (see the appendix B for the scale). The Wells (1965) scale was developed for use with children ages two through twelve, which is inclusive of the sample in this study.

The sorting activity was conducted via the Qualtrics online survey system. The researcher and research assistant conducted the activity either in the primary classroom or school library. When collecting data from children, it is important to develop rapport. To begin the session, the researcher talked with the students at a level appropriate for the ages of the students to assist with developing a level of rapport. Wells (1965) notes that rapport can also lead to negative consequences if the rapport is too strong, at which point the child may simply provide the answers he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear.

With a small degree of familiarity and rapport that was developed in the few minutes of introducing the activity, the concerns regarding a rapport bias should not be an issue. In an attempt to ensure no bias, the students were specifically and repeatedly told that there were no right or wrong answers in the activity, and no opinions or influencing answers were provided during the activity by the researcher and/or assistant.

Findings

The study's exploratory nature allowed for the analysis of the data in a variety of ways. Overall, the data analysis uncovered some interesting relationships and insights into how children perceive family, the influences of their perceptions, and advertising's role in their perceptions.

The quantitative data were analyzed using several techniques in the SPSS statistical software. First, regression analyses were conducted on the relationships among the before treatment scores for nontraditional family photos and other variables such as demographic and behavioral variables. Second, the data were analyzed to compare the before and after treatment scores for both traditional and nontraditional family structure photos.

Various demographic variables were analyzed as potential predictors of the percentage of nontraditional families identified as families out of the possible

nontraditional family photos. The percentage was calculated both before and after exposure to the advertising stimulus. Since the participants were exposed to fewer traditional family photos than nontraditional family photos, percentage scores were utilized in the data analysis process in order to accurately compare the traditional scores to the nontraditional scores. As discussed in the literature review, increased exposure to television does affect children. Gender effects of this nature have been exhibited as well. Finally, social comparison theory tells us that the structure of a child's family of origin provides a basis from which comparison can be made and the impression formation development model indicates that children's ability to make comparisons develops with age.

These variables were analyzed as predictors of children's pre-stimulus perceptions of diverse structures as families. Gender, family type, and amount of television watched daily did not have a significant relationship with the dependent variable, but age did ($R^2 = .20$, $p = .001$). After conducting this bivariate regression analyses, the potential predictors were analyzed in a multiple regression analysis.

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between the proportion of nontraditional families identified as families to possible nontraditional families and various potential predictors. Table 5 below summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. As shown, age is significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Older students tended to identify a greater proportion of nontraditional structures as families than younger students. The multiple regression model with all four predictors produced $R^2 = .31$, $F(4,43) = 4.92$, $p < .05$.

Power analysis of this regression model indicates that the power is approximately .93. As shown in table 5, age also had a significant regression weight, indicating that older children were expected to identify more nontraditional structures as families than younger children, after controlling for all other variables. Family type, sex, and daily TV watching did not significantly contribute to the multiple regression model. Compared to the model with age as the only predictor, the multiple regression explained more of the variance.

Table 5. Summary Statistics, Correlations, and Results from Identification Regression Analysis

				Multiple regression weights	
Variable (N=48)	Mean	Std	Correlation with DV	b	B
Age	9.940	1.873	.539***	.046***	.515
Family Type^	.400	.494	.047	.014	.042
Sex^^	1.580	.498	.124	.046	.139
Daily TV Hrs	1.430	.653	.161	.027	.106

^ coded as 0=traditional and 1=nontraditional

^^ coded as 1=male and 2=female

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were also conducted to examine the relationship between the average affect score toward nontraditional and various potential predictors. Table 6 below summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. As

shown, age and sex are significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Older students tended to have a greater liking rating for nontraditional photos than younger students, and female participants tended to like nontraditional family photos than male participants. The multiple regression model with all four predictors produced $R^2 = .19$, $F(4,44) = 2.59$, $p = .05$ with approximately .68 power. As shown in table 6, sex also had a significant regression weight, indicating that female children liked photos of nontraditional structures more than male children, controlling for all other variables. Age, family type, and daily TV watching did not significantly contribute to the multiple regression model.

