

HOW HUMOUR IN
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS
REFLECTS AND DETERMINES
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETAL
ISSUES

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Abstract

This study examined how humour is used within the social context of humorous television commercials (n=75) as a medium for and determiner of contemporary societal issues. The commercials were analyzed using categories developed through a combination of the guidelines provided by Fowles (1996) and Foss (1996), with an in-depth analysis conducted on the categories determined to be most relevant to the research question.

Due to the prevalent use of stereotypes in this sample, results from the analysis were organized using stereotypes as a primary theme. This theme was then further divided into the stereotypes that were supported and those that were contradicted in this sample. Information demonstrating the role of other themes (e.g., sexuality) or categories (e.g., music) in the development of the narratives was also included.

The most salient finding was that the humour found in this sample of commercials was frequently at the expense of the males in the commercials, supporting the notion of males being portrayed as a “stupid group.” However, this group differs from traditional “stupid groups” in important ways. Whereas members of traditional “stupid groups” belong to marginalized and peripheral parts of society, members from the “stupid group” in this study are from a dominant and powerful part of society.

The representation of men, women, and families in this sample of commercials reflects changes in family structure and the associated stereotypes of mothers and fathers. These findings are discussed within the context of social and economic changes and the impact of these changes on the evolution of stereotypical gender roles. The notable

exclusion of non-traditional family constellations in this sample highlights the way in which commercials serve to reinforce mainstream cultural values.

In this sample of television commercials, success is portrayed in a way that reinforces a common stereotype of successful individuals. Although this finding might suggest an additional “stupid group” of individuals who are successful, the “successful” characters were also male, making the distinction of a “stupid group” of successful individuals separate from the “stupid group” of males impossible to discern in this sample.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Review of the Literature

Humour possesses the unique ability to communicate information to others that would be too threatening to communicate directly. Specifically, humour can decrease the intensity of a message by framing the message as a joke or amusing anecdote on one level, while delivering a more serious or threatening message on another level. Communications involving humor commonly remain focused on the message containing humour, with the more serious or threatening message not consciously acknowledged (Berger 1995a). This allows the sender of the message to communicate feelings such as aggression, hostility, or criticism to another individual, yet allows both the sender and receiver of the communication to focus on the less threatening, humorous component.

As individuals living in a fast-paced society, we seldom reflect on the experiences of our everyday lives, discounting many of our experiences as typical or ordinary. Consequently, we remain oblivious to the subtle impact of events we consider unimportant or trivial, such as humour. Considering a communication as humorous provides us with permission to trivialize, minimize, invalidate or totally avoid dealing with the issue associated with humour that may be serious, threatening, or painful. This study seeks to investigate common but often unacknowledged and unrecognized components of everyday life, such as viewing humorous television commercials, and make their function explicit. In this way it will be possible to examine how experiences considered trivial provide a

reflection of and are determinants of important contemporary issues within our society.

An overview of the role of humour in everyday life and a brief discussion of how humour has been viewed by the public and academia will be presented. Theories and functions of humour will follow, with three major theories that will be used in the analysis portion of this study being highlighted. An explanation of the functions served by humour for individuals, groups, and society will be provided along with examples of humour that demonstrate these functions.

Popular culture has been defined as “the culture of the ordinary person” (Berger, 1995b, p. 161) and focuses on media such as television shows, movies, fashions, print media, music, food, and other happenings in our everyday lives. Because popular culture reflects and influences contemporary societal issues (Fowles, 1996), humour will be examined within the context of popular culture. Within the broad spectrum of popular culture, the specific medium of television commercials will be used to examine issues related to humour.

Although television commercials are a common occurrence in everyday life, they are different than other forms of popular culture because of their exorbitant cost and their primary purpose of influencing behaviour. An advertising agency’s ability to identify and construct meaningful and memorable symbols that identify and reflect issues experienced by the specified target group determines the level of success of the commercial. Because humour within society typically provides a venue for dealing with difficult or sensitive issues within everyday life, it is hypothesized that humour may serve the same function within television commercials.

Because television commercials also serve as a form of persuasive communication they are considered a form of rhetoric (Foss, 1996), making rhetorical criticism a logical theoretical framework for the analysis of humorous television commercials. Rhetorical criticism is defined as “the process of systematically investigating and explaining symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes” (Foss, 1996, p. 7). Berger (1996) conceptualizes television commercials as micronarratives. Accordingly, within the context of rhetorical analysis, a critical analysis of the elements within the narratives used in humorous television commercials will be conducted. After the elements within the narratives have been comprehensively examined, specific elements will be identified and used for further analysis. These elements will be chosen for their significance in determining how humour is used as a means of communication in a social context (i.e., in television commercials) and how this social context both reflects and acts upon contemporary societal issues.

The Importance of Humour

Humour plays an important role in everyday life and is considered one of a few identifiable factors that make life “delightful, rich, and enjoyable” (Fry, 1987, p. vii). Humour permeates many aspects of everyday life and serves a variety of functions ranging from being a source of enjoyment or entertainment to providing a way to cope with unfortunate life circumstances. As such, humour is present during periods of great happiness as well as during times of deep sadness or despair. “Indeed, our most intimate relationships, our most personal problems and our most sacred beliefs provoke humour and have done so for thousands of years” (Berger, 1993, p. 1).

Humour is universal and “is found throughout the human race” (Fry, 1987, p. vii). Humour exists across all cultures and has been expressed in a variety of ways throughout history (Haig, 1988). Several prominent characteristics of humour include its ability to influence attitude, mood and, consequently, interpersonal relationships, and the lack of a clear understanding of it in spite of the development of many theories attempting to explain it (Haig, 1988).

As a concept, humour evades specific definition (Berger, 1995a). Although generally associated with pleasant feelings and the generation of laughter as a response, humour should not be equated with laughter (Chapman & Foot, 1976). The expression of humour encompasses a wide spectrum of emotion, ranging from positive feelings of happiness and pleasure to negative feelings of aggression and hostility. Ziv (1988) provides a broad definition of humour, stating that humour acts as a message within a social context constructed by the sender with the intention of producing smiling or laughter in the receiver.

In order to understand humour usage within a specific environment, a shared knowledge base is critical for those involved in encoding or decoding the humorous communication (Berger, 1995a). Because much of what we find humorous depends on subtleties of language and experience as a method of conveyance, a receiver would not be able to determine the humorous content of a message without a common base of understanding. This common understanding or base of knowledge develops as we live within a specific culture or society and learn the language spoken within that culture or society, including the meanings associated with the symbols used. “The jokes of a

subgroup of society at a// particular time convey information about topical issues, status and the norms of that society, which may appear incomprehensible to an outsider” (Haig, 1988, p. 95).

In spite of the prevalence and widespread acceptance of humour in contemporary culture, humour (and the resulting laughter) was not always viewed positively. Public laughter has become acceptable only in the last 100 years. Throughout Western history “laughter was thought to be impolite at best, sinful at worst” (Goldstein, 1987, p. 3). Today, although humour (and laughter) is viewed positively, overall it is considered trivial by the general public. “How ironic, then, that this seemingly trivial, inconsequential, common thing we know as humour is so enigmatic and plays so vital a role in our psychic lives and in society” (Berger, 1993, p. 9).

Humour as an Area of Serious Academic Inquiry

Past and current academic writing in the area of humour emphasizes the importance of humour and its contribution to everyday functioning, especially its therapeutic benefits (Fry & Salmegh, 1987). However, in the not too distant past, humour was considered frivolous and unimportant in academic circles (Fry, 1987; Haig, 1988). In the introduction to an early text highlighting humour research, the editors state that during the period of time preceding the publication of the book, humour was not an acceptable topic for serious academic inquiry. Because of the existing climate, the work of many of the contributors to the book was completed “on the side” (Goldstein & McGhee, 1972, p. xx).

As predicted by Goldstein and McGhee (1972), humour has become more

acceptable as an area of study, generating a great deal of attention and research in recent years (Berger, 1995a). International conferences highlighting the importance of humour studies began with the first conference held by the International Society for Humour Studies in 1976 (Fry & Salmegh, 1987) and the inception of *Humour: The International Journal of Humour Research*, devoted to the publication of scholarly articles in the area of humour research.

Publication of the ground-breaking *Anatomy of an Illness* (Cousins, 1981) detailing the author's use of humour to battle a life-threatening illness spurred intense interest in the health-related therapeutic benefits of humour. In the 1980s, large numbers of individuals providing health care within institutional settings became interested in the benefits of incorporating humour into health care. Clinical psychologists became interested in how humour could be applied to psychotherapy (e.g., Fry & Salmegh, 1987). As a result of these events, a considerable amount of research investigating the physiological and psychological aspects of humour followed.

Research in the area of humour has focused on a variety of issues such as the development of tests to measure factors related to humour (Craig, Lampert, & Nelson, 1996; Kohler & Ruch, 1996; Ruch, 1994; Ruch, Kohler, & van Thriel, 1996; Ruch, 1992; Thorson & Powell, 1991), humour production and humour appreciation (Ruch, 1988; Ruch & Hehl, 1986; 1988; Ziv, 1984), ratings of various types of humour (Kuhlman, 1985), the use of humour within various forms of psychotherapy (Christie, 1994; MacHovec, 1991; Hudson & O'Hanlon, 1991; Richman, 1996; Saper, 1990; Schimel, 1989; Tuttleman, 1991) and organizational settings (Ehrenberg, 1995; McClane & Singer,

1991; Morreal, 1991), the function of humour through various stages of adult development (McGhee, Ruch, & Hehl, 1990; Thorson & Powell, 1996) and humour as a mechanism for coping with stress (Bizi, Keinan & Beit-Hallahmi, 1988; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; Overholser, 1992).

To date, many aspects of humour have been examined, yet the concept itself remains relatively poorly defined (Haig, 1988) and difficult to understand (Berger, 1995a). Although humour may be defined operationally as a rating on a particular scale, or behaviourally as a stimulus that results in a response of laughter, no widely accepted definition of humour exists. In spite of the research generated over the past two decades, the function of humour in everyday life has not been adequately addressed (Chapman, 1983). One factor contributing to the lack of inquiry into humour's function in everyday life involves the tradition and expectation for research to follow a carefully controlled experimental design. Although useful in many areas of investigation, important information is forfeited within the rigid constraints of such research paradigms (Chapman, 1983).

Even though the power and importance of humour are widely acknowledged, further study must examine the use of humour in everyday life. As suggested by Berger (1993), the use of humour in popular culture provides a fundamental understanding of the issues faced in contemporary society. However, a theoretical foundation must guide this examination. During the period in which humour became an area of serious academic inquiry, numerous theories of humour were developed that provide a critical foundation for this analysis.

Humour: Theories and Functions

Many theories have been developed to identify and explain various aspects of humour (Koller, 1988). Haig (1988) states “over one hundred theories of humour exist and have been promulgated by philosophers, novelists, literary critics, psychologists, sociologists, artists and humourists themselves” (p. 9). However, due to the multifaceted nature of humour, no particular theory completely captures it (Chapman & Foot, 1976).

Researchers from a variety of disciplines have examined humour from the perspective of gaining an understanding of the functions it fulfills for individuals and groups within our society. This research is conducted using a variety of media such as situation comedies, movies, and cartoons, but is most frequently found in the analysis of the content of jokes. Analysis and interpretation of humour based on different theoretical orientations may result in different methods of analysis being used, leading to different interpretations based on similar content. Multidisciplinary examinations of humour address this issue by producing richer and broader understandings of humour based on an integration of concepts from a variety of disciplines. Through multidisciplinary approaches to understanding humour, several methods of analysis and several interpretations of the same text are possible and desirable in order to more fully capture the function of humour in a particular setting.

The following examples do not provide a comprehensive explanation of how various disciplines would analyze humour. They do, however, provide an illustration of how various concepts and principles from a variety of disciplines apply to humour research. Different combinations of these concepts and principles allow a more thorough

understanding of humorous stimuli than would be possible if limited to one approach while conducting an analysis of humour.

Psychologists examine the use of humour by individuals and groups as a means of coping or as a mechanism of defense. Psychoanalytic formulations would focus on the use of humour to deal with sexual and aggressive impulses, which are the subjects of most jokes (Ziv, 1984). Sociological analysis focuses on humour “as both an interactive process and a societal product that affects how groups, organizations, institutions, and societies deal with the imperfections and dilemmas of relationships, norms, values, and systems” (Koller, 1988, p. 1). Anthropologists examine the use of humour in different cultures and attempt to answer questions regarding how humour is used, by whom, and under what circumstances, while philosophers attempt to gain an understanding of the origins and the conditions under which humour exists. Those studying humour in literature analyze the genre in which humour is found such as satire, parody, and comedy, and examine the production of humour through the use of characterization and literary devices such as exaggeration, irony, metaphor, or synecdoche. Communications theorists would be interested in the encoding and decoding of a particular humorous message and in gaining an understanding of how audiences interpret and understand humour in a variety of media.

Berger (1995a) identifies two levels of humour found in society and recommends the examination of both levels when conducting an analysis of humour. One level is the manifest function that acts when we are aware of the functions and consequences of humour. Latent functions operate when we are not aware of the function or consequences of humour (Berger, 1995a). The latent functions of humour are extremely powerful and

frequently invoked, though often unintentionally, by both individuals and groups. The latent functions serve a variety of purposes for both those generating humour and those appreciating humour, even though the individuals or groups involved lack awareness of the impact of telling or listening to a joke (Berger, 1995a).

Humour plays a vital role in social communication among individuals and groups and can provide a form of social regulation (Haig, 1988). Koller (1988) outlines a wide range of functions of humour including: social bonding, relief from stress and strain, expression of aggression or hostility, celebration of life, self-effacement, social correction, upholding honesty over sham, provoking thought, balancing pain, reinforcing or undermining stereotypes, therapy or catharsis, defense against counter attacks or threats, and survival. Ziv (1984) describes dealing with social taboos, allowing a venue for social criticism, facilitating group interaction, acting as a defense mechanism, and exercising intellectual abilities as the central functions of humour. Berger (1995a) summarizes the functions of humour within the social context:

It can be used to control people, it can be used to resist control and domination, it can help people integrate themselves into groups, it offers “stupid outsiders” to laugh at (and feel superior to), and it offers numerous gratifications to people. It frequently makes use of stereotypes of groups, which provide, on one hand, a quick sense of character and motivation, and on the other negative self-images that are dysfunctional for the group being ridiculed. (p. 101)

Humour researchers agree that one theory or approach to the study of humour is

unable to adequately explain all forms of humour. Often several theories and approaches are combined to explain humorous phenomena. According to Koller (1988), four macrotheories best explain all forms of humour. These theories deal with incongruity (the difference between what we are expecting to happen in a situation and what actually happens and how this produces humour), relief from tension (how humour is produced in anxiety-laden situations to function as a form of psychological release), ambivalence (humour directed at characteristics of a culture that result in opposing feeling states such as love-hate or attraction-repulsion), and superiority (engaging in humour that allows individuals or groups to gain esteem by deprecating others). Haig (1988) divides humour theories into five groups - "incongruity, changes in affect or tension, superiority, social communication, including control and modulation, and psychoanalytic approaches" (p. 9). Psychoanalytic approaches focus mainly on the role of sex and aggression in humour but may be expanded to examine other psychoanalytic constructs such as defense mechanisms. Berger (1993) focuses on superiority, incongruity, and psychoanalytic theory, while Davis (1993) combines incongruity, release, and superiority theories. Tension relief, superiority, and incongruity theories are commonly used in the analysis of humour. These three theories can be conceptualized so that they incorporate the characteristics present in other theories. For example, many humour researchers examine the role of sex and aggression within tension release theories. Due to the ability for three broad theories to incorporate characteristics of more specific theories, this study will use the ideas found in tension relief, superiority, and incongruity theories to analyze humor.

Humour as Relief from Tension

Theorists subscribing to the tension-relief theory of humour focus on humour as “a release from restraints or controls whether they are physiological, psychological, or social restrictions” (Koller, 1988, p. 8). Tension relief theories focus on the ability of humour to function as a safety valve for both individuals and groups (Haig, 1988). Humour offers a socially acceptable venue that allows individuals to gain distance from aggressive or sexual impulses. “Aggression, hostility, or social conflict is held by anthropologists to be a “universal,” indicating that it is found in every known society or culture” (Koller, 1988, p. 20). Aggressive impulses often result in humour being used to diffuse conflict or release tension between individuals and groups in a socially acceptable format, before the conflict escalates to overt aggression. Sexual impulses are often directed into the form of “dirty jokes” with content of a highly sexual nature (Berger, 1993; Ziv, 1984).

