WHERE’S THE BEEF? MASCULINITY, GENDER AND VIOLENCE IN FOOD ADVERTISING

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Does art reflect reality or does art construct reality? This thesis explores the ways in which food advertising perpetuates culturally defined expectations of masculinity and normalizes violence against women. Cultivation theory argues that advertising is a form of education about the social world. While advertising may not directly influence audiences, viewers will learn about the social world and their environment through the messages offered in advertisements (Rubie-Davies, Lui, & Lee 2013). Food advertisements highlight behaviors that are deemed inappropriate or violent in society, but the continuous use of these themes explains how normalized violence against women is accepted in today’s culture. Patriarchy is engrained into society and prevalent themes within food advertising perpetuates a male dominated world.

Using radical feminist theory and cultivation theory with the objectification of women this thesis identifies different forms of masculinity that are exploited throughout five categories of food advertising. The categories of advertisements include fast food, alcohol, snack food,
meat, and diet food advertising. These categories were analyzed through culturally defined
expectations of masculinity. These expectations include fragile masculinity, dominant
masculinity, and violent masculinity. These types of masculinity include stereotypes expected in
men. Fragile masculinity exploits men’s insecurities, whether that focuses on control of their
environment, women, or physical traits. Dominant masculinity exploits the idea that men want to
control and dominate women in their lives. This can be seen through physical position of women
in advertisements or a message that women are inferior. Violent masculinity exploits the idea
that women are lifeless objects to use. Violent masculinity uses the stereotype that men must be
violent and aggressive to be considered a man.

Thirty-five documents were collected and analyzed under this precedent. Nineteen of the
documents collected were advertisements that used messages of fragile masculinity to sell
products. Eleven of the documents collected were advertisements that used messages of
dominant masculinity. Five of the documents collected were advertisements that used messages
of violent masculinity. By marketing products through the exploitation of masculinity, food
advertisements are habitually instilling cultural stereotypes of masculine behavior. These
stereotypes limit men’s emotional expression, as well as their interaction with others to
aggression and dominance. These stereotypes of masculinity also place women in positions of
subordination. Three positions of women identified in food advertisements were *The Tease*, *The
Piece of Meat*, and *The Conquered* (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016). Each of these
positions are physical, but they also contribute to how women are viewed and the opinion of
women’s places in society.

This thesis compares the type of masculinity used in food advertisements and the position
that women are given. The advertisements that exploited themes of violent masculinity placed
women in only one of the three positions, *The Conquered*. Women were placed in the position of the Conquered for five of the advertisements, all of which depicted direct forms of violence. These advertisements were playing into a stereotype that presents men as violent and sexually aggressive toward women, even without consent. Several advertisements were using aspects of rape culture to market and sell products. Bud Light used a message from rape culture to present their product as fun and free, explaining “The perfect beer for removing ‘no’ from your vocabulary for the night.”

This research found that food advertisements are guilty of normalizing violence against women to promote and market products. This normalization is completed through the exploitation of masculine stereotypes that define men as violent, controlling predators. Food advertising does not directly influence viewers, but cultivates an idea of how women deserve to be objectified or treated in society.
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Introduction

Mainstream popularity of the issues revolving around gender specifically allows for the investigation of cultural gender traits to take full force. Since the defining separation of gender and biological sex, the access to understanding how gender plays a significant role in everyday life has exploded. While this is a more recent recognition of freedom within the popular conversation about gender, gender roles and sexuality have been exploited in mainstream spotlights for decades. Advertisements of food are some of the leading ways in which veiled messages about gender and sexuality are experienced by the public eye. When exploring popular print and commercial advertisements for food brands and restaurants the use of sexuality is apparent, but the gender stereotypes that follow leave audiences with messages that many may not have consciously absorbed. Selling of food uses overt messaging that play into the cultural gender stereotypes and expectations that are most popular at the time. Using masculinity and femininity, specific advantages allow for individuals to experience a social setting that is not only expected, but perpetuated through food advertisements. The following research asks the question of whether food advertisements take advantage of what has been deemed fragile masculinity and perpetuates sexual violence against women. To further understand the issues surrounding gendering food and sexuality, prior research must be addressed.

Defining Gender

The definition of gender has transformed since the beginning of research surrounding humans’ biological sex and ties to gender. The perception that sex and gender are separate entities in a human’s experience has recently been an accepted idea in the western world. While there are examples of gender being seen as a culturally influenced characteristic, most of the global north applied gender to the same categories of sex. West and Zimmerman outline that
gender has categorically sound options and the western world follows these defined categories regularly (1987). While the definition of gender has changed even since West and Zimmerman’s landmark contribution to the understanding of gender, the categories of male and female are the basis for popular definition of gender.

West and Zimmerman begin their understanding of gender by defining three core concepts around human experiences of sex and gender; sex, sex category, and gender. Sex, which they define as “a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males.” (1987:127). According to West and Zimmerman, sex can be attributed to genitalia or chromosomes at birth (1987). Sex category is the placement into a category classified by the previously defined, sex. While sex and sex category may align, “categorization is established and sustained by the socially required identificatory displays that proclaim one’s membership in one or the other category.” (West and Zimmerman 1987:127). The interactions of other may help placement into a sex category, simply because an individual’s interest in one sex category does not have to align with the definition of sex. Sex category is the everyday application based off sex criteria. West and Zimmerman’s understanding of gender may blossom from one’s identification with sex categories, but gender “is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category.” (1987:127). Gender is the way in which an individual bolsters the ideas around their recognized sex category. West and Zimmerman’s exploration of gender began with the idea of doing gender, “Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological.” (1987:137).
By exploring Goffman’s definition of gender displays, West and Zimmerman discuss the likelihood of gender being based on interactions. The expected exposure of gender through interactions begins the rooted ideology that gender is a natural experience of humans. Gender is not simply a character trait of an individual, but the interactions with others in specific environments. This display offers interactions that can be defined as masculine or feminine (West and Zimmerman 1987:130). These traits are culturally defined, but Goffman discusses the concept of masculinity and femininity as a social option. Pulling from his theory surrounding dramaturgy, Goffman explains gendered behaviors are acted out in certain environments as if they are performances. Applying dramaturgy to the idea of gender suggests that gendered characteristics are defined socially and rooted through social interaction, “In his view, gender is a socially scripted dramatization of the culture's idealization of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well schooled in the presentational idiom.” (West and Zimmerman 1987:130). While this perspective is important in the way in which gender can be seen throughout social interactions, this focus tends to be much too minuscule and blurs the fact that gender’s influence is everywhere in the society.

West and Zimmerman (1987) continue to discuss the presentation of gender by looking at Garfinkel’s case study of Agnes. As a trans individual, Agnes had to direct herself through life in a way that followed the expectations of gender. By recognizing the differences between stereotypical male and female behaviors, Agnes’ experience of life heightened her awareness of gender expectations. “Agnes faced an ongoing task of being a woman-something beyond style of dress (an identificatory display) or allowing men to light her cigarette (a gender display).” (West and Zimmerman 1987:134). Masculine behavior and feminine behavior are a defined action by most individuals. While acting masculine or feminine does not take away sex or sex category, it
blurs the line of gender if one behaves out of the norm for their sex category. Within gender, the defining characteristics of being a man or woman are listed alongside the idea of masculinity and femininity. These norms that align with gender expectations create a sense of categorization in behavior as well. Men behave in a masculine way and women behave in a feminine way. The commonplace idea often placed on young women of ladylike behavior is an effect of the gendering of actions. This is one of the reasons West and Zimmerman couldn’t fully delve into Goffman’s ideas of gender appearance simply being a result of interactions between individuals. The influence of gender weighs heavily on the actions and social world within single interactions, but also society’s understanding of human behavior.

Gender expectations are not only how behaviors are defined, but also the way in which ideas are presented. Advertisements and cultural references are also scrutinized with a very gendered perspective. West and Zimmerman identify gendering social worlds through not only humans, but the consumption of popular culture. The issue is addressed during a time period where social media and popular culture were less available to the broad public. Their analysis of popular culture’s influence has only since intensified, (1987:135):

> Popular culture abounds with books and magazines that compile idealized depictions of relations between women and men. Those focused on the etiquette of dating or prevailing standards of feminine comportment are meant to be of practical help in these matters. However, the use of any such source as a manual of procedure requires the assumption that doing gender merely involves making use of discrete, well-defined bundles of behavior that can simply be plugged into interactional situations to produce recognizable enactments of masculinity and femininity.

An emphasis on popular culture’s perpetuation of gender norms provides insight into the way in which gender is seen in society. The categories of men and women are usually the only options,
following sex categories, and stepping outside of that can create social conflict. One of the most recent stepping stones for those who do not consider themselves a part of the structured gender options is the relevance of transgender issues. The national conversation surrounding gender issues has allowed and opened doors for trans individuals who once felt their voice was silenced by cultural expectations of gender.

West and Zimmerman’s defining characteristics of sex, sex category, and gender have been landmark ideas within sociological thought throughout the last several decades. Even though their work was established in 1987, their conceptualization continues to be discussed by those interested and researching gender studies. Added contributions have been made to further explain the experience humans have with gender and sex. While much of West and Zimmerman’s work is still reveled by sociological discussions, the ways in which society functions alongside gender is shifting in certain ways. Cultural gender norms are still applicable to the United States and continue to influence the way individuals behave in their social settings, but gender norms are laxed compared to even the last decade. The issue of trans rights created a conversation that was silently building. A response to West and Zimmerman’s understanding of “doing gender” details the hardships that transgender individuals have when addressing gender in a static way. Connell helps define transgender individuals through her assessment of West and Zimmerman’s definition of gender. She simply defines transgender as an individual who rejects their sex category (2010:33). This introduces some of the new wave ideas surrounding gender and cultural expectations of categorized men and women.

Connell suggests that the defining characteristics of West and Zimmerman’s work, while important, requires the identification of trans individuals by “undoing gender” (2010:32). Her assumption is that transpeople disrupt the understanding of sex, sex category, and gender. This
disruption offers the idea that undoing gender or redoing gender is pertinent. West and Zimmerman believed that undoing gender was not possible, but redoing gender wasn’t out of the question. The trends of trans individuals has significantly increased the possibility of gender behaviors to cross the line that defines culturally categorized men and women. The rights of trans individuals are blossoming, while also contributing to the less restrictive gender expectations placed on individuals in the United States.

*Understanding Masculinity and Femininity*

The boundaries of gender roles are being pushed and questioned by a broader array of individuals. Attitudes toward restrictive gender roles are lessening, we see this through the current social movements; #metoo, Time’s Up, Black Lives Matter, and the Women’s March on Washington. Women are spending more time expressing their frustrations with corrupt social systems that limit their opportunities throughout their lives. The movements question the roles and characteristics women are prescribed because of their gender. While this is helping women, specifically in the United States, gain a voice, men’s expression of gender still has restraining guidelines. The understanding of femininity and masculinity as characteristics that align with gender creates rigid expectations for someone of a specific gender to behave in a feminine or masculine way. Many ways in which society expels these characteristics is through the expression of emotion. Studies over the past several decades show that men are less likely to openly express emotions (Parkins 2012:46-7). Previous research established that face to face interactions display less emotional expression by men compared to women. Parkins’ study approached this knowledge with added detail, as she explored how men express emotion through technology. By researching how men expressed emotion through Facebook and Twitter, Parkins found comparable results. Men are less expressive than women, even through non- face to face
interaction (Parkins 2012). This is because expressive behaviors, aside from anger, have been deemed a feminine trait. The strength and sturdiness that is expected of masculine men limits the way in which they are able to interact with other people.

The development and application of feminine and masculine traits being associated with gender begins at very early ages. Davidson and Gordon discuss developmental models that explain children’s understanding of their gender expectations (1979:14-7). The first model mentioned was developed by Kohlberg and highlighted that the way children learn their gender identity is similar to the way in which they recognize and categorize physical objects (Davidson and Gordon 1979:14). Children apply their learned gender norms because they want to be rewarded for recognizing their position, “the boy knows he is a boy, and he is pleased that his costume is appropriate to being a boy” (Davidson and Gordon 1979:14). The second model discussed, focuses on the reward for discovering and following gender norms. Mischel delves into the idea that young boys and girls want to be rewarded for acting as the defined boy and girl (Davidson and Gordon 1979:15). Feminine and masculine traits are defined by their cultural understanding of gender identity. The third model approached by Davidson and Gordon examines children’s attitudes toward gender norms through idealization of feminine and masculine traits (1979:16-7). Pleck discusses three phases in development of children. Children are allowed the option of discovering when feminine traits or masculine traits work for certain situations. As they develop and recognize the expectations of gender, they will then align their decisions with their social understanding of gender.

Definitions of feminine and masculine traits are entrenched at an early age for children. Their understanding of manliness and ladylike behaviors are collected from their interactions with their significant others, “people with whom the child has frequent and regular contact, who
have control over rewards and punishments for the child, and who have some image of what the child should become” (Davidson and Gordon 1979:14). Culturally, femininity and masculinity follow socially regulated gender norms. Davidson and Gordon explain that these traits are placed on a one-dimensional scale (1979:16-7). If a person is more masculine, that must mean they are less feminine. This scale defines an individual more or less feminine due to their level of masculinity.

The Shape of Masculinity and Femininity Today

Talcott Parsons, a leading voice in functionalism, established the idea that families function as a factory and socialization is key in the “production of ‘stable adult personalities’.” (Whitehead 2002:18). Along with natural responses to socialization, Parsons concluded that gender roles were inherent ways in which the world must behave to function fully, “the surgeon (stereotypically rational, reasoned, unemotional and distant) must be male, while the nurse (stereotypically caring, compassionate, maternal and emotive) must be female” (Whitehead 2002:18). The defining understanding of feminine and masculine characteristics continues to influence the way individuals behave among their social settings. Durkheim’s delineation of gender roles as social facts and steps to stability reinforced structural functionalists’ perspective.

