The Mass Marketing of Inequality: Perpetuating Female Subservience One Schema at a Time

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Abstract

Social injustice toward women continues to permeate every institutional and interpersonal domain in societies all around the world. And while experts, dedicated to feminist ideals, work dutifully to reduce and eliminate barriers to female equality—changes in social policy and structure will ultimately fail until, and unless, the female psyche is unshackled from the strategically induced, schematic confines of socialized inferiority and servitude. This paper will identify and disclose some of the ways in which tactics employed by American mass-market media establish and maintain superficial, subservient self-concepts in the female psychology across the life span. From infancy through aging, mass marketing campaigns target the female mindset with messages that frame concrete degrees of sexual, domestic and economic servitude with symbolic images of increased power, independence and effectuality. Employing the use of critical content analysis, this paper demonstrates examples of how wording, color, imagery and context are utilized by market media to thwart the advancement of female equality from the "inside-out". The foundation and premise of this perspective is to emphasize that formal efforts to discriminate against women will become increasingly unnecessary, as females unwittingly internalize, adopt and aspire to compliance with the subservient roles assigned to them by mass-marketing campaigns. In effect, women have become consumers of marketing strategies that socialize the female psychology into an unjust and inequitable schematic representation of self—thereby ensuring the perpetuation of inter-generational inequality.

Introduction

 "None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe that they are free" (Goethe)

Social injustice toward women continues to permeate every institutional and interpersonal domain in societies all around the world. And while experts, dedicated to feminist ideals, work dutifully to reduce and eliminate barriers to female equality—changes in social policy and structure will ultimately fail until, and unless, the female psyche is unshackled from the strategically induced, schematic confines of socialized inferiority and servitude.

From infancy through aging, the American female population falls prey to an unrelenting barrage of mass-marketing campaigns that saturate the female psychology with messages that frame concrete degrees of sexual, domestic and economic servitude with symbolic images of increased power, independence and effectuality. Through the use of colors schemes, wording, products, contexts and imagery, women are socialized to internalize, adopt and aspire to subservient roles assigned to them by mass-marketing campaigns—thereby thwarting the advancement of female equality from the "inside-out".

As females unwittingly comply with the gender-role expectations, as presented and encouraged by mass-market media, traditional and explicit methods of formal discrimination become increasingly unnecessary—as women are shaped into willing and eager participants in their own subjugation. In effect, women have become consumers of marketing strategies that

socialize the female psychology into an unjust and inequitable schematic representation of self—thereby ensuring the perpetuation of inter-generational inequality—one schema at a time.

Theoretical Foundations
Ultimately, it will not matter how many theories we espouse, or social policies we enact—as a woman will not voluntarily walk through a door of opportunity unless she *perceives* the inherent value and social acceptability in crossing its threshold. In order to better understand what social psychological dynamics may contribute to the perceptual development of female inferiority and inequality, certain theoretical models must be examined.

Schematic Frameworks
In essence, it isn't so much reality, as our *perception* of reality that governs our thoughts, feelings and behaviors. And our perceptions are largely dictated by the schematic frameworks we have accumulated throughout our years of experience. A *schema* may be defined as a cognitive, physiological structure or network that is formed by experience—and once formed—serves to influence our perceptions of all future experience.

In accordance with the seminal theoretical views of Locke (1690), children begin their life journeys with an *empty slate* in terms of social understanding and the assignment of meaning and value towards themselves and the world around them. However, with time and experience, this blank, cognitive slate accumulates knowledge that forms the basis of preconceived notions and expectations—in other words—schematic frameworks. "As structured knowledge that we bring to everyday perceptions, schemas emphasize our active construction of reality" (Fiske & Taylor 1991, 99).

As a cognitive structure of neural networks and pathways, schemas aid in our ability to interpret our world and, consequently, determine our conduct in relation to it. In the most elementary sense, the purpose and function of schematic frameworks allow us to:
1) identify and categorize stimuli
2) evaluate stimuli on a continuum of positive/negative outcomes
3) form a basis of prediction, expectation and behavioral control

Take, for example, a young child who has no prior knowledge or experience with a hot stove. When asked about this object, a parent is likely to *identify* it as a "stove" and *categorize* it as a "kitchen appliance". If the child should burn his/her hand on the stove, an immediate *evaluation* will be rendered (in this case negative)—leading the child to formulate the schematic *expectation* that hot stoves are painful—resulting in the avoidance of future behavioral contact.