When used by individuals or groups, humour can veil aggressive or hostile communication, constructing a safety valve that can diffuse tension in interpersonal situations or release tension in hostile or anxiety-provoking situations (Berger, 1995a; Haig, 1988; Ziv, 1984). The safety valve constructed by using humour allows us to cope with unpleasant or even horrific events in our lives. Koller (1988) conceptualizes humour as a “mechanism for survival” (p. 13) and a “*vital ingredient* in confronting life” (p. 10). Much of the research regarding the use of humour as a coping mechanism focuses on the role of humorous media such as movies, television shows, novels, plays, and most frequently, jokes.

Humour plays an important role within families due to the closer relationships

among family members than of friends or other acquaintances. Koller (1988) states families are often compared to a magnifying glass where, due to the loss of perspective resulting from the close relationships, inevitable imperfections and differences among family members become magnified. Family members may become targets of aggression purely from their proximity, regardless of the cause of the hostility in another family member (Koller, 1988).

Hostile or aggressive feelings experienced by family members frequently find expression through the use of humour, enabling tension to be diffused and the family structure to be maintained. “The aggressive feelings that arise between partners in a marriage as a result of infantile rivalry, frustrated dependency or blatant infidelity may sometimes be effectively defused utilising humour” (Haig, 1988, p. 156). A social paradox is evident in the expectations of families to share love, affection, and compassion, while the reality is that violence and abuse are found within families in unprecedented numbers (Koller, 1988). Koller (1988) outlines the difficulties associated with the nuclear family:

In TNF [traditional nuclear family] units, husbands and wives are asked to fulfill each other's lives emotionally, economically, socially, and spiritually. This is a long-range plan that can be sabotaged or demoralized by a host of changing circumstances, most typically from external independent variables such as the state of the economy, the polity, or social mobility within social stratification systems. (p. 264)

Common stereotypes found in family humour include: the harried housewife-mother, strong wives and weak husbands, mothers-in-law, zany or competent servants,

mischievous children, weird neighbors, sibling rivals, and other family members (Koller, 1988). Mother-in-law jokes are common within specific parts of the world, a function of tension and conflict between the generations. In parts of the world where elders hold a privileged position and are highly respected, mother-in-law jokes are not told (Haig, 1988).

Davis (1993) asserts that humour can “reveal the truth about a society” (p. 2) and cites Herzler in suggesting that what individuals in a society find funny at any particular time provides a useful index of the social and cultural climate of the group generating or appreciating the humour. Citizens of countries in eastern Europe ruled by Marxist governments frequently used humour to cope with their circumstances (Berger, 1996). Slovenko (1988) provides the following example of a joke that circulated in the Soviet Union:

A man who has purchased an automobile is told that he can take delivery in exactly 10 years. “Morning or afternoon?” the purchaser asks. “Ten years from now, what difference does it make?” replies the clerk quizzically. “Well,” says the car-purchaser, “the plumber’s coming in the morning.”

(p. xi)

Some ideas regarding humour focus on the ability of humour to provide a physical release from tension (Koller, 1988). It is suggested “that in laughter aroused by unpleasant feelings or incongruity, the surplus nervous energy overflowed into the nerves supplying the mouth and respiration” (Haig, 1988, p. 16). These physiological characteristics are present when humour is serving as a release from psychological tension. A great deal of

conversational humour fulfills the purpose of tension relief in everyday circumstances, especially when an uncomfortable topic is being discussed or when conflict or the threat of conflict is present among members of a group.

Humour minimizes the seriousness of situations and is often found in situations of tremendous threat including prisoner of war camps, palliative care settings, or any environment where a serious threat to physical or psychological well-being exists. This type of humour, called “black humour” or “sick humour” (Dundes, 1987; Ziv 1984), moves in cycles that parallel the issues experienced by a particular individual, group, or society.

Sick humour provides a tension-release function regarding topics considered socially inappropriate for discussion. Because of cultural sanctions against discussing certain topics openly, these types of jokes emerge as a way for individuals, groups, or society to deal with the anxiety resulting from life events or experiences (Dundes, 1987). Specifically, sick humour allows individuals to distance themselves from circumstances involving the misfortune of others (Dundes, 1987).

An example of the use of sick humour can be found in society’s discomfort with individuals with physical disabilities. When new laws were passed allowing for greater integration of disabled persons, the discomfort experienced by members of the general public was the driving force behind the “quadriplegic” sick joke. (Dundes, 1987). An example of this type of sick joke follows:

What is the hardest part of the vegetable to eat? The wheelchair. (Dundes, 1987, p. 16)

“Quadriplegic” sick humour is also found in the following series of one-liners:

What do you call a man with no arms and no legs ...

in a swimming pool?	Bob	
on your doorstep?	Matt	
stuffed in your mailbox?	Bill	
in a pile of leaves?	Russell	
in a hot tub?	Stew	
lying on hot pavement?	Flip	
waterskiing?	Skip	
in a hole?	Phil	
nailed to a wall?	Art	
in the meat case display?	Chuck	
on a barbecue?	Frank	(Dundes, 1987, pl 17)

Gallows humour involves jokes told about victims of oppressive circumstances by the victims themselves, such as individuals about to be executed or those with life-threatening illnesses. The individuals or groups within such situations produce and enjoy this type of humour and its psychological benefits. Although very important for those who have to cope within specific situations, this type of humour is often perceived as very disturbing by those outside the situation (Dundes, 1987).

Likely due to the intense stress of their experiences, individuals working within German concentration camps and many German citizens told “Auschwitz” jokes, considered to be a special form of gallows humour called executioners’ humour (Dundes,

1987). It is hypothesized that it was necessary to reduce the status of Jewish people to that of mere objects to be able to deal with their participation in the widespread execution of millions of people. This form of humour is particularly disturbing but important as an illustration of humour acting as a coping mechanism during one of the greatest atrocities of our time. The use of humour under these circumstances is demonstrated in the following example:

What is the difference between a fat Jew and a thin Jew?

The fat Jew burns longer. (Dundes, 1987, p. 33)

This form of humour was still prevalent in Germany during the 1980s (Dundes, 1987) and may continue to be used by those involved in the concentration camps, their families and friends, or other citizens. It is likely that only by maintaining the status of the Jewish people as objects rather than human beings were the individuals associated with concentration camps able to integrate their experiences and involvement in these acts.

Superiority Theory

Early conceptualizations of superiority theory are found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, with this line of thinking continuing with Hobbes and more contemporary theorists such as Bergson and Rapp (Koller, 1988). The essence of superiority theory maintains that the sudden realization of one's current superiority over ourselves at an earlier time, another individual, or another group generates laughter. (Berger, 1996; Haig, 1988). Hobbes believed those who felt inferior sought out and used humour as a mechanism to assist them in gaining esteem and a sense of superiority through deprecating others by highlighting their defects or imperfections (Berger, 1995a).

Self-deprecating humour, ethnic humour, humour targeted toward “stupid groups,” and humour produced at the expense of superiors provides salient examples of humour used to convey superiority. Common stereotypes regarding specific groups [politicians, blondes, men, women, mothers-in-law, ethnic groups, ethnic sub-groups (JAPs - Jewish American Princesses)] are frequently the subject of jokes based on superiority. Superiority theory has also been linked to the feeling experienced by those who triumph in combat or in other activities where one individual or group has proven to be superior over another. A contemporary example of this phenomenon is found in the “victory dance” of football players in the end zone when they are successful in scoring a touchdown against the opposing team (Koller, 1988).

Self-deprecating Humour. Self-deprecating or self-disparaging humour entails an individual making jokes at his or her own expense in order to provide the listener or audience with a sense of superiority (Koller, 1988). Experts examining this form of humour disagree about its purpose. Some view self-deprecating humour as one of the most mature mechanisms of defense, while others view individuals using this humour as doing so to compensate for feelings of inferiority and inadequacy (Ziv, 1984). Ziv identifies three primary motives for using self-deprecating humour:

1. to deter aggressiveness by laughing at himself and removing potential weapons for attack
2. identification w

Ethnic Humour. Ethnic humour identifies ethnic groups of perceived lower status and makes them the subjects of jokes in order for the original group to experience a sense of superiority (Ziv, 1984). A pattern exists whereby the subject of ethnic jokes of one culture will, in turn, identify a group less powerful than themselves in order to use that group as a target for humour, and so on. An interesting phenomenon is the recycling of jokes by different ethnic groups (called “cross-breeding”) and jokes based on multiple ethnic groups at the same time. These techniques are illustrated in the following examples of the same joke about individuals on a deserted island, recycled several different ways by different ethnic groups.

Texas, 1960s version - Two Englishmen, two Germans, and two Americans were on a ship that sank. They were the only survivors, and they swam to an island where they were stranded for ten years. After ten years, a ship finally appeared. After thus being rescued and after returning to their homelands, the two Germans started an Army, one American started a factory, and the other American started a labor union. The two Englishmen didn't know each other yet.

American version - The ship sinks and the survivors are left on a desert island. The Americans go into business immediately. The French begin building night clubs. The Germans build armament plants. Then one turns to the other and asks, “Who's that group standing there?” The reply: “That's the English, they're still waiting to be introduced.”

Greek version - Two men and a woman are shipwrecked on a desert island.

If they are Spanish, the men will fight a duel and the survivor gets the girl.

If French, one man becomes the husband, and the other the lover. If

English, nothing will happen because no one is there to introduce them so

they won't speak. If Italian, they will play cards to decide who will have

the girl. If Greek, they will start fighting over politics and forget the girl. If

Turks, one will have the front way and the other the back passage.

German version - A ship goes down in the Pacific. Nobody survives except

two men and one woman. They save themselves on a small island. What

happens if the two men are Italian? The one murders the other in order to

possess the woman for himself. If they are Frenchmen, they live peacefully

a trois. If they are English or Germans, then the men move to another

island and leave the woman alone. If they are Russians, they set a bottle

afloat for Moscow for further instructions.

Egyptian version - Girls of different nationalities were asked: "What would

you do if you found yourself on a deserted island alone with a bunch of

men on the island trying to attack you?"

The German girl said, "Rather ungentlemanly, rather bad taste."

The American girl said, "I'll close my eyes and say no."

The Indian girl said, "The best way is passive resistance."

The French girl said, "I understand the situation, but I don't see the problem."

(Dundes, 1987, pp. 98-100)

Many cultural stereotypes are evident in this form of humour, the propensity of

Germans for war, the capitalist tendencies of the Americans, the stiffness and rigidity of the English, the liberal sexual attitude of the French, the link to the mafia-related activity for Italians, and the backwardness of the Russians. In different versions of the same joke different ethnic groups are represented. However, the characteristics or stereotypes of the ethnic groups tend to remain constant from version to version.

Humour Directed Toward “Stupid Groups.” Berger (1995a) cites Davies’s (1988) discussion of the functions of humour directed at “stupid groups.” These jokes enable members of the society, at large, to distance themselves from the marginalized stupid group, and enable people to reassure themselves that as ordinary members of society, they are intelligent and rational . . . These jokes help people deal with various forms of anxiety they face in modern, rational, industrialized societies by creating a peripheral ethnic minority of stupid people to whom one can feel superior” (p. 94).

“Stupid” jokes, like ethnic humour, adopt the technique of using the same basic joke and recycling it by substituting other “stupid groups” into the same joke.

Subsequently, the “stupid group” of one version of the joke recycles the joke to poke fun at another “stupid group” that is in an inferior position to the original “stupid group.”

“Stupid groups” are a prominent feature in many countries. For example, in the United States, Polish individuals are considered a stupid group, while in England, the Irish are considered a stupid group, Belgians play this role in France, and Norwegians and individuals from Finland are the stupid groups in Sweden (Berger, 1995a). “Newfies,” individuals from Newfoundland, are a common “stupid group” in eastern Canada.

The manifest function of stupid jokes is to provide entertainment. The latent function of these jokes enables the consumers to feel a sense of superiority over the group being laughed at, decreases anxiety regarding living in a complex society, and serves as a subconscious form of social control over the teller and the audience (Berger, 1995a). The following joke is told in the United States:

A polish couple decided to have a chicken farm. They bought two chickens, took them home, dug a hole in their backyard and buried the chickens head first. Next morning they discovered the chickens were dead. They bought two more chickens, this time planting them in the ground feet down. By the next morning the fowl had died. They wrote to the Polish consulate explaining their problem. Within a week they received a prompt reply from the Polish consul. The letter said "Please send us a soil sample."

(Davies, cited in Berger, 1995a, p. 93)

Other common jokes directed at Poles are:

What has an IQ of 450? Poland

How do you break a Pole's finger? Punch him in the nose.

How was the guy who won ten million dollars in the Polish lottery paid? He gets ten dollars a year for a million years. (Berger, 1995a, p. 161)

Humour Directed Toward Authority. Humour used within group environments assists with issues of resistance and control, as well as being a mechanism for dealing with conflict while maintaining the integrity and structure of the group (Powell & Patton, 1988). Within hierarchical structures, humour frequently attacks authority figures, usually

in their absence (Haig, 1988). The popularity of the Dilbert comic strip illustrates the use of humour by individuals in a workplace against their superiors and the organizational structure itself. Political jokes provide citizens with opportunities to voice frustrations toward leaders or political parties.

An example of a joke during Stalin's rule reads:

Is it true that Comrade Stalin collects political jokes?

Yes, but first he collects the people who tell them.

A joke discreetly circulated in Ethiopia about the chairman is as follows:

Colonel Mengistu orders a series of postage stamps, all bearing his likeness. Soon after the stamps are put into circulation, postal employees note that they tend to fall off envelopes. Suspecting that the capitalists have short-changed him on the glue, the chairman orders an investigation. After weeks of consumer surveys, the secret police report back: Ethiopians are spitting on the wrong side of the stamps. (Slovenko, 1988, p. xi)

Within society, groups are divided according to age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, etc. Majority group members poke fun at minority group members through humour, thus maintaining the power structure. Social norms are reinforced in a similar manner. Individuals or groups with greater power use sarcasm or other humour techniques to put down or ridicule the individual or group who has violated group norms (Powell & Patton, 1988).

Humour provides an important venue for social integration (Berger, 1995a) because it "helps people integrate in groups and helps groups establish identity and a sense

of solidarity” (p. 95). “Humour can influence or define the formation of in-groups and out-groups, establish scapegoats and convey attitudes on religion, sexuality and hierarchies” (Haig, 1988, p. 92).

A man sees a group of long-term convicts who seem to be communicating very oddly. One of them says, “7,” and they all burst into laughter. Another says “23” and they all explode—and so it continues.

The observer notices that one convict does not laugh at every number, as the others do. “What are they doing?” he asks him.

“They’re telling jokes. But because they all know all the jokes by heart, they have given each one a number.”

“So why don’t you laugh like everyone else?”

“I’m pretty new here. I only know the jokes from 15 to 23.”

(Ziv, 1984, p. 33)

Incongruity Theory

Incongruity theory has widespread acceptance and is considered by many to be the most important theory of humour (Berger, 1994; Berger, 1995a). The basis of incongruity theory involves the difference between what we are expecting and what we get in a given situation. This discrepancy and the listener’s ability to resolve the incongruity produces humour. In this regard, incongruity theory relies on the familiarity of the listener or audience with the material being discussed in addition to the listener’s or audience’s intellectual abilities. The combination of the identification of incongruous elements based on our experience and cognitive flexibility allows us to resolve the incongruity presented

and experience humour. Incongruity results through the punch lines in jokes or the unexpected and foolish actions of individuals within situations (Berger, 1995a). The resolution of incongruous elements within a situation leads to the generation of laughter (Haig, 1988).

An example of how incongruity creates humour is demonstrated in the following joke (Berger, 1993, p. 1; Ziv, 1984, p. 78):

St. Peter is busy minding the gate to heaven when he is called away. He asks Jesus to mind the gate for a while. While Jesus is there an old Italian man appears. "I'm looking for my son," says the man. "I loved him very much and he disappeared. I've been all over the world and asked many people if they had seen him. Everyone said they had heard of him but never had met him..." With tears welling in his eyes Jesus opens his arms and exclaims "Father." The old man embraces him and cries "Pinnochio."

According to some incongruity theorists, superiority theory is imbedded within incongruity theory (Berger, 1993). The joke presented above contains these elements. Because St. Peter is away, Jesus is minding the gate. Jesus, who according to religious doctrine should be perfect, makes the error of confusing a mortal man with God. This could be a means for some people to express criticism or ridicule toward religious beliefs. However, the resolution of the incongruity is the primary technique used to create humour.