While social conflict theorists and symbolic interactionalism investigate these issues with a perspective that questions the inequality among genders, functionalists’ beliefs continue to represent a common denominator among the social world. Whitehead discusses that the defining characteristics of masculinity do not include emotional responses or emotional expressiveness (2002). Referencing the previously mentioned study by Parkins, men are still unable to reasonably express their emotions (2012). The idea that men aren’t allowed to portray feminine traits continues, while it is more acceptable for women to express more masculine traits. This can
be seen simply through headlines of recently published news articles surrounding the discussion of gender; “Why Men Don’t Want the Jobs Done Mostly by Women” from the NY Times, “Society is creating a new crop of alpha women who are unable to love” from Fox News, “The "masculine mystique" – why men can't ditch the baggage of being a bloke” from The Guardian, “Men pay a steep price when it comes to masculinity” from USA Today, “The Most Powerful Women in Sports: 35 Executives and Influencers Winning Over the Next Generation of Fans” from AdWeek, “Why is femininity in men less accepted than masculinity in women?” from Tremr, and “Americans see society placing more of a premium on masculinity than on femininity” from the Pew Research Center.

The topics of these articles exemplify how the idea of a feminine man is still seen as odd or negative, while a masculine woman can be a positive attribute. This lack of interaction with femininity and masculinity throughout men’s lives perpetuates harmful and destructive behaviors. Whitehead explains that masculinity’s role in violence has become a significant portion of any study of masculinity (2002:35). Without acknowledging the violence that is performed by men that continues to be supported by what is expected from culturally defined masculinity, one is ignoring the basis of violence often perpetuated against women. Whitehead goes on to explain Bowker’s understanding of masculinity accompanying violent actions, “violence represents the ‘dark side of masculine role performance’ with 90 percent of violence being perpetuated by men (1998:xiii). It is important, then, to recognize that masculinities are not necessarily benign, but are directly implicated in those practices of men that are oppressive, destructive, and violent” (2002:35). Whitehead’s analysis of men’s masculinity and acts of violence show that the perpetuation of stereotypical masculinity lends to the violent actions taken by men in our society. Masculinity doesn’t create violence alone, but the presence of masculinity
without the presence of characteristics associated with femininity contributes to higher rates of violence by men, than women.

**Redefining Violence**

The understanding of physical violence seems to be universal in some cases, where individuals would agree that an action could be deemed violent. The lines between violence and aggression blur throughout certain actions. Hamby’s discussion of defining violence through a scientific lens, applicable to social sciences, introduces the idea that while overtly violent acts are identifiable, there are crucial answers missing (2017). Hamby approaches her question of defining violence by beginning with the idea that different agencies and organizations, several established to prevent violence, are confusing the definitions by not specifying details. The American Psychological Association, criminal law, medical journals, the National Criminal Victimization Survey, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all define violence in a different manner (Hamby 2017:168-70). The APA defines violence as an extreme action. Hamby clarifies her assessment through these example, (2017:168):

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This definition does not say what is meant by extreme. The maliciousness of the intent? The extent of injuries? If it includes murder, does it include or exclude manslaughter? Similarly, a recent review in a prominent medical journal offered a confusing mix of exemplars: “The terms rape, sexual violence, and sexual abuse encompass many forms of violence, including sexual harassment and sexual trafficking” (Abrahams et al., 2014, p. 1648). One cannot tell from this definition whether sexual harassment always falls under the definition of rape or whether rape, sexual violence, and sexual abuse are synonyms (correct answer in both cases: No).
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Hamby claims that a gap in research continues to grow with the lack of a solidified definition. Defining violence won’t solve the issues surrounding violent acts, but it will better establish the cultural understanding of what is and is not violent. This will lend help to the victims of violence in turn. Again, the definition will not stop violence, but create a notable reference for those who have been victims of violence and help establish ways of prevention.

Hamby cites four elements, commonly seen dispersed throughout existing definitions, that should be present in an act of violence. To properly be categorized as a violent act the action must be intentional, unwanted, nonessential, and harmful (2017:168). Hamby’s elements of violence are notable and easily understood by most humans. Intentional actions are deliberate. Unwanted actions are nonconsensual actions. Nonessential actions are acts that are not necessary for survival. Harmful actions are those that cause harm. These elements highlight human behavior that is deemed violent. Hamby recognizes and acknowledges the difference between an academic definition and a definition others can use, “Many people endorse severe corporal punishment, justify domestic violence in cases of infidelity or even “talking back,” and believe that women are “asking for it” when they are sexually assaulted” (2017:177-8). One of the more influential means of defining violence would be using these commonalities in legislation. Instead simply focusing on research involving violence, the changed definition being applied to legislation would affect how acts of violence are displayed in reality.

Violence Against Women

A frequent form of violence that involves Hamby’s established elements is between domestic partners. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that nearly 50% of murdered women are killed by an intimate partner in 2017. Author Emiko Petrosky explains that domestic violence is really a public health issue because of the prevalence of intimate partner
violence (2017). This was a similar sentiment in the 2006 Congressional Quarterly Researchers report citing that three women are killed every day by partner violence. While more than ten years has passed since the report was published, the information still has intense relevance in the social world. Women are in more danger in their own homes than they are threatened by violence perpetrated by a stranger. This report continues to explain that women are five times more likely to be physically abused by a partner than men (CQ 2006:1). While men can be victims of abuse, they are more likely to be the perpetrator.

The intensity of violence against women is internationally seen. The World Health Organization explains violence specifically directed toward women can take several forms, “hurt them physically, sexually or psychologically, threats to inflict such abuse, and forceful restrictions on their freedom” (Akyuz 2009:2). This definition of violence can easily create conflict, simply because this means that a substantial portion of women around the world have experienced some form of violent behavior. It also means that cultural trends included in mainstream media romanticize and perpetuate the abuse of women. Violence is used as a form of entertainment constantly and to avoid that would mean that one would have to circumvent most social mediums. Violence’s presence in media has be a topic of discussion within American culture for decades; explaining mass shootings through violence in video games, parental control of violent television shows or movies, the 24 hours new cycle honing in on violent crimes, or the simple use of violence as a form of entertainment. Violence is very present in the United States and often, it is seen through media. Potter (2003) discusses the myths that continue to revolve around the idea that violence and media correlate. Explaining 11 common myths, Potter details that one myth often believed is that media are not responsible for the negative effects of their violent messages (2003). This myth is one of the reasons violence against women continues to be
prevalent in American media. The consistency in violence against women seen through media has affected observers of media. This influence isn’t addressed by those producing it, so individuals are then blamed when, in actuality, a cultural ideology involving violence sends a message that violent behavior is acceptable and normalizes it. Another myth explored by Potter explains that most individuals do not believe the violence portrayed through media will affect them, but others are at risk (2003). This myth displays that American individuals separate themselves from violence, as if it is not real. A result, individuals may believe they cannot be perpetrators of violence either.

The WHO’s definition of violence against women also contends that the restricting of freedom is a form of violence (Akyuz 2009:2). This idea is influential in the way in which gender norms are acted out and perpetuated through mainstream belief. Behaviors that are seen as manly or masculine can also be defined as abusive, such as being overly protective to the point of restrictive rules, possessive of significant others, or limiting interactions with other individuals due to jealousy or need to control others. These are common traits listed when imagining a relationship, that is not necessarily healthy, but ordinary. While in an academic paper, it is reasonable to list these behaviors as abusive and manipulative modes of action, society displays that labeling restrictive behavior as abusive does not bode well with many individuals within American culture. When topics of abuse are highlighted, there is an immediate backlash that demonstrates the entitlement men feel over women’s bodies. This specific response occurred after the growth in the #MeToo movement. There were immediate responses to this social movement with commentary that accused the women involved of overreacting to normal occurrences. This will be discussed later, but the entitlement to women’s bodies and the
perpetuation of toxic masculinity is cued from cultural relics that continue to show societal norms that must be understood.

**Gender in Advertisements**

Rubie-Davies, Lui, and Lee began their exploration of the relationship between gender and television advertisements with the cultivation theory, posited by Gerbner in 1958 (2013:176-8). Cultivation theory was used to understand the effects advertisements had on individuals’ beliefs and attitudes. Rubie-Davies, Lui, and Lee continued this work by applying the effect television advertisements had on individuals’ attitudes toward gender. They recognized the vast influence of advertisements and began their examination with the understanding that “television educated viewers at the societal level about what the rest of the world was like.” (Rubie-Davies, Lui, & Lee 2013:176). This basis immediately introduces the idea that individuals believe that what they view from television advertisements represents some form of social reality. Cultivation theorists have found that people will closely align with the programs they view often or choose to view (Rubie-Davies, Lui, & Lee 2013:177). Their decisions surrounding what they are interested in viewing commonly parallels that of their world view. It is important to recognize though, that while individuals decide the programs they view, this is not true for advertisements, “they may be exposed frequently to advertisements portraying stereotypical perspectives that reinforce a particular world view that they would not necessarily choose to watch given free will.” (Rubie-Davies, Lui, & Lee 2013:177).

Rubie-Davies, Lui, and Lee found that women were more likely to be featured in advertisements that focused on health, fashion and beauty, or portrayed as the stereotypical homemaker (2013:190). Men were more likely to be featured in a position of power throughout advertisements, as decisionmakers or businessmen (2013:190). Masculinity and femininity is
frequently highlighted throughout popular advertisements, not restricted to television. The understanding of how men should behave versus how women should behave is consistently seen through ads that focus on what products and actions are appropriate for each gender to absorb and perform. O’Barr and Timke explain that “advertisements’ representations of masculinity and femininity can reinforce and legitimate certain gender roles and hierarchies between men and women” (2017). Their research goes on to state that women are likely placed in positions of submission and dependent on the men in the advertisements, while men are the driving motivation for the advertisement. While some may argue that men and women are appear in similar advertisements now, such as an ad for childrearing products, the portrayal of the gender is different. O’Barr and Timke point out, (2017):

> Across all of the ads, though, fathers are the drivers of action and the center of attention. They are goofy providers of fun and laughter who might make a mess and never clean it up. Such a role contrasts sharply to a mother’s serious job of consoling others, cleaning up, or teaching children, usually daughters, lessons on how to keep a beautiful home.

Even when genders are used to advertise the same product, women and men are portrayed differently to accommodate the expectation surrounding their gender.

Feminine and masculine expectations in advertisements combat the upcoming societal understanding of feminism. While social trends continue to revolve around the idea that women are becoming more equal to their male counterparts, advertisements are not following this queue. Women and femininity are still constantly presented as passive and sexually submissive; this display is a transparent form of advertising that continues to contribute to the understanding of female sexuality in the United States. Men and masculinity are also presented as powerful, in
control, and the decisive actor in most situations. Without the acceptance of women’s issues on every sector of the social world, ideology will remain stagnant and allow for violence to continue against women.

**Violence in Advertisements**

The use of violence in advertising has continued through the evolution of mediums. Violence can be seen in advertisements through print, on television, and on the internet. Different forms of violence can be seen more often than others; domestic violence, bullying, workplace violence, sexual violence, violence in sports, road rage, etc. The popularity of using violence to sell product hasn’t seen a decrease, even with a more open conversation about violence’s influence throughout American culture. The ideas to limit portrayals of violence seem to focus on television shows and video games. Previously mentioned was the fact that advertisements are in media no matter what, so the decision to view violent advertisements differs from choosing a program to watch (Rubie-Davies, Lui, & Lee 2013:177). This isn’t necessarily an advertisement someone decided to view, but one that was decided for them.

Jones, Cunningham, and Gallagher discuss ways in which to examine violence used in advertisements with 6 themes; intensity, congruence, perceived intention, legitimacy, identification, and power balance (2010:18-21). The use of these themes increases the influence that violence has over viewers and how viewers may react to the violence presented. Through these 6 themes, researchers are able to observe how advertisements use violence to sell products. These latent functions of violence within advertising control the way in which ideas surrounding the product are formed. Similarly to gender, the messages that are portrayed in violent advertisements help develop what individuals believe the world is like. In shaping the perception of viewers, violence in ads also claims that if this behavior is accurate in real life, then the
demonstration of violence is not too out of hand. Individuals recognize that they do not have to behave exactly as an advertisement, but their reactions to the social world may be more influenced by ad violence than they want to believe.

Leonard and Ashley (2012) explored violence in print advertisements and consumer reaction to the victims of the portrayal of violence. Their work included three types of advertisement displaying violence; ads from the victim’s perspective, undeserving victims from the perpetrator’s perspective, and deserving victims from the perpetrator’s perspective (2012). Advertisements included in the first cluster, from the victim’s perspective, focused on social issues such as child abuse or animal neglect. These advertisements had purpose with their message, other than selling a product, but to raise awareness (Leonard and Ashley 2012:85-6). The second cluster, undeserving victims from the perpetrator’s perspective, depicted commercial messages. Several of the advertisements in this cluster were cartoons and often the individuals depicted were not seen as deserving of their violent treatment (Leonard and Ashley 2012:86). The third cluster of advertisements, deserving victims from the perpetrator’s perspective, also had commercial messages. These messages stem from the idea that victims who are deserving of violent acts are not seen as victims, “perspective of the perpetrator of violence against powerful victims or victims associated with criminality or lower moral standards and thus more likely to be perceived as deserving of their fate” (Leonard and Ashley 2012:86).

Leonard and Ashley found that violence is understood by audiences through the deservingness of the victim, (2012:86):

Our results indicate that consumers organize their thoughts about violent advertising in consideration of the deservingness of the victim and whether the ad presents the victim’s or perpetrator’s perspective.
Arranged as a visual display of the perceived similarities between the ads, our results demonstrate a shared common cognitive structure of advertising depicting violence. Understanding this cognitive structure suggests that marketers using violent advertisements should consider whether their ads portray the viewpoint of the perpetrators or victims, and how this will impact their message. If their ad is promoted from the perpetrator’s viewpoint, they also need to consider the deservingness of the victim. These results suggest specific areas for additional research to find a more complex and nuanced understanding of how consumers perceive and react to violent advertising.