As applied to the study of gender schemas, children begin to formulate *gendered identities* as early as 18 months of age, and by age 7 have fully achieved the notion of *gender constancy*—the realization that classification by biological sex is fixed and unchanging (Yoder 1999). And while most young children are able to fully discern their personal identities and social categorizations as either male or female—the remaining schematic representations of evaluations and expectations are influenced and derived via the process of social learning.

Social Learning, Affiliation Needs and Social Identity
When we want to know what we "look" like, we may look into a mirror at the reflection of our physical image. But if we want to know what we "are" like, in terms of personal value and worth, we look to the reactions of others. These *reflected appraisals* (Shrauger & Schoeneman

1979) represent a social mirror whereby we gain positive or negative feedback as to the appropriateness and social acceptability of our attitudes and behaviors.

Because humans are social animals, we are motivated by the need for affiliation, social acceptance and belonging (Maslow, 1970). And the degree to which we are responded to with rewards (acceptance) or punishments (rejection) often dictates and guides the development of our own schematic representations of self (i.e., self-concept and self-esteem). "Everyone is motivated to create and maintain the highest self-esteem possible…people's self-concepts develop as they see themselves reflected in the actions of significant others" (Schlenker, 1980, 329)

Therefore, in an effort to maximize the rewards of social acceptance and the maintenance of a positive self-image, we tend to align our thoughts, feelings and behaviors with those of others. Through this process of *social learning* (Dollard and Miller, 1941; Bandura, 1962), we utilize others as role models and fashion our own conduct in accordance with what is deemed "socially acceptable" by way of imitation. "One of the most important classes of cues in the social learning situation is the behavior of others, whether that behavior is directed at the subject or merely occurs in his presence" (Shaw and Costanzo 1982, 45).

In connecting these concepts to the mass marketing of inequality, it's important to emphasize that the social influence exerted by the presence of others can be realized in both actual, as well as implied, contexts (Allport, 1985). Therefore the live presence of others *and* the presence of "virtual" human characterizations on television, film or print media may all qualify as sources of social learning about the self and others.

The Mere Exposure Effect
A social psychological dynamic known as the *mere exposure effect* (Zajonc, 1968) has demonstrated that the more frequently a message is communicated—the more favorable, acceptable and normalized it becomes. "Repeated exposure to an object leads to a greater liking of it—familiarity leads to positive feelings. The advertising industry certainly seems to follow this principle—new products are announced in a flurry of repetitious, attention-grabbing, commercials. Presumably, if consumers are familiar with a product's name, then they may feel positively toward it and be more likely to buy it", (Baron & Graziano 1991, 206).

But what consumers are encouraged to "buy" through repetitive, implicit messaging is far greater than the item being explicitly sold in the mass-marketing of products. Consumers are *also* being sold a steady diet of gendered attitudes, beliefs, social expectations, lifestyles and behaviors.

Cognitive Dissonance and the Need for Balance
Drawing upon the theories of *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957) and *balance* (Heider, 1958), it appears as though humans have a *need* for cognitive consistency. Established schemas—formulated by years of repeated exposure to socially modeled and sanctioned expectations, become deeply entrenched, and eventually serve as a type of "autopilot" mechanism for processing information. This often results in our blind acceptance of familiar messages—while rejecting, out of hand, notions that contradict or challenge our preconceptions.

When faced with information that is unfamiliar, or in opposition to our schematic expectations, we are cast outside of our cognitive comfort zones—creating a dissonant and uncomfortable psychological state. In order to reduce or eliminate this incongruous sensation, we actively seek out ways to restore our equilibrium (peace of mind). This drive toward dissonance

reduction often results in the reaffirmation of the familiar beliefs systems, attitudes and behaviors we have come to accept as "reality" (i.e., a return to the peripheral, "autopilot" state of schematic processing).