Specific Functions of Humour

The previous sections provided a discussion of the three main theories of humour

and the functions of humour for individuals, groups, and society. In order to provide a comprehensive list of the specific functions of humour, Berger (1995a) examined the literature and presented the functions and rewards of humour and related areas. These functions are summarized in Table 1.

The prevalence of humour in everyday life is demonstrated by the numerous functions humour serves for individuals, groups, and society. The presence of humour within a particular content area serves as an indicator of the significance of a particular issue. For this reason, humour forms a critical component of our culture. Because common media for humour include television shows, movies, and cartoons, it is important to examine humour within the framework of popular culture.

Humour and Popular Culture

Humour and popular culture share a number of important commonalities. First, both humour and popular culture exercise considerable influence over our everyday lives. Popular culture also serves functions such as “educating” us about how to live in our society, “giving us ideas about what is good and bad, about how to solve problems, about how to relate to other people in society, about what our responsibilities are to others” (Berger, 1996, p. 4).

Second, like humour, popular culture also evades precise definition. “Culture is one of the most dominant and elusive concepts used in contemporary discourse about society and the arts” (Berger, 1995b, p. 135). Popular culture is frequently defined as “the culture of the ordinary person—the television shows, films, records, radio programs, foods, fashions, magazines, and other phenomena that play important roles in our daily lives”

Table 1

Specific Functions of Humour and Related Areas

-
1. To be made to laugh.
 2. To feel superior to others, who are seen as stupid or foolish.
 3. To see authority figures deflated.
 4. To have shared experiences (of laughter) with others.
 5. To experience guilt-free aggression and hostility.
 6. To see others make mistakes.
 7. To be purged of unpleasant feelings through laughter.
 8. To obtain an outlet for sexual or aggressive drives in a guilt-free manner.
 9. To gain an identity.
 10. To learn about the world.
 11. To find distraction and diversion.
 12. To integrate oneself into some group.
 13. To cope with embarrassing situations, hostility, etc.
 14. To explore taboo subjects without risk.
 15. To affirm one's moral, political, and spiritual values.
 16. To see comic "villains" in action.
 17. To facilitate interpersonal relationships.
 18. To cope with stress and anxiety.
 19. To show the triumph of justice.
 20. To have the pleasure of a momentary regression.
 21. To express ideas that otherwise would not be tolerated.
-

Adapted from: Berger, 1995a, pp. 97-98

(Berger, 1995b, p. 161).

Berger (1991) addressed the criticisms of popular culture and outlined topics important to study within the area of popular culture:

Most of what we call popular culture is, quite simply, trash. Not too many people will argue that. So it doesn't make sense to castigate popular culture for being junk, sub-literature, etc. *The important question is this—what does this trash reveal about American (or any other) culture and society? And how do we find out what is revealed?* (p. 181)

A third similarity between humour and popular culture is that serious academic study of these areas has been considered acceptable only during the last two decades. Currently, the study of popular culture “has become a central concern, if not a preoccupation, for academics in areas (and departments) as varied as philosophy, literature, history, communications, political science, and sociology” (Berger, 1995b, p. 138). Previously, the only area of culture worthy of academic study was that of elite culture such as literature, music, or dance. Now that the area of popular culture has received a great deal of attention and is regarded as highly important, the gap between the two has narrowed and the entire area of culture is approached through the metadiscipline of cultural studies (Berger, 1995b).

Fourth, humour and popular culture are highly complex and are best investigated by multidisciplinary approaches. Due to the highly complex nature of the media used to transmit popular culture, Berger (1996) suggests that a multidisciplinary approach is critical for the analysis of such media. This new multidisciplinary perspective used for

studying popular culture takes theory from a number of areas and applies it to the products of popular culture.

The new cultural criticism, informed by a combination of psychoanalytic theory, Marxist theory, semiotic theory, and literary theory, is particularly interested in how texts generate meaning and in the ideological aspects of popular culture, the role it plays in the social and political world, and the role played in society by the people who control the media that carry much of popular culture. Some cultural critics focus great attention on the social and political aspects of popular culture and describe themselves as “critical theorists.” (Berger, 1995b, p. 162)

Fifth, both humour and popular culture provide a socially acceptable outlet for emotions and impulses that are not socially acceptable, such as aggressive and sexual impulses (Berger, 1993). Humour and popular culture serve the needs of both individuals and society by using symbolic content to provide an outlet for the pressures and emotions we experience in our everyday lives. Fowles (1996) suggests that the ability to facilitate the release of psychic energy and tension resulting from everyday life in a subtle and almost unconscious manner accounts for popular culture’s appeal to the masses. Further, he states that “mediated popular culture, then, offers its audience the elixir of emotional management, so needed for the maintenance of successful lives in the modern world” (p. 106).

Although the initial role of advertising was to provide product information to the consumer, it has evolved and come to be considered as a prominent form of popular

culture. When examining this phenomenon, Fowles (1996) identified several commonalities between advertising and popular culture.

1. Both advertising and popular culture are developed to suit the purposes of a capitalist economy, with the emphasis on making profits.
2. Advertising and popular culture are both highly polished, professional and artistic ventures that use symbols as a means of communication.
3. The content and method used to convey information in advertising and popular culture are the same.
4. Both advertising and popular culture pose difficulties for researchers attempting to conduct an analysis. "They are woven so tightly into everyday life that to hold them at an objective distance and to comprehend them deeply is not easy" (p. 19).
5. Both of these media contain messages that are highly complex and merit careful attention regarding the symbols they use to achieve their communication.
6. Both advertising and popular culture have come under considerable criticism regarding their role/place in society.

A variety of differences between advertising and popular culture were also noted by Fowles (1996).

1. Although both advertising and popular culture communicate information, advertising has an additional function of influencing behaviour.
2. Advertising is much briefer than other areas of popular culture.
3. The print advertisement or television commercial is much more polished, perfect, and costly than other forms of popular culture.

4. Advertising meets the needs of advertisers, whereas popular culture meets the needs of the audience.

Fowles (1996) discussed the important ability of popular culture to “normalize” our experiences. Through popular culture we are able to deal with experiences that produce strong emotional reactions while developing ways to fill areas of emotional deficiency, often through the use of humour within popular culture. Additionally, humour found within popular culture provides external normalization, influencing individuals to behave in accordance with socially acceptable norms, beliefs, and values (Haig, 1988).

It is clear that humour and popular culture share numerous important commonalities. Humour and popular culture play an important role in society through the identification of contemporary and controversial issues facing individuals and groups within a culture or society and through the provision of a socially-sanctioned outlet for dealing with these issues. Like humour, the area of popular culture has struggled for recognition, and the important function it serves has often been disregarded or discounted. Over time, the importance of humour and popular culture have been increasingly acknowledged and examined separately and together through a variety of media.

The Use of Psychology in Television Commercials. The critical difference between advertising and other forms of popular culture is advertising’s focus on influencing the behaviour of the consumer. Product manufacturers pay billions of dollars each year to advertising firms to develop effective strategies to market their products. In turn, advertising firms rely on the use of psychological principles and information in achieving this goal.

One of the mediums used to accomplish this goal is the television commercial, considered the “most powerful form of advertising” (Berger, 1996, p. 61). On average, individuals watch television approximately four hours per day, resulting in exposure to between 500 and 1000 commercials per week (Berger, 1996). Other estimates of television watching are as high as seven hours per day (White, 1993). Applying Berger’s statistics regarding the number of commercials per hour, an individual watching television for seven hours per day would be exposed to between 875 and 1375 commercials during one week. However, these are not usually new or different commercials but successful commercials for products being repeated, which is consistent with research in the area of cognitive psychology, particularly in the area of repeated exposure and its impact on memory.

Television commercials have become increasingly complex and sophisticated over the years (Fowles, 1996), evolving from simple product information to carefully researched “manufactured dreams, [or] micronarratives that are meant to persuade viewers to purchase a given product or service.” (Berger, 1996, p. 41) This phenomenon was observed by author E. B. White in the early 1930s when he stated, “They [advertisers] infect the routine futility of our days with purposeful adventure. Their weapons are our weaknesses: fear, ambition, illness, pride, selfishness, desire, ignorance” (cited in Robinson, 1998, p. 33). Paralleling the increasing sophistication of television commercials, was the increasing sophistication of the viewers resulting from exposure to the more complex commercials.

The increasing sophistication of viewers allowed psychological information to

become widely used and accepted as a means of producing more complex commercials, successful in shaping consumer behaviour. This process began when advertisers began infusing goods with meaning. They accomplished this task by developing a language of symbols associated with the motivations, aspirations, and images desired by consumers in developing their own identities. By identifying the symbols associated with characteristics desired by members of the target demographic group, advertising campaigns were developed with the goal of attaching symbols to the product being advertised. The identification of significant symbols and the process of making the symbol synonymous with the product lays the foundation for a successful advertising campaign. When consumers face a product selection choice, advertisers aim to have the consumer associate the product with the symbol that fills a particular psychological need, separate from the specific need fulfilled by the product. For example, if a consumer required clothing, many product choices are available. The symbols attached with different products may be associated with ruggedness or toughness, or fitting in with a particular group (rappers, fashion models, sports heroes, successful businesspersons), filling a psychological need for seeing oneself in a particular way on a conscious or unconscious level. Consequently, the purchase of a piece of clothing can meet both physical and psychological needs.

In *The Ad and the Ego* (Boihem, 1996), Jhally suggests that commercials gain their persuasive ability by identifying and accentuating needs, desires, or characteristics unavailable to consumers for various reasons. These issues tend to be those unamenable to either conscious or quick change (e.g., age, physical appearance, intelligence, social status, power, personality, relationships). By highlighting and emphasizing our shortcomings in

various areas through commercials and associating symbols that would enable us to remedy our shortcoming through the purchase of particular products, advertisers are believed to influence consumers by causing the consumers to associate the symbol connected to the product with their perceived shortcoming in a conscious or unconscious manner. The final and all-important connection lies between the association of the product with the symbol to fulfill the shortcoming and the ultimate choice of one particular product over another on a consistent basis.

In the development of television commercials, one additional important piece of information was added to the symbols and the meanings they carried to the consumer. This information gave consumers permission to buy products to fill “wants” instead of “needs” and allowed them to believe that “it’s okay to surround yourself with products that enrich your lives; it’s all right to think first of number one” (Robinson, 1998, p. 44). For consumers who experienced difficulty putting themselves first, advertisers also provided the solutions within advertisements for products. “They needed housewives to believe that a new washing machine wasn’t about clean clothes or having the afternoon to play bridge, it was about having more time to enjoy her family. The message became, you owe it to your children to buy this new washing machine” (Robinson, 1998, p. 44).

Increasingly, advertisers incorporate emotion into television commercials. We all have needs for security, self-worth, power, social acceptance, and success (White, 1993) as well as desires for material goods to make life more comfortable and convenient. Advertisers attempt to utilize emotional copy so the audience identifies with the emotions, symbols, and subsequently transfers this identification to their product. Common

emotional experiences integrated into commercials involve family affection, anticipation, health, surprise, activity, conformity, joy, superiority, disgust, sadness, group spirit, economy, recommendation (White, 1993). “Consumer ads typically tell stories of success, desire, happiness, and social fulfillment in the lives of the people who consume the right brands” (Goldman & Papson, 1996, p. 2).

The main goal for advertising is for consumers to recall the product when making product choices. In achieving this goal, advertisers must carefully balance factors influencing recall with factors perceived by consumers as persuasive, that negatively influence a purchase choice. White (1993) states that in studies examining the effects of humour in television commercials, above-average recall rates are evident in audiences without high ratings on measures of persuasion. This means that advertisers are more successful in achieving their goals of positively influencing recall while not being perceived as persuasive in television commercials using humour. An additional benefit is that the audiences do not experience humorous commercials as more persuasive than commercials not utilizing humour (White, 1993). Highly entertaining commercials are memorable for the viewers who discuss them in conversations and watch them repeatedly for their entertainment value (White, 1993). These types of commercials provide maximum repetition and exposure, important factors for remembering the product and influencing consumer behaviour.

Clearly, psychology plays an important role in advertising. Psychological research has been used by advertisers to capitalize on the consumer’s desire to fill certain psychological needs through identifying products with symbols that are meaningful and

memorable to the consumer. Advertisers believe that the degree to which a commercial accomplishes this goal determines how successful they will be in influencing consumer behaviour.

Humour in Television Commercials

Research Examining the Use of Humour in Television Commercials

Humour plays an important role in advertising in general, with 94% of those directly and successfully involved in the development of advertising indicating their belief that humour in advertising is an effective tool in gaining attention (Madden & Weinberger, 1982). While humour is commonly used in all forms of advertising (i.e., radio, print, television), research in the area of humour and advertising tends to focus on radio and print advertisements.

Research indicates that humour is found in 24% of television commercials (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). A review of the literature examining the use of humour in television commercials indicates that this research focuses on three main areas - the way humour is used to enhance attention to and comprehension of the advertisement (Furnham, Gunter, & Walsh, 1998; Weinberger, Spotts, Campbell, & Parsons, 1995), how humour is perceived and influences attitude (Alden, Mukerjee, & Hoyer, 2000; Lee & Mason, 1999), and the way humour is used as a means of persuasion (Unger, 1995; Unger, 1996). Results from studies focused on this latter purpose suggest that humour and emotional content enhance the ability of individuals to remember the product being advertised when combined with rational content, while advertising focused on providing only psychological benefits garners limited success (Agres, 1990). These studies

emphasize the role of cognitive processing (i.e., attention, memory, comprehension of the message, understanding the humour) and the attitude of the viewer toward the advertisement (i.e., is the humour perceived positively or negatively, is the level of persuasion in the commercial appropriate or offensive).

When humour is used in television commercials, it is considered peripheral or contextual rather than a semantic aspect of the message contained in the television commercial (Hung, 2000), although some disagree with this conceptualization (i.e., Scott, 1990). Similar to humour, other peripheral or non-message aspects (e.g., characters, music, colour) play an important role in the overall meaning of the commercial. In research examining the role of music in television commercials, Hung (2000) found that viewers of a commercial could identify meanings associated in the music within commercials. Interestingly, this pattern was found in commercials for unfamiliar products with unfamiliar music. It is quite possible that this effect of generating meaning in commercials may be considerably stronger when familiar music and familiar products are used.

Elements found within humorous television commercials also play an important role in the commercial itself. The use of colour in products, packaging, and advertising has long been recognized as being extremely important in the success of a particular product (Danger, 1969). The importance of appropriate intertextual referents (familiar words or symbols found in other areas of culture or popular culture that are used in the new context) in generating humour through parody is discussed by Harris (1997). Allen (1988) emphasizes the importance of language usage in humorous television commercials

because “advertisements are repeated so often that their key lines become part of common discourse” (p. 29).

The available research on the use of humour in television commercials focuses on the commercial viability of the use of humour, rather than the far-reaching social and cultural implications of the context in which the humour is generated and the type of humour that is used. An additional limitation of the current research on humour in television commercials is that the sample sizes of qualitative studies are not sufficient to draw conclusions about the content of the narratives of commercials using humour. Finally, current research does not examine the impact humour used in this way might have on the viewer or on society in general.

The importance of humour in advertising is obvious by the frequency with which it is used. However, rather than focusing on the ability of humour to assist in selling a particular product, an examination of the broader issues stemming from this common phenomenon may provide important information about the more far-reaching implications of using humour in television commercials.

Analyzing Humorous Television Commercials

Humour and the associated symbols and meanings within television commercials merit careful examination. As a component of popular culture, television commercials are important to study because they have “a great deal to tell us about the values and beliefs of members of society, as a whole, and of the numerous subcultures that exist in any given society” (Berger, 1996, p. 16).

Although humour is very complex and utilizes many different techniques (outlined

in Table 2), usually it is possible to identify one central technique. Berger (1993) identified

Table 2

Berger's Conceptualization of Humour Categories and Techniques

Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Exaggeration	Catalogue	Eccentricity	Time
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarrassment	
Insults	Disappointment	Exposure	
Infantilism	Ignorance	Grotesque	
Irony	Mistakes	Imitation	
Misunderstanding	Repetition	Impersonation	
Over literalness	Reversal	Mimicry	
Puns, Word Play	Rigidity	Parody	
Repartee	Theme/Variation	Scale	
Ridicule		Stereotype	
Sarcasm		Unmasking	
Satire			

two main steps in the analysis of humour. First, identify the techniques used to generate humour in the commercial as well as any elements used to facilitate the generation of humour such as character, setting, etc. Then, the techniques must be evaluated to determine which are primary and secondary.