One of the common types of violence seen in advertisement is violence against women. Not only is it used to sell products, many times the violence shown isn’t related to the product whatsoever. Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, and Cherrier (2016) approach overt violence toward women in advertisements with two concepts, the use of mock assault and taboos. Mock assault is the portrayal of male aggression in a joking manner or playful, when in actuality the actions are still overtly violent simply without a reaction of fear from the victim, “the woman’s apparent lack of fear betrays a deeper symbolic level of men’s power to do as they please with women, implying that male violence towards women is not only normal but also linked to masculine expressions of passion.” (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1450). This lack of fear displayed by mock assault in advertising normalizes the violence seen by audiences. The use of taboos is also prevalent in advertising. A taboo can be defined as “a forbidden thing, act or contact dangerous to the doer and his or her group. Distinct from social norms, a taboo not only forbids behaviour and practices but also thinking or considering such behavior.” (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1452). Taboos are behaviors that are socially known as wrong, such as incest, to keep the behavior from happening. By portraying taboos in advertisements, the acts and behaviors that were once deemed erroneous, now seem more acceptable. “Following Douglas’
framework (1984), when advertising agencies use taboo themes in their campaigns, they create pollution and disorder in that the taboo-theme and the message of the advertisement are anomalies that do not fit into any existing patterns and classifications.” (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1452). This is heavily seen through violence against women in advertising. Advertising that portrays violence against women is disconnecting the taboo of violence from viewers and this slowly creates a regularity around said violence, allowing it to be acted out in reality more often.

Gender and Violence in Food Advertisements

The role that gender plays in food advertisements, whether that be ads for meat products, alcohol, or a fast food restaurant, are shaped by the way in which food is gendered in society. The social norms surrounding masculinity, femininity, and gender expectations play a significant part in the decisions that individuals make surrounding their food. Masculinity is more often than not related to the consumption of meat and femininity often aligns with health-conscious decisions. The ideology that is rooted in these societal norms can be drafted to a largely historical context. Adams (1990) refers to meat as a symbol of patriarchy due to its relation and representation of manhood. Ruby and Heine establish in their work that meat is associated to and with historical power dynamics and privilege, such as “a staple for the gentry and a rare treat for the peasants” (2011:448). Furthering this analysis, they examine the relation meat and masculinity have today, “meat is often viewed as an archetypal food for men, with many men not considering a meal without meat to be a “real” meal,” (2011:448). Vegetarianism is also viewed as a staple to define characteristics in modern America. Ruby and Heine (2011) found that much of the ideology surrounding vegetarian diets was that of superior moral regard for the earth and creatures. This thought was not necessarily defined by vegetarians, instead most omnivores’
beliefs about vegetarian diets (Ruby and Heine 2011). Participants in Ruby and Heine’s work continually described vegetarians as “pacifist, weight-conscious, and liberal” (2011:448). Ruby and Heine also found that women were more accepting of others’ vegetarian diets than men, which supports the idea that a non-meat diet is not and cannot be masculine. Men are less likely to express empathy for the animals that are being slaughtered from consumption as well (Ruby and Heine 2011). These findings follow in the footsteps of many of the ideas surrounding gender expectations in food.

The idea that men are less likely to express empathy for animals being treated poorly before being slaughtered and during their slaughter resonates with several traits that can be categorized as masculine. This can also play a significant role in the chances of individuals feeling empathy for human suffering, similarly to animal suffering. De Backer and Hudders (2015) reported that individuals with more prosocial tendencies are more likely to be vegetarian or likely to become vegetarian compared to omnivore counterparts. Filippi et al. (2010) found that, compared to omnivores, vegetarians and vegans had increased engagement of empathy related brain areas while viewing negative scenes of animals and humans. Those who decide to ban meat from their diets are more likely to express stronger feelings of empathy toward humans and animals alike. This does not mean omnivores are inherently vicious toward other living beings, but there is a higher chance that their reaction and action to violence is diluted compared to those consciously avoiding meat.

This understanding of empathy and the expectations of masculinity are recognized by those who design advertisements for foods. This stretches from children’s foods to fast food restaurants to yogurt commercials. These products are being sold with the acknowledgement and exploitation of gender stereotyping. Not only do advertisers take advantage of gender
stereotyping, they also use messages of overt violence. Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, and Cherrier identify some of the ways in which violence is used in advertising, specifically directed at women. They found that women are presented in three common ways throughout advertisements that provoke or display violent acts; the tease, the piece of meat, and the conquered (2016:1455-8).

Gurrieri et al.’s interpretation of the tease is when “that constructs women as passive, sexualised beings to be gazed upon, whose worth is associated with conforming to stereotypical representations of beauty” (2016:1455). The tease offers the viewers a chance to gaze or observe the women freely. This position in advertisements extends the idea that women’s bodies are objects to see and have, not the body of a functioning human. Each example given within Gurrieri et al.’s work shows a woman with little clothing and being handled by men. The message that is sent by advertisements using the tease position is one that explain women’s presence is that of beauty and sexual pleasure. When the tease is used in advertisement that also show elicit forms of violence the message not only give males ownership of female bodies, but also “where the female subject is constructed as partially responsible for being a “cock tease” who was “asking for it” (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1456).

The piece of meat advertisement shows women as animal like creatures that are controlled, dominated, and submissive to violent consumption. Not only are women in this position of advertisement being sexualized,
they are also lacking a voice and human traits other than their bodies. “By dehumanising the women portrayed, the violence is diminished and made more “acceptable”” (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1456). This can be seen in one of the advertisements used as an example by Gurrieri et al. This advertisement for Beyman Blender is the most literal form of the *piece of meat* ads. A woman is disturbingly cut into several pieces, exposing layers bone and muscle. The woman is wearing little clothing and has an expression of sensual apathy on her face. Her blank stare contributes to the sexualization of her portrayal of meat. This false existence that is being presented only reinforces the idea that women are submissive, sexual objects. Gurrieri et al. continues their analysis of the *piece of meat* advertising position, “Such a construction reproduces and glamourises an image of women as weak and vulnerable. Combined with her zoomorphic construction as a slaughtered animal, the female subject is constructed as prey” (2016:1456). Women are being presented at prey, objects to catch and consume.

*The conquered* position for women in advertising explains that they are submissive and controlled by the dominated force, or in most cases men, around them. Gurrieri et al. (2016) explains that this form of woman in advertising promotes the idea that femininity is defined through submissiveness and defenselessness. *The conquered* places women in a position of brokenness and any defiance of power displays masculine traits, which women in this position cannot have. Men in *the conquered* advertisements are
always physically larger than their female counterpart and are physically positioned in a way that looms over the woman. Power is distributed throughout the human presence of these advertisements as well. Gurrieri et al. (2016) describes two images that differ significantly, but parallel in many ways. One is for Fluid hair salon in which the woman has an obvious bruise around her eye and a man holding a necklace behind her, as if to give her a gift in apology. The second image is an advertisement for Dolce and Gabbana, where a woman is being held down and observed by several men. The structure of power is apparent in both ads, but demonstrated in different ways. “The power asymmetry in both images is also highlighted through the codes of masculinity used, such as standing upright, balanced and assertive posture, directly gazing at the viewer and wearing the masculine fashion of denim and suits that convey confidence and command. Hence, masculinity is largely constructed in opposition to what is considered feminine, i.e. power vs submission, confidence vs withdrawal and independence vs conformity” (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1457).

**Theoretical Framework**

Previous research examining how advertisements’ use taboos of violence and sexual violence, specifically directed toward women, show that significant messages are observed by audiences and influence their understanding of how violence is acted out in the social world (De
Backer and Hudders 2015; Filippi et. al 2010; Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016; Leonard and Ashley 2012; Parkins 2012; Pettigrew et. al 2012; Potter 2003; Ruby and Heine 2011). Many of these studies focus directly on gender in advertising and the stereotypes that follow gender norms. Others delineate violence against women and how advertising uses forms of social taboos that are not supposed to be acted out in social reality, but the presence of them encourages similar behavior. Food advertising shares common aspects of exploiting gender stereotypes, while also normalizing violence against women. The exploration of the food advertisements’ influence over society often looks at the defining root of masculinity and how masculinity is presented within in the context of violence toward women. Gender plays a crucial part in the execution of food advertising, seeing that food is highly gendered within the United States. One of the factors that studies exploring food advertisement lacks is how the use of fragile masculinity produces ideology that masculinity can only be defined through strength, dominance over others, and sexual control.

With social norms changing, it is also time for advertisers to no longer exploit the dehumanization of women and stop placing masculinity into a confined box, and work toward the ideology that Americans are trying to reinforce in younger generations. Not only does research revolving around sexual violence against women need to be continued, but the presentation of violent masculinity and the exploitation of fragile masculinity need to be considered when analyzing cultural definitions of masculinity. Food advertisements are using what can be defined as fragile masculinity to sell products, but also perpetuate a belief that masculinity must be defined by strength, power, and the size of male genitals. To understand how masculinity plays a role in the extension of violence toward others, this research will
examine not only sexual violence, but also the aspects of masculinity that use emotionless control and penis size to define manhood.

**Radical Feminist Theory**

Radical feminism explores issues of gender through a lens that questions and faults patriarchy for the injustices that are committed against women. Radical feminism, not only looks at women’s disadvantages in the social world, but also how the societal norms must be altered or forgotten to allow women to freely and safely express themselves. Food advertisements have vast audiences and the messages that are delivered from food advertisements relay ideology that may perpetuate actions of individuals. Radical feminist theory recognizes that sexism is ingrained into society. By addressing some of the images that are seen constantly, the norms within culture will be addressed changing the way women are seen and approached in the social world.

Radical feminist theory approaches issues of women’s inequality as social and cultural positions that women are forced to participate in through the domination of men. Miriam explains that radical feminists “claim that normative heterosexuality is crucial for the maintenance of female subordination.” (2007:211). While Miriam’s focus was on compulsory heterosexuality, this sentiment can be applied to the overall interpretation of radical feminism. Without normative actions from heterosexual males, female domination would be far less prevalent. Heterosexual males are likely to apply culturally defined experiences of masculinity in their interactions with women. This in turn leads to the control and abuse of women because societal understanding of masculinity includes that to be masculine, you must be the dominant character in most social situations. Radical feminist theory looks at this understanding of social
scenes and delves into the idea that women’s subordination stems from men’s social expectations.

Radical feminist theory applied to the sexualization and objectification of women in food advertisements explores the idea that women are being presented as consumable objects (food) to sell a product that has nothing to do with sex. In different mediums, food advertisements continue to relate the process of eating to the way in which a male can, and is entitled to, interact with a woman. Radical feminist theory is able to approach the idea that women are presented as food and theorize that this is due to the societal agreeance that women are not allowed autonomy, specifically when being sexualized. By representing the object of a carnivore’s appetite, food advertisers are placing women in the position of the subordinate being. This cultivates the idea that men are entitled to use women as if they are also entitled to consume food, as well as the cultivation of the idea that men must use women as they consume food to be defined as masculine.

*Cultivation Theory and the Objectification of Women*

Radical feminist theory introduces the needs to understand the cultural expectations of men and women, while cultivation theory explores the way in which television advertisements are used to perpetuate these expectations. The application of cultivation theory in the context of women’s presence in food advertisements is common sense, seeing that cultivation theory is revolving around how audiences absorb the messages that they experience through television. Cultivation theory does not assume that individuals will immediately apply what they observed through television directly into their life, but that individuals with long-term exposure to regular types of messages will begin to believe that message is how the world behaves. “There was no claim that television could influence perceptions of individuals about their particular lives and
their worlds, but rather that television educated viewers at the societal level about what the rest of the world was like” (Rubie-Davies, Lui, & Lee 2013:176). When looking at femininity and masculinity in food advertisements, cultivation theory exudes the type of analysis necessary to accurately understand how depicted stereotypes may entice similar behavior.

Cultivation theory identifies how media cultivates the idea of women as consumable objects. By presenting women as food, male viewers see their female counterparts are inferior because they are objects to use. Female viewers internalize this presence of women as consumable and learn to function in the social world as an object to which men are entitled. Media also plays into the expectations that convince men, usually using concepts of fragile masculinity, that they must objectify women to seem masculine. Presenting masculinity through stereotypical lenses, such as strength and control, men also see that hurting and dominating women are masculine traits.

The process of objectification, in this context, stems from cultivation of images that perpetuate stereotypical expectations placed upon men and women. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) explain objectification as women’s internalization of the observer’s perspective and understanding of themselves as their primary view. Within objectification theory, women are seeing what they believe observers see. This creates a cycle for women. Food advertisements create this presence for women that places them in the position of being consumed or dominated. This cultivates the thought that this is how the social world functions. If this is how the social world functions and men are entitled to using/consuming women, women recognize this as their presence in their social settings. Objectification of cultivation not only posits that women and girls internalize the perspectives of those who observe them, but the perspectives that the observers are learning from as well.
Methodology

This study will explore how culturally defined expectations of masculinity throughout food advertising perpetuates and normalizes violence against women. This study is a document study in which data was found through different mediums of advertisements that are observed by large audiences. This includes print advertisement, advertisements that appear online or in televised commercials. Advertisements were selected from several different mediums, so in turn several segments of the social world are represented. If an advertisement dealt with food or the consumption of food, it was included in the document analysis. Advertisements were identified that exploited gender roles often in their advertisements. Examples of these gender roles would include women being sexualized or placed in a provocative position, women serving food, women in any domestic work, men consuming large amount of food, men fighting, or men gathering to sexually watch women. This study employs a latent content analysis of how food advertisements perpetuate violence against women and how the exploitation of masculine expectations normalizes that violence.