Because our motivation to reduce or avoid dissonance is so powerful, we may opt to dismiss conflicting, albeit valid, messages entirely—in an effort to avoid engaging in critical (central-route) thought and reasoning. "When any mode of reducing dissonance is available, "stopping thinking" will be the preferred mode; that is, the person will prefer to passively forget about the dissonance or actively suppress it" (Hardyck & Kardusch 1968, 226). This propensity clearly sets the stage for the mindless acceptance of gendered messages in a market economy - where thinking "outside the box" is regarded as an unpleasant and distasteful experience.

Bridging Theory and Application
Having touched on the models of schematic representations, social learning, mere exposure and the needs for cognitive balance, social affiliation and the maintenance of positive self-identity - how might these theories relate to the mass-marketing of female inequality? Taken alone, any one of these social dynamics may not, in and of itself, be overly problematic. However, when viewed in combination—the cumulative and interactive effects suggests grave and debilitating consequences for society, as a whole, and women in particular.

It is estimated that the average American child views over 20,000 television commercials per year (A.C. Nielsen Co. 2007), with the average American watching over 1,500 hours of television in the same time frame. And, the average high-school student "spends more time with television than interacting with parents or teachers" (Aronson 2008, 110). Moreover, findings indicate that those spending this much time viewing television "perceive women as having more limited abilities and interests than men" (Aronson, 2008, 111). Since television programs and advertisements represent only a fraction of the mass-market industry (i.e., movies, magazines, catalogs, video games, web-sites, etc.), there's overwhelming evidence to suggest that continual exposure to market-media bears a direct and profound association to the internalization and acceptance of gendered inequality.

There are those that may argue that market media simply reflect pre-existent cultural dynamics and desires - rather than creating, maintaining and perpetuating stereotypical attitudes and social divisiveness. However, from a social psychological standpoint, there is cause for concern that the spin placed on gender-marketed messages constitutes a form of social propaganda defined as "the systematic propagation of a given doctrine" (Aronson, 2008, 72), and that "selective emphasis puts media in the position of determining subsequent events—not simply reporting them" (Aronson 2008, 66).

In synthesizing the aforementioned theoretical perspectives into a cohesive model of application—we piece together a puzzle that forms a disturbing picture of market-induced gender inequality. In conducting a content analysis of the contexts, colors, wording and imagery marketed to females (and males), one finds a striking and unsettling trend lurking just below the surface of many seemingly harmless and wholesome advertising campaigns and products. Presented as family friendly, benign and socially desirable, many products are marketed as concrete, attractive and practical necessities. Symbolically, however, the explicit and implicit messages associated with these products represent toxic psychological catalysts of female subservience and subjugation—while promoting male power, dominance and entitlement.

Because mass media and marketing represent primary cultural institutions, they constitute sources of "authority" to many consumers (especially children). And messages contained in

programs, movies, print media and the product industry trigger the conformity of attitudes and behaviors via the process of *internalization* (Kelman, 1961), whereby consumers adopt and regard these messages as "true and correct" reflections of their social realities. It can also be argued that consumers perceive market media as sources of *legitimate*, *expert* and *referent* power (French & Raven, 1959)—lending further credibility and influential prowess to gendered marketing strategies.

In summary, we form *schematic representations* of self and others through the *social learning* mechanisms of observation and imitation—with market media comprising an implied source of social modeling. We learn to assign positive *evaluations* and *expectations* to those behaviors and characteristics that reap positive feedback, acceptance and appraisals from others—while avoiding associations with factors that lead to negative social reinforcements (i.e., a little girl is encouraged to play with baby-dolls—whereas, a little boy is not).

Because of our tendency to gain and maintain a *positive self-concept*, we naturally gravitate toward those behaviors that are sanctioned and approved by society. And due to our strong need for *acceptance* and *affiliation*, we are likely to avoid any behavior that threatens social ridicule and rejection.

