

# Television Commercials as a Lagging Social Indicator: Gender Role Stereotypes in Korean Television Advertising<sup>1</sup>

Kwangok Kim<sup>2,3</sup> and Dennis T. Lowry<sup>2</sup>

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Previous studies of mass media in many countries have confirmed that images of women are stereotypical and unrealistic, particularly in television advertising. This study was designed to analyze the representation of gender roles in Korean television advertising and to compare the results with previous studies conducted in other countries. A sample of 878 Korean television advertisements from the MBC network in 2001 was content analyzed. Findings indicate that women in Korean television advertising were portrayed as young (48.2%), as dependent (37.5%), and as nurturing children (12.1%); they were often depicted in the home (37.2%). These stereotypical images of women have been found in television advertising in many countries. Korean society has changed a great deal in recent decades, but the images we analyzed do not reflect the current situation. Therefore, television commercials are a lagging social indicator of role changes.

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**KEY WORDS:** gender roles; stereotypes; television advertising.

The representation of people in the mass media has often been negative (Taylor & Stern, 1997). The media often have reinforced (if not created) images of negative (Taylor & Bang, 1997) or unrealistic (McArthur & Resko, 1975) stereotypes. Lippmann (1957) defined stereotypes as “preconceptions” that are “not a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted” (pp. 90, 95). One social issue in advertising has been the distorted reflections of people in societies (Pollay, 1986). Williamson (1978) argued that “advertisements must take into account not only the inherent qualities and attributes of the products they are trying to sell, but also the way in which they can make those properties mean something to us” (p. 12).

Gender representations in advertising can easily reflect “fundamental features of the social structure,” such as values, beliefs, or norms (Goffman, 1979, p. 8). However, advertisements “signify” or “represent” the desire of objects or “the self” by reproducing images (i.e., desired images) of others who are different from “the self” in most cases (Williamson, 1978). Advertisers tend to use a limited meaning of values or beliefs about gender roles in advertising by reinforcing the same stereotypical images of gender roles, as if those images are desired by society (Pollay, 1986; Williamson, 1978). Advertising often builds only abstracts of certain groups of people (i.e., stereotypes) on “its own plane of reality, capitalist realism” (Schudson, 1984, p. 214). In other words, as Goffman (1979) argued, advertising is a series of editions of social behaviors of society. However, some researchers (Caballero, Lumpkin, & Madden, 1989; Callcott & Phillips, 1996; Jaffe & Berger, 1994) have found that the use of stereotypes in advertising cannot always persuade consumers to buy products.

Advertisers seek to communicate to a target audience with existing beliefs. Advertisers believe

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<sup>2</sup>College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>3</sup>To whom correspondence should be addressed at College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois 62901-6601; e-mail: kwangokkim@netscape.net.

that the use of stereotypes makes it easier to communicate to a target audience and to sell their products than the use of multiple, realistic values and beliefs would. As Goffman (1979) and Schudson (1984) argued, advertisers use “reality” that is believed to sell their products effectively. For example, idealized (or desired) values and gender roles are often employed in advertising, although they are only real in the advertising world (Schudson, 1984; Williams, 1993; Williamson, 1978). Why should we be concerned about stereotypical advertising? According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), subjective reality cannot be maintained without a certain social base and social processes. Subjective reality is continued by confirmation or alternating possibilities of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In other words, consistent media images of stereotypical gender roles have reinforced the public’s subjective reality (Pollay, 1986), and those images remain in the public without portraying the actual “reality” of the society (Schudson, 1984).

When advertisers use stereotypes in advertising, do they reflect the images and beliefs of the public? Or do they mold or shape stereotypes? Advertisers might use stereotypes to reflect people’s existing beliefs. However, although any society or culture has multiple values and beliefs, all values are not employed in advertising (Pollay, 1986). Williams (1993) argued that “the magic system” of advertising, which inserts irrelevant values and meaning into advertisements, is “the result of a failure in social meanings, values, and ideals” (p. 422). Thus, the use of stereotypes in advertising can become selective reinforcement (Pollay, 1986).