Sampling

In collection of documents, the time frame for publication of advertisements was between 2000 to present day. The sampling process was convenience and purposive sampling. Both are non-probabilistic types of sampling. Convenience sampling relies on the convenience of the material being found. Convenience sampling is subjective. The data collection of documents for this research was not presented in one population, seeing that thousands of advertisements are produced every year and promoted on many forms of media. The advertisement had to be seen through popular means of media. If one was seen on Facebook or television, it was included in the collection of data. When collecting documents through purposive sampling, data is
approached through identified characteristics. While researching food advertisements, the sample of advertisements had to adhere to certain characteristics such as the use of food in the advertisement, the use of sexualization, the use of gender roles, and the exploitation of masculine stereotypes. Advertisements that did not feature food, sexualized women or gender stereotypes were not included in the sample. Television commercials, print in magazines, posters in restaurants, advertisements on Facebook or other popular social media are the outlets for finding a collection of data that can offer a sample of advertisements that normalize violence against women.

Food Advertisement Categories and Themes

Within this research, food advertisement categories are identified as follows: Fast food, alcohol, snack foods, meats, and diet foods advertisements. Documents were collected that were characterized to each food advertisement category. Several of the food advertisement categories contained more documents than others, simply due to the content, use of masculinity stereotypes, and women’s positions in the advertisement. All advertisements were designated to three themes that marketed products through the depiction direct violence, depictions of subtle implications of violence or domination of women, and products that are supposed to enhance masculinity. These can also be defined through culturally defined expectations of masculinity; violent masculinity, dominant masculinity, and fragile masculinity. Violent masculinity portrays the depiction of direct violence, dominant masculinity delivers a message of subtle implications of violence or domination of women, and fragile masculinity reminds consumers that the marketed product should be purchased to enhance masculinity.

Types of Masculinity
In more detail, the three themes of masculinity expectations reveal that masculine stereotypes that are expected of men to be consider manly. The expectation of violent masculinity plays into the stereotype that men are only supposed to express themselves through anger and aggression. This stereotype explains that when a man feels emotional, whether that is angry, sad, happy, or even aroused, the appropriate expression of that emotion is to act violently. This influences the way in which men act toward women when attracted to them. Behaving in an aggressive manner to sexually attract women is common belief. Violent masculinity is toxic because it limits the way men are able to express themselves as well as places women at risk because men’s understanding of expression is to resort to violence. The expectation of dominant masculinity explains that men should be controlling of all of their environments, specifically when women are involved. To lack control or dominance of a situation is portrayed as feminine, which in turn is negative. Dominant masculinity plays into violent masculinity, but the focus on dominance is not physical control. Dominance focuses on manipulating and controlling the social aspects around an environment. The expectation of fragile masculinity exploits insecurities that stem from violent and dominant masculinity. Fragile masculinity is the fear of being seen as feminine, instead of masculine. This stereotype is what produces the idea that physical strength and penis size actually define masculine characters. Fragile masculinity also is why gendered products exist, such as shampoo or toothpaste for men. These products are promoted as manly so men don’t have to feel feminine buying the same product as their partner.

After the documents were divided into the three themes of masculine expectations; violent masculinity, dominant masculinity, and fragile masculinity. The advertisements characterized within the three themes were then separated into the position of the woman within the advertisement.
Women's Positions

The position that women are placed into in advertisements is defined as the physical position as well as the view of women’s position in society (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016). The positions are The Tease, The Piece of Meat, and The Conquered (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016). The Tease is when a woman is placed in a passive position that is meant to be seen, specifically sexually. The Tease also offers the idea that women want men to objectify them. If a woman is presented as a Tease, she is then allowing herself to be gazed upon by men and objectified. Piece of Meat is when a woman is placed in a position that relates her to animalistic ties. This could be literally placed in a position of an animal or placed in a position that is controlled, dominated, or consumed like animals. The Piece of Meat refers to themes of violence because meat is lifeless and when applying that mentality to women, their personhood is then lost. The Conquered places woman in a position of passivity, submission, and one that suggests she is helpless without a controlling force to assist her. The Conquered position is also associated to violence or dominance because the women must be placed in that position by another, usually male. These positions for women are not simply how they are perceived in food advertisements, but may also shape the opinion and view of women in their positions in life. When asking if art reflects reality or constructs reality, the position of women in advertising portrays a cultural understanding of how women should be treated within social reality.

Severity of Sexualization

Several other themes were identified when analyzing the collected documents. One theme that influenced the decision to employ convenience sampling was sexualization. By looking at the severity of sexualization in advertisement, the themes of masculinity expectations and women’s positions were better characterized. The severity of sexualization was ranked as low,
medium, and high. Low sexualization would be women were not present in the advertisement or their presence was there for means other than to be sexual. This would include women serving food in a motherly fashion. Often when women are portrayed in an older position, the severity of sexualization is lower. Medium sexualization would be women are not overtly sexualized, but are wearing clothing that can lead to sexualized thought from viewers. This would include women modeling clothing, but the focus is not on her body. If her hand was placed casually on her inner thigh, this would be a sign of medium sexualization. High sexualization would be when overt messages of sex are portrayed in the advertisement. This includes sexual innuendo, when women are placed in highly sexualized positions, such as laying on their backs with their legs spread, when women are presented as being sexually aroused by the product, when women are wearing little clothing, etc. Highly sexualized advertisements are fairly easy to spot.

Severity of Violence

Another theme identified in the collection of documents is violence. Severity of violence is observed similarly to sexualization; low, medium, and high levels of severity. Levels of violence are significant in this research because to understand if violence against women is normalized through food advertisement, the level of violence must be understood first. Low levels of violence would be little to no sign of violent behaviors within an advertisement. Medium levels of severity of violence would be messages that implied violence, but do not directly depict the violence. This would include advertisements where a man is physically creating a barrier around a woman. This does not directly imply that he is violent, but his position holds power and dominance over the woman. High levels of violence would be direct depictions of violence, such as a woman being portrayed as bruised or bandaged from either another human or the product being marketed.
Severity of Restorative Masculinity

The last theme to emerge when exploring the documents collected is restorative masculinity. Restorative masculinity applies stereotypical versions of masculinity to advertisements in hopes of presenting a product as a masculinity enhancement. It is when an advertisement offers some restorative power in terms of masculinity. If the advertisement explains that the product will increase manliness or attractiveness, restorative masculinity is present. The severity of restorative masculinity is separated into levels, just as sexualization and violence. Low severity of restorative masculinity has little to no portrayal of the product as manly. Low restorative masculinity does not rely on stereotypical masculine traits to boost the confidence of the consumer. This would be seen in advertisements targeting women consumers. Medium severity of restorative masculinity would be hints of stereotypical masculine traits. This could include products that are marketed to make men seem more attractive, but do not blatantly say women will be more attracted to the consumer. This could be the portrayal of man buying a type of shirt and having a woman hug him after putting it on. High severity of masculinity is explaining a product will automatically make the consumer seem manlier. This includes advertisements that compare the product to penis size, such as a commercial for a large burger. It also would include advertisements that offer the idea that to be feminine is to be bad. An example of this refers to a prior example, man’s shampoo or toothpaste. To be considered more masculine, men are interested in buying products already deemed manly.
Below is an example of the chart in which the images and commercials will be analyzed with these rankings. F.1 is the first advertisement, F.2 is the second advertisement, and so on.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F.1</th>
<th>F.2</th>
<th>F.3</th>
<th>F.4</th>
<th>F.5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Masculinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Sexualization</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Restorative Masculinity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In applying these themes to the food advertisement categories; fast food, alcohol, snack foods, meats, and diet foods, a discussion of the normalization of violence and sexualization in food advertisements may be addresses. This study will attempt to find that food advertisements of a certain type are more likely to exploit masculinity stereotypes by portraying violence against women as masculine. Advertisers recognize the use of gender stereotypes in their published advertisements. This recognition also reveals that their exploitation lacks concern for the safety of the majority of the populous. Not only are women threatened by the normalization of violence, men are threatened by the ridiculous expectation that perpetuates dangerous behaviors.
Results

The term taboo describes a forbidden thing, actor contact dangerous to the doer and his or her group (McClenon, 1998). Distinct from social norms, a taboo not only forbids behaviour and practices but also thinking or considering such behaviour (Fershtman et al., 2011). In advertising, exploiting taboo themes is widespread (Simões and Freitas, 2008). Taboo execution in advertisements represents the use of images, words or settings that evoke a socially prohibited behavioural or verbal act (i.e. suicide, murder, dead bodies or sexually deviant practices) unrelated to the product or the brand (Sabri and Obermiller, 2012; Simões and Freitas, 2008; Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006). (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1452)

Research (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier) on the relation between advertisements, violence, and gender show that viewers absorb the messages that are being portrayed. The influence is not direct, but the normalization of violence, specifically against women, is a common trend. While violence is deemed taboo, the use of violence in advertisements is wildly accepted. The urge to look further into advertisements leads to one of the strongholds of the advertising world which is food. Food advertisements are no different than advertisements for other products. The products are still being sold through the exploitation of violence and gender stereotypes. I argue that food advertisements’ use of violence against women and exploitation of masculine stereotypes normalizes violence in ways that also perpetuates it.

In examining food advertisements, I found specific types of food were more likely to use violence and gender expectations than others. These include, beginning with the food category that portrayed violence and stereotypes most often, fast food, alcohol, snack foods, meats, and diet foods. While there is some overlapping, the types of food advertisements found could easily be placed into one of the five food categories. The advertisements are ranked low, medium, and
high in several examinations; levels of violence, levels of sexualization, and levels of messaging of restorative masculinity. Other ways of ranking advertisements were the type of masculinity being portrayed and the position of the woman within an advertisement. The types of masculinity include dominant masculinity, violent masculinity, and fragile masculinity. The positions of women within the advertisements were “the tease”, “the piece of meat”, and “the conquered”.

Thirty-five advertisements were found that related to the five categories of food. Fourteen fast food advertisements were analyzed, eleven alcohol advertisements were analyzed, five snack food advertisements were analyzed, three advertisements using meat were analyzed, and two diet food advertisements were analyzed. Within this analysis, I will present at least two advertisements from each food category and attach the rest in the appendix. The most common name brand advertisements I found that exploited both gender stereotypes, masculine expectations, and violence against women was Burger King. Because fast food advertisements used these traits in their commercials and print ads most often, I will begin my analysis there.

When individuals are approached with the idea of sexualized food advertisements, many immediately think of Hardee’s and Carl Jr.’s commercials with scantily dressed women eating massive hamburgers as if they are sexually aroused by the foods presence. This is a form of overt sexualization that definitely goes against many taboos established by cultural norms surrounding sex, but my analysis begins with Burger King advertisements. Burger King is known for risqué advertisements that use both overt sexualization and sexual innuendo. Burger King not only uses sexualization of women, but also the idea that their product will make men more desirable to women. Many of their advertisements offer the idea that their sandwiches represent or are a metaphor for male genitals that deserve a lustful response from all women.
**Fast Food Advertisements**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Women’s Position</th>
<th>F.1</th>
<th>F.2</th>
<th>F.3</th>
<th>F.4</th>
<th>F.5</th>
<th>F.6</th>
<th>F.7</th>
<th>F.8</th>
<th>F.9</th>
<th>F.10</th>
<th>F.11</th>
<th>F.12</th>
<th>F.13</th>
<th>F.14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Masculinity</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Piece of meat</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Violence</td>
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<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Sexualization</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Restorative Masculinity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
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</table>

**Figure 1**: This is obvious in a Burger King television commercial from 2011 that features a woman and a man interacting on an empty subway train. The woman standing, holding onto a train pole. The man is sitting with a chicken sandwich level to his crotch, holding it as if it is his penis. The woman begins to stare at the chicken sandwich and smiling at the man in a flirtatious manner. Once the man notices, he pulls down the wrapper of the sandwich as if to expose himself. In response, the woman grinds on the subway pole as if she were an exotic dancer. The camera then shows that another man is sitting at the front of the train watching this encounter. The woman sees the second man watching and pulls her blouse closed, to hide her chest from the man. Her discomfort is obvious in body language and facial expression. The camera shows the second man again and this is when viewers see him holding a significantly smaller chicken sandwich. The second man displays obvious shame once he realizes his sandwich is smaller than the first man’s. The scene ends with the line, “Wish your chicken was bigger” and continues with pictures of the new, “long chicken sandwiches” from Burger King. Figure 1 places the woman in a position of The Tease. It also expresses the idea that the sandwich increases masculine...
characteristics, so uses fragile masculinity. This figure doesn’t depict violence, so is ranked low in level of violence. It is also highly sexualized and shows high signs of restorative masculinity.

**Figure 2:** The image to the left is another advertisement from Burger King with overt sexual innuendo. In 2009 Burger King released their advertisement for the new BK Super Seven Incher. The idea that sex sells is beyond the representation within this advertisement. Again, a sandwich is the metaphorical penis while the woman in the ad is lustfully amazed by the snack. By placing the sandwich directly in front of the woman’s gaping mouth, the advertisement is not only selling Burger Kings food, but also the immediate picture of oral sex. Printing, “It’ll Blow Your Mind Away” leads viewers to picture oral sex if they had not already been persuaded to do so by the image alone. This advertisement places the women in the position of The Tease with high levels of sexualization and restorative masculinity. While the advertisement depicts low level of violence, the masculine trait being used is dominance because the women is in a physically controlled position as well as the idea presented is that a man is sexually dominating her.