The vast majority of gendered messages marketed in mass media reflect strict and inequitable distinctions between what is "acceptable and expected" behavior for males vs. females. And when considering the tremendous volume of messages that saturate our market economy—the *mere exposure* to such constant and consistent gender differentiations leads to sweeping, cultural rates of acceptance and favorability. This dynamic is so prevalent, that those faced with conflicting messages (regardless of how valid they may be), will likely reject or dismiss counter-evidence in an effort to avoid the *cognitive dissonance* and *imbalance* that will inevitably ensue.

Perhaps the most challenging and insidious aspect of this mode of mass socialization into gendered inequality is the underlying subtlety by which the messages "innocently" seep into our collective consciousness—bypassing the radar of critical reasoning and central route processing. Let's not forget that *gender constancy* represents the awareness that sexual designation is fixed and unchanging. From this standpoint, it's a natural extension in peripheral reasoning to conclude that, if biological sex is considered a permanent distinction—so too, are the roles and social expectations associated with male and female behavior (i.e. boys will be boys, etc.).

The Three Primary Messages of Female Inequality
When considering the mass-marketing of female inequality, there appear to be three primary messages that are continually communicated to the female consumer, both explicit and implied, with a suspiciously strategic intent to manipulate the female psychology into accepting and adopting subservient roles with the effect of keeping women "in their place".

Beginning in infancy and continuing throughout adult life, the pattern reflects consistency across a wide range of marketing venues. From bedroom decor, clothing and toys to greeting cards, magazine covers and anti-aging products, women are repeatedly told that they are:
1) weak, passive, dependent and subservient and subordinate to males
2) primarily responsible for all domestic/childcare related tasks
   (regardless of, and in addition to, full-time employment outside of the home)
3) to embrace a constant preoccupation with body image, fashion, youth and beauty—with an emphasis on the servicing of male sexual fantasy.

Message #1—Diminutive vs. Superlative Status
We are all too familiar with the stereotypically gendered, pink and blue color schemes marketed to boys and girls. But a closer look reveals some profound implicit messages contained in the usage of these colors, as well as the images and wording that accompany them.

The messages begin in infancy (and in many cases, during gestation)—with girls' nursery décor emphasizing pastel pinks with kittens, butterflies and bunnies. And while the male nursery may be pastel blue—frequently the décor utilizes bold colors—with images of fire trucks, race cars, airplanes or dinosaurs. At first glance, the casual consumer may not detect the underlying meaning that infiltrates the schematic representations being formulated in the mind of the male and female infant. But, however precognizant, the messages plant the seeds of inequity and mark the beginning of the road to differential life aspirations and opportunities.

Overall, the differences in color and imagery directly translate into the internalization of superlative vs. diminutive status on the basis of biological sex. Kittens, for example, are delicate, weak, passive, harmless, soft and gentle. In contrast, dinosaurs, trucks, airplanes and race cars are dynamic, forceful, action-oriented and powerful.

In examining infant clothing, one example showed a male's jumper with the image of a duck holding a bat and baseball with a caption that read, "Goal Oriented". On face value, one might surmise that the word "goal" references sports. However, because adult males are generally found to possess an overall *achievement orientation*, as opposed to the *fear of achievement* orientation found in females (Horner, 1970), one must consider the breadth, scope and consequence of the message being communicated.

In contrast, the pale-pink jumper for the female infant donned the phrase, "Daddy's *Little* Princess" - with the word "little" emphasized in a larger font and bolder shade of pink. This message promotes a combination of diminutive characteristics in the female psychology. Not only is the female being labeled as male "property" (denoting "ownership" by the father)—but also accentuates her diminutive status as an individual by calling special attention to the word "little".

In comparing the wording and imagery in clothing for toddlers, the message of gender inequality becomes more explicit. In one comparison, a blue, male toddler's shirt read, "Big Lad in Training", while a pink, female's shirt read, "Mini Me". Although the market for these garments were three year old children (with little actual difference in body size)—the printed message clearly emphasizes the superlative and diminutive status of males and females, respectively (see Table 1 for examples of other comparisons).