Table 6. Summary Statistics, Correlations, and Results from Affect Regression Analysis

				Multiple regression weights	
Variable (N=49)	Mean	Std	Correlation with DV	b	β
Age	9.860	1.936	.274*	.091	.220
Family Type^	.410	.497	-.082	-.176	-.109
Sex^^	1.570	.500	.345**	.568*	.356
Daily TV Hrs	1.41	.659	-.038	.054	.044

^ coded as 0=traditional and 1=nontraditional

^^ coded as 1=male and 2=female

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Second, comparisons were made among the treatment groups and also between the before and after survey answers. In all three treatment conditions, participants identified photos of traditional families as families significantly more than photos of diverse families when comparing both pre- and post-stimulus answers. This tells us that children can more easily identify traditional families than those that are not traditional in composition.

Comparing across conditions indicated that there were no significant differences among the before and after scores of choosing traditional families as families or choosing nontraditional families as families. Non-statistically, the means do show some changes in the expected directions based on the treatment condition, but, again, the changes are not significant. With a larger sample size, these results may be significant.

Table 7. Mean Changes among Treatment Groups

	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment	Δ
Control			
Nontraditional	.52	.52	*.00*
Traditional	.89	.94	.05
Traditional Ads			
Nontraditional	.50	.46	-*.04*
Traditional	.91	.90	-.01
Nontraditional Ads			
Nontraditional	.47	.52	*.05*
Traditional	.91	.90	-*.01*

Participants in the nontraditional condition exhibited decreased affect for traditional family photos ($\Delta = -.53$, $p = .015$) after exposure to the stimulus but also decreased affect for nontraditional families ($\Delta = -.32$, $p = .021$). In the traditional condition, there were no significant differences in affect before and after the stimulus for both traditional and nontraditional family structures. Finally, in the control condition, participants' affect for traditional families decreased significantly ($\Delta = -.44$), but there was not a significant change in affect for nontraditional structures. Initially, these results may suggest a fatigue bias, but the lack of change for nontraditional family structures in the control condition belies this initial explanation. Though no formal hypotheses were put forth for this exploratory study, there was an informal supposition that the treatment conditions would influence affect in different ways.

Qualitative Insights

During the sessions, the researcher had the opportunity to observe the students taking the survey and made several insightful observations based on participants' comments. Even students as young as six or seven appeared certain what consisted of a family. This was indicated by statements such as,

"This is definitely a family." (Fourth grade student)

"That's not a family!" (First grade student)

In most cases, as indicated by the quantitative data above, a family consisted of the traditional structure. Even when students viewed other groupings of people, comments such as follows:

"Where are the boys in this picture?" (First grade student)

"There are only boys in this picture; the girls must be out shopping." (First grade student)

Perhaps the most revealing statement was from a first grade boy who displayed certainty and confusion regarding family structures as suggested by impression formation theory in that children in first grade are in the behavioral comparisons stage, making comparisons based on concrete characteristics.

"This picture is definitely of a family because those two are married. [Pause]. *"But how can a black boy marry a white girl?"* (First grade student)

The statement shows the clarity and, yet, the confusion of the participant regarding interracial relationships. Another telling statement indicated that children are an important part of a family.

"You can't have a family without kids." (Fourth grade student)

"That's just one guy. How can that be a family?" (Sixth grade student)

The qualitative insights from the researcher's observations of the participants support the findings that children perceive family in the traditional form much more frequently than in an alternative form. The presence of children was a key indicator of a family in the

minds of children. All-in-all, children seem to perceive families in the traditional sense, even creating a story about alternative photos to finish its structure traditionally.

Discussion

This study is expected to contribute to the literature in three key ways. First, this provides an extension of the socialization literature in terms of how children learn about family and the changing idea of family. The stages of impression formation in the socialization literature support the finding that children form perceptions and attitudes about the idea of family through concrete comparisons as younger children and through more abstract comparisons such as love and intangible relationship bonds as older children. And certainly, age as a significant predictor of perceiving alternative structures as family can be attributed to some degree to the development of social perspective taking. From a consumer socialization perspective, the qualitative insights suggest that traditional family consumer roles such as females having a tendency to go shopping is established in children as young as first grade, which is supported by previous research.

Second, this study adds to the already expansive literature on advertising's effect on children by better understanding advertising's influence on children's perception of what comprises a family. Study 1 provided evidence that traditional family structures are not prevalent in children's programming, nor are they consistently portrayed in advertising targeting children, but the diverse nature of the families shown in the media is

not always obvious, thus the influence on perceptions may be reduced. Due to the exploratory nature and small sample size of Study 2, the current research does not provide conclusive evidence that advertising itself affects how children perceive family, but it does suggest that the amount of television children are exposed to may be among the factors that influence family perceptions.