Berger (1993) conducted a content analysis, examining humour in various media, and developed a “comprehensive and mutually exclusive” (p. 18) classification system. In *An Anatomy of Humour* (1993), he provided his conceptualization of the four major categories and 45 different techniques he feels account for all of the methods by which humour is produced (see Table 2). The four main categories Berger believes capture all techniques used to generate humour include:

1. *Language*. The humour is verbal.
2. *Logic*. The humour is ideational.
3. *Identity*. The humour is existential.
4. *Action*. The humour is physical or nonverbal. (p. 17)

According to Berger (1996), television commercials should be considered as micronarratives. Therefore, the same techniques used for narrative analysis should be employed for commercial analysis. These include examining plot and characterization, features such as “dialogue and language, actors and actresses, technical matters – lighting, color, editing, and music, sound and music, signs, symbols, and intertextual devices” (p. 65), as well as “the rhetorical techniques of persuasion, and other matters such as the use of humour or attempts to generate anxiety in people” (p. 41).

Similar to analysis of humour and analysis of popular culture in general, Berger

(1996) recommended a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of commercials that “does justice to the aesthetic complexity of mass-mediated popular art texts and, at the same time, does not neglect their impact on our social and political institutions and culture in general” (p. 13). He also suggested an approach whereby the methods used for analysis are driven by the text being analyzed.

The analysis of symbols in commercials presents a formidable challenge because it requires observers to be able to separate themselves from the commercial and view it inquisitively. Fowles (1996) outlined the difficulties implicit in this process:

Some students of advertisements may find themselves “in the beam” of an ad and blinded by it; the ad is aimed directly at them, and they are fully engaged by it to the point of having little perspective and little power of discernment. To such an investigator, the ad seems totally natural, and the levels of signification thus collapse to form an obdurate, impenetrable surface. “It’s all so obvious,” this observer might feel, “and not worth discussion.” In the opposite direction, others may be so far out of an ad’s beam that they cannot recognize the symbols used or make sense of them, or they may be nearer the beam in that they recognize the symbols but reject them, perhaps disparagingly, as people of one gender sometimes dismiss ads aimed at the other. (p. 168)

To assist in the “deciphering” of advertisements, Fowles (1996) provided a series of guidelines. These guidelines focus on the context of the advertisement, the composition of the advertisement, and the cultural significance of the advertisement. Although

presented in a linear sequence, Fowles (1996) suggested that the process of deciphering advertisements may involve a more circular pattern and encourages flexibility rather than rigidity in applying his guidelines, cautioning that stringent application of the guidelines may eliminate important insights. The list of guidelines for deciphering advertisements is reproduced in Appendix A.

Using Principles of Rhetorical Criticism in the Analysis of Humorous Television

Commercials

Rhetoric is frequently described as communication with the intent of persuasion. Booth (1963) defined rhetoric as “the art of finding and employing the most effective means of persuasion on any subject, considered independently of any intellectual mastery of that subject” (p. 219). Foss (1996) viewed rhetoric more broadly and stated that “any message, regardless of the form it takes or the channel of communication it uses, is rhetoric and is appropriate to study in rhetorical criticism” (p. 6).

Initially, rhetorical criticism focused on a neo-Aristotelianism paradigm based on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, which limited critical analysis of rhetoric to speeches delivered by individuals (Foss, 1996). This early focus provided a foundation for rhetorical criticism and an identity separate from literary criticism. In the 1960s and 1970s, this approach was challenged and criticized, leading to the development of a variety of approaches in response to neo-Aristotelianism (Foss, 1996).

Rhetorical criticism is defined as “the process of systematically investigating and explaining symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes” (Foss, 1996, p. 7). Within a general framework of rhetorical criticism, Foss

(1996) discussed a variety of more specific approaches focusing on different artifacts (what is being analyzed), units of analysis, elements within the artifact, and methods of analysis. As outlined earlier, television commercials take the form of narratives, possessing features such as setting, characters, plot, etc. Therefore, a narrative criticism approach provides a useful framework for research questions involving the use of rhetoric within narratives, such as television commercials.

Conducting an analysis of rhetoric using narratives requires four steps (Foss, 1996). First, a research question must be formulated and the artifact used for analysis must be identified. In this study, the research question is: “How does the humour used in television commercials reflect and determine contemporary societal issues?” The artifact (television commercials) is identified within the research question. Second, a unit of analysis, or dimension of the narrative is identified (humour within television commercials). The analysis of the artifact, the third step of the process of narrative criticism, involves two processes. First, the narrative must be thoroughly examined. When this examination is complete, specific elements most relevant to the research question are identified. In this study, important elements might be techniques used to generate humour, functions of humour, emotions, setting, characters, themes, or symbols. In the fourth step of narrative criticism, the information available from this process is integrated into a critical essay, detailing the dimensions of the narrative and the elements that provide the most important information for answering the research question.

Rationale for the Study

To this point, much of the attention focused on popular culture has examined

movies, television shows, situation comedies, soap operas, modern plays, novels, music, sports, and other areas considered “popular” culture. Although advertisements have received some attention within the realm of cultural and communication studies through examinations of print, radio, and television advertisements, it appears that humorous television commercials have not been widely examined within the popular culture genre. Advertising research tends to focus on cognitive and affective reactions to humorous television commercials and their ability to successfully sell products, rather than the broader social and cultural implications of these commercials.

Humour within television commercials is enjoyed extensively by the general public and increasingly displayed in feature-length films (the yearly Cannes Festival of the World’s Best Television Commercials) and television specials (The World’s Funniest Television Commercials). The increasing frequency and popularity of these features demonstrates that television commercials are no longer only a venue for advertising products; the public has also accepted and redefined humorous television commercials as a form of entertainment.

The evolution of the television commercial, particularly the move from pure product information to a form of art viewed by millions purely for purposes of entertainment, mirrors the social and cultural changes evident over the past 80 years. Six general areas of change that have facilitated this evolution have been identified.

First, life has become increasingly complex over the past 80 years. Important economic changes such as the specialization of labor have led to important social changes such as increased urbanization. Roles and responsibilities have become more complex both

within the family and within the workforce. Managing the multiplicity of demands stemming from these varying roles and environments has become a major challenge in contemporary society. Television commercials have evolved in a parallel process, becoming increasingly complex technically, and mirroring the social changes as they are taking place.

Second, economic and social changes have had a significant impact on the world of work. During World War II, women were employed outside the home in higher numbers than ever before. After the war ended, this trend continued and provided women with greater financial independence. The privately funded research resulting in the development of the birth control pill allowed women to exert choice over the timing and number of pregnancies they experienced. This new technology offered women the opportunity to pursue professional careers at an unprecedented rate. Overall, these developments resulted in lower birth rates and the changing roles of men and women within the family unit, within the workplace, and within society as a whole. These changes are documented in the evolution of the characters and the underlying social and cultural beliefs found in commercials throughout the history of television.

Third, the increased incidence of stress-related illness and the recognition that humour is an important mechanism for managing stress has led to humour assuming an important role in everyday life. As outlined earlier, the importance of humour in dealing with both stress and illness has become popularized over the past 20 years. Hospitals have established humour rooms and provide humour groups for patients. Movies, situation comedies, and cartoons remain important genres for humour. More recently, the wide

dissemination of humour through the Internet has gained popularity.

Fourth, the increase in technological sophistication has led to a widespread application of technology in the home and in the workplace. Increased technological sophistication has also led to significant changes to leisure activities. There has been an overall decrease in physical activity, facilitated by the ease with which television has become an accessible and acceptable form of leisure activity. The technological advances in computer hardware and software have extended to the production of television commercials. The widespread trend of watching television as a form of leisure activity has provided advertisers with an important venue for persuasion. This venue has become increasingly important and competitive, and the advances in computer technology allow advertisers to incorporate effects that were previously impossible. These effects add to the humour and the overall effectiveness of the television commercial.

Fifth, techniques of statistical analysis have become more sophisticated and are readily applied to business, including advertising. A large number of commercials that are produced are never seen by a general audience. The use of focus groups and the collection of vast quantities of data for specific demographic groups have led to the ability of the advertiser to choose the most effective commercial for a specific demographic group. The use of "club cards" to monitor the purchasing habits of individuals followed up by individualized incentives based on the buying habits (e.g., specific coupons being mailed to specific households) is a relatively new advance in this area. Future advances will focus on the ability of the advertiser to monitor the viewer of the television via a specific sensor and deliver specialized commercials based on age, gender, and other demographic

characteristics.

Sixth, advertising plays a central role in business and business plays a central role in our economy. Although initially advertising was merely a forum for information, the free market economy and the impact of advertising on supply and demand have led to the central role advertising assumes in our economy. The vast financial resources devoted to advertising by business is a testament to the centrality of advertising in our economy.

The integration of the six general areas presented above has resulted in the current economic and social conditions. The interaction of these social and economic changes has made the evolution of television commercials possible. As indicated earlier, both humour and popular culture have historically served as a means by which individuals and societies cope with contemporary issues. However, these venues for coping with contemporary issues are only successful if they are understood and meaningful for the consumers.

The goal of this study was to examine how elements within humorous commercials (e.g., symbols, setting, type of humour) serve as mechanisms for reflecting and determining the issues faced by individuals or groups within contemporary society. This goal is reinforced by Jhally in Boihem (1996) when he states that “advertising is the best place to look” if you are trying to understand contemporary society.

While acknowledging the important role humour plays in our everyday lives and the important functions humour serves, it appears that there has been no extensive examination of the use of how humour is used as a means of communication within the social context of television commercials. Although previous research has examined the content of print advertisements (e.g., Williamson, 1978) and television advertisements

(e.g., Berger, 1996) to gain a general understanding of the use of signs and symbols, a systematic analysis focused specifically on the use of humour in television commercials will be able to provide an indication of sensitive topics and issues presented through the use of humour.

Comprehensive research examining the elements contained within the narratives of a relatively large number of humorous television commercials is notably absent from the literature. Additionally, an examination of the elements within these television commercials, particularly how and why humour is used and is effective, may provide insight into the increasingly popularity of humorous television commercials among the general public. This, in turn, will provide important information regarding the characteristics of the society in which we live.

Chapter 2 - Method

Materials

This study involved the collection and analysis of 75 humorous television commercials from a sample of 346 humorous television commercials. The process used in collecting and identifying humorous commercials involved dividing the broadcast day into "dayparts (pre-determined times of day)" as outlined by Callcott and Lee (1994, p. 3). These dayparts are broken down as follows: morning - 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., day - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., early fringe - 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., prime time - 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., and late fringe - 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

The initial data collection involved one weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday) of programming that included the dayparts listed above from 12 stations: each Canadian and U.S. network station (CBC, CTV, Global, ABC, CBS, NBC), one independent station (Fox), and five cable stations (CNN, Discovery, HGTV, TSN, WTN). These stations were chosen to capture commercials that may be targeted toward diverse audiences. The names of the stations were drawn randomly and assigned to a weekday. Programming from all dayparts of the station was videotaped for one day. The taping took place on November 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 22, 1998. November 11th was a Wednesday but was not used because of specialized programming for Remembrance Day. After taping all of the dayparts, one of the tapes was found to be defective resulting in one daypart missing for one channel.

The content of the videotapes was viewed by the researcher, who determined if the

commercials met the criterion of humorous intent by the advertiser. Commercials 30 seconds or longer were considered for analysis. A two-step process was used to identify humorous commercials. First, the humour found in a particular television commercial had to fit within one of the three main theories of humour (relief from tension, superiority, incongruity). Second, the humour within the television commercial had to fit within the humour categories and techniques outlined by Berger (1993). This process enabled all commercials using humour to be included in the sample (n=346) rated for humorous intent.

Television commercials that met the criteria for being considered humorous (n=346) were imported into a computer file through the use of a video capture card and exported to a separate videotape through a video output card. To assess the level of humorous intent, portions of the videotape containing the humorous commercials were shown to 18 undergraduate students recruited from postings or word-of-mouth. These participants received either course credit or payment for their participation. Participants included seven males between the ages of 18 and 30 years, and 11 females between the ages of 18 and 20 years. The commercials were shown in three groups, with each participant viewing 115 or 116 commercials drawn from the videotapes of the dayparts from channels listed above. The participants rated the level of humorous intent by the advertiser on a 4-point scale (no humorous intent, slight humorous intent, moderate humorous intent, strong humorous intent). The participants' ratings were entered into a spreadsheet and the mean rating of humorous intent was identified for each of the 346 commercials. Commercials that received a mean of 3.25 out of 4.00 or higher were

retained for further analysis, yielding 75 commercials (See Appendix B for a brief description of each commercial included in the analysis). The retained commercials were exported onto a separate video tape. The commercials that were retained were analyzed by the researcher using the categories listed in Appendix C.

Procedure

Consistent with the methods of narrative criticism, once the artifacts have been identified, the narratives within these commercials were examined using a combination of the guidelines provided by Foss (1996) and Fowles (1996). Attending to components of the narrative such as setting, characters, narrator, events within the narrative, temporal and causal relationships within the narrative, audience, and theme is considered important in the comprehensive examination of narratives (Foss, 1996). A list of questions to assist in exploration of the components of narratives (Foss, 1996) is included in Appendix D. When analyzing television commercials, Fowles (1996) suggested examining features such as context, visual characteristics, symbolic appeal, meanings for the intended audience, the narrative within the commercial, intertextual referents, and social and cultural implications of the commercial (see Appendix A for a complete list of guidelines provided by Fowles, 1996).

Although Foss (1996) and Fowles (1996) identified both the narrative itself and elements within the narrative as being important to the analysis, their frameworks differ. Foss (1996) focuses on narrative analysis in general, with television commercials being considered one form of narrative. Fowles (1996) focuses on the analysis of advertisements and considers the analysis of narratives within the advertisement as one of the components

of the analysis. A “master list” containing a combination of the elements from both Foss (1996) and Fowles (1996) that was most relevant for this study and that framed the analysis of the humorous television commercials used in this study is provided in Appendix C. The “master list” was developed by viewing numerous television commercials and exploring how the elements outlined by Foss (1996) and Fowles (1996) could be applied. Once this process was completed, the elements believed to be most important in obtaining information critical to the analysis were retained. To directly address the theory of humour and functions of humour within the narrative, two additional categories, “theory of humour” and “function of humour” were added. Because the characters found within the commercials frequently represented a common stereotype, this category was added during the initial stages of the analysis.

The initial analysis involved viewing the humorous television commercials and entering the data into a database containing the categories listed above. This process was extremely time-consuming due to the number of times each commercial was viewed to obtain the necessary information. First, the commercial was viewed in its entirety to determine the product, product category, and intended audience. The description of the composition of the commercial required a large number of iterations. The category containing the scripted sequence was the most rigorous because it required a complete overview of the dialogue and action within the commercial.

The commercial was then viewed in its entirety again, with a focus on the content of the commercial at a very general level, to obtain an overall idea of the amount of dialogue and any other features that may stand out to the viewer upon an initial viewing.

Data regarding the scripted sequence were generally viewed in pieces of approximately three to five seconds, then entered into the database. This category tended to overlap with many of the other categories. When this occurred, the information contained in the scripted sequence remained more general, while the information entered into the database for specific categories was in greater detail. An example of this would be providing a general physical description of the characters within the scripted sequence but attending to their description in much greater detail in the category describing characters (role, relationship to other characters).

Each three to five-second piece was watched at least once. In the majority of cases it was necessary to view these pieces a minimum of three times to obtain the necessary data. Frequently, a great deal of information was contained within these small pieces, with rich information regarding the overall composition of the commercial in addition to complex dialogue available in the piece. In these instances, each small piece could be watched up to eight or more times before the information contained within the piece was accurately captured, translated into the database, and reviewed for accuracy.

Once the overall scripted sequence was completed, each commercial was again viewed in its entirety for each additional category. At times, a single viewing was sufficient to describe a specific element within the commercial. However, more frequently, many elements would change throughout the commercial. For example, different scenes could lead to changes in most of the categories but would usually lead to different colours, lighting, cinematography, and items in the foreground and background.

Data for more general categories requiring greater interpretation such as

intertextual referents, relationships, identity, social status, and cultural beliefs were entered within the initial analysis but continued to be revised throughout the entire analytic process. Over time and with additional reflection and discussion, information was added to these categories and included in the final analysis.