TABLE 1   **Examples of Marketing Female Inequality through**
               Wording and Imagery in Children's Clothing Styles

Wording	
Males	**Females**
Top Dog	Show Girl
Big Lad in Training	Mini Me
Mr. Fix-It	My Daddy Can Fix Anything
Goal Oriented	Daddy's Little Princess
Out-Spoken	I Speak with my Smile & Listen with my Heart
Power Play	Peace & Love
Imagery	
Males	**Females**
Trucks	Kittens
Airplanes	Butterflies
Boats	Bunnies
Dinosaurs	Hearts
Gun/Weapons	Rainbows
Blasts/Bursts/Explosions	Glitter & Sequins
Bold/Dark Colors	Pastel Pinks & Purples
Super Heroes	Fairies/Disney Princesses

Source: Miscellaneous stock photos derived from online Google search for children's clothing images (2010).

In case after case, the qualitative content analysis revealed similar trends in gender-marketed messages—spawning and reinforcing the notion of female inferiority and ineffectuality. In a discount-store flyer, a little boy and girl were shown modeling rain coats and hats. The male's version mimicked a yellow fireman's uniform—while the female wore a bright pink, "kitty" design. When considering the ramifications of such imagery, one must take into account the heuristics that are unconsciously activated. The concept of "fireman" is typically associated with heroism, bravery and honor—whereas the concept of "kitten" triggers notions that are soft, gentle, cute and non-threatening. Is it really any wonder that females and males learn to conform to inequitable divisions of labor, power and opportunity?

Perhaps one of the most compelling examples in clothing messages included an explicit display of male power and entitlement with a stock-photo of a pre-teen boy's shirt that read: *If I like it—it's mine, If it's in my hand—it's mine, If it looks like mine—it's mine, If I think it's mine—it's mine, Everything else is mine"*. In contrast, unlike this egregious example of male dominance, messages targeted at females often reflect symbolic vs. concrete degrees of power and efficacy.

For example, one purple girl's tee-shirt donned a big, pink "Care Bear" with hearts and rainbows floating overhead. The bear in the image was dressed like a cheerleader holding pom-poms and the caption read "Girl Power!" And while the explicit words may appear to encourage girls to be powerful - the image's colors, context and design imply precisely the opposite. The title, "Care Bear" presumes that females are expected to assume the role of nurturer and caretaker. Hearts and rainbows are indicative of romantic fantasy and the cultural icon of

"cheerleader" conjures heuristic notions of scantily-clad, sexually objectified females whose primary function is to titillate and support the primary focal event of competitive male achievement.

The greeting card industry follows suit in framing superlative vs. diminutive messages targeted at males vs. females. One striking example was in the comparison between of two *American Greetings* birthday cards designed for grandchildren. The card designed for males reads, "*Some grandsons are athletes, some grandsons are scholars. Some work night and day to earn lots of dollars. Some are artistic, and some scientific…and some, like you grandson, are simply terrific!*" On face value, one cannot object to the validating and encouraging sentiments expressed in this card (complete with visuals of chemists and professors)—at least not until one reads the pink, glitter-laden, companion card designed for females, which reads, "*Granddaughter—What has 2 legs, 2 arms, a great, big smile and is very special? You are!*"

It doesn't take a social scientist to decipher the blatantly discriminatory flavor of these contrasting messages. On one hand, the male is being told that he can aspire to any number of successful, powerful, high-status positions—whereas the female is being congratulated for possessing limbs and teeth! And, in case it escaped your attention, make note of the word "*what*" in the opening phrase of the female's birthday card—once again, underscoring a dehumanized and objectified status.

One of the most powerful socializing agents in terms of the mass-marketing of gender inequality can be found in the realm of children's toys. Prior to age 3, toys targeted at infants and toddlers appear non-gender specific in terms of color schemes and activities. However, once children are pre-school age, the toys designed for boys and girls suddenly and drastically deviate. For the most part, male toys are designed around role-related activities involving war, violence, aggression and weaponry, as well as items involving athletic prowess, building, engineering and vehicles. Female toys fall into the primary domains of baby dolls, fashion dolls, make-up/fashion, and domestic tasks (cooking, cleaning, etc).