**Figure 3:** The image below is another Burger King advertisement printed in 2004. This image depicts the bottom of a woman’s face with band aids on the corners of her mouth as if she was injured while stretching her mouth. The bottom of the image simply says, “Real Big Burgers” in
small print. While this advertisement is very simple, it provokes thoughts of oral sex because again sandwiches are metaphors for male genitals. The use of bandages makes the image and the presence of the women seem violated. There are high levels of violence and sexualization, along with the woman being placed in the position of the Conquered. The type of masculinity being displayed is violent, but the level of restorative masculinity is medium. This advertisement uses traits of restorative masculinity because it normalizes actions of sexual violence

**Figure 4:** In 2009 Arby’s promoted their new sandwich with the image located on the next page. This print advertisement gained an immense amount of attention because of its blatant comparison of the female form of two sandwiches. The advertisement is supposed to incite imagery relating to breasts, because of the placement of hands and the way in which they are gripping the sandwiches. The caption below, “We’re about to reveal something you’ll really drool over.” leads viewers to think of the sexualization of breasts, instead of the actual food
being advertised. This places the woman in the position of the Piece of Meat, while using high levels of sexualization. There are low levels of violence and restorative masculinity linked to this advertisement. The use of masculinity within it though is dominant. Dominant masculinity is used because the woman is portrayed as holding her breasts, as if to cover nipples. This implies that even as an object or food, breasts must be covered and controlled.
Alcohol Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Position</th>
<th>F.1a</th>
<th>F.2a</th>
<th>F.3a</th>
<th>F.4a</th>
<th>F.5a</th>
<th>F.6a</th>
<th>F.7a</th>
<th>F.8a</th>
<th>F.9a</th>
<th>F.10a</th>
<th>F.11a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td>Piece of Meat</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Masculinity</td>
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<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>High</td>
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<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Restorative Masculinity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1a: Belvedere released this Facebook advertisement in 2012. While the advertisement does not show any physical reminisce of the vodka they are trying to market, they are comparing the easy process of drinking their liquor to the way in which someone incites sexual advances. The disturbing message from this image does not begin with the comparison of consumption of alcohol to sexual activities, but the way in which the sexual
advances are received by the woman in the advertisement. The image does not depict sexualization of a woman consenting to sexual advances, but the man forcing the woman to sit on his lap and manhandling her. Her facial expression lacks the normal disinterest that is usually seen with in advertisements, but instead shows blatant fear. The man is smiling as he sexually assaults the woman. This assault is to say that while women are not easily consumed, Belvedere Vodka is. The woman’s position within this advertisement is the Conquered. The type of masculinity shown is violent, with high levels of violence being portrayed. While the level of sexualization is medium, the restorative masculinity is high. Restorative masculinity is high because the advertisements creates a pattern of normalization in sexual assault and rape.

Figure 2a: Skyy Vodka is known for overtly sexual advertisements where women are consistently sexualized and faceless. This advertisement does not differ. Released in 2000, this advertisement shows a woman laying on her back, attempting to sunbathe in a bathing suit with a man standing directly over her wearing a suit and holding Skyy Vodka. The woman is not only positioned in a submissive manner, she is also wearing minimum amount of clothing and is lifting her sunglasses to give attention to the looming man. While this advertisement does not depict direct violence, it portrays multiple layers of dominance over the woman. The woman is the in position of the Conquered, while the man is displaying dominant
masculinity. There are obvious high levels of sexualization. The restorative masculinity and violence levels are medium. Dominant masculinity is being exploited because of the physical barrier created to control the woman present in the advertisement.

**Figure 3a:** These images were from a collection to advertise Campari liquor. While all were very sexualized, these two images represent the majority of what was offered by the brand. The first image to the left, a woman is being escorted on to an elevator by a man holding a bottle of Campari and two other men behind her. All are dressed formally. Her expression is that of disinterest and lust. The next image depicts the same woman and two of the men, one who is no longer wearing a shirt. One of the men is still holding a bottle of Campari while they both are grabbing the woman lustfully. The woman, again, looks disinterested, but in more stable as she is holding the faces of the men. In this collection of advertisements released by Campari, the woman’s position is the Conquered while the men are displaying violent traits of masculinity. The collection has high levels of sexualization, violence, and restorative masculinity. This advertisement places the
woman in a Conquered position through violent masculinity by creating an image of a woman being physically restrained by three men.
Snack Food Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Position</th>
<th>F.1b</th>
<th>F.2b</th>
<th>F.3b</th>
<th>F.4b</th>
<th>F.5b</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Masculinity</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>The Piece of Meat</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Conquered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Violence</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Sexualization</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Restorative Masculinity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1b: Doritos released a SuperBowl advertisement in 2012. Being a Super Bowl commercial, Doritos targeted male audiences with their “Girl in Chips” ad. The scene begins with an obviously distracted man watching a football game and eating a bag of Doritos. A woman is sitting next to him in a white, unbuttoned shirt with her underwear and bra exposed. She is touching his face, trying to draw his attention. She seems frustrated when she realizes the football game and Doritos are more engaging than her presence. She snags his bag of Doritos and heads off screen. The man doesn’t notice the woman left the room until he realizes his first bag of chips is empty and he is in search for more. While looking for his snack, he enters a bedroom where the woman is naked only to be covered with Doritos chips. She suggestively signals the man over. The man looks at the woman and her chip bath as if he is more excited about the chips than the opportunity for sex. The end of the commercial shows the man jumping into bed as the announcers from the original football game exclaim, “Touchdown!” This commercial presents the woman as the Tease. The type of masculinity used is dominant and the level of restorative masculinity is medium. There is a high level of sexualization and a low level of violence.
Figure 2b: Popchips released a collection of print advertisements in 2012. While several of the advertisements were sexualized, this image is the advertisement that uses sexualization and objectification of women’s bodies most. The woman is holding a bag of Popchips over her breasts with the caption, “Nothing fake about ‘em.” Alluding to natural breasts, but marketing healthier snacks, Popchips compares consumable food to women’s breasts. The woman in the advertisements looks like she is having fun, while pretending her chest is actually bags of glorified chips. The woman is in the position of the Piece of Meat. While there are low levels of restorative masculinity and violence, the masculinity being reached through audiences is fragile. The presence of fragile masculinity is apparent through the concept that these chips are acceptable for men to consume because they are being compared to breasts. By presenting the chips as breasts, Popchips are then seen as something that a masculine character would be interested in consuming. By sexualizing the woman and the food, men then see it as a more masculine snack. The advertisement has high levels of sexualization.
Figure 3b: The image below appears after commercial advertisements for Slim Jim. Many of the commercials offer the premise of men using Slim Jims to represent their penis. An advertisement that was released in 2013 focused on men needing Slim Jims to become more masculine. There are traits listed that are deemed too feminine for men and Slim Jims are physically thrown at them to stop them from committing feminine acts. The advertisement refers to the throwing of product as Slim Jim Donors. Some examples of these feminine acts are softball bunters, gratuitous emoticon texters, pizza blotters, and dudes looking for a melon baller. The message of this commercial is that men should encourage men to be more masculine and provide them with Slim Jims. The use of the image above at the end of the commercial simply adds to the representation of gender stereotypes already at play throughout the advertisement. The women are in positions of the Tease, while the men are portraying fragile masculinity. The level of violence is medium, but levels of sexualization and restorative masculinity are high.
Meat Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F.1c</th>
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<th>F.3c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Position</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>Tease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Masculinity</td>
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<td>Fragile</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Violence</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Sexualization</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Restorative Masculinity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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**Figure 1c:** Hummer released an advertisement in 2006 depicting the use of meat to define masculinity among men. The commercial begins with a man checking out of a grocery store. It shows that the cashier is scanning vegetables and a giant container with the word “TOFU” printed largely across the front. This man seems happy until he notices the man behind him is checking out with a huge portion of ribs and different types of meats with a big bag of charcoal. The second man looks at the tofu container and simply nods at the first man. His facial expression expresses a sense of sorrow and embarrassment for the first man buying healthier foods. The first man then looks at the magazine rack located at the front of the check out and spots an advertisement for the new Hummer SUVs. This leads the man to quickly and assertively jump in his car. The next scene is him picking out a new Hummer from a Hummer dealership and pulling out of the parking lot aggressively. The commercial ends with the man driving in his new vehicle eating a carrot as the statement, “Restore the Balance” scrolls across the screen. The advertisement, while not directly advertising food brands, portrays the ideas of masculinity surrounding meat well. The type of masculinity portrayed in this advertisement was fragile, with high levels of restorative masculinity. This is because to rightly consume healthy foods, men
must demonstrate their masculinity through another stereotype. The level of sexualization is low and the level of violence is medium.

Figure 3c: Hillshire released a collection of advertisements in 2011 featuring women holding dishes, that included Hillshire meats, and had captions such as the two above. These advertisements are portraying mothers and women who are taking care of a household. The comments are directed toward their partners and how they interact with the women. The men do not have to present or portrayed in the advertisement, because the captions make the message clear. One of the advertisements not included above, but was an ad used in the collection had a caption that read, “The art of persuasion, always tasty.” The women in these advertisements are placed in the position of the Tease, but with low levels of sexualization portrayed. There are also low levels of violence. The masculinity expectation being used is fragile, with high levels of restorative masculinity. The use of fragile masculinity is present because the message delivered
through this advertisement conveys an idea that to by listening to their partners or other humans, they are not portraying masculine traits. By being bribe by the women present, the disregard for the women’s wants is acceptable.
Figure 1d: Dr. Pepper approached their consumers in a very blatant way in 2011 with their release of Dr. Pepper Ten. Dr. Pepper Ten was a diet soda for men. The advertisements for Dr. Pepper Ten literally said, “It’s not for women.” as shown in the advertisement to the left. Not only did this appear in print advertisements, but also commercials. All of the commercials featured men doing stereotypical masculine things. One of the more popular commercials begins with a futuristic battle scene with a man running through a forest with a giant gun. He runs behind a tree as if to protect himself from gunfire, looks at the camera and says, “Hey ladies, enjoying the film? Of course not.” At this moment a snake jumps up behind him and he punches it away. He continues to run and as he jumps over
rolling boulders and off a cliff he screams, “Cause this is our movie!” From that fall he lands in a vehicle appropriate for the terrain and pulls a Dr. Pepper Ten can from the floor, “And Dr. Pepper Ten is our soda! It’s only ten manly calories, with all 23 flavors of Dr. Pepper!”

Throughout this scene he is being driven rapidly through the forest with gunfire heard in the background. He crushes the soda can and throws it as he says, “It’s what guys want, like this!” Which sets off a booby-trap that catches three men following him on motorcycles. He then looks at the camera and says, “Catch phrase! So, you can keep your romantic comedies and lady drinks, we’re good.” At the end of the commercial a man yells, “Dr. Pepper Ten! It’s not for women!” as the image below is flashed on screen.

This advertisement places women in the position of the Conquered. The type of masculinity being portrayed is fragile, with high levels of restorative masculinity. This advertisement displays high levels of violence and low levels of sexualization.

**Figure 2d**: Miller Lite released a commercial in 2010 advertising their lite beer as the best lite beer. It begins with a male costumer asking for a lite beer, the bartender, an attractive young female, asks if he cares how it tastes. He says he doesn’t care how it tastes, very casually. As the bartender opens a bottle to hand the man, she says, “Okay, well, when you start caring, put down your purse and I’ll give you a Miller Lite.” The exchange is presented as awkward and the man’s
discomfort is obvious. He grabs a bag that was hung on his shoulder so it was out of sight to viewers and retorts, “It’s a carry-all.” The bartender looks at him and continues, “No it’s not.” The man then walks away from the bar with a questioning face. A voice then speaks over the scene, “Man up, because if you’re drinking a lite beer without great pilsner taste you are missing the point of drinking beer.” The extended version of this advertisement ends with the man sitting with a group of friends in the same bar and he explains he is going to get another Miller Lite, his friend says, “I’ll watch your purse.” The man responded again, “It’s a carry-all!” to which his group of friends laugh. This advertisement does not focus on the woman, but still places the bartender in the position of the Tease. The advertisement also displays high levels of restorative masculinity through fragile masculinity. There were medium levels of sexualization and low levels of violence throughout the commercial.
Discussion

Does art reflect reality or art construct reality? Nonetheless, while the prior question delineates if society is shaped through these messages or simply imitates, the use of these themes continues to normalize a submissive position for women within the world. By perpetuating expectations of masculinity, men are defined in ways that place women in positions that potentially lessen their opportunities throughout the social world. Food advertisement may be categorized as art, so often the reaction to exploitative material is that of disregard, but it is easy to ignore the messages by explaining that they are simply a form of art and do not portray any form of reality. Whether art is an imitation of culture or what shapes culture, the themes presented by food advertisements are manipulative and reassure ideologies that strengthen the divide between genders.

In this study, thirty-five total advertisements were collected to understand the ways in which violence against women is normalized through gender stereotypes and societal expectations of masculinity. The process of boosting male understanding of masculinity throughout food advertisements is a common trend that continues to deny that women are functioning beings with personhood and autonomy. This exploitation of masculinity is limiting progress toward equality. These advertisements and the messages that support violence toward women, and harmful gender stereotypes, about both sexes. The five food advertisement categories identified heavily played into the gender stereotypes that are directed toward men. They are fast food, alcohol, snack foods, meat products, and diet foods.

Fast food advertisements used gender inequality as a tactic to sell products in every advertisement collected. The positions used were the Tease, Piece of Meat, and the Conquered. The types of masculine stereotypes seen in all of the advertisements were dominant masculinity,
violent masculinity, and fragile masculinity. Levels of violence, sexualization, and restorative masculinity were observed as well. The advertisements collected in archival research were all advertisements that seemed to be directed at masculine expectations. Due to this observation of the data, themes that follow the rankings of advertisements have emerged. To further detail the data collected, the themes are separated by the type of masculinity that was most present within the advertisement. Data will be analyzed in the three themes of masculinity and then separated further by the use of sexualization and the position of women within the image.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Piece of Meat</th>
<th>The Conquered</th>
<th>Absent Women</th>
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</thead>
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<td>F.9, F.1c, F.2c</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F.4, F.8, F.13, F.7a, F.8a, F.9a</td>
<td>F.2a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Masculinity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F.3, F.10, F.1a, F.3a, F.11a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fragile Masculinity

The use of fragile masculinity within food advertisements was the most popular by far. Nineteen of the thirty-five documents collected used expectations of masculinity as a way to market their product. This included restorative masculinity revolving around genitals size, attention from attractive women, increased sexual attraction, increased sexual experiences, and overall boosting of societal expectation of masculinity. Women are presented in the various positions in advertisements that exploit the masculinity expectation, which contributes subthemes throughout the analysis of food advertisements. The position of the Tease can be seen in eight advertisements, the Piece of Meat position can be seen in four advertisements, and women in the Conquered position can be seen four times. There are three advertisements that have no women present or don’t play off of women’s sexuality. These advertisements will go into a subtheme of high restorative masculinity because the exploitation of fragile masculinity leads advertisers to presents ways to boost masculine traits.