Once the information from the set of 75 commercials was entered into the database, a videotape containing these commercials (that received a mean rating of humorous intent of 3.25 or higher) was shown to two groups of individuals, comprising interpretive communities, to obtain additional information regarding the interpretation of these commercials by members of the general public. A total of 13 individuals participated as members of the interpretive communities. The age of the members of the interpretive community ranged from 27 - 71 years, with 9 females and 4 males. All participants had some form of post-secondary education. Both sessions were audio-taped and additional information provided by the interpretive communities that would assist in the final analysis was included in the database with the information from the initial analysis.

To manage the large amount of data in the database resulting from the initial analysis and interpretive communities, information from nine of the categories from the database across all 75 commercials was condensed into a table. These categories were chosen because they included socially or culturally significant information rather than descriptive data stemming from the production of the commercial. The categories included in the table were as follows: product group presented in the commercial (to serve as a base for the comparison of the other elements), characters, identity, social status, relationships, stereotypes, theory of humour, function of humour, and intertextual

referents.

To continue the analysis, information from each of the nine categories (e.g., stereotypes) across all 75 commercials was examined. When clear themes or categories were evident within the data, the information within each category was further broken down into the relevant subgroups or themes stemming from the data. For example, characters that were elderly were identified as a subgroup within the character category, then commercials containing elderly characters were examined to determine if there were commonalities among commercials containing elderly characters. In addition, within the character category itself, commercials not containing elderly characters could be examined and any important differences (e.g., Is the function of humour in commercials containing elderly characters different than the function of humour used in commercials not containing elderly characters?) could be identified. This allowed for a further examination of the subgroups within the same category (e.g., How are stereotypical characters portrayed within the commercial?) and across categories (e.g., How does the use of music, photography, and lighting serve to build tension in commercials where tension release is the primary theory of humor used?). Once the analysis was completed, results from the analysis were integrated. The prevalent use of stereotypical characters emerged as a central theme within which additional results were discussed. These results were then incorporated into the broader social and cultural context describing how humorous television commercials serve as a mechanism for influencing and reflecting contemporary social and cultural issues.

Chapter 3 - Results

General Comments

The integration of each of the elements included within the humorous television commercials contributes to the gestalt experienced by the viewer upon seeing the commercials. The overall presentation and experience of the commercials in their entirety constitutes a complex cultural experience. Viewing entire commercials repeatedly over time, as would be the experience of the consumer, differs considerably from the process involved in the analysis of the narratives of the television commercials.

These differences were highlighted when feedback was elicited from the interpretive communities. When the first interpretive community was shown each television commercial with time for comments provided after each commercial, comments focused on superficial and readily apparent attributes. When this process was altered and the entire set of television commercials was shown to the second interpretive community prior to a second showing when comments were then elicited, the impact of the repetition was evident. Comments from the second interpretive community demonstrated a greater depth, highlighting patterns found in a series of commercials for one product and patterns found among similar products. The second interpretive community also identified and commented on overall similarities and differences within the groups of television commercials. This process may be similar to that of the consumer who views the same commercials repeatedly over time and becomes increasingly familiar with the content. However, this process differs from the typical experience of the consumer because

members of the interpretive community were gathered specifically to view these television commercials. Also, the commercials were shown as a group without interruption, which is very different from the typical experience of the consumer.

Points of conflict were found within the interpretive communities. The episodes of conflict occurred when males and females in the interpretive community differed in their opinion of the presentation of the characters and the intended meaning of the advertiser. These episodes provided heated discussion and were found only in television commercials with a highly sexually-charged component.

Although the reactions of the members of the interpretive community were interesting, overall they provided little additional information to the content of the analysis. At a process level, however, it was fascinating to note that although the viewers were assembled and directed to attend to the content and overall meaning of the commercials, very little information was available to them at a conscious level. Upon questioning, some of the more salient elements were recognized. Some of the more subtle innuendos, suggested by music, intertextual reference, or the use of cinematography to sexualize an innocuous image through the choice of camera location, were evident only upon repeated exposure and verbal cues.

The differences between the information available to viewers at a conscious level and the information received by the viewer at an unconscious level is impossible to measure directly. The goal of advertisers throughout the history of television commercials has been to appeal to the unconscious level, capitalizing on emotional needs, desires, and insecurities present in the target audience. By examining the content of the narratives of

humorous television commercials through repeated exposure and attention to key elements, four types of information are available that were not available or accessible to the viewers in the interpretive community, who represent consumers. First, subtle nuances and innuendo were identifiable only after the commercial was viewed many times and in small sequences, as necessary to capture and record the pieces of information during the analysis. Second, through the process of analysis it was possible to isolate the elements to assess their contribution to the whole. Third, by first understanding theories and functions of humour, processing the impact of the theory and function of humour used to convey the message and its contribution to the overall commercial was possible. Finally, conducting an in-depth analysis of the narratives in the humorous television commercials within a socio-cultural framework provided the opportunity to integrate all of this information in a manner not possible for the typical viewer.

Due to the complexity of managing the massive quantity of data generated by the analysis of the components of the humorous television commercials, information from the elements will be presented in themes that became apparent during the process of analysis. These themes are focused on the popular cultural stereotypes found in this sample and are presented in two main categories - stereotypes that were supported and stereotypes that were contradicted by the characters in these commercials. Other themes such as power, sexuality, or the use of humour and other elements (i.e., music or lighting) are discussed within the context of the stereotypes presented.

Stereotypes Supported

The use of characters consistent with popular stereotypes in this sample of

humorous television commercials was very interesting. Male characters that upheld popular stereotypes were cast in negative roles, looking stupid, incompetent, childish, power hungry, selfish, and insane. The humour in the commercials was generated by highlighting the “stupid male” role. When female characters were central to the narrative, they assumed roles consistent with stereotypical female roles. However, these characters were relatively infrequent and tended to play roles exaggerating the supported stereotype to generate humour.

Male Stereotypes

One of the most significant findings in this study was the over representation of male characters in this sample. When examining the primary characters in the 75 humorous television commercials, 134 (67.3%) were male. Six different male stereotypes were supported by the roles of the characters within these commercials. These stereotypes include males being less competent parents, the association between males and power, males in positions of authority, the leisure activities of males, detective and criminal roles, and the way that males are represented as the “voice of authority.”

Males Being Less Competent Parents. Commercials including adult males and young children contained the stereotype of the father being mean, childish, or incompetent in his parenting skills. In a commercial for Spam (#19), a male and a young child are eating lunch. The father is sitting down to eat a spamburger hamburger. The baby has other food to eat - peas, etc. The father says tauntingly, "Look what daddy gets. Looks good, huh? You eat those peas. This is daddy's." Although the father is presented as cruel for teasing the young child, we see the child outsmart the father and end up with the

spamburger at the end of the commercial.

In a commercial for a vehicle with dent-resistant panels (#32), we hear a ball hitting the side of the vehicle as some children are playing baseball in their front yard. The father panics and runs outside. Rather than scold them for damaging the vehicle, he appears upset because they are not standing properly to hit the ball. The father attempts to demonstrate this skill, but is unable to hit the ball himself. The children urge him to go back into the house and the father complies.

In a commercial for instant potatoes (#43), a male in his 30s is sitting at the kitchen table stabbing his fork into some food with a grimace on his face. We see a shot of a baby sitting in a high chair adjacent to this male. He looks toward the baby, then across the kitchen to see if his wife is watching. She is busy, so he takes two scoops of the potatoes on his plate and puts them onto the baby's plate. The male moves to put a third scoop of potatoes on the baby's plate, but his wife comes to the table so he reroutes them into his mouth, then appears to be surprised at the good taste. He continues to scrape them back off the baby's plate and into his mouth.

The increasing involvement of males in parenting was reflected in this sample. This was reinforced by using a “home” setting and having the “average male” dressed casually in blue and brown tones. The male characters playing a parenting role were the focus of the humour. This representation of males may reflect the challenges males face as they become more active parents. Male viewers may find these commercials humorous, using these commercials as an interpretation of their own behaviour or their experiences of a father figure participating in household activities. The theme underlying the humour in this

set of commercials is the incompetence of the male partner in functioning as a parent. In two of these commercials the humour was generated through the male losing his power and the child triumphing in the end. These commercials may be amusing for female viewers experiencing hostility toward their partners for their actions with their children or their lack of participation in parenting activities.

Males and Power. Power themes, such as competition, strength, energy, physical prowess and virility, were evident in commercials demonstrating how a father uses an alarm system to protect his beautiful daughter from advances from other males (#11); how the confidence a businessman has in the power of a battery in a cell phone allows him to relax and enjoy dancing when his car is broken down in the middle of the desert (#38); and how a new battery, installed by a full pit crew, allows the Energizer Bunny to squeal out and continue a journey into the desert (#21). Masculine themes were common in commercials for electronics (e.g., virility is represented graphically in commercials for computer hardware that used sports such as parachuting and soccer to present their message - #13, #41). The familiar icon (graphic representation of progress with a dark color extending up a line representing the degree to which the computer has completed performing a specific function) could represent sexual arousal in a male - when the dark color extends all the way to the end of the line, the computer is ready to perform its next function.

When males with similar amounts of power were presented as main characters in the commercial, the focus tended to be on competition in leisure activities (mountain climbing, video games). In the commercial for Dolly Madison donuts (#26), the “couch

potato” climbs to the top of the mountain before the athlete and appears to be superior to the athlete. In the commercial for Nintendo (#25), the male who owns the game invites his friend over then proceeds to annihilate him in every game they play, commenting on his superior ability as they play. When the friend finally leaves, the male totally lacks awareness of his socially inappropriate behaviour and smells his armpits to determine if his personal hygiene was the reason for his friend’s departure. In these commercials, the triumphant male characters are clearly happy with themselves and remain oblivious to their incompetence or foolishness. It is this lack of awareness coupled with the incongruence of the situations that generates humor.

Two very clear examples of commercials using superiority theory to generate humour portray Americans as “stupid” and are focused on the loss of power of American males (#8, #9). One is clearly directed at Canadians being superior to Americans and uses a real situation to make the comparison between the “superior” Canadians and “inferior” Americans appear more valid (#8). The commercial begins with hundreds of monkeys using typewriters in a warehouse setting, alluding to the commonly used anecdote that if you put a monkey in a room with a typewriter, given enough time it would produce a Shakespearean play. The narrative switches settings to a board room where American businessmen are asking Canadian businessmen to put a streak of color behind the puck when televising hockey games so that the Americans will be better able to follow the action. The Canadian males pick up and throw the American out of the room. The use of a visual effect (streak of color behind the male) emphasizes the humour and is an intertextual referent because the color was used to follow the puck during hockey games

televised in the United States.

The second commercial (#9) shows a male and female, obviously tourists, stepping down into a darker area presented like a cave. The female says, "Look, they make olive oil. Take a picture. Here." An elderly female dressed in black and slightly stooped over emerges. The setting appears to be rural Italy and the elderly female says, "Bonjourno" with a heavy accent. The male says, "Oh, hi how are you? Is this your business?" The old female replies, "Yes." The male responds, "We have a business, too." His wife adds, "Yes, yes, we have three stores in Ohio," holding three fingers up in front of the old female's face and speaking slightly louder, insinuating that the old female may have trouble understanding. The old female thinks and says, "Ohio, we sell to Ohio... and California and Canada and Argentina and Australia..." The Italian female hands them a business card. The wife reads the card and says, "They're on the Internet. How can they afford it?" which highlights the superior business savvy of the elderly Italian female over the Americans.

The commercials highlighting males and power contain an element of competition, with the character who appears to have the least amount of power appearing to be the most powerful by the end of the commercial. The humour in these commercials stems from this transfer of power. Because most viewers of these commercials will feel less powerful in some areas of their life, the surprising transfer of power allows the viewer to vicariously experience the triumph of the characters.

Males in Positions of Authority. These commercials focus on how the males in positions of authority abuse their power. In one commercial (#63) an older, slightly

overweight boss bellows, "Murphy. I want you to pick my wife up from the airport. Her name is Thelma." In the next shot we see Murphy in the airport with "Thelma" written on a large card he is holding at chest level. He is one of many males dressed in suits with names of females on cards. A beautiful blonde female in a tight white dress walks up to him and says, "I'm Thelma." He responds, "Really?" She says, "Really." They get into the car. A song with words, "Lonely girl" is playing on the CD in the background. As they drive along, they are smiling at one another, almost flirting. The female seductively pulls her skirt down because it has ridden up. She looks at Murphy and says, "Thanks for the ride." He responds, "My pleasure, Mrs. Burns." The female looks confused, "Mrs. Burns. who's Mrs. Burns?" We hear the sound of brakes squealing. Next we see an older, heavier female with dark hair, waiting impatiently at the airport with her luggage stacked around her.

In the commercial for Bud Light (#1), a middle-aged, overweight, and obviously angry football coach enters a team room. He sees five players sitting around icing their feet and sitting in the hot tub and yells, "You guys are in here again? I can't believe this - you're always in here *nursing your injuries*. I have never seen such a group of cream puffs in my life! This is football!" He yells directly behind the largest player, who is African-American, "I need guys that can play!" The large African-American male jumps as if he is frightened. All of the players are looking down at the floor seemingly remorseful, as the camera shot highlights their facial expressions. The coach storms out of the room angrily. After the coach leaves, we see that the players had beer cooling in the ice they were using for their injuries.

In a commercial for office products (#34), a male who is clearly in a managerial role drops in to his employee's office as he is leaving for the day. He says very quickly and in a commanding tone, "Johnson, I'd like to see some ideas on saving the company money. I'll be back first thing in the morning." Johnson looks very young and anxious about proving himself to his boss. Polka music starts playing in background with a very high-pitched violin. Johnson commands himself to "Think!" We then see seven different shots edited together suggesting the passage of the night. Throughout these shots we see him rubbing his face trying to keep himself awake we hear him saying, "Think!" to himself repeatedly. It becomes light outside and he is beginning to fall asleep. His head begins to fall toward the desk. As it is falling, as a male bringing the mail tosses a Staples catalogue that lands under Johnson's face as it hits the desk. The boss shows up at the doorway and asks, "Well, Johnson...?" Johnson wakes up and lifts his head with the Staples catalogue stuck to his cheek. The boss comments, "Staples, that'll save us a lot of money. Johnson, you're a genius!" Johnson beams with pride at pleasing his boss, still with the catalogue stuck to his cheek.

These commercials share several important features. When attempting to demonstrate a role involving power or prestige (e.g., males in powerful roles within a business setting), the characters were found in dark colored suits. The inappropriate abuse of power took place on the "turf" of the more powerful male (office setting, locker room army training area). One critical observation was that in these commercials, the powerful males were using their power against other males - females were not found in these commercials. The humour was generated in all of these commercials when the ability of

those with less power to successfully cope with or outsmart their boss or coach was highlighted (i.e., those less powerful became more powerful), making the males in positions of authority appear to be easily tricked or outsmarted.

Leisure Activities of Males. The focus on competition within this theme results in considerable overlap with the "Males and Power" theme. However, the finding that a number of commercials in this sample focused on the leisure activities of males and none focused on the leisure activities of females merits attention. The likely audience being targeted by this group of commercials is males in the 25 - 45 year age group, with most of the commercials highlighting the leisure activities of males in this age group. A commercial for a video game system discussed earlier (#25) highlighted competition between the characters, with the male who owns the video game winning all of the games and "rubbing it in" until his friend becomes frustrated and leaves.

A public service announcement for drinking responsibly (#61), focuses on drinking and meeting females. The commercial begins with a male sleeping in a small apartment with his head at the foot of the bed. The phone begins to ring and the answering machine picks it up and plays the greeting, "You know what to do." The male sits up and rubs his face. He is only wearing pants and looks in pretty rough shape. The male voice leaving the message on the answering machine states, "Wild party last night, huh?" The male just waking up looks in his wallet and finds the name Cheryl and a phone number. He walks into bathroom and the male leaving the message continues. "So what happened to you? Last I heard you were heading for some body piercing place." The male looks down and finds that he has a nipple ring. He looks alarmed then looks on the back of the paper

where Cheryl's phone number is written. The card is for a body piercing and tattoo parlor. The male frantically searches arms for tattoos but doesn't find any. He looks at his nipple ring again and plays with it as if to say - it's not so bad - it's kind of cool. The voice on the answering machine continues, "Oh, man, that stuff is too weird for me. I'm sure you didn't do anything too stupid. Hey, you're the man, cool guy. Well, see you at the beach." The male turns around and the viewers see a huge tattoo in the shape of a heart covering his back. The name Cheryl is inscribed in the middle of the tattoo.