While we may be well aware of the stark and explicit contrast between fashion dolls and super-hero action figures, many of the more subtle, implicit messages denoting superlative vs. diminutive status can be found in the language used in the marketing of children's toys. Time and again, repetitive messages emphasizing the distinctions in power and purpose on the basis of sex permeate product labels and titles. As described in Table 2, nouns and adjectives associated with boy toys typically include denotations of power, strength, aggression and superlative size. But in stark contrast, girl toys are labeled with language associated with a variety of diminutives, softness, nurturance, preoccupation with physical attractiveness and fantasy.

TABLE 2   **Marketing Female Subservience through Wording Usage in Children's Toys**

Male Scripts	Female Scripts
Superlative, Active, Orientation on Power/Dominance	Diminutive, Nurturing, Orientation on Physical Attractiveness
Big Muscle Wheelie **King**	**Twinkle** Lights Cinderella Carriage
Rescue Heroes Action Fire Truck	**Baby Comfort** Doll Set
Mighty Machines Snowmobiles	**Polly Pocket** House of **Style**
Fix-it-up Johnny Tractor	**Petite** Miss Boutique
Battle-Ram Lego Set	**So Soft** My **Little** Pony
Laser **Command Pursuit** Set	**Glitter and Glow** Nail Salon
Dominator Radio Control	**Glamour** Girls Ranch
Battlized Power Rangers	Disney **Little Princess** Tea Cart
Attack Force Play Set	**Littlest** Pet Shop
B-Damen **Skill Challenge**	Strawberry **Short** Cake

Source: Mills Fleet Farm 2006 Toy and Gift Catalog, Appleton, Wisconsin.

In addition to the wording associated with the gendered marketing of children's toys, there are also striking differences in the production of televised toy commercials. Typically, toys marketed to boys are presented with fast-paced, hard-driving musical scores and frantic, kinetic imagery—showcasing active physicality and competitive interactions in outdoor settings. In contrast, commercials targeted at girls depict quiet, cooperative play in an indoor setting amid pink, flowery décor. More often than not, toy advertisements targeted toward girls involve play focused on fashion, childcare or domestic chores (cleaning, cooking, etc.), while male toys correspond to weaponry, aggression, competitiveness or interaction with machinery (remote control cars, racing sets, etc.).

These distinctions in context, presentation and focus promote assertiveness, activity, exploration and achievement in male children, while relegating girls to the narrow confines and security of their homes—thereby retarding the development of independence, assertiveness and achievement orientation in the female psychology.

Message #2—Females are Primarily Responsible for all Domestic/Childcare Related Tasks
The second pervasive and inescapable message relayed by mass-marketing is that females (regardless of age and status) are primarily responsible for all domestic and child-care related tasks. The "Susie Homemaker" image of the 1950's—reflecting a well-manicured, apron-wearing mother happily tending to her family's domestic needs—still permeates the world of contemporary, mass-market imagery. Although more than half a century has passed, even a casual glimpse of commercial advertising, product packaging, and toys marketed to little girls, still finds females as the exclusive proprietors of this domain.

In terms of marketing this message to young girls via the toy industry, we find no shortage of "easy-bake ovens", play kitchen sets, toy ironing boards, brooms, mops, and baby changing tables, bassinets and bath tubs. Even stuffed animals marketed to girls come complete with "care-taking" accessories like brushes, combs, and even Barbie, has now been issued a pooper-scooper (Mattel, Barbie and Tanner Play set). In fact, mass-marketing does such a good job of exclusively dedicating messages of domestic and caretaking responsibilities to female

children, that males are entirely absent in commercialized messages involving these products. In the rare instances where male children are present, they are typically seated at a play kitchen set being serviced by a female child.

The messages of exclusive responsibility continue into adulthood and throughout the mid-life and old age of female consumers. The vast majority of messages marketed (on screen, print media, and web-sites) depict females as the primary, if not sole, protagonist interacting with products associated with domestic and childcare related tasks. Perhaps most striking is the fact that the female models portrayed in these campaigns are happily engaged in their domestic duties—smiling and self-satisfied, as they complete their tasks with joy and efficiency.

He made it in the kitchen and ate it in the dining room. With Swiffer® WetJet®, both floors were clean before he was.