The Tease

Figures 1 and 4b: The first fast food advertisement analyzed was the Burger King commercial from 2011 where the man on public transportation enticed a woman with his chicken sandwich. This commercial was one of the more absurd advertisements collected. Burger King set up the scene so that the sandwich represented the man’s genitals. The woman’s interest in the man was not due to conversation, but simply the sandwich which was being held on his lap. At one point in the commercial the man unfolds the wrapper on the sandwich, as if he was removing more clothing. The woman’s reaction was enthusiastic. By presenting the food as an object that the woman in the advertisement lusted over in such an intense manner, the idea is that women would be more willing to find a man attractive if he consumed that product. Hopefully no one
believes that a sandwich will convince a woman to take her shirt off on a public transit, but the idea that women will be more interested can influence the way that consumers buy the product. After the woman shows intrigue, another man is presented with a smaller sandwich. Her dislike of that man explains to audiences that with the purchasing of this specific sandwich you are more interesting to women and they are more likely to believe that you are more masculine physically.

Figure 1 is a great example of an advertisement that exploits the expectations of men, warning them that they must have bigger penises and objectify women to be seen as masculine. The advertisement offers little communication between the sexes. The man watches as the woman sexually entertains because of the size of his sandwich. The woman is presented as having no control over her actions once seeing the man’s sandwich. He is given the right to watch her as she performs for him, even though there is no exchange beforehand. This advertisement takes place on a public transit, where women are assaulted regularly. Burger King’s interpretation of this situation creates the idea that, women on public transportation are always willing and interested in interacting with men. Not only does this advertisement normalizes objectification of women and the expectations of men, it also normalizes behavior that potentially ends in the assault of women in public settings.

Figure 4b uses a similar approach in the advertisement where a man opens a container of Pot Noodles only to find a female on the bus miraculously become attracted to him. As he eats the food, she becomes more interested. They finally are dancing together in the middle of the bus. This idea that women will instantaneously become attracted to men who consume certain products delivers a message of entitlement to male viewers. Men will not automatically assume that Burger King or Pot Noodles will make women attracted to them, but relays the idea that certain behaviors deserve certain reactions from women. The entitlement also stems from the
idea that women in the position of the Tease are expected to respond positively, even though the position of the Tease does not reflect reality.

**Figure 5:** Hardee’s and Carls Jr. commercials are known for being overtly sexual, often with women lustfully consuming giant burgers. One of the recent commercials partnered with an X-Men movie and used the character Mystique. Mystique is a female character who can shape shift into other people. She is shown eating a burger, but before she bites down she transforms into a muscular, white male. The words “Man Up” flash on the screen as he launches into eating the burger. Mystique is already a very sexualized character, but one of her strengths in the X-Men series is her independence. This is completely taken away from her in this commercial. Moreover, by showing a woman change into a man to consume this food, the advertisement sends the message that when a man is not eating this type of burger he equates a woman. The point of the commercial is to show that masculinity can be attained through the consumption of this burger.

**Figures 7 and 11:** Carl’s Jr. used Paris Hilton in an advertisement where she is holding a burger while wearing a bathing suit. This isn’t outside of the norm for Carl’s Jr., except this advertisement was paired with the statement, “She’ll tell you size doesn’t matter. She’s lying.” This sentiment not only plays into fragile masculinity, as well as the idea that women are malicious in someway. By sexualizing Paris Hilton in this advertisement, the message about size really plays a significant role in how men
view their own masculinity. When pictured next to an attractive, inaccessible woman, the message has a heavier impact because they have to restore their masculinity in some way. While burgers obviously don’t make genitals bigger, the idea is that the consumption of this burger will carry that message. Women like Hilton will be more interested if manlier food is consumed. This advertisement also appeals to viewers that have established insecurities, by pandering to this insecurity, Burger King convinces men that this burger may be helpful. This type of restorative masculinity is toxic because it creates this sense of entitlement to women. This insurance of restorative masculinity may indulge scenarios of resentment from men, toward women. This may happen through a situation where Burger King is reassuring men that the burger will make them seem more masculine, then a woman rejects them, they will be angry because according to most fast food advertisements, women like Paris Hilton should be interested after the man consumes a burger.

Similarly, Fat Shack uses women’s interest in men as a way to advertise sandwiches. A young, attractive woman eating their signature sandwich is placed next to the caption, “Four Inches Has Never Been So Satisfying.” She has the sandwich up to her mouth with mustard running down her face, even though she has not even eaten the sandwich. The symbolism within this advertisement is supposed to remind viewers of oral sex. The caption is what parallels the Paris Hilton advertisement. By referring to the sandwiches’ size, the women are presented as being either satisfied with a specific size or not. Either way, the message entails that women are interested in the sandwiches of a certain size, so they are also interested in genitals of a certain size. Carl’s Jr. and Fat Shack exploit the social norms around penis size to incite consumers. The stereotype of equating penis size to level of masculinity is used to sell sandwiches to men.
Figure 3b: Slim Jim refers to their product as the Original Meat Stick in their advertisement shown at the end of commercials. Meat stick is also a synonym for genitals. The image the women are rubbing Slim Jims on one another’s bare stomachs. This advertisement is playing into the interest of threesome because the two women seemed interested in one another and the product represents penises. The use of the term “Meat Stick” only furthers the idea that the women are also interested in doing the same with men. The women are in the position of the Tease because a stereotype of men is that they are always interested in seeing two women interact sexually.

Figures 3c and 2d: Hillshire and Miller Lite express ideas of fragile masculinity by questioning men’s ability to delineate what is and is not masculine. Hillshire produced a collection of advertisements that creates this idea that men are unable to express themselves even with their significant others. The images are of women holding a meal and over the meal are captions that explain that the food is the only reason their partners are being attentive. The first caption is, “He won’t mind a chick flick marathon.” accompanied by Hillshire meats on a pizza. The second image shows a woman holding dish with Hillshire meats with the caption, “My birthday is coming up? Really? I totally forgot.” These advertisements are selling products through a message that explains that men are incapable of spending time with their significant other or her bribing her partner into allowing her some sort of freedom, even something as simple as watching a movie she likes. This is a form of fragile masculinity that doesn’t offer sex, but allows men to overlook important aspects of communicating with others as if it is an expectation of the masculine role.

Miller Lite’s advertisement is more blatant than Hillshire’s use of fragile masculinity. A man asks for any lite beer and the response of the bartender is that he can put down his purse,
then have a Miller Lite. This use of an object deemed feminine shows that men are supposed to order Miller Lite or be compared to a man who would use products marketed for females. According to this advertisement, drinking another type of beer equates being a woman. To boost masculinity, advertisements place men in a position seen socially as feminine and they must try their best to avoid that. Hillshire and Miller Lite exploit the idea that men want to escape femininity by excluding men from expressive behaviors and insulting women’s femininity.

*Piece of Meat*

**Figure 12:** Burger King introduced the BK Girls advertisement with a sarcastic hit to those who say women are objectified in Burger King commercials. By introducing the BK Girls as women with careers, but while presenting them in tiny bikinis in their work place. The commercial ran in 2007 with great success, as well as backlash. Figure 12 portrays the three women deemed the BK Girls and a fourth image shows the chicken BLT they are promoting. Each female is given a job description; Sara runs a large investment bank, Jane is a professor of biology, and Princess Zarathustra presents giant checks. There are lined up next to the new chicken sandwich being promoted by Burger King. Burger King is mocking the idea that their advertisements simply offer women presence to objectify their bodies by placing women in positions of power and still holding them in the position of a piece of meat. This advertisement exercises the idea that women equate meat quite literally. The women are being compared to the chicken sandwich, even with their professionalism attached to their image. This campaign did not separate women from the objectification of Burger King’s advertisements, but only enhanced it. The message behind the Piece of Meat position is that of men’s entitlement of women. By placing women in a position that equates something consumable, they are then also seen as
readily consumable. This position is mocking women’s power. No matter what women achieve they will continue to be seen as an object in this position.

**Figures 14 and 2b:** Figures 14 and 2b are advertisements that literally create an image where women’s bodies are food. Carl’s Jr. published an advertisement that featured their newest sandwich with the caption, “Everybody Loves Big Breasts”. By advertising a chicken breast sandwich with this connotation, their audiences will understand the sexual innuendo. Figure 2b features Katy Perry holding up two bags of Popchips to her chest as if they are her breasts. Both of these advertisements depicting women as food, specifically breasts. When women’s bodies are related to food, their bodily autonomy is diminished by which men assure control of them. There is cultural understanding that women’s control of their bodies isn’t as important as the influence of social expectations.

These advertisements also offer other expectations of women’s bodies as well. Carl’s Jr.’s advertisement explains that “It’s going to get messy.” under the picture of the sandwich. The caption that breasts are going to get messy speaks to the idea of men’s sexual domination over women. The sexual act of ejaculating on a woman’s chest is a stereotypical fantasy promoted and fetishized by pornography. The act of getting breasts messy is one of the ways
in which this simply sandwich advertisements ties into the way in which men view and objectify women. While the connection between a messy chicken sandwich and fetishized sexual dominance is nuanced, the subconscious understanding of getting breasts messy skips to what is highlighted by popular pornography. The Popchip advertisement states, “Nothing fake about ‘em.” This sentiment is alluding to the product as well as Katy Perry’s breasts because of the placement of the food items. By proclaiming that natural is better, the advertisement is shaming those who have undergone surgery to alter their bodies. This is another form of fetishizing women’s bodies. By fetishizing and sexualizing natural breasts, women are not in control of their lives.

**Figure 10a:** Maker’s Mark’s advertisement places women in the position of the Piece of Meat as well, but not a physical position such as the previous documents. Maker’s Mark simply has the quote, “Your bourbon has a great body and fine character. I wish the same could be said for my girlfriend.,” next to a bottle of Maker’s Mark. Comparing a woman to the aspects of a drink similarly places women in a position of submission. Even without the presences of a woman in the advertisement, men are controlling the way in which women are viewed. By stating that a bottle of alcohol has a better physical body and more character than a human equates them to something less, a piece of meat. The emphasis throughout the quotation is “great body” and “I wish”. Body and the man’s interest were prioritized even in the event placing women in an inferior position. Their bodies and the what the men surrounding them want is held at a higher significance.

*The Conquered*

**Figure 6:** The Manthem commercial from Burger King details the struggle that men have when offered anything other than burgers. The lyrics, while not thought provoking, encourage
the idea that men do not eat healthy options and feel trapped by women when they are forced to eat anything besides meat.

“I am man, hear me roar, in numbers too big to ignore, and I'm way too hungry to settle for chick food! Cause my stomach's starting to growl, and I'm going on the prowl, for a Texas Double Whopper! Man, that's good! Oh, yes, I'm a guy! I'll admit I've been fed quiche! Wave tofu bye-bye! Now it's for Whopper beef I reach. I will eat this meat. (Eat this meat) 'Till my innie turns into an outie! I am starved! I am incorrigible! And I need to scarf a burger beef bacon jalapeno good thing down! (Yeah!) I am hungry! (I am hungry) I am incorrigible! I AM MAN!”

The lyrics of this commercial offer little to the men that are interested in eating foods other than Burger King Whoppers. With this message, men are shamed for liking other types of dishes. In the first scene, when the singer says he can’t settle for “chick food”, the meal being shown is shrimp. It is a small portion. Burger King’s message is not only should men only be consuming ridiculous burgers, but their portion sizes should be giant. Men are not allowed to want smaller meals or any kind of food that was not once mooing. In the commercial, there are scenes where men are walking out on the streets in protest of “chick food”. The end of the commercial is a large group of men, all singing about “man food”. There is a minivan that is flipped over by the crowd, which displays the message that men acting fatherly are also too feminine. The driver of the van is a man who gets out and begins singing with them, as if to abandon his life with the van. Minivans are often associated with children and families. By destroying the van, the men are sending the message that they are not responsible for childrearing and to expect them to share that role insults their masculinity. This commercial presents men in a way that is insulting to both sexes. Men cannot enjoy parts of life that are seen too feminine, which even included fatherhood, and everything that women enjoy is weak.
The lyrics of this commercial were taken from Helen Reddy’s “I Am Woman” which was a protest song that was created to empower women during the social movements in the 1970s. Burger King is making fun of the way in which women gained power throughout the United States by rewriting the lyrics to this song. At one point the men protesting rip their underwear off and throw it in fires, to joke about bra burning protests that happened when the original version of the song was released. The Manthem commercial explores this idea that men feel suffocated by the expectations of masculinity and dragged down by women’s interests and they believe women’s interests are inherently inferior. This commercial is a prime example of how masculinity limits the way in which men can behave in the social world.

**Figures 4a and 5b:** Bacardi and the Got Milk? campaign used aspects of the position the Conquered to exploit expectations of fragile masculinity. Bacardi presents an advertisement featuring a woman who would not be considered skinny or healthy by the social world. The use of this individual is to explain that men can be more attractive if they take advantage of the “ugly girlfriend!” Bacardi is using fragile masculinity that produces insecurities about one’s self to hurt and degrade women who do not fit society’s standard of beauty. To boost masculine traits and confidence, men should use this position of the conquered woman to feel better about themselves. The Got Milk campaign delivered a similar message through a series of advertisements where men are portrayed as the victim of their partners’ menstrual cycle. A man holding cartons of milk with caption that states, “I’m sorry for not reading between the right lines.” This is an advertisement that claims that milk helps reduce symptoms of PMS. Messages like the Got Milk campaign place women in a double bind. They are not allowed to be expressive, so they must be submissive. The viewer then can express the same message within their own lives, because the story behind the quotation is not explained.
products such as Dr. Pepper Ten exist. Women are not featured in this advertisement, but are mentioned continuously. The mocking and degradation of women’s positions in the world limits the ways in which they are able to respond, playing them into a conquered position. The physical presence of a woman isn’t necessary to fulfill the placement of submissive, controlled, or dominated.