Previous studies (Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Ganahl, Kim, & Netzley, 2003; Gilly, 1988; Lovdal, 1989) of gender roles in television advertising around the world have indicated that television commercials have been a lagging social indicator. There are three types of social indicators:

- (1) leading indicators, which tend to show the direction of future economic or social activity;
- (2) coincident indicators, which tend to track social and economic cycles with comparatively little lag time; and
- (3) lagging indicators, which measure how the economy or society was rather than how it is or will be (Estes, 2003, p. 4).

As advertisers fail to reflect the actual images of gender roles in advertising (Pollay, 1986; Williams, 1993), one-sided unrealistic stereotypes in

advertising are not indeed a leading, or even a coincident, indicator.

According to cultivation theory, the media play an important role in creating distorted views (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). This theory suggests that exposure to media content creates a worldview, or a consistent image of social behavior, norms, values, and structures, based on the stable view of society provided by the media (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). In other words, cultivation theory posits that consistent images and portrayals construct a specific portrait of reality, and as viewers see more and more images, they gradually come to cultivate or adopt attitudes and expectations about the world that coincide with the images they see. Although this model has typically been employed to explain the impact of television violence (e.g., Gerbner & Gross, 1976), it also has been applied successfully to the cultivation of attitudes toward gender roles (e.g., Signorielli, 1989). Although Gunther and Thorson (1992) found that people claimed no negative effects of product commercials on themselves (but did expect negative effects on others), other researchers (Frueh & McGhee, 1975; McGhee & Frueh, 1980; Schreiber & Boyd, 1980) have found evidence of a cultivated audience or the process of cultivation in advertising.

### Women in Television Advertising

Many studies have been conducted in the area of women’s representation in television commercials. Researchers have argued that television programs and commercials reinforce conventional gender stereotypes (Gerbner et al., 1994). According to McGhee and Frueh (1980), viewers’ stronger belief in cultural stereotypes correlates with increased television viewing. They reported that heavy viewers of television attributed a higher status to men than to women. Men were perceived as having more diverse and improved life options (McGhee & Frueh, 1980). However, changes in women’s representation in commercials began in the late 1970s and early 1980s (e.g., Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Lovdal, 1989; Scheibe, 1979; Schneider & Schneider, 1979). For example, Schneider and Schneider (1979) argued that marketers and society have begun to accept the changing roles of women. After analyzing 27 h of prime-time television commercials aired in 1976, they reported that women’s role portrayals were either closer to actual roles held by women

in the United States, or were moving toward actual roles at a faster rate than men's role portrayals were (Schneider & Schneider, 1979). However, many scholars (e.g., Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Lovdal, 1989; Scheibe, 1979) have found that such change was not yet sufficient to overlook the problems of women's representation in television advertising.

Advertisers often have used traditional cultural stereotypes in their commercials (e.g., Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Franzwa, 1974; Signorielli, 1989). As television is considered the largest of the mass media, considerable research has been conducted in this area. Previous studies done in the United States have demonstrated that men are more likely than women to be portrayed as professionals or workers outside of the home (Allan & Coltrane, 1996; Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Ferrante, Haynes, & Kugsley, 1988; Ganahl et al., 2003; Gilly, 1988). Allan and Coltrane (1996) compared the 1950s through 1960s with the 1980s, and they found that, although the number of female main characters had actually decreased by 5.8% in the 1980s, 70% of the women were pictured as "free-floating" consumers with no reference to work or family activity, whereas 50% of the men were shown either working or parenting. According to Craig (1992), advertisements aired in the afternoon, mostly targeted toward women, emphasized traditional stereotypes associated with housewives.

Female characters have been found to be more likely than male characters to represent household products (domestic products), whereas male characters have been found to be more likely than female characters to represent financial or technical products (non-domestic products) (Allan & Coltrane, 1996; Craig, 1992; Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Ganahl et al., 2003; Lovdal, 1989; McArthur & Resko, 1975). Also, many studies have shown that women are portrayed as much younger than men (Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Ganahl et al., 2003; Gilly, 1988; McArthur & Resko, 1975). In voice-overs, men's voices dominated women's voices (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Ganahl et al., 2003; Lovdal, 1989; Pierracine & Schell, 1995). Women have been found to be portrayed as product users rather than as product authorities or experts (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Gilly, 1988; McArthur & Resko, 1975).