Another commercial highlights a masculine hunter who "roughs it" by sleeping outdoors (#14). The commercial begins by showing a male dressed in hunter's clothing (flannel shirt and insulated vest), sleeping with his head on a log in the middle of the forest. We see a close-up of the face of a deer and the lyrics of a song that add important information to the narrative begin, "I'll be your sweetheart if you'll be mine . . ." We see the male sleeping, then the shot moves to show the side of the deer's head and a twinkle in her eye. The shot returns to the male with his head resting on a log. This time the camera is in front of the male and we see the dry branches from the log appear like antlers on the back of the male's head. We hear a sound from the deer that sounds like a giggle, demonstrating flirtatiousness, pleasure, or happiness. We see the hooves of the deer move closer to the male and the male's face as he wakes up and sees the deer in front of him. Next, we see the lake and then we hear sounds (screams) from both the male and the deer that indicate they realize what is going on and are distressed.

Each of these commercials show males engaging in stereotypical leisure activities (e.g., playing video games, drinking and picking up females, hunting). The commercial for

the video game system directly focuses on the competition between the two males. The other two commercials contain sexual innuendos, with the humour at the expense of the “innocent” or “stupid” male. In one case, the male was too drunk to realize that he had a huge tattoo. In the other case, the male became the object of affection of a deer.

Detective and Criminal Roles. Several commercials utilized common male stereotypes of “good guys” and “bad guys” in the form of detective and criminal roles. In commercial (#42) a criminal is being interrogated while one police officer is eating a chocolate cupcake. The set and characters are readily recognizable. The stereotypical “criminal” is thin and has dark curly hair, a moustache and beard. He is wearing a black leather jacket. The interrogation room is bare and dark, except for the light hanging over the table at which the criminal is sitting. The detectives also represent stereotypes - relatively clean-cut and driving a hard bargain with the criminal. One of the detectives begins, “Alright Tommy, you're looking at 10 to 15. Why don't you try to help yourself out?” Tommy is looking at items on the table - cupcakes and a brown paper bag in the area of one detective's groin. The detective looks down then at Tommy and asks, “Are you looking at my cupcakes?” The detective continues, “Go ahead take a bite.” Tommy reaches and grabs a large chocolate cupcake and begins to eat it vocalizing “mmm mmm.” The detective remarks, “Atta boy. Now we can do this the easy way or we can do this ... the hard way.” The detective removes a container of milk from brown paper bag and slides it across the table.

The power and cannibalistic sexual themes are evident in the exchange between the detectives and the criminal. Although the detective appears to “give in,” and share his

cupcakes (that the viewer realizes represent the detective's testicles through the use of cinematography), the detective outsmarts the "stupid" criminal in the end. Given the connection between the detective's testicles and the cupcakes, a viewer would likely experience a reaction watching the vigor with which the criminal eats the cupcakes and the sounds he is making while doing so.

At times, humour is generated by the character regressing to an earlier stage of development. In one commercial we see a male reverting to a trick he likely learned during his adolescence (#37). This young attractive male wearing a blue shirt and tie walks up to a drink machine and puts money in to get a drink. He appears to be confident and in control as he waits for his drink, but the drink does not come out. He pushes the buttons and the slot he put the money through quickly and roughly. With a degree of frustration he sighs, "Man!" He looks at the place the drinks come out, then scans the empty cafeteria to make sure that no one is able to see him. He moves to the floor and positions himself laying on the floor so he can get at the proper angle for his arm to move inside the machine to get his drink. Just as he is close to reaching a drink, we hear a male clearing his throat. Suddenly, the young male looks around and sees two males and a female standing behind him. The word "Activated" appears on the screen when the young male realizes he is caught by people who appear to be his superiors. The young male, with his arm still in the machine, looks at them and laughs nervously.

Black and white film was used to set the mood of a detective television show in commercial #12. This commercial begins with a close-up shot of the top of a newspaper with the left side cut off. Part of the headline is cut off, but the viewer can still read it,

"Story of the Century." The music in the background sets the tone of a detective show.

Contrary to the setting that might be expected with the mood that has been set, the commercial takes place in a confectionery. The first character shown is Leslie Nielsen (a famous comedian) as he is reading the newspaper. His voice is narrating, "It was the story of the century, but I had bigger things on my mind." The shot changes to a distant view of the character with a huge stuffed whale sitting on his head. " . . . like what's the story with this crossword game? Then, the kid at the counter caught my eye, which is funny because I didn't throw it." The viewer sees that a male character at the counter is holding a large eyeball (approximately 3" in diameter) in his hand. The clerk rolls his eyes at the joke. "That's when I saw the crossword ticket." The male behind the counter holding the ticket motions to it with his eyes, like it is some sort of secret or illegal interaction. "I told him this crossword could be my ticket to the big time. He said he'd keep an eye out for me." The young male places a large letter "I" on the counter. The narrator responds "Oohhh" and his character winces, supposedly at the poor pun.

A less intense commercial involves a foiled bank robbery attempt where a second set of bank robbers attempts to rob a bank already being robbed (#52). This commercial relies on cinematography similar to that of the popular movie *Dog Day Afternoon* to set the mood. Although there is a definite "criminal element" in this commercial, both the bank robbers and the bank manager end up looking foolish.

These four commercials highlighting detective and criminal themes are all very different. One focuses on a real detective-criminal relationship, one focuses on "superiors" catching an "inferior" stealing, the third sets up a detective theme through

cinematography, lighting, music, and dialogue where there is no criminal activity taking place, and the fourth alludes to a famous movie about a bank robbery. These four commercials are for different types of products (i.e., milk, deodorant, lottery tickets, and pain reliever) and use different public settings (police station, office, store, and bank).

There are two important similarities in these commercials. First, all of the major characters are male, consistent with the stereotypical detective and criminal. Second, the main characters in these commercials are made to look foolish (criminal being outsmarted, a “professional” employee caught stealing out of a vending machine, male acting like a detective yet looking silly through the use of props and pun, bank manager having his bank robbed twice at the same time).

Males as the “Voice of Authority.” The narrator plays a relatively minor role within the narrative of the commercial itself. At times, the narrator is a character in the commercial or is key in providing information regarding the action within the commercial, but most often the narrator presents product information. One clear theme found throughout this sample was that regardless of the placement or role of the narrator, the narrator was presented as an objective voice of authority that could provide additional, unbiased information about the product advertised. Not surprisingly, the voice of the narrator exuded strength, confidence, intelligence, and was almost exclusively male [(n=63), as compared with the narrator being female (n=6), animal (n=1) or the commercial having no narrator (n=5)].

This pattern of male “experts” serving as narrator in these commercials provided an interesting twist to this sample of commercials that tended to use male characters as the

focus of humour. Even though many of the commercials in this sample targeted males as a “stupid group” and presented negative male roles consistent with popular “stupid male” stereotypes (e.g., fathers as selfish demonstrated by teasing their children - #19 or stealing their food - #43; fathers not being good enough at sports to teach their children - #32; males not being competent and confident in understanding technology - #5, #65), an underlying assumption that the “voice of authority” should sound like a middle-class white male was prominent.

Female Stereotypes

Females were found much less frequently than males in this sample. Overall, 49 or (24.6%) of the primary characters were female. The roles of females in these commercials were very interesting and represented three popular stereotypes - traditional females, lonely elderly females, and young beautiful females. When female characters were used to generate the humour within the television commercials, either older females or females in roles that represented exaggerated traditional stereotypes were found.

Traditional Females. Two commercials for convenience food highlighted the stereotypical “traditional” female role of being in charge of food preparation. One of the commercials that contained female characters portrayed a stereotype of older females who have been displaced from their traditional role and were very angry (#35). The opening dialogue documents their hostility. One character states, “We are not happy about this.” A gray-haired female in the background, also angry, encourages her, “You go girl!” The next point introduces the idea that maybe these females would always have something to complain about. The first female continues, “But we weren’t happy about baking all day

either." The other character rationalizes, "but it was ours." The commercial provides additional information suggesting how wonderful the product tastes, then returns to highlight the level of frustration the females experience at their role being displaced by convenience food. The first female, obviously angry, asserts, "Dabnabbit - what's next, Thanksgiving in a box?" and hits the camera in frustration. After a male voice over, we see the females walking away with one of them commenting, "We need a martini." Most interesting is that this ending has been changed twice since the sample was gathered. The first change was from a specific reference to an alcoholic beverage to a more ambiguous statement, "We need a drink." The second change was to eliminate this ending altogether.

The second commercial features a displaced mother attempting to regain her nurturing role to her adult "macho football player" son (#2). An African American football player walks into a locker room with soup on a tray for a white player and states, "Hey Johnny, there's a new Chunky Soup, sweetie pie." The white player responds, "Hey, Chunky. . . Did you just call me sweetie pie?" Other player replies, "No, uh ... sweaty guy. There's a new Chunky Soup, sweaty guy. Chunky baked potato with cheddar, and bacon bits. A hearty soup loaded with big chunks of baked potato to fill my little Johnny bear right." The other player grabs the African American player's face and pulls off a mask, revealing the African American player's real identity as that of the white player's mother. He whines, "Mom..." She replies, "Gotta make sure you're eating good." "How long have you been wearing this?" he asks, holding the mask. "Since the half," she replies. This commercial is interesting because the mother assumes a cross-racial role in her disguise. Also, before we are aware that one of the players is not really a male, there is considerable

tension developed through dialogue that introduced a homosexual theme.

A third commercial features a group of traditional females discussing their “battles” with dirty dishes (#45). It begins with the words “War Stories” in text across the middle of the screen. Music from a country and western movie is playing in the background, as if two cowboys are ready to fight a duel. Although they are participating in a non-traditional activity (tai chi) during the commercial, their comments are focused on the stereotypical role of a housewife who is responsible for doing the dishes. One by one, each of the females in the front row tell their war stories with dirty dishes. However, the war is not only against the dirty dishes, but against the husbands who caused the dirty dishes, due to their incompetence or negligence. One female begins, “Last night my husband overcooked the rice. We’re talking bullets.” Another female continues, “Uh huh, blue cheese omelette, no butter. Think about it!” The third character tells her story, “Lasagna, 400 degrees, guess who took a nap?” The female in the middle responds with, “Whhoooo.” Her breathing is consistent with tai chi but the sound of her breath fits with the country and western duel music.

Two of these commercials focus on the frustration the females experience resulting from their traditional roles; however, in two commercials it is because their role is displaced (#35, #2) and in the other it is because their role is maintained (#45). Ironically, only one of these commercials is set in a home-type setting, the others are in non-traditional settings (a males’ locker room and in a tai chi class).

These exaggerated representations of stereotypical roles for females (becoming angry because a simplified method of meal-preparation has displaced their role; willing to

be injured by disguising as a football player to get close to her son; fighting a “war” against the dirty dishes their husbands left behind) can only be successful at this time because the importance of these activities to the identity of females has diminished considerably. These same commercials would not have been considered humorous 50 years ago when females gained their identity to a greater extent from the quality of their performance of household tasks (females whose houses were untidy or dirty were judged as lazy or “less than” females whose houses were “spotless”).

Lonely Elderly Females. Two commercials focus on the stereotypical lonely elderly female, using this stereotype to generate humour. One commercial focuses on the stereotype of the lonely elderly female who lived alone with her cats. This commercial begins with a shot of a cuckoo clock striking 6:00 p.m. The choice of a cuckoo clock rather than a grandfather clock or other clock is meaningful and suggests that the “real cuckoo” appears immediately after this. We hear an elderly female screech in a high pitched and sing-songy voice to her many cats, “Yumm yummm time. Everyone’s going to get some. Mommy’s got your milk...” The physical appearance of the female character (short in stature, gray hair), the choice of clothing (light colored dress with crocheted collar, cardigan sweater), and her home (small, dark, cluttered) all serve to reinforce the stereotype of elderly females. The music in the background sounds like a haunted carnival. As she moves through her house into the kitchen we hear cats meowing and see several following behind her. The elderly female reaches the fridge and looks inside, realizing she is out of milk. Between this point and the end of the commercial, five different pieces of music are used to communicate suspense and fear. A container labelled “Non-Dairy

“Creamer” is in the cupboard on a shelf cluttered with other items. The female states in a tentative tone, “Oh look, just like milk.” Her voice changes, as if she is lying. With an evil look in her eye, she begins mixing the powder with water. She is very sloppy as she mixes the powder and water and this action reinforces the “crazed” manner in which she is preparing the “milk.” The female reassures the cats in a worried voice, “You won’t know the difference.” She casts a quick and worried glance at the cats and says, “Almost ready.” We hear the cats meowing in the background and see them and many bowls on the floor when she attempts to pour the “milk” into the dishes. She pours the “milk” from a squatting position, which has the effect of the milk spilling and splashing out of the dishes. The female says, “Yummy yummy, nice kitty,” as she is filling the dishes. As soon as the cats taste the “milk” they begin to screech and tip over their dishes. We hear, “Oh oh” from the female. Next, courtesy of editing and special effects, we see choppy, close up shots of the cats closing the blinds, locking the deadbolt on the door, and turning off the power, to trap the female and retaliate for not serving real milk. The text “Got Milk?” appears in white text on a black background. The edges of the white letters are fuzzy and we hear the sound effect of a strong charge of electricity, supposedly the elderly female being electrocuted by the cats.

In a commercial for a hotel using the stereotype the lonely elderly female (#64), an elderly female is sitting in a chair in front of a television set with rabbit ears. She is wearing a blue dress with a white sweater over it, white slippers, a hair net, and has beaded idiot strings for her glasses. Although she is knitting, she is not paying attention to what she is doing and is totally engrossed in the television program, which is a love story.

We hear the dialogue, "I love you Marsha. I love you Tom. I love you Marsha. I love you Tom. I've always loved you Marsha....Oh Tom...Kiss me." As this is occurring, we see a dog sleeping in a basket sitting to the right of the female's chair. The wool for the item she is knitting is in the box with the dog. Because she isn't paying attention, we see that the wool has become mixed up with the dog hair and that she is using the dog's hair to knit her item. By the end of the commercial, the dog is half bald and we see the dog's fur knit into the item the female is knitting. A male voice over begins, "Don't sleep just anywhere." The dog lifts its head and whines in background.

In these commercials, both females and their homes represent the lonely elderly female stereotypes. These stereotypes are reinforced by the use of setting, lighting, and colour. Socially, we see two elderly females living alone, highlighting the tendency for older adults to be isolated, living away from other family members. This tendency in our culture is different from other cultures where the elderly live with the rest of the family and are considered to be valuable members of the community. The commercials present no evidence indicating that these females have an important or vital role in society. These commercials also highlight the growing importance of pets as valued companions for those who may be lonely and have limited social contact outside their home.

Young Beautiful Females. In commercials containing young, beautiful females, the narrative focuses on the males in these commercials being sexually attracted to the young, beautiful female character who remains unattainable (#55, #63). Commercial (#55) begins with shot of cars parked on a city street. A female is running in the background and jumps into one of the cars. The male in the car is surprised and says, "Whoa, whoa, whoa." The

female begins speaking rapidly in Italian. The male driving the car doesn't understand her so she says, "Drive! Just drive!" hurriedly in English with a heavy accent. They are shown speeding through the streets. She commands him, "Straight, straight ... no no .. left go left go left... go around the circle ... right here, stop." She is speaking very quickly and appears very agitated, looking around as if to see if someone is following her as they are driving. At the end of the commercial, the male driver asks, "Wait, who's after you?" The female responds in English with no accent, "Nobody, but thanks for the test drive," and closes the door. The driver of the car smiles to himself, pleased at his adventure.

Another commercial for a car focuses on the build-up of sexual tension between the male and female characters (#63). Although this commercial was discussed earlier because the "boss" in the commercial abused his power by asking his employee to pick his wife up from the airport, the beautiful young female who the employee picked up by mistake was the focus of the humour in the commercial. Specifically, the female appears innocent and does not ask who sent the male to pick her up. Then, she becomes more seductive in the way she looks at the younger male and pulls down her skirt that has ridden up as she sat in the car. It is only when the female has been driven to her location that we become aware that she was not the female who was supposed to be picked up. The build-up of sexual tension between the characters distracted them from seeking the information necessary to determine that they should not be together.