Figure 1. Marketing Messages depict females as happy, energetic domestic servants

However, while the marketing strategies have remained consistent over the last century—the realities of American women have not. Unlike the mid twentieth century, it is now estimated that upwards of 70% of women (ages 25-54) work full-time jobs outside of the home (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). In 1965, it was estimated that women took responsibility for 92% of domestic duties (Robinson, 1988). But decades later, in families where both the male and female work full-time jobs, findings reflect that women are still engaging in 80% of domestic and childcare responsibilities (Beckwith, 1992).

This profound inequity in the division of domestic labor has devastating effects on the psychology and well being of working women with families. "Women who are spouses, mothers and workers often are described as harried, overloaded, tired and burned out." (Chesler 1991, 179). Known as *role-overload* and *role-conflict*, women who internalize social expectations of

assuming primary responsibility for domestic duties—in addition to contributing financial support to the family—frequently find themselves overly stressed, fatigued, depressed and relationally resentful and dissatisfied (Yoder, 1999).

Yet, despite evidence to the contrary, toy marketing campaigns continue to depict domestic and child care tasks as fun, desirable and expected - as they exclusively target young girls who are impressionable and unsuspecting of the ill-fated destiny that lies ahead. And while adult women may come to realize the full and inequitable measure of shouldering the majority of household chores—they often find themselves plagued by the dissonance created by marketing messages that boast happy, energetic "super-mom" models that easily navigate the multiple roles of relationships, parenting, occupations *and* domestic management.

In many ways, the concrete advancements that women have accomplished over the last several decades in terms of economic, professional and political growth is systematically overshadowed by the mass-marketed, backlash campaigns of domestic servitude that keep females "bare-foot and pregnant"—if not in form—then certainly, in substance.

Figure 2. Media Toy Messages Market Housework as Fun to Females: But Reflect a Disconnect between Fantasy and Reality

Message #3—Females Should Embrace a Pre-occupation with Fashion, Body Image, Youth, Beauty and Sex Appeal
Judging from the mass-marketed messages targeting women and girls, it appears as though "sex appeal" is the prime female directive. Beginning as early as infancy, with the newly designed "baby high-heels" (Heelarious, 2008), and continuing through aging with the marketing of "anti-wrinkle" treatments—females are repeatedly encouraged, if not demanded, to pre-occupy themselves with body image, glamour, fashion, agelessness and overall physical attractiveness. But this marketed expectation is not crafted with the intent of good grooming habits and personal hygiene—but rather with a focus on the servicing of hetero-male sexual fantasy.

From the earliest "dress-up" fashions and make-up/hair-salon related toys to clothing fashions and magazine messages, the female psychology is molded to internalize and reflect a sexually objectified image—in both outward appearance and attitude. And as can be seen from the messages presented on childrens' toys and clothing—males and females are being socialized into inequitable representations of self and goal orientations. Male messages communicate gender roles that primarily focus on manipulating, dominating and molding their outward *environment* (bulldozers, building sets, weaponry), while female messages emphasize a directive to mold their outward *appearance* (make-up, fashion, etc.).

A qualitative assessment of the fashion-doll industry (i.e., Bratz Dolls, MGA Entertainment, 2006) reflects a deeply disturbing similarity between the highly sexualized poses, clothing and expressions of the dolls marketed to little girls and the soft-pornographic images featured in men's magazines (see Figure 3). Complete with prostitute-like fashions, pouty lips and seductive poses—these dolls prime the adaptation of sexualized objectification in female children as young as three years of age. One particularly disturbing segment of the Bratz campaign markets a line of "Baby Bratz" dolls to pre-schoolers. These dolls boast tiny and revealing halter tops with "thong" diapers.

Figure 3. Striking Similarities between Dolls Marketed to Female Children and Sexually Objectified Roles Marketed to Adult Women.

Beyond the priming exerted by the fashion doll industry, a review of clothing styles marketed to little girls, pre-teens, adolescents and women further instill the expectation of sexual objectification by limiting clothing options to items that are scanty, tight and revealing. Even clothing marketed to female toddlers boast similar designs.

Fashion magazines marketed to females of all ages reinforce this message by mandating the necessity for the female consumer to "please her man" and "maximize his pleasure in bed" by offering sex-tips and directives on the cover of every issue (i.e., Glamour, Cosmopolitan, Seventeen, etc.).