Dominant Masculinity

The Tease

Figure 2: Figure 2 is an example of the sexually explicit ideas Burger King wants to produce when trying to advertise their new sandwiches. The position of the sandwich, the woman’s face, and the caption give a complete understanding of what the advertisers were attempting to portray. With a sandwich being displays as a penis and the consumption of the sandwich representing oral sex, Burger King is playing into a specific type of restorative masculinity. The creative minds behind this type of advertisement are expressing the idea that
with the consumption of this product, comes the sexual attention of females. The impressed and shocked face of the female is a subconscious need and want for women to respond similarly to penises.

The caption, “It’ll Blow Your Mind Away” really doesn’t leave anything to the imagination when partnered with the image. Audiences will immediately think of women performing oral sex on men, blow jobs. The use of the word blow was not an accident, but advertisers’ understanding of expectations of masculinity. Even the name of the sandwich incites the thought of genitals, “BK Super Seven Incher”. Penis size is important in the ability to be seen as masculine. Referring to the sandwich in the same way men refer to their penis size, Burger King is relating their sandwiches to their consumers’ image of what is a man. This could have been portrayed without the presence of the women, simply displaying the sandwich while still using the Seven Incher name. The presence of the woman allows for the idea that impressing women will also come with having a larger penis. The objectification of the woman presented in this advertisement allows men consuming Burger King’s sandwiches to see women as objects there to make them feel manlier. Another message explains that if you consume the sandwich, you are deserving of a similar reaction as the woman in the advertisement. Through Burger King’s logic, being more masculine leads to more sex. Overall, this advertisement exudes the messages of objectification, along with restorative masculinity.

Figures 5a and 6a: Evan Williams’ advertisement featuring a young woman explores the position of the Tease heavily. There is an image of a teenage female wearing a school uniform, she is slouching a bit. The image next to the teen is of a young woman, in a tight-fitting shirt with most of her torso exposed. The caption over these two images is “The longer you wait… the
better it gets.” There is a bottle of Evan Williams in the middle of the two images, with that it says aged seven years. The young woman in this advertisement is placed in the position of the Tease because of her physical appearance, but also the message that is sent with the images being parallel to one another. Not only is she a tease once she’s of age, but the message aligns with the idea that while this woman on the left isn’t at her prime, she is still acceptable. The play with pedophilia continues to show that young women are still subjected to sexualization and objectification. Their age does not limit their position within the social world, they can still be considered a tease. This is evident through the term “jail bait”. Jail bait is referring to an underage female to, whom men are attracted, but still recognize the legal issue of underage sex. Jail bait places young women at fault in any situation, because the word bait delivers an understanding that they are going out of their way to get the adult men in trouble for finding underage girls attractive. Even though the men who find underage females attractive are at fault. Evan Williams used the position of the Tease to appeal to the interests of dominant masculinity. To portray a female who is underage and sexualize her by placing her in a position that is supposed to allure viewers, Evan Williams is willing supporting messages of pedophilia. The portrayal of the young female after aging seven years explores the want for young women,
while also presenting a form of domination because finally after seven years the young woman is free to be sexually exploited by men.

The alcoholic beverage, Four Loco, also plays into the idea of sexually active young women through figure 6a. The advertisement shows a female bartender leaning over the bar with a lowcut shirt, her breasts are exposed. Only the bottom of her face is seen, which dehumanizes her place in the advertisement. Two cans of Four Loco are sitting underneath her chest with the caption, “Nice cans.” Above that it reads, “Now Available Legally.” This advertisement places the woman in the position of the Tease due to her physical position as well as the lack of personhood. Once her face is not shown, the woman is no longer seen as a person. The statement about nice cans is referring to her breasts and the cans of Four Loco. The commentary of availability and legality delivers a message of legality of the female more so than the drink. Playing off of themes of pedophilia, Four Loco is suggesting that the woman is more attractive and attainable because she has recently become a legally consenting adult. The idea of dominant masculinity being restored through the idea that younger women are more attractive displays a message of misogyny as well as indirect violence. Finding younger women more attractive can stem from an idea that they are more willing to participate in dominating acts than older women. They can easily be dominated and manipulated. Evan Williams and Four Loco position women as a Tease and invest their money in advertisements that contribute to the idea that underage women are easier to coerce than their older counterparts.

**Figure 1b:** This Doritos’ commercial exemplifies the attitude that men are focused on their own sexuality. In this case, Doritos and football. The woman in the advertisement is placed in the position of the Tease simply because her interactions with her partner must be sexual. Dominant masculinity supports the idea that ignoring those around you to please yourself is
acceptable, but when attention is taken away from your interests it has to be something that is beneficial to oneself. Not only is the sexualization and manipulation of dominance place women in a submissive position, the advertisements portrays men as dumb. If his attention is only kept through competition, food, and sex, the level of complexity that most humans share is completely disregarded. The position of the Tease is to add another level of interest and this is always sex. Women are placed in the position of the Tease, only able to connect with males through sexualization and men are presented as dulled animals.

_Piece of Meat_

**Figure 4:** Arby’s advertising approach uses similar messages to many of Burger King’s advertisements, in the sense that food represents body parts. The striking difference is that when food is being portrayed as female bodies, it does not empower them in the same way that food as male bodies does. Arby’s advertisement explains that their new burgers are something to drool over. It is a picture of female hands covering sandwiches as if they were her breasts. Even though these are actual sandwiches, the burgers are covered as if they are deemed inappropriate like breasts. This message concludes that women’s bodies must be covered, even when a sandwich replaces the placement of breasts. When women are presented as food or consumable, it relays a message that women are also consumable. By comparing women’s bodies to food, women are then seen as objects that are present to consume and use.

**Figure 8:** McDonald’s does not usually use the same tactics as Burger King or Hardee’s, but they are still guilty of using women’s bodies to sell product. Figure 8 is an example of placing women in the position of a Piece of Meat quite literally. By describing a container of McDonald’s fries as “Tall, blonde and gorgeous.” the advertisement is using characteristics usually defining humans as a way to sell product. The play with words creates a message that
allows for women to look as if they are inanimate objects, present to be used. The mixture of human and food descriptions leaves audiences questioning the validity of women’s places in the social world. The consequence of using descriptions of people for food returns to the idea that women are no more than a “piece of meat”. Dominant masculine traits exploit this position of women. By limiting their personhood, it is easier to dominate and individuals have less moral issue with dominating something that lacks autonomy.

**Figure 13:** Hardee’s advertisement features a picture of a chicken sandwich being held by a pair of hands with the caption, “Hold me right there, bite me right there!” Figure 13 is not only using sexually explicit imagery, it is giving the same voice to food that women are expected to have. While the food featured is not literally speaking to audiences, the expectation of women during sexual activity is that of constant willingness. By applying this sexual interaction to an image of a sandwich, women are again placed in the position of a Piece of Meat. Figure 13 is an example of an advertisement that women are not present in, but their sexuality is still sexualized and exploited. This advertisement is also normalizing sexual acts that not everyone may find acceptable. By publishing that type of sexual message for many audiences to see, the advertisement is taking away sexual expression of women by limiting them to a specific standard or expectation.

**Figures 7a, 8a, and 9a:** Budweiser, Three Olives, and St. Paul’s Girl are all featuring advertisements with women positioned as a part of the beverage. Budweiser presents three women wearing Budweiser’s bathing suits as a portion of the Budweiser label. Three Olives
depicts a martini glass with a woman sitting in the glass as if she is the drink. St. Paul’s Girl shows a silhouette of a woman, but instead of presenting her features the silhouette is a beer glass. All three of these advertisements successfully displace women’s personhoods and autonomy. This is accomplished through the sexualization and objectification of women’s bodies as useable and consumable objects. Dominant masculinity is boosted through this portrayal of womanhood because it simply disregards women as people in general. This disregard allows the expression of masculinity to provoke domination over women.

*The Conquered*

**Figure 2a:** Alcohol advertisements often use sexually explicit material to better market their products. Skyy Vodka is no different. Using the position of the Conquered woman, Skyy exemplifies how domination of women is a defining trait of masculinity. In figure 2a, a man is standing directly over, straddling a female who is sunbathing. She is in a small bikini, while he is wearing a full suit. This difference in attire parallels the physical difference between their statures as well. The woman is lying on the ground, looking up to the man whose face is not pictured. His dominance over her is displayed through the physical barrier he created with his body between the woman and the rest of her environment. His suit signals that he is wealthy and is important in whatever career he may have. A suit desires some level of respect, while putting the woman in a bikini signals that her status is insignificant and can be ignored as long as she is presenting herself in an attractive way. The man is holding two glasses and a bottle
of Skyy Vodka with a tight grip. His stance and the way in which he is holding the bottle alludes to some aggression, dominance toward the woman. The message that is delivered from this style of advertisement explains that by presenting yourself in an aggressive way, women will look up to you. Physically barring a woman from something, even sunbathing, is portrayed as okay and respected if you are a powerful man.

**Violent Masculinity**

A “mock assault” suggests male aggression towards women can be playful because despite the portrayal of violence, the woman show no fear but rather has a blank expression. However, the woman’s apparent lack of fear betrays a deeper symbolic level of men’s power to do as they please with women, implying that male violence towards women is not only normal but also linked to masculine expressions of passion. (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1450).

Mock assault is a form of interaction between men and women often depicted throughout food advertisements, specifically those reciting expectations of violent masculinity. The stereotype of men as the aggressor and the woman as submissive does not vary from other types of advertisements, food advertisements carrying those themes as well. A popular trend within food advertisements that creates a unique understanding of the relation between men and women is the presentation of women as consumable beings. The process of consuming something is inherently violent; chewing, ripping, grinding, etc. While this isn’t seen as violent when considered in the context of food, treating a human that way should be considered violent. Women are seen as objects that are consumable to the observer of the advertisement. The women in these advertisements are showing similar signs to those in advertisements with mock assault. The facial expression that displays a lack of awareness or care for the action being taken against
them is defined as “licensed withdrawal”, a concept theorized by Goffman (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan, & Cherrier 2016:1456). “Licensed withdrawal” is present in advertisements featuring women interacting with men. It places women in a position of vulnerability. By not reacting to the actions being taken against them, licensed withdrawal normalizes men’s violent behaviors. Women are not expected to react and men do not come to expect them to do so. Mock assault and licensed withdrawal are two concepts that are regularly used within food advertisements.

The application of these concepts creates concern because advertisers presumably recognize the benefit of these effects for selling their products. Mock assault and licensed withdrawal are two examples of the way in which masculinity is culturally defined through violence. The use of the effects not only normalizes the idea that women are objects to be used, it normalizes acts of violence against other human beings. Food advertisements are not a direct influence over domestic violence, but the presence of this type of behavior in advertisements allows for violence against women to become normal and ordinary. Violent masculinity explains that being violent toward a woman does not make you an abuser, but violence towards women makes you a man. The advertisements that exploit traits of violent masculinity only place women in the position of the conquered, because to be violent is to conquer another.

*The Conquered*

**Figure 3**: This is another advertisement produced by Burger King. Burger King not only exploits masculinity and objectifies women within their advertisements, they also use violence against women to promote their burgers. Figure 3 is an advertisement about how large their burgers are. There is no food in this advertisement and the Burger King logo is small. The woman in the advertisement is presented without facial features other than her nose and mouth. The bandages on her mouth are supposed to explain that Burger King’s burgers are so large that
she hurt her mouth when eating one. The other message that goes along with this image is not about the hamburgers at all, but the message that when consuming these big burgers that means that men are more masculine. According to Burger King, the more masculine men are endowed with bigger penises. The bandages portray a message that big burgers also equate big penises. The woman needed bandages after giving oral sex, which resulted in her injuries. This message, not only incites pointless sexualization, but also violence against the woman in the advertisement. To be portrayed as masculine, men must not only follow the societal expectations but be sexually violent. Burger King is literally selling burgers by referring to a man physically harming a woman through oral sex. Violent masculinity is furthered through advertisement such as this advertisement. Gurrieri et al. expresses the concern with mock assault as a way in which violence against women is portrayed and perpetuated.

**Figures 10 and 11a:** McDonald’s released an advertisement on a Boston Subway depicting a woman in need of a crisis hotline, except the caption explains that she is suffering because she does not have a Big Mac. The image parallels the support lines for rape and sexual assault victims. By placing this woman in the position of a victim of a sex crime, but instead advertising a Big Mac McDonald’s is perpetuating the carelessness society expresses towards victims. Making fun of those who are in need of help is a way that violent masculinity is reassured. This humor allows for the individuals who act violently toward women to never suffer serious or terminal consequences. Bud Light also plays into rape culture that continues to perpetuate violent sexual acts. In a recent promotional campaign, Bud Light created a tagline “The perfect beer for removing ‘no’ from your vocabulary for the night.” The sentiment behind this is blatantly disregarding any understanding of consensual interactions. Bud Light is condoning a scenario where an individual becomes so intoxicated that they are unable to consent.
McDonald’s and Bud Light’s advertisements distribute a message to viewers that to become masculine, a female must be violated. These messages are not simply control or domination, but a combination of violence, domination, and disregard for the females in their lives. Violent masculinity is boosted through messages that align with rape culture and rape myths, because men who adhere to violent masculinity must be reassured that their entitlement of women’s bodies is deserved.