Another example of the young, beautiful female "tempting" an "innocent" male is found in commercial #11 for electronics products. This commercial begins with a statue of cupid overlooking a lavish pool area. In the background, the viewer sees the pool where

the action takes place. Romantic music is playing in the background. A beautiful young female wearing heart-shaped sun glasses and walkman headphones is laying on a lounge by the pool. The lounge area is covered, making the setting appear like a covered four-poster bed. The female is working on a lap-top computer, while a young, attractive male is cleaning the pool. The weather is sunny and warm. The movements of both characters are slow and seductive. The male removes his t-shirt to reveal a well-muscled torso. A camera shot of the female is taken from between the male's legs. At this point, water from the pool is also spraying upward into the shot between the male's legs. The female sits up and removes her headphones, then removes her sun glasses, then removes the sucker from her mouth. When the male moves closer to the female, he walks past a sensor and an alarm goes off with a male's voice announcing, "Step away from my daughter."

In this group of commercials, young females are presented as powerful, sneaky, and manipulative, setting the male up to do something that the female wants him to do. The intense sexual tension displayed in these commercials focuses on a "forbidden fruit" or "Adam and Eve" theme whereby the attractive female tempts the unsuspecting "innocent" male. It is assumed that females would appreciate the power held by the females in these commercials and the way that the females use their power to control the males. Similarly, males are thought to enjoy commercials focused on the male fantasy of being seduced by young, beautiful, exotic, and rich females.

Additional Stereotypes Supported

Long-term Relationships. Overall, long-term relationships and the individuals within those relationships are presented very negatively in this sample. This presentation is

consistent with the popular stereotype that individuals in long-term relationships “let themselves go” and the relationship becomes sexually unsatisfying. Commercial #22 for hair products begins with a male and a female alone in a living room, representing the stereotype of a couple in a long-term relationship (i.e., the male watching sports with his feet up and the female absorbed in reading a women’s magazine). The room is dark and cluttered, with a bluish tone. We hear a baseball game on the television that is in the foreground. The male is average looking and somewhat disheveled - unshaven, crumpled clothing, shirt unbuttoned. He is eating snacks out of a bowl as he is watching television, with his feet up. Something exciting happens in the game and he jumps in excitement, spilling some of his snacks. The female sitting in chair across the room, distracted by the male’s excitement, crosses her legs and refocuses on her magazine. She is reading a quiz, “Is He Right For You?” The female looks over at the male then blows out a deep breath, demonstrating her disappointment in her partner. Her skin looks bluish and very shiny. Romantic music begins with the lyrics, “The look of love is in your eyes. The look your heart can’t disguise.” As this is occurring, the male undergoes a metamorphosis from head to toe, beginning with his shirt blowing off of him. We see physiological changes as his stomach changes from flabby to well-toned, his chest becomes more muscular and hairy, his lips become more full and shapely, his nose becomes more chiseled, his eyes become more almond-shaped, and his feet become longer and more attractive. The new male is not eating snacks and has his feet on the floor. We even see a tear running down his face as he is watching television - not likely sports. The shot is edited so that with each change in the male, the viewer sees the expression on the female’s face, then the part of the male that is

changing. With each change there is increased sexual tension displayed by the female twirling her hair with her finger, tossing her head back, and covering her face with her finger and peeking through at the changing male. This "new male" stands and walks over to the female who gazes up at him in amazement, tilting her head back seductively. Just as he leans to kiss her, he belches. We see all of the changes disappear and the original male is back. The sound in the background is of a record scratching. The female looks at him with disgust and she rolls her eyes. He asks, "What?"

In some commercials, causal relations or attributions for the behaviour of the characters needs to be implied from previous events not shown to the viewer. In the commercial for Butter (#6), this was accomplished by the viewer observing the female character complete a questionnaire in a magazine that asks questions about her relationship with her male partner. Based on the exaggerated way she makes a check mark in the most applicable box, the answer she provides, and the way in which she and her male partner present themselves and relate to one another, the viewer assumes a particular quality to the relationship prior to the commercial. We see the female sit facing away from the male in a cold and distant manner. We watch her fill out the questionnaire and see her answers, indicating her dissatisfaction. We hear her ask him to get her breakfast, as if this is one of the "test" items on the questionnaire. We see the male's anxiety as he chooses between butter and margarine, supposedly because his wife may become angry at him if he makes the wrong choice. We see the male's facial expression when he gives her the breakfast, suggesting that he is hoping that he did the right thing. The humour is generated

when the female appears to act out of character, based on our assumptions of her personality and their previous relationship, and carries him to their bedroom.

Commercial #15 begins with a shot of the outside of a seedy motel room, with a scientist in a white lab coat looking out the window, then pulling the curtain closed. The words "Video Stability Test" are in white text in the lower portion of the shot. Music is used to set a "sleazy" atmosphere. The next shot shows the inside of the room with a scientist holding a clipboard and standing next to the bed. A middle-aged male and female in their nightclothes, presumably husband and wife, are laying on the bed. They are notable for their tackiness and lack of attractiveness, and serve as a stereotype of middle-aged husbands and wives. The scientist puts coins in a slot to make the bed vibrate. The female looks at the male and licks her lips, the male looks back toward her through the corners of his eyes. The female holds her video camera up and we see her view of a ceiling fan moving to the vibration. The text "Image stabilization" is at the top of the view through the camera lens and "The Competition" is at the bottom of the view. A male voice over says, "The competition." The view moves to the male's camera with "Image stabilization" across the top of the view and "Palmcorder" on the bottom. The voice comments, "The Panasonic Palmcorder," then continues, "The Panasonic Palmcorder. Notice how the image from his camera is more stable, as if he weren't moving at all." We see a shot of the male's stomach, sticking out from underneath a white undershirt. His overweight belly is shaking as the bed vibrates. The female responds, "So, what else is new."

The depiction of long-term intimate relationships between males and females in this sample is noteworthy. The characters playing these roles tend to be older and physically

unattractive. The relationships themselves are presented as routine, empty, and sexually unsatisfying. From the representation of the individuals in these relationships, we see the value our society places on sexual attractiveness as well as what constitutes physical attractiveness within our culture, with one whole commercial focused on the real male evolving into an ideal male that is more physically attractive (e.g., well-defined facial features, physically fit) to the female. These commercials also highlight the acceptance of older and physically unattractive individuals as the target of humour, likely the reaction to a generalized fear of becoming that way ourselves.

Another important feature of these commercials is that they allow the viewer into intimate areas of these relationships (e.g., sexual fantasies, sexual difficulties or dissatisfaction) in a voyeuristic manner. These commercials may also provide the viewer with permission to engage in sexual fantasies about individuals other than their partner, acknowledge dissatisfaction with their own sexual relationship, or feel superior to the individuals and relationships portrayed in the commercials.

Contrary to the presentation of long-term relationships between males and females, the relationships between males and females that were not long-term were depicted as daring, exciting, and charged with sexual energy. The characters in these commercials tended to be young, vibrant, and highly attractive, utilizing the stereotype of the young and beautiful female. These two sets of stereotypes accentuate age-related stereotypical differences in physical attractiveness and sexuality. In sexually-charged commercials with young, beautiful females, the references to sexuality serve to heighten the tension of the viewer, with the tension relieved when the progression of sexual activity is stopped by an

outside force. Although this pattern was also found in the commercial where the average male changed into the “ideal” male, the characters and relationship were depicted negatively using the stereotype of a long-term relationship. In the other commercials focused on long-term relationships, the humour was generated in one commercial by the incongruity of the older female pursuing sex, while in the other commercial the humour was generated through the inappropriate discussion of details of the older male’s poor sexual performance.

Individuals With Mental Illness. Only one commercial contained a reference to an individual with a mental illness. However, due to the common stereotype of individuals with mental illness presented in this commercial, the prevalent theme of males being portrayed negatively, and the way in which the different elements are integrated to create the narrative, this commercial (#30) will be discussed. It begins with a distant shot of a male in a kitchen, taken through the doorway. The institutional setting is similar to a visitation room in a prison or an interrogation room in a police station, as portrayed on television or in movies. The furnishings are sparse, the walls are yellow, and the light is hung directly over the table. A male is sitting across from two plates - one contains crumbs from what was there, the other contains a toaster strudel with a “Happy Face” drawn in icing. Behind the two plates we see an empty, ugly, upholstered chair approximately 20-years old. The male sitting at the table has dark hair and is dressed very plainly in a blue t-shirt. He looks slightly disheveled, with crumbs on his face that match the crumbs in the empty plate. He speaks to the remaining toaster strudel in a slow, measured voice, “Listen, I know you are wondering what happened to your pal.” He

begins speaking louder, in a defensive and disturbed manner that suggests that the room may be in a psychiatric setting rather than a police station. "It's not my fault. I can't help myself. He comes in here with his hot flaky pastry, all that real fruit filling and his little icing smile..." He is looking to the ceiling and smiling, recollecting his experience with the other toaster strudel. "... somewhat like your own." He grins and looks directly at the remaining toaster strudel with a crazed look in his eyes. The viewer hears music from the shower scene in "Psycho," the icing smile turns into an "O" shape, and the toaster strudel has developed icing eyebrows to demonstrate a facial expression of fear in anticipation of its demise. A male voice over states, "Pillsbury Toaster strudel. It all comes together to make a tasty obsession," highlighting the emotional instability present in the main character of the commercial. The crazed male looks satisfied as he rubs his stomach saying, "There, now you'll always be together." Two plates containing only crumbs were shown in the background.

This commercial integrates several important elements to set the mood and portray the humour. During the first few seconds, the viewer recognizes the familiar institutional-type setting. As the commercial continues, the viewer is provided with additional information to indicate that the male character may have serious mental health problems. For example, he is dressed plainly, appears to be disheveled with crumbs on his face, and is speaking to a piece of pastry. Editing is used to highlight a choppy, unstable character, with the tone of the male's voice and the words he is using increasing the tension as the viewer becomes increasingly aware of this male's inability to control his behaviour. The humour is generated in this commercial when the male can no longer control his behaviour

and eats the other toaster strudel, then explains the rationale for his behaviour to the toaster strudel he has just eaten. As this is taking place, the viewer hears the familiar music associated with the shower scene in the movie Psycho, confirming that this male is, in fact, "psycho."

This commercial demonstrates several interesting cultural beliefs regarding mental illness. First, the ability of the advertiser to successfully utilize this theme within the commercial indicates the growing awareness of mental illness within our society in general. However, the greater recognition of mental illness stems largely from the negative and often inaccurate way individuals with mental illness are portrayed in other areas of popular culture, such as in movies or in television shows. This lack of accurate information regarding mental illness leads to misunderstanding and fear of individuals suffering with mental illnesses. Not surprisingly, this fear and anxiety associated with mental illness is dealt with within our culture through the use of humour. The choice of a male as a main character is not surprising given the innuendo suggesting the male could be a pedophile (i.e., describing physical characteristics of the pastry that make him unable to control himself and the use of "obsession" in the voice over). The main character being male also provides an additional example of how males are presented negatively in commercials.

Stereotypes Contradicted

The way in which popular stereotypes are contradicted in this sample of commercials also serves to generate humour due to the presentation of the characters that is incongruent with our expectations. One of the ways that stereotypes are contradicted in

this sample is through the characters acting as they would if they were much younger or are experiencing the pleasure of a momentary regression.

The commercials using this strategy to generate humour target an adult audience who have assumed more roles with greater responsibility through their development into adulthood and feel stressed out and overwhelmed by these responsibilities. We see these adults “regress” to earlier, more playful stages of their development in these commercials (e.g., a male employee who puts money in a pop machine doesn’t get his pop, so he reverts back to adolescence and uses his knowledge/experience of stealing from these machines but gets caught - #37; ordinary, plain-looking tourists are transformed into a model and fashion photographer - #39).

Commercials offering a momentary regression allow these individuals the opportunity to experience feelings of silliness and childishness in a vicarious manner. They are able to experience playfulness cognitively and emotionally without abandoning the “responsible adult” exterior. The use of music is extremely important in some of these commercials. In many commercials in this sample, we hear music from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Not surprisingly, the individuals who grew up and listened to popular music in those decades are the group that consume the most and have the greatest amount of disposable income.

A second way that stereotypes are contradicted to generate humour also involves the establishment of the character as a popular stereotype. The viewer takes this stereotypical character and associates with it the many qualities associated with the

stereotype in our culture. Humour is generated when the viewer is provided with information about the character that is incongruent with the stereotype.

A number of the commercials that were discussed in the section on stereotypes supported are also discussed in this section. This is not surprising because commercials often contain multiple characters, some who support stereotypes and some who contradict stereotypes. At times, during the course of the commercial the characters themselves change and come to contradict the expected stereotype.

Male Stereotypes

Several male stereotypes were contradicted. These stereotypes involved males generally considered to be competent, males being technically superior to females, salesmen being pushy and aggressive, as well as the stereotypical businessman. Not surprisingly, the two positive stereotypes of males (being competent and being technically superior) were contradicted by having the males appear stupid or incompetent. However, the two more negative stereotypes were contradicted by having the males appear more positively than their stereotypes would suggest. Interestingly, in the commercials casting some of the male characters in a more positive than expected manner, either another male character assumed the “stupid male” role, or the more positive stereotype was exaggerated and the character appeared somewhat silly.

Males As Competent. Generally, we tend to assume a level of competence in both male and female characters. The violation of this assumption and the display of males as incompetent was a prominent theme in this sample of commercials where many popular negative stereotypes of males have been supported (e.g., incompetent parents). Likewise,

commercials containing male characters in positive stereotypical roles that are contradicted generate humour by causing the males to look stupid or foolish.

In commercial #75, a male is looking for his cat and running across the living room calling, "Kitty, kitty, kitty,..." He gets on the floor, looks under the couch, sees the cat, and exclaims, "Oh, Kitty!" The cat looks at him, uninterested. The male gets a little green mouse to try to get the cat to come out. The cat does not respond. The male gets a blue scratching post. No response. The male gets a fish bowl with goldfish. No response. The cat looks bored. The male brings a giant barrel of catnip. No response. He brings a huge ball of purple yarn. No response. He dresses up like a giant mouse. No response. The cat still looks bored. The male jumps up and down and points to the cat as if to say he knows what will get the cat's attention. He comes back carrying some packages and says teasingly, "Whisker Lickins." The male is finally able to get the cat to come out from under the couch when the cat sees the treats. The male lays on his back and the cat comes up on his chest. The cat appears cuddly, but just long enough to take the package of cat treats, then runs back under the couch. The male sighs in frustration.

In commercial #33, a male is sitting at a table with a plate in front of him filled with food. The male has a pair of chopsticks and he is trying to eat the "Asian side dish" with the chopsticks. Nineteen different shots are edited together to illustrate how the male is trying to eat the rice with the chopsticks. Most of his attempts result in the rice falling back on the plate. He uses snow peas to move rice to his mouth in one shot and uses his fingers in the second-last shot. The shots are choppy and are edited as a time-lapse collage, suggesting that the process of the male eating the rice with the chopsticks occurs

over a considerable amount of time. In the last shot we see that the male has given up and has stabbed a chicken finger with his chopstick. He looks very pleased with himself as he twirls the chicken finger on the end of the chopstick.

Both of these commercials highlight the incompetence of the males in tasks that are considered quite simple (i.e., attracting the attention of a pet and eating). However, these seemingly “simple” tasks can be quite difficult at times, causing some viewers to empathize with the effort the male character puts forth to try to accomplish these tasks. Viewers may find these commercials humorous due to the incompetence of the males in the commercials or because they have had similar experiences and can relate to the difficulties the characters are experiencing.

Males as Technically Superior. Middle-aged males were presented as technically incompetent, contrary to the stereotype of males being more proficient with electronic equipment than females. The narratives of two commercials for the same store provide information that contradicts this stereotype. In one of these commercials (#5), three males are standing in front of a VCR. Two of the males in suits (the salesmen) are standing on either side of a casually-dressed customer. All three males are facing the camera. One salesman states, “It’ll be fine.” The other salesman adds, “You’re ready.” The customer reaches out to change the time on the clock of a VCR. The salesmen look at each other and smile proudly. The customer changes the time successfully, steps back in amazement, then states, “Wow. You guys are like Yoda.” The salesmen look at each other questioningly.

In the second commercial (#65), we see the side or rear view of the head of one of the salesmen. Another salesman moves into the picture, looking at something off to the side and asks the first salesman, "Have you talked to him yet?" The first salesman replies, "Mr. Hamilton? Ah, he's fine." The second salesman nods and asks, "How long has he been at it?" The first salesman looks at his watch, "Umm, a couple of hours." The second salesman responds, "Oh, not that long, then." The shot moves to an older male. He is in his 50s and is attractive, looks successful, and is dressed in a polo shirt under a suit jacket. He is standing in front of some equipment at shoulder height, pushing one button repeatedly and watching the compartment open and close repeatedly. The male is smiling, obviously enjoying himself and pleased with his technological competence.