Many studies of television commercials in the late 1970s and early 1980s were efforts to find changes

from previous decades (Allan & Coltrane, 1996; Caballero & Solomon, 1984; Ganahl et al., 2003; Lovdal, 1989; Pierracine & Schell, 1995; Scheibe, 1979). Although some researchers found some changes and improvements in terms of stereotypical gender role images in advertising, they concluded that gender roles in commercials remained and continued to be unrealistic portrayals of society. Scheibe (1979) argued that men's representation changed little, if at all, and Ferrante et al. (1988) reported that there was little change in gender roles in television commercials. For example, women were portrayed in the home, and men were portrayed in the business world (Ferrante et al., 1988). Although Pierracine and Schell (1995), who analyzed prime-time commercials in the 1990s, found some degree of improvement in women's representation in advertising, they argued that such a change did not fully reflect the reality of women in society. Therefore, although far from conclusive, recent evidence suggests that traces of sexism remain; the improvements noted are in the direction of more respectful and realistic portrayals of women in advertising (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Ganahl et al., 2003; Pierracine & Schell, 1995).

Although the content of programming or commercials may vary because of differences in cultures, most research done outside of the United States, whether in Europe, Africa, or Asia, has revealed that every country studied had similarly distorted or misrepresented stereotypes of women in television advertising in one way or another (e.g., Arima, 2003; Furnham, Babitzkow, & Ugucioni, 2000; Furnham & Bitar, 1993; Furnham & Farragher, 2001; Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000; Furnham, Pallangyo, & Gunter, 2001; Gilly, 1988; Manstead & McCulloch, 1981; Mazzella, Durkin, Cerini, & Buralli, 1992; Mwangi, 1996; Neto & Pinto, 1998). In contrast, a few studies done outside of the United States have shown differences in terms of stereotyping gender roles in advertising (Furnham & Farragher, 2001; Gilly, 1988). For example, Gilly (1988) analyzed television advertising from three different countries, and found that there were no significant differences between men and women in terms of settings, voice-overs, marital status, employment status, occupation, and credibility in Australian commercials, although women were likely to be younger and more dependent than men were. Furnham and Farragher (2001) compared television advertisements shown in Britain and New Zealand, and found that in New Zealand gender roles in television advertising seemed to be more

balanced, except for voice-overs. However, most researchers around the world agree that there are indeed stereotypical images of women in television advertising.

As in the United States, most researchers around the world have found that men are likely to be shown in work settings, and women are shown in home settings in television commercials (Arima, 2003; Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Furnham & Bitar, 1993; Furnham et al., 2001; Gilly, 1988; Mazzella et al., 1992; Mwangi, 1996). Women in other countries have been found to be depicted as younger than men in television commercials (Arima, 2003; Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Furnham & Bitar, 1993; Furnham, Mak, et al., 2000; Furnham et al., 2001; Gilly, 1988; Mazzella et al., 1992; Neto & Pinto, 1998). As in the United States, male characters have been more likely than female characters to appear in voice-overs (Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Furnham & Bitar, 1993; Furnham & Farragher, 2001; Furnham, Mak, et al., 2000; Gilly, 1988; Mazzella et al., 1992; Neto & Pinto, 1998).

Moreover, women were more likely than men to be portrayed as dependent (Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Furnham & Bitar, 1993; Furnham, Mak, et al., 2000; Furnham & Voli, 1989; Neto & Pinto, 1998). Researchers have reported that female characters are likely to represent body or household products, whereas male characters are likely to represent automobile or service products (Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Furnham, Mak, et al., 2000; Furnham et al., 2001; Furnham & Voli, 1989; Neto & Pinto, 1998). In terms of argument types, female characters have been found to be more likely to use non-scientific arguments, whereas male characters are more likely to use scientific arguments when representing products (Furnham, Mak, et al., 2000; Manstead & McCulloch, 1981; Mazzella et al., 1992; Neto & Pinto, 1998).