**Figure 1a:** Belvedere Vodka offers a very realistic version of violent masculinity in their advertisement featuring a man forcefully pulling a woman into his lap. The caption of the image refers to how difficult it was to have sexual interactions with the woman, paralleling the fact that she was difficult to convince to go down unlike Belvedere. This message is blatant and is a perfect example of the rape culture that exists in mainstream media. The reason this advertisement is popular and approved by advertisers is due to the understanding that controlling a woman is an acceptable means of attaining masculinity. Depicting such obvious sexual violence to market a product is directly normalizing violence against women and myths of rape. This advertisement doesn’t even take use of mock assault. The woman is visibly scared and shocked by the action being taken against her. Belvedere exceeds the limitations of art depicting reality. This is a form of art is too real for any victim of violence.
**Figure 3a:** Campari released a promotion with actress Salma Hayek. Her role in the advertisements is very sexualized and uses objectifying messages to deliver a marketing campaign. While these messages are inappropriate because they normalize the disregard for women’s personhood and autonomy, some of the images featuring Hayek are more telling about the way in which society views women. One of the advertisements is her standing in a darkly lit elevator with three men surrounding her, pulling her into the closing door. She has her arms at her waist and a licensed withdrawal. The man hitting the elevator button is holding a bottle of alcohol. This advertisement presents Hayek in a conquered position because of the limpness of her body and the lack of control she has in her environment surrounded by three large men. Violent masculinity is being enhanced because the in which these men are grabbing and pulling Hayek is violent. The message that is sent with her presence in the elevator is that they are sexually charged in their motives. The advertisement is playing into to the stereotypical fantasy of a gang rape. The men are hovering over her being and withholding her ability to move. The fact that this is sexually charged violence for an alcohol advertisement also increases the idea that sexual interactions are valid when one of the parties is intoxicated.
Conclusions

Radical feminist theory enters food advertising with an analysis that claims that women are sexualized and objectified to the extent of their personhood is diminished. Food brands such as Hardee’s and Burger King promote a sense of entitlement women’s bodies through their advertisements while Dr. Pepper uses gender roles to define how they should target audiences with masculinity. A radical feminist lens offers the idea that because women are so overtly sexualized, objectified, and dehumanized in food advertisements that violence against women is promoted. Gender roles are limiting to women and continue to place them in a position of subordination to men. Food advertisements link women to a position of lifelessness, comparing them to meat. This form of subordination is severe in the fact that this reassures the idea that women are at the hands of those who control power. Cultivation theory with the objectification of women allows audiences to understand the world through the idea that women lack autonomy. Using them as objects, as they are presented in food advertisements, is acceptable. Cultivation of the objectification of women perpetuates and normalizes violence against women. By cultivating a cultural ideology that women are meat to consume, a foundational thought process allows for women to be placed in subordinate roles.

After detailing 35 food advertisements, several trends became transparently clear. All of these observations deal directly with how masculinity is presented within food and the gender expectations that are engrained in society’s understanding of femininity and masculinity. They are:

- Women were more sexualized in fast food and alcohol advertisements.
- Alcohol advertisements exploited violent masculinity expectations more so than dominant or fragile masculinity.
- Women were always placed in the position of the Conquered in alcohol advertisements.
- Fast food and diet food advertisements heavily relied on fragile masculinity expectations.
- Fast food advertisements used their food as a metaphor for penises, weapons of sexual warfare.
- Advertisements not directly associated with men or targeting men still played into culturally defined expectations of masculinity.

All of the advertisements mentioned were analyzed, first for the sexualization depicted. Sex is a significant and obvious point in this research, but the way in which sexualization and objectification were used alters the messages being delivered to audiences. In twenty-seven of the thirty-five advertisements, there were medium or high levels of sexualization. Sex is a way in which many food brands market their products and sex is used in very explicit ways. This trend of exploiting sexualization does not follow suit with the way in which sex is discussed in society. The topic of sex is still off limits in most social circles and to discuss sex openly is rare. The way that food advertisements use sexualization contradicts the way that the social world establishes boundaries with sex. The double standard for advertisements and people actually functioning creates a vast number of confusing issues.

The first issue is that individuals can see sexual images or actions, but not speak about it. This leads to the understanding of sex through advertisements promoted by Burger King or Bud Light. The messages that follow, as previously outlined, are violent and offer ideas that masculinity must be defined through domination. Without the ability to discuss these misinformed understandings of sex, the trend continues. Women are then used as sexual objects,
while men believe that controlling those around them and their penis size defines their masculinity. Sexually explicit advertisements, complied with pornography, in turn becomes a form of sex education.

A second issue that blossoms with the trends in the food advertising industry is that is limiting of sexual freedom. While women and men are both limited sexually within these advertisements, women are more so disadvantaged. Men and women are placed into categories of how they should behave sexually. Men are aggressive and dominant, with the expectation of an abnormally large penis. This constraint on men convinces them that to be sexual, they must follow these guidelines. Women are submissive objects, that can be sexually ravaged, but are expected to always enjoy it. The lack of communication about sex is why these trends continue in sex and how women are constantly placed in positions of inferiority. Sexual freedom is diminished by food advertisements.

Continuing in the same vein, a third issue, portrays sex as an act that men are supposed to do to women as if women are objects. Women do not have sex with men, but are the object with which men have sex. Pleasure is the focus of men, but pleasing is the focus of women. Food advertisements do not relay any message that women should be sexually empowered unless a man is there to watch or dominate her prior to her sexual exploration. If the message of food advertisements were reality, women would only be aroused when presented with an aroused man. This ignores all other sexual orientations while also ignoring women’s sexual interest. The issue within this sentiment becomes significant when women believe that their sexual experiences revolve around men. By presenting sex as an act to be done to women, women are taught that they should not have sexual desires other than those that align with their partners’. Food advertisements successfully normalize sexual assault through this message. A woman may
not enjoy the way that men are approaching her, but with the backing of dominant masculinity men are allowed to behave in a way that is harmful to others.

Food advertisements often place women’s bodies in the position of the food. Arby’s, Hardee’s, Carl’s Jr., Burger King, etc. are all restaurants that regularly use women’s bodies as representation of food. One of the major issues with this style of advertising is the lack of autonomy women have when placed in those positions. By presenting women’s breasts as burgers, their breasts are no longer a part of their entity. Breasts can then be seen as separate from the individual they are attached to. This is because a burger is a consumable object, up for anyone’s attention. When women’s body parts are compared to objects that are consumable, the message delivered is that women’s body parts are also consumable. This lends to the perpetuation of sexual assault against women. Touching women inappropriately and without consent is an action that many feel they are entitled to simply because women’s breasts, backs, and bottoms are not seen as their own. Another issue that is born from this trend in food advertising is that breasts equate meat, lifeless products. When a woman is assaulted through groping, her body is seen as a lifeless entity that should not have a reaction. Comparison of bodies and meat creates an idea that women are objects to play with until they are ready to be consumed. Advertisements that portray women’s bodies as food take away women’s control of their physical body.

A problem that stems from advertisements portraying women as objects is the expectation of reaction. Because the message received from food advertisements equates women to lifeless meat, men do not want a response when addressing women as such. The expectation is that women should respond the same way a sandwich would, simply be consumed without retaliation. Since women are functioning, living beings when a woman is sexually assaulted or
harassed, instead of sitting back and taking it, she counters. These reactions vary with individuals, but the issue is how men react to the reaction of women. If a woman reacts negatively to sexual advances, such as catcalling, men get angry. According to food advertisements, women should want this attention and accept it. Men feel entitled to approaching women, either consensually or aggressively, because women are consistently presented as submissive, willing participants. Food advertisements create boundaries for women and their reactions to society.

In the fast food advertisements analyzed, women constantly received the bulk of the violence depicted for simply being a woman. While some of these advertisements were insulting to men, the butt of the joke always returned to a man’s level of femininity and how womanly he was. This is common in many aspects of the social world. Curse words are a significant example. By referring to man as a “bitch” or a “pussy”, they are insulted because it is comparing them to women and questioning their masculinity. This is how food advertisement also uses womanhood as an insult. One of the advertisements for Hardee’s and Carl’s Jr portrays this innate fear of femininity through a woman’s transformation into a man, simply to eat a hamburger. Mystique, a shapeshifter, feels as if she must shapeshift into a man to eat a hamburger. This shows that women are not supposed to eat hamburgers, as well as men should be insulted if they eat food that women are eating. If Mystique has stayed her original form, she would then be a strong female character eating what is defined as “man food.” This contradicts is culturally defined as masculinity. Feminine traits are not appealing and are used as an insult to perpetuate this idea that men must eat meat and control women to be considered a man.

This dislike of femininity and urge to be presented as masculine is the motivation behind Burger King’s Manthem commercial. This commercial is a perfect representation of the
limitation that culturally defined masculinity places on men. Men are restricted in terms of food, emotional expression, relational expression, even word choice. Men are controlled by the concepts that define traditional masculine roles. While women are beginning to step away from the traditional role of femininity, men are still withholding of any feminine expression. By restraining men to stereotypical expectations of masculinity, society is creating and perpetuating violence against women. Men who follow strict expectations of masculinity are more likely to express themselves through anger and violence. They are less likely to talk about issues within relationships. Lack of communication isn’t necessarily because they are restricted from expressing themselves, but also due to the idea that men don’t need to explain their actions. The privilege that goes along with being masculine is that actions are less likely to be questioned.

Further Research is Necessary

While the number of documents collected in this analysis was plentiful within this research, the understanding of food advertisements can go beyond the 35 advertisements collected and viewed. There are limitations in this research, simply because advertisements for food brands are so prevalent and collecting a larger sample size would be extremely time consuming. Further research can be done, by collecting documents from simply one of the food advertisement categories. This analysis wanted to understand which type of food advertisements exploits and normalizes violent behavior more so. The individual categories of food advertisements would offer a closer understanding of their messages alone, instead of recognizing the normalization of violence that is received in the messages presented in the broad categories. Research about the individual themes of masculinity expectations and stereotypes could also be conducted to further understand how masculinity plays a significant role in product advertising in food.
Looking Toward the Future

The ability to question those in position of power, who are abusing their power, is beginning to grow. Movements such as #MeToo, the Women’s March, and Time’s Up are helping women who are victims of abuse address their assaults openly. While these movements are widely appreciated and accepted, backlash to their messages are also seen. This backlash is evidence that normalized behaviors of domination, manipulation, and violence are present in our society. By addressing those who sexually, mentally, or physically abuse women openly, these normalized behaviors are being attacked. Backlash is created by those who do not want these normalized versions of exploitation to stop. Backlash is fashioned because those who are abusive, want to continue to have that power.

A woman came out against actor Aziz Ansari, claiming that he coerced her into sexual interactions. In January 2018, Babe released a woman’s account of her relations with Ansari. She explained that while she willingly went back to his apartment, he immediately began trying to initiate sex. She said she wanted to slow down, but throughout the night Ansari continuously pressured her into sexual activities. At one point, the woman recounts him shoving his fingers in her mouth, ignoring her request to slow down. The pressure that he continued to place on her throughout the night led to what she recalled being one of the worst nights of her life. After being sexually involved with Ansari through his badgering and manipulation, she left feeling he had taken advantage of her. This type of experience was deemed as simply a bad date by many of the individuals reading the woman’s account. Many argued that the woman should have not gone to his apartment or she should have been more clear in her dislike of his behavior. Most of the backlash that spurred from this woman’s story was that she made the wrong decision, victimizing her even further with ridicule.
This example of a woman’s experience with a powerful man demonstrates that while movements such as #MeToo are successful, culturally we must begin to change. Instead of addressing the issue revolving around Ansari’s behavior, the woman was attacked and was accused of overreacting. This type of behavior from men does not equate a bad date or the boys will be boys mantra, but a lack of concern for the women. Men’s aggressive, dominating behavior is so normalized that their disregard for their partner is defined as a bad interaction. Without recognizing toxic behaviors and addressing them as so, the normalization of abuse will continue. Ansari’s interaction with this woman is an example of what many women experience in their lifetime and instead of viewing this as a normal experience, we must begin addressing them as a social problem with men’s understanding of women.

#MeToo is a positive way to address normalized behaviors of assault throughout society. The continuation of this type of movement will only help women accomplish more throughout their lifetime. They will no longer be held back by the limitations of misuse of power. This hope, while progress is being made, cannot fully come to term due to the acceptance of culturally defined roles of masculinity and femininity. Gender roles and expectations push against social movements such as Time’s Up and the Women’s March. These gender roles are prevalent in food advertisements, which makes them a limiting factor in the progress of society. Women and men’s position within the social world are curbed because of the ridiculous stereotypes constantly written into the food industry’s advertising. Food advertisements are guilty of normalizing actions of violence against women, as well as exploiting masculine expectations that perpetuate domination and control of others. Whether art reflects reality or constructs reality, the way in which gender is functioning is changing within our culture and art must follow to truly create progress.
References


Dastagir, Alia E. “Men pay a steep price when it comes to masculinity.” *USA Today*, 31 March 2017.


Appendix

Figures 1 – 14: Fast Food Advertisements
Figures 1a – 11a: Alcohol Advertisements
Figures 1b – 5b: Snack Food Advertisements
Figure 1c – 3c: Meat Products Advertisements
Figure 1d – 2d: Diet Food Advertisements

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Figure 11

FOUR INCHES HAS NEVER BEEN SO SATISFYING.

FAT Shack™

INTRODUCING OUR NEW VALUE MENU
Featuring 4” Shackers for only $2.79!

706 South College Avenue (Corner of College & Laurell) Phone: (970) 682-2216 Web: www.FatShack.com

Figure 12

Meet the BK Girls

Princess Zaramusto

Decadent at first glance
But better in your mouth.
Deliciously big, perfectly
big enough to make you
slurp in wild joy.

Sara

Savor the humanity.

Barbara

Bloom of the burger.
Not just a pretty burger.

BK Chicken BLT

But just a pretty burger.
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<td>11a</td>
<td>Bud Light beer advertisement</td>
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Figure 1b: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abcE3wZBDcE

Figure 2b: nothing fake about ‘em.

“i’m not into phonies. Good thing there’s nothing fake or phony in popchips. They only taste like they’re bad for you.”

Katy Perry

think popped!
never fried, never baked.
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Images included in the Literature Review.

Beyman Blender
Advertisement
Fluid Hair Salon
Advertisement

Dolce and Gabbana
Advertisement