In line with messages that stimulate an over-preoccupation with body image, weight, breast size and fashion, mass-marketing targeted at females also utilizes fear-tactics associated with aging and unattractiveness. Marketing campaigns for anti-aging treatments (addressing women as young as 30 years of age) result, not only in record-breaking profits, but also self-esteem breaking schemas, as women of all ages attempt to fight a losing and unnecessary battle against the natural and inevitable process of maturation.

Taken in combination, these messages frame timeless youthfulness, glamour and sex appeal as supreme imperatives in the female psychology, and as such, distract women from concerning themselves with concrete and substantive degrees of economic, political and social equality. As long as women remain fearful of aging and lacking sex appeal, they will continue to succumb to the strategically induced "divide-and-conquer" strategies that market other women as relationship-threatening competitors. In essence, sex appeal and the ability to attract males, is marketed as a concrete, feminine power-base—when in reality it only serves to deepen female subjugation and sexual servitude.

Public Policy, Symbolic Sexism and Beyond
While some may argue that there's nothing inherently wrong with females aspiring to roles involving submissiveness, nurturance, domestication and sex appeal, the traits that are typically associated with social progress, achievement and success have little to do with adopting characteristics of smallness, caretaking, household chores and nail polish. The traits most often associated with high levels of performance in achievement settings (education, industry, politics, etc), correspond to one's capacity for assertiveness, independence, self-confidence, decisiveness and leadership.

From the premises outlined in this paper, one can clearly discern that the characteristics females are encouraged to adopt, internalize and maintain place them at a severe disadvantage in relation to social justice and gender equality. In fact, the inequity is so striking, when viewed through the lens of market-messaging, that I would pose it represents a violation of equal protection, due process and constitutional rights. Much like the famous "Doll Studies" (Clark & Clark, 1939) that documented the internalized and inferior self-concepts exhibited by black children in relation to whites as testimonial evidence in Brown v Board of Education (1954)—one could easily equate how the self-concepts of females also reflect internalized degrees of weakness, inferiority and servitude in relation to males.

"It is clear that the Negro child, by the age of five is aware of the fact that to be colored in contemporary society is a mark of inferior status. A child accepts as early as six, seven or eight the negative stereotypes about his own groups" (Clark & Clark, 1950). Like race, sex, too, is a biological determinant and involuntary primary social category. Judging from the dynamics formed through repetitive exposure to market messaging that socializes females into identities and roles of diminutive, domestic and sexual servitude—could we not simply interject the words "female" and "her" in place of the terms "Negro", "colored" and "his" in Clarks' assertion?

The question posed is an empirical one. When asked to anonymously jot down words or phrases describing male and female traits, 149 female college undergraduates clearly evidenced a profound, internalized recognition of inequitable traits and characteristics on the basis of sex—

using words such as "weak, inferior, submissive, dependent and small" when describing females—but "strong, dominant, independent, and leaders", when describing males.

The notable difference between the racial segregation of 20th century America and the contemporary mass-marketing of female inequality today is that the system of Jim Crowism utilized a method of concrete, formal public policy to subjugate people of color. In contrast, mass-marketing realizes the same effects on the psychologies of women—but through methods of symbolic sexism and discrimination—making for a more insidious, elusive and intangible foe of social justice.

In 1971, cigarette commercials were banned from American television to avoid the adverse social influence media exerted on the viewing audience (specifically children). However, contemporary data show that women are twice as likely as men to suffer from major depression—citing diminished self-esteem, role conflict and societal discrimination as primary causal agents– not to mention unprecedented rates of eating and anxiety disorders (Crawford & Unger, 2000).

This begs the question—why aren't we equally concerned that the messages marketed through mass-media involving the subjugation, domestic servitude and sexual objectification of women are causing substantial harm to the female psyche—restricting aspirations of equal opportunity and adversely affecting their quality of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

The time has come for public policy makers to turn a critical eye to the systematic and symbolically sexist mass-media campaigns that flood our market economy. Males and females represent the wings on the bird of humanity. As one is hindered—so is the bird's ability to fly.

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