### Women in Korean Culture

Mass media do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of the social and cultural systems in which they exist. One of the most important structures of Korean culture is kinship solidarity, and the family is considered the basic social unit (Kong, 1997). Confucianism has had a great influence on the family and overall culture in Korea. For example, the rules of Confucianism have guided the

relationship between husband and wife. This relationship tends to be unfair toward women, and results in their lower status. However, as the rapid increase of women's education and labor participation outside the home has occurred, feminism has influenced a change in the family over the past decades (Kong, 1997). For example, labor participation rates for women in Korea increased from 39.3% in 1970 to 48.3% in 1995. The traditional extended family was transformed into the nuclear family, and women gained more control over the decision-making process within the family; however, this does not mean that each individual woman obtained actual power over her partner in the home (Paik, 1998). The relevant issue for the present study, though, is to what extent the recent trend toward gender equality in Korean society is showing up in Korean television commercials.

### Hypotheses

The present study was guided by 10 specific hypotheses based on previous studies done around the world.

- H1:* Female characters will be under-represented in advertising in terms of their numbers in population.
- H2:* Female characters will be younger than male characters overall.
- H3:* Female characters will be less likely than male characters to be portrayed in voice-overs.
- H4:* Female characters will be most likely to appear in home settings, whereas male character will be most likely to appear in work settings.
- H5:* Female characters will be most likely to be portrayed as homemakers or parents, whereas male characters will be most likely to be portrayed as professionals or workers.
- H6:* Female characters will be more likely than male characters to be portrayed as unmarried.
- H7:* Female characters will be less likely than male characters to use scientific arguments, for the advertised products.
- H8:* Female characters will be more likely than male characters to represent non-technical products.
- H9:* Female characters will be less likely than male characters to be portrayed as product authorities.
- H10:* Female characters will be more likely than male characters to appear with children in the background.

## METHOD

### The Sample

The content universe for this study consisted of prime-time programming (7:00–10:00 p.m.) from 7 January through 3 February 2001, a total of 28 days. There are five major television networks (EBS, KBS1, KBS2, MBC, and SBS) in South Korea. We excluded the regional (SBS) and commercial-free networks (EBS and KBS1). MBC, which is an equivalent channel to the four major networks in the United States (ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox) and has a general audience (rather than the segmented audiences of cable channels), was selected for the present study.

A stratified sampling method was used to collect data. Samples of 4 days (3 h per day) from each week were randomly selected and videotaped to construct four sample weeks. Advertisements for television shows, movie promotions, and public service announcements were not included in the samples. Commercials that contained only children, animals, or cartoon (fantasy) characters were also excluded. After those deletions, a net sample of 878 advertisements was available for analysis. Although many past studies excluded repeat advertisements, we included all repeat advertisements, because our study was designed to see how frequently stereotypical images of women were represented in television advertisements. This approach is based on cultivation theory, as each advertisement creates another “impression.”

### Coding Procedures

Three Korean-speaking observers independently coded the characteristics of the central figures portrayed in each advertisement. The central figures were defined as those who play main roles in a given commercial (Mazzella et al., 1992). When there were more than two central figures in a commercial, those featured most prominently were selected for analyses.

### Coder Reliability

The three Korean-speaking coders participated in a group training session where 20 advertisements were coded. Any disagreement was resolved by reviewing the problem advertisement together

to determine the reason for the disagreement. After the training session, each coder was required to code independently a further set of 20 advertisements. There was 91.1% pre-intercoder agreement among the coders. The intercoder reliability for the full study was determined by recoding (i.e., double-coding) about 20% of the advertisements randomly selected from the final sample. There was overall 88.6% of agreement among coders. In addition to the simple agreement test, for a post-reliability test, the sample size of 93 central figures (content units) was calculated for a chance agreement test (Scott's Pi) at 90% confidence level. Overall, an agreement of .83 was calculated by Scott's Pi formula (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998).

## RESULTS

The final sample of commercials included 1112 central figures (42.2% men and 57.8% women). As the percentage of women in Korea is almost exactly 50%, this finding did not support Hypothesis 1, because there were 7.8% more female central characters than would be expected.