Finally, this study helps us understand how marketing can perpetuate, as seen with gender roles, or eliminate stigmatized family compositions. The content analysis of Study 1 demonstrated that family is not a key theme in advertising to children. In the cases where family is featured, there is no clarity provided as to family structure. Instead, children must make their own conclusions about the families in advertising that may be nontraditional. For example, the qualitative portion of Study 2 indicates that children may view an advertisement with a father and child and assume that a mother is in the family, but just not present in the ad instead of interpreting a single father with his child. The content analysis also provided evidence that programming includes more diverse family structures than advertising with more clarity regarding the family structure and less interpretation required by the viewer. Marketing and advertising to children does not appear to perpetuate family stereotypes, but does nothing to reduce or eliminate them either. Moving forward, the inclusion of obvious diversity in family structure within children's advertising would likely be a step in the direction of eliminating these stereotypes, thereby, reducing the stigmatized status of diverse families.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study are primarily linked to the methodology. Collecting data from children is a challenging process, and it can be particularly difficult to validate the data after collection. Additionally, the influence of each participant's own family structure is likely to influence strongly his or her concept of family, making it difficult to distinguish advertising's influence on family. Data on the participants' family structures were collected and included in the analysis, but were not contributing variables when the groups (traditional versus nontraditional) were compared. Future studies might also take parental style into account as another potentially contributing variable. The lack of significant results among the treatment conditions can likely be attributed to the size of the sample and to possible fatigue of the participants as youth tend to have shorter attention spans. Recruitment of the sample size that participated in the study was a daunting task, but recruiting additional participants would be a crucial next step.

The next steps for this research stream include a formal qualitative analysis and recruitment of a larger sample for the quantitative measures. There are several potential data collection methodologies for the qualitative study that would provide additional insight into the relationships among children, advertising, and family structure perceptions. One such methodology would be similar to the data collection methodology utilized by Martin and Peters (2005) in a study on young girls' identification of beauty in which participants completed both a sorting activity (Study 2) and a collage (future study). The collage would specifically illustrate how children conceptualize the idea of

family. Additionally, depth interviews and projective techniques would help us to understand the role of advertising.

As outlined in the literature review section, the research on family portrayals in the media is primarily limited to gender roles and motherhood/fatherhood, which leaves the door wide open for future research. Moreover, the need for additional research on nontraditional family structures has been called for in the literature (Allen, Debevec, and Chan 1984). More content analyses would go far in extending this study including timeframes during which differing target groups such as families, teens, adult men, and adult women would be watching television. More research linking advertising to family perceptions more deeply through the lens of social comparison would be a key next step. Furthermore, additional content analyses of advertising media beyond television commercials would be warranted. The study proposed here looks at children's perceptions of family in advertising, but this can be expanded to overall perceptions of family in advertising from the viewpoints of other age groups – teens, adults, and the elderly. As discussed in the limitations above, it is difficult to obtain accurate data on the reality of households in the U.S., but looking at perceptions compared to reality would be interesting at some point in the future. Finally, examining stigmatized family structures would be a fascinating research stream to consider, specifically in terms of consumer socialization.

Appendix A

Family Types for Classification

1. Biracial couple with children
2. Visibly-adoptive family
3. Monoracial couple with children
4. Same-sex female couple
5. Same-sex male couple
6. Same-sex female couple w/ children
7. Same-sex male couple w/ children
8. Monoracial childfree couple
9. Interracial childfree couple
10. Step-family
11. Single father
12. Single mother
13. Individual
14. Intergenerational

Appendix B

Family Advertising Portrayals Survey

Q1 Please type in the number written at the top of the Youth Assent Form that you just signed.

Q1.1 Who is your teacher?

Q1.2 How old are you?

❍ 5

❍ 6

❍ 7

❍ 8

❍ 9

❍ 10

❍ 11

❍ 12

❍ 13

❍ 14

Q1.3 What is your gender?

- ❍ Boy
- ❍ Girl

Q1.4 How many shows on television do you watch each day?

- ❍ None
- ❍ 1
- ❍ 2-4
- ❍ 5-7
- ❍ More than 7

Q1.5 For each of the following pictures, answer the question:"Is this a picture of a family?"

Is this a picture of a family?