Hypothesis 2 was supported. There was a significant difference,  $\chi^2 = 68.39$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq .001$ , between the ages of the male and female central figures. Female central figures were younger than male central figures. Male models coded as “under 30” were 23.9% of the sample, and female models were 48.2%. Though there was only a little difference between categories of “under 30” and “over 30” among female models (48.2% vs. 41.2%), there was a significant age difference among male models (23.9% vs. 59.5%).

An analysis of gender and mode of presentation indicated that there was a significant difference between men and women in the category of mode of presentation,  $\chi^2 = 25.31$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Male central figures were more likely than female figures to appear in advertising as voice-overs (20.5% vs. 9.8%). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported. Also, women were more often depicted visually than men were (90.2% vs. 79.5%), when the two visual categories (Visual/Speaking and Visual Only) were combined. Thus far it can be said that, although Korean television commercials present more female than male central characters, women tended to be younger and depicted visually.

Hypothesis 4 was supported. The location or setting in which the male and female central figures

**Table I.** Relationship Between Gender of Central Figure and Role

	Percentage of men ( <i>N</i> = 469)	Percentage of women ( <i>N</i> = 643)
Spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend	17.7	13.1
Parent	3.2	12.1
Homemaker	0.4	12.3
Worker	27.1	13.4
Celebrity	3.4	3.7
Interviewer/narrator	27.3	11.5
Other	20.9	33.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Note.  $\chi^2 = 162.12$ ;  $df = 6$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.382$ .

appeared differed significantly,  $\chi^2 = 61.32$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Male central figures were more likely to appear in an outdoor setting (39.7% vs. 33.1%), whereas female central figures were more likely to appear in the home setting (37.2% vs. 21.3%). Moreover, male central figures were more likely than female central figures to appear in a business setting (14.7% vs. 4.4%). Women were slightly more likely than men to appear in social settings (9.8% vs. 7.2%).

One of the most important hypotheses in this study dealt with the types of roles played by women in Korean television commercials. Initial analysis of gender and the category of role revealed a significant difference in roles of central figures (Hypothesis 5) between men and women,  $\chi^2 = 162.12$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . As shown in Table I, female central figures were more likely than male central figures to have a wider range of roles. Male central figures were more likely than female central figures to play the roles of workers/laborers and interviewers/narrators (54.4% of men vs. 24.9% of women). Whereas 12.1% of women played parental roles, only 3.2% of men did so. In addition, 12.3% of female central figures and 0.4% of male central figures were depicted as homemakers. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

According to McArthur and Resko (1975), spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend, parent, and homemaker roles can be combined as dependent roles, whereas worker, celebrity, and interviewer/narrator roles can be combined as independent roles. When the data in Table I were analyzed with this framework, there was a significant association between the gender of the central figure and the role portrayed,  $\chi^2 = 95.62$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Male models were portrayed as independent more often than female models were (57.8% vs. 28.6%). As a large

**Table II.** Relationship Between Gender of Central Figure and Marital Status

	Percentage of Men ( <i>N</i> = 469)	Percentage of Women ( <i>N</i> = 643)
Married	20.0	33.5
Unmarried	19.0	44.3
Not identified	61.0	22.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Note.  $\chi^2 = 174.82$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.396$ .

number of female central figures belonged to the "other" category (33.9%), the role data were re-analyzed without this category to see whether it affected the results; however, the results were still significant,  $\chi^2 = 71.60$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Compared to 43.3% of female central figures, 73.0% of male central figures played independent roles. This finding is in keeping with traditional gender role stereotyping.

There was a significant association between gender and marital status,  $\chi^2 = 174.82$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq .001$  (see Table II). Female characters were more likely than male characters to be portrayed as unmarried, which supports Hypothesis 6. The most interesting finding of this analysis is that 61.0% of the male central characters were not identifiable in terms of marital status, but 77.8% of the female central characters had an identifiable marital status. Of those women, 33.5% were married, and 44.3% were unmarried. At the same time, only 19.0% of the men were identified as unmarried. This finding might have been influenced by a higher number of male than female voice-overs. Therefore, this finding was retested, excluding voice-overs of both male and female central figures, because all voice-overs were coded as unidentified marital status. Without voice-overs, however, the result was still statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = 157.38$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq .001$  (see Table III). Whereas 50.9% of male central figures' marital statuses were not identified, 49.1% of female central figures were depicted as unmarried.