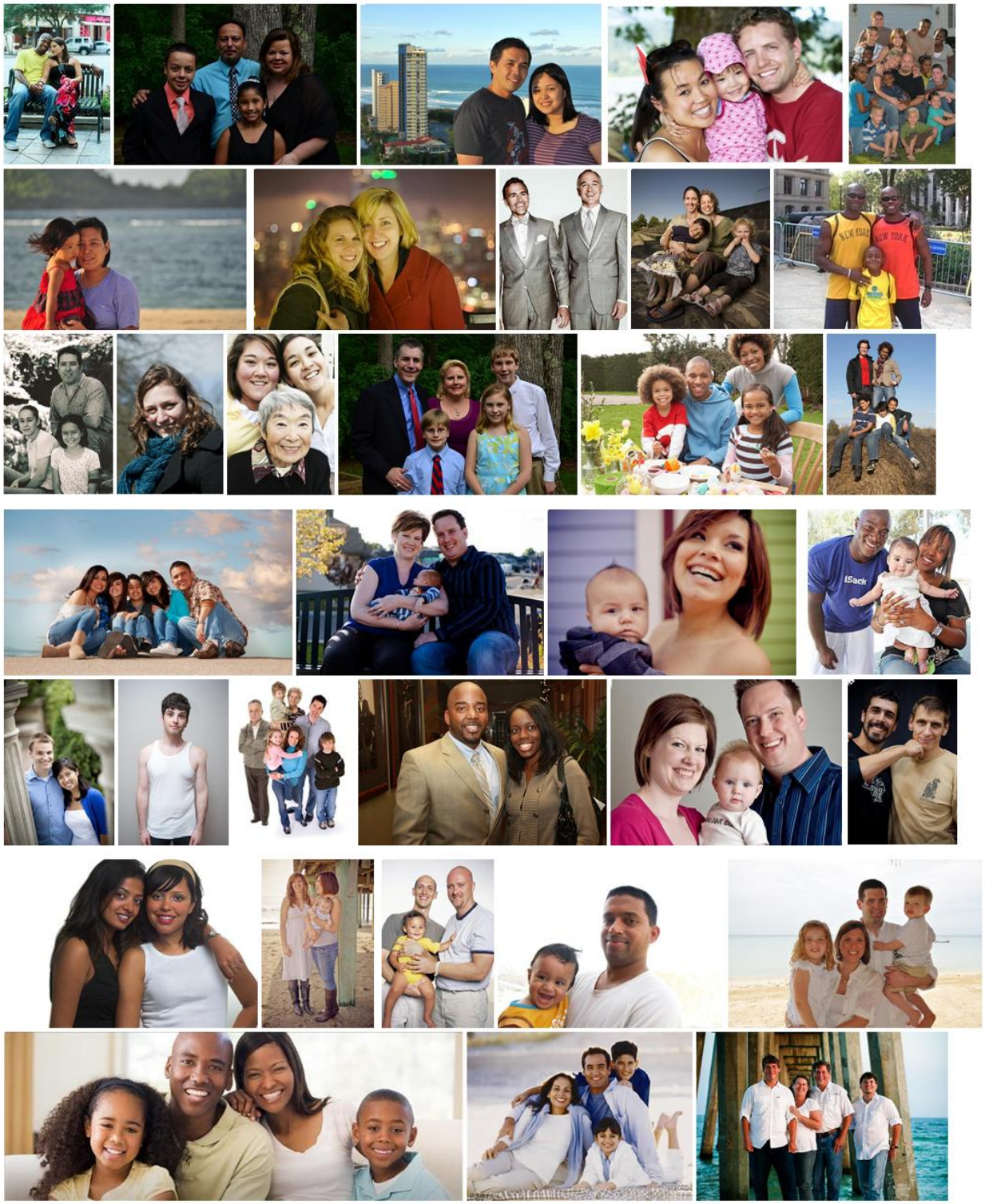
INSERT PHOTO HERE.

- ❍ Yes, this is a family.
- ❍ No, this is not a family.

How much do you like this picture?

Really like
Like
Just a little like
Maybe like or don't like
Just a little don't like
Don't like
Really don't like

Survey Photos



Appendix C

Study 2 Coding Table

Question	Coding Value	
How often does your participating child watch television?	0	Never
	1	Daily
	2	Less than daily
How much time does he or she spend watching TV?	Converted to hours per day	
Please describe the structure/composition of your family.		
Coding Scheme 1	0	Traditional (married heterosexual monoracial parents)
	1	Nontraditional
Coding Scheme 2	0	Married
	1	Divorced/blended
	2	Single mom
	3	Single dad
	4	Interracial
	5	Same-sex
	6	Intergenerational
	7	More than one category above

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