**Table III.** Relationship Between Gender of Central Figure and Marital Status (Voice-over Excluded)

	Percentage of Men ( <i>N</i> = 469)	Percentage of Women ( <i>N</i> = 643)
Married	25.2	37.1
Unmarried	23.9	49.1
Not identified	50.9	13.8
Total	100.0	100.0

Note.  $\chi^2 = 157.38$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.406$ .

Hypothesis 7 dealt with the types of arguments (scientific vs. non-scientific) used by female central characters. There was no significant association between the gender of a central figure and type of argument,  $\chi^2 = 5.45$ ,  $df = 2$ , *ns*. Thus, Hypothesis 7 was not supported. Both male and female central figures were likely to use non-scientific arguments for the products they represented.

Hypothesis 8 was supported. We found a significant association between the gender of a central figure and the product type,  $\chi^2 = 26.14$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Although the percentage of men was well balanced between technical and non-technical product types (44.8% vs. 55.2%), women were more likely to represent non-technical products (70.1%) than to represent technical (29.9%) products. This finding also is in keeping with traditional gender role stereotyping.

Hypothesis 9 dealt with the basis of credibility of the central characters. Female characters were less likely than male characters to be portrayed as product authorities,  $\chi^2 = 49.98$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p \leq .001$ , which supports our hypothesis. Whereas the majority of both men and women were depicted as product users, the percentage of female central figures was 20% higher than the percentage of male central figures in this category. In addition, 26.2% of the men and only 14.2% of the women were portrayed as product authorities. Once again, this finding is in keeping with traditional gender role stereotyping.

The last hypothesis dealt with analysis of the association between the gender of a central figure and the background. The results were significant,  $\chi^2 = 86.20$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p \leq .001$  (see Table IV). Female characters were more likely than male characters to appear with children in the background. Therefore, Hypothesis 10 was supported. Furthermore, although both men and women were likely to ap-

pear in advertisements without anyone else in the background, women were more likely than men to have no background (50.7% vs. 39.4%). Each gender was likely to be associated with others of the same gender when background models were used. When children were present in the background, female central characters were more likely than male characters to be present in the foreground. However, it is interesting that men were not likely to appear in the background (5.3%) when female models were in the foreground. The percentage of female models in the background (9.6%) when men were in the foreground was greater.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, when we compared the results of this study with content analysis results from previous studies conducted in the United States and many other countries, we found similar stereotypes of women. One exception to this statement pertains to the gender of central characters. Most past studies have indicated that male models outnumbered female models in television advertisements, except for studies done in Mexico, France, and Kenya (Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Gilly, 1988; Mwangi, 1996). For instance, 67.1% of central figures in Portugal television advertisements were men (Neto & Pinto, 1998). In the present study, 42.8% of central figures in Korean television advertisements were men, and 57.8% were women. This finding indicates that advertisements use more female models than male models overall on Korean television networks. However, this result does not indicate a true portrayal of women in Korean society, although it broke the traditional image of male dominance in representations overall. In terms of age, unlike some studies in which young female characters dominated (Furnham, Babitzkow, et al., 2000; Gilly, 1988; Neto & Pinto, 1998), there was a little difference between women under 30 and over 30, although male characters were less likely than female characters to be portrayed as young. Moreover, there was one other area that indicated a non-stereotypical image of gender in Korea. There was no significant difference for an argument type between male and female characters. Therefore, there were multiple representations of gender in some images in Korean television advertising.

However, in most cases, the representations of women in Korean television advertising were not much different from those in other countries.

**Table IV.** Relationship between Gender of Central Figure and Background

	Percentage of Men ( $N = 469$ )	Percentage of Women ( $N = 643$ )
Mostly female	9.6	9.0
Mostly male	17.5	5.3
Mixed	29.4	20.2
Children	4.1	14.8
No background	39.4	50.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Note.  $\chi^2 = 86.20$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.278$ .

Women were portrayed as young, as nurturing children, and as at home. Preparing meals, doing house chores, and nurturing children were the main depiction of women in television advertising. Although men appeared less frequently than women in Korean television advertising, they showed more dominance than women did in terms of authority figures, voice-overs, or appearing frequently in business settings. Moreover, men were more likely than women to represent technical products in advertising. Women also were more likely to appear in the background when a male central figure was in the foreground, but the opposite situation rarely occurred. This indicates that men belong in a dominant role.

Most recent studies did not code for marital status, except for Gilly (1988), who compared marital status in commercials in Mexico, Australia, and United States. However, Gilly (1988) did not find any significant association between marital status and gender of characters in those countries. When we analyzed Korean television advertising, we found that the marital status of women was significantly more likely to be identified than was the marital status of men. This is consistent with portraying women as younger than men. Advertisers seemed to believe that women are more attractive when they were young and unmarried. Williamson (1978) argued that "Sex becomes a referent system, always hinted at, referred to, in innuendo, double entendre, or symbolism: but never raw" (p. 120). Therefore, "unmarried" can be interpreted as being "available." As previous researchers have claimed that women in advertising are portrayed as sex objects (Allan & Coltrane, 1996; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Ganahl et al., 2003; McArthur & Resko, 1975), one can argue that young (i.e., unmarried) female characters are sexually suggestive.

The representation of gender roles in advertising seems to be limited. Based on our findings, as well as those of previous studies, Korean advertisers are only portraying some aspects of gender roles. The commercials reinforce certain dimensions and ignore the diversity of current gender roles, although there is no proof that such images sell more products. Moreover, some researchers have found that the use of stereotypical images could discourage some consumers from buying the products (Caballero et al., 1989; Callcott & Phillips, 1996; Jaffe & Berger, 1994). Stereotypical images in advertising are not necessarily misrepresentations of the real world, but they are certainly limited representation. We have found a few limited stereotypes in Korean advertis-

ing. First, female models in advertising are young and unmarried. If they are married, their main occupations are traditional women's work, such as doing house chores and nurturing children. Male models represent roles related to business. Second, male models exercise authority to persuade the audience to buy products. Moreover, women are placed in the background when a male central figure is present, though the opposite situation is unlikely to occur. Third, female models are portrayed more frequently than male models in advertising, but when it comes to persuading the audience with authority, male models are more likely to appear.

Although television viewers often claim that commercials do not affect them in negative ways (Gunther & Thorson, 1992), repeated images in television advertising may have already created a "mainstreaming effect," as suggested by cultivation theory. Television has the power to cultivate people to have the same views of the world (Gerbner et al., 1994), for example, stereotypical views of gender roles in our society. In other words, the mainstreaming effect reduces cultural and political differences among television viewers. Studies have shown that heavy television viewing may influence children's perceptions of behaviors and psychological characteristics associated with gender (Frueh & McGhee, 1975; McGhee & Frueh, 1980), and Schreiber and Boyd (1980) found that heavy viewers of television commercials among the elderly were more likely than light viewers to perceive characters (e.g., the elderly) in commercials as realistic (i.e., mainstreaming effect). It may not be advertisers' full responsibility to reflect statistically accurate images of our society. However, the burden of responsibility is on the advertisers when they fail to reflect the rapid changes in such stereotypes in our society.

Because we analyzed only commercials from prime-time television, we might not be able fully to reflect commercials in other time periods. Furthermore, because most past studies excluded all repeat advertisements, and we included them, the results of our study might not be directly comparable with those from past studies. Nevertheless, within the context of cultivation theory, we believe that repeat impressions are extremely important and should be included. It must also be remembered that the various studies referred to earlier obviously were conducted in different countries, and different countries have different cultural expectations and norms. However, because we used established categories and methods, some comparisons are certainly warranted.



As noted, the present study certainly cannot demonstrate negative social consequences from the stereotypes that were found—and the same is likewise true of every content analysis study—yet the possibility of negative social consequences does exist. Future studies will be needed to explore these possible consequences. For example, future researchers might measure the success or failure of using stereotypes in advertising. Do stereotypes sell more? Do consumers remember the commercials better? Future researchers have an opportunity to document improvements in gender role representations in advertising over time. This would be in keeping with the broader framework of media cultivation theory.

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