Both of these commercials are very simple in their overall presentation. The male customers are presented as "average guys," slender and wearing stylish casual clothes, making them look somewhat "above-average" intellectually or financially. There is very little action in these commercials, making the task the main characters are accomplishing stand out. The lack of technical ability of these males (one needing reassurance to change a clock, the other fascinated with opening and closing a compartment) is the central focus of the narrative, with both of the males unaware of their incompetence and pleased with their abilities.

Salesmen as Pushy and Aggressive. The same commercials described above (#5, #65) present salesmen in roles contradictory to the popular stereotype of salesmen being pushy and aggressive. Contrary to the slimy "used car salesmen" stereotypes who harass and lie to the customers to make the quick sale, these salesmen are dressed very well and

are patient and supportive. In fact, the concepts of buying and selling are not mentioned in these commercials.

The characters in these two commercials are exclusively male. In other commercials with male characters, there tended to be a focus either on the power differential (with the more powerful male abusing his power then losing it in the end), or on the competition between the male characters. In these commercials, the primary focus is the supportive relationships between the salesmen and the customer, which is ironic because a clear power differential exists, with the salesmen knowing much more about the product than the customer. There is also a noticeable absence of competition between the salesmen, which is also contrary to the popular stereotype of salesmen and the presentation of other males in this sample.

Businessmen. Commercials containing businessmen tend to focus on the power the businessmen have over others. In one commercial, we see this stereotype contradicted (#38). The commercial begins with a distant shot of a male getting out of a car. He is in the desert with no vegetation - just a tree with no leaves, and two birds sitting on a branch. The male appears to be in his 40s and is slightly overweight. His shirt is crumpled and the sleeves are rolled up. He walks around to the front of the silver car and the lifts hood. Steam from the engine pours out from beneath the hood. The male takes out his cell phone and puts in Duracell batteries. A male voice over begins, "Introducing the amazing power of new Duracell Ultra." He pushes a pre-programmed button and a female answers, "Mike's Towing, please hold." The male looks frustrated and sighs, "Oohh." The music on hold is from the 70s, "Play that funky music right boy..." We see the male start to tap his

finger to the music while holding the cell phone. Soon he begins to dance on the deserted highway, moving his free hand and wiggling his hips using dance moves from the 70s. A female's voice comes back and says, "Mike's towing, can I help you?" The male replies, "Hey, can you put me back on hold?" When the music resumes, we see a distant shot of the male dancing across the highway and the two birds in the tree moving from side to side to the music.

Although many busy people can appreciate the humour in this commercial and may themselves find pockets of regression in their daily lives, we would not typically expect this behaviour from this character in this setting. This character is presented as somewhat different than the other successful businessmen. He has removed his suit jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Even though he was initially frustrated at being put on hold, he was quick to loosen up and begin to enjoy himself, which is much different than we would expect from an uptight businessman. The humour in this commercial stems from his request to be put on hold when he finally has the opportunity to ask for help. Supposedly, he does this because he is relaxed and having a great deal of fun listening to the music and dancing rather than worrying about being stranded in the desert. This commercial gives the viewer permission to take the opportunity to have fun and be playful, in spite of being a busy person with many responsibilities. Unfortunately, this man's choice to listen to music and dance on a deserted highway rather than seeking the assistance he requires, makes him appear to have poor judgement.

Female Stereotypes

Two popular stereotypes of females are contradicted in this sample. First, contrary

to the examples of stereotypes of elderly females that were supported, one example of the stereotypical elderly female being contradicted was found. Second, the stereotype of the traditional female who is helpless is contradicted by a number of commercials in this sample. The higher number of commercials contradicting this traditional female stereotype is not surprising because the use of females in this way assists in making the males in the same commercials appear “stupid,” incompetent, or easily tricked.

Elderly Females. Only one commercial in this sample contradicts the stereotype of the elderly female. Although this commercial has been discussed in the section focused on the role of the male in the commercial, the character responsible for generating the humour is the elderly Italian female who is more technologically sophisticated and successful in business than the American male (#9). The setting, clothing, and movement of the elderly female suggests that she may fit the stereotype. When the Americans begin to speak to her in a condescending manner about their business, she innocently informs them of the countries in which she sells her product, demonstrating her superiority over the Americans.

Females As Helpless. A popular stereotype for females is that of the damsel in distress waiting for her knight in shining armor to rescue her and save the day. There were no such females found in this sample of commercials. Contrary to this stereotype, females were presented as powerful and, at times, manipulative, tricking the males in the commercials into doing what they wanted.

In one commercial discussed earlier (#55), an attractive female appears to be a

"damsel in distress" and hurriedly jump into a male's car. She appears to be in danger and tells the male "Andiamo, drive" in a panicked voice with an Italian accent. The male believes she is in danger and follows her instruction. At the end of the commercial the male asks the female who is following her, to which she replies, "Nobody, but thanks for the test drive," in a calm voice with no accent indicating that she had tricked the male into taking her for a test drive.

A commercial for a board game features a couple in which the female plays a dominant and manipulative role (#23). They are seated and ready to play the game. The female asks, "OK. Ready?" The male says, "OK," and they sit down. The female is holding a game card with word sounds that the male must combine into a sentence. The female looks on, encouraging him. We hear the male saying, "Will ymn ..." and see the letters printed on the card. He continues to struggle to make out the sounds and the female excitedly encourages him. We see several shots of the male's face as he is trying to solve the puzzle. The male finally deciphers the sounds and says, "Will you marry me?" The female responds, "Yes!" excitedly and hugs him. The male looks puzzled at what has just occurred.

Two additional commercials highlight the independence of females in contexts typically associated with reliance on males. The humour in these commercials results from the altered male role or lack of a male role altogether. The first commercial hints at the sexual satisfaction of the female character while she is in the shower - alone (#68). It begins with a female pushing a grocery cart down an aisle in a grocery store. A male voice is making announcements over the loudspeaker. "Stop by aisle 5 for Clairol's Herbal

Essences. It takes you where no shampoo has gone before." The female is walking up to a display of shampoo, Clairol Herbal Essences. The female picks up a bottle of shampoo and smells it. Then she begins to fantasize about being in the shower and washing her hair. We hear harp music and see the female's apartment in a dream-like state, slightly blurry. We hear her moaning with pleasure as she washes her hair. The male's voice on the intercom becomes much deeper and sexier as he continues, "With all natural botanical, organic herbs and pure mountain water. It will leave your hair looking beautiful." In the background we see the female throwing her head back and writhing with enjoyment, moaning, "yes, yes, yes." Suddenly, she realizes that she is really in the grocery store and looks around, slightly embarrassed. Dr. Ruth was watching all of this and walks up to the female saying, "If you think that's great, try the body wash."

The second commercial focusing on the independence of females shows a pregnant female in labor driving herself to the hospital, while her husband is the passenger (#44). The commercial begins with a shot of the front door of a house. We see the door open and a harried-looking male come out carrying a suitcase in one hand and another item in the other. A very pregnant female, looking quite uncomfortable and obviously in labour, is behind him. He runs to the car and throws the items in the trunk, then returns to the house. We see several shots of the female moving slowly to the car, breathing to control the pain of the contractions. She is holding her stomach as she is walking. The music to Blondie's *Don't Get Me Wrong* begins playing in the background. The male throws another load into the trunk and closes the lid. He walks up to the passenger door and hands his wife the keys to the car as she walks by, still in obvious discomfort. He gets into

the passenger side and closes the door. We see him breathing heavily from his effort to pack the car and the anxiety of the situation. The female walks slowly across the front of the car, gets into the driver's side and begins to drive herself to the hospital.

Additional Stereotypes Contradicted

Long-term Relationships. Only one commercial in this sample presented a fun and playful attitude in a long-term relationship (#39). Although the viewer has no way of knowing that this is a long-term relationship, the plain, unattractive, older characters (consistent with the portrayal of other individuals in long-term relationships), and the successful use of this stereotypical portrayal of individuals in long-term relationships results in the viewer making this assumption. A male and a female who appear to be very ordinary-looking tourists are walking on a path in an exotic location. There is water in the background and birds are singing. The male is carrying a camera and says to the female with him, "Walk over there and I'll take your picture, alright?" The female is wearing a scarf around her neck and a light blue sweater over a darker blue dress. The male gets carried away and assumes the role of a commercial photographer, snapping many shots and casting the female into a model role. He continues, "That's lovely, just lovely. Now, by the statue." The female hugs the statue, beginning to get into the mood. "Pout, pout." He squeezes his lips into a pout with his fingers and the female responds by puckering into the camera. Disco music begins and the female takes the scarf and sweater off and throws them into the air. The male is thoroughly enjoying himself vocalizing "Woohoo." We can hear the male snapping the pictures, with the pictures displayed by camera shots. The male and female have now totally assumed the role of photographer and model, with the male

making brief remarks ("oh yes") in between shots and the female becoming much less conservative. The female is now dancing to the disco music in a pool of water in front of some classic architecture. The male is continuing to snap shots saying, "yes, lovely, work it, work it." We see a group of five males wearing black clothing, like Roman Catholic priests. One of them has a red sash around his waist, signifying that he is more important. The males are standing behind the male taking pictures, with the one in the red sash standing closest. At the end of the commercial, we see the male with the red sash raise a camera and sneak a picture of the female.

This commercial portrays the relationship between the male and female as playful and exciting, contradicting the prominent negative stereotype of individuals in long-term relationships and the relationships themselves. The more positive mood results from the exotic setting, the ordinary (rather than sleazy or "white trash") characters presented, and the upbeat disco music in the background. This commercial also has some subtle sexual innuendos in the words the male is using to encourage the female ("oh yes," "work it, work it") and the way in which he is saying the words. The forbidden fruit theme also plays a role in this commercial, with the priests so tempted by what they see that the senior priest with the red sash actually loses control and sneaks a picture of the "other man's woman."

Children as Innocent. Only one commercial in this sample contained a child as the primary (human) character. This commercial (#56) takes place in a large, bright kitchen, with a shiny light-colored counter top. The first shot is taken from the inside of a box of animal crackers and shows a young girl with pig tails pouring a glass of milk. The little girl

is so small so she has to lift the carton of milk over her head to fill the glass. She is portrayed as a stereotypical sweet and innocent little girl. We hear music that we associate with happiness and magic. The shot is taken through a clear cellophane window in the box and is from the perspective of the animal crackers inside the box. Then we see the box of animal cookies with cellophane covering a half-moon opening. The camera zooms in to get a close up shot of the box of crackers. The little girl reaches inside the box of animal crackers and we hear the crackers speaking, "Oh oh, we've got trouble." We see the shadow of a hand come across the box. "Oh please, not me." We hear a crunching noise. "That's gotta hurt." We hear a female's voice in the background call the little girl, "Tracy..." and we see the little girl run out of the room, leaving the box of crackers behind. In the background, we hear piano music associated with a mystery, followed by a bass suggesting a plan. The animals look at the glass of milk sitting on the cupboard - an ongoing threat to them. The elephant yells, "We've gotta do something." The animals jump through the cellophane window of the box and the elephant yells, "Charge!" The bass in the background is combined with horns, suggesting a conflict. The crackers run up to the glass of milk and manage to push it over with a cracker yelling, "Timber." The camera angle is such that the glass of milk falls over and into the camera - away from the crackers. A lamb-shaped cookie warns, "She's baaaaack." We see a more distant shot of the animals running toward the box and hear a voice yell, "Let's go!" A rhino in the foreground yells, "Run monkey, run!" They all make it back to the safety of the box except a cracker in the form of a monkey. "I'm not going to make it," the monkey cries and falls over on its front. The music in the background changes to strings, heightening the suspense and danger. The

little girl grabs the monkey cracker. The rhino says sadly, "She's got monkey." The little girl looks into her empty glass and yells, "Mom!" She throws down the monkey and runs out of the room. The animals yell after her, "Go eat someone your own size!" The lamb states, "Baaaaa" in the background.

The humour in this commercial results from the common experience of a child eating animal crackers and drinking milk. However, the innocent little girl is portrayed as a cannibal who is eating the personified and defenseless animals. The build up of tension in this commercial is resolved when the animals are able to succeed in their "mission" and the little girl runs away when she sees her spilled milk.

Animals. The role of animals in this sample merits discussion. Animals have always played an important role in our lives in many ways (e.g., food, protection of family and livestock, herding, companionship) and we are beginning to recognize this in society in general (e.g., animal rights movements, individuals harming animals being prosecuted). Within popular culture, animals that are companions or pets are found frequently, usually within a family unit. This sample of commercials parallels that pattern; however animals are not presented as a source of food, protectors of the family, for livestock, or herding. The use of animals within commercials, combined with the use of special effects, allows humour to be generated through the use of incongruity (e.g., the fur from a dog becoming intertwined with yarn and the dog losing the fur on one-half of its body - #64; the cats electrocuting the elderly female for feeding them powdered milk #7).

A number of the commercials already discussed contain animals as important characters. One commercial that has not been discussed (#50) demonstrates how a

goldfish has been incorporated into the family structure and generates humour as a result of special effects. A stereotypical father in a black and white plaid bathrobe walks into the kitchen. The music in the background sounds very "happy," with lots of strings, similar to the theme of "Leave it to Beaver." He walks over to the cupboard that has a box from Hostess Donuts on the top. He looks inside and all of the donuts are gone, only a few crumbs remain. Believing he was entitled to the last donut, he says, "OK. Who ate the last Hostess Donut?" The camera moves to his son who is wearing a black t-shirt with "12" on the front. The son states, "Don't look at me." The shot moves to the male who looks at the next person in an interrogating manner. The shot moves to his wife, who is wearing a white t-shirt. She tells him, "Don't look at me." The male raises his eyebrows, then the shot moves to his daughter wearing a pink nightgown. She responds, "Don't look at me." "Well," he responds, "it didn't just get up and walk away, did it?" The male is holding the empty box. In the background, the whole family hears water dripping. They notice that it is leaking out of the empty box and that there are some puddles on the floor. They all begin to follow the puddles of water down a hallway. It leads them to an aquarium with a goldfish inside. The fish has chocolate around its mouth and responds to the family by saying, "Don't look at me."

In another commercial highlighting an animal (#3), the animal plays more of a human role. A television is situated on a kitchen cupboard and is playing a program of a female providing instruction on how to wrap a gift. An ape is diligently watching this instruction with supplies ready to wrap a gift. The female begins, "Elegant gift wrapping says a lot about your gift and it also says a lot about you. Now we're going to start with

the textured foil. Even if you're all thumbs, wrapping like this is easy. Now, I like to pre-cut the tape so I can just place it on the gift." As the female is speaking, we see the ape with paper other than foil wrap, taking long pieces of tape rather than short, yet able to wrap the gift nicely. The instructions provided by the female's voice continue. "Here we have the final gift. Of course, don't forget to remove the price tag before you begin wrapping." The ape realizes that the price tag was not removed before the gift was wrapped and closes its eyes to communicate this. The female's voice continues, "I think this is beautifully wrapped and I would be happy to see..." her voices fades away.

The tone and syntax of the female on the video are strikingly similar to Martha Stewart's. We see how even when the ape follows all of the instructions, it is destined not to be successful due to the passive-aggressive nature of the female providing the instructions who does not inform him to remove the price tag until after the gift is wrapped. The incident within this commercial is likely familiar to all viewers, but may strike a cord with the home-making impaired who seem unable to complete a simple task such as wrapping a gift. These individuals may also experience a degree of hostility toward the female providing the instructions in a condescending tone.

Using animals to deliver the humour is very appealing because it is not likely considered threatening by any consumer group. This trend clearly results from the advances in computer technology that make the special effects possible as well as the increasing popularity of animals as pets.

Summary

The television commercials in this sample were quite remarkable in the way

stereotypes were used to present the characters, with other elements such as lighting, music, setting, items in the background, and colour serving to reinforce the stereotypes. This extensive use of stereotypical characters quickly provided viewers with a great deal of information about the characters, based on their previous experience with the popular stereotypes. A historical understanding of the stereotypes and their evolution, as well as the importance of gender-specificity regarding stereotypes (e.g., males as strong, successful, athletic, domineering, technically advanced; female as weak, dependent, feminine, fulfilled by being a good housewife; mothers as controlling and overinvolved with their sons; older males in positions of power as loud, rude, and abusive to those with less power) is also required to understand the humour.

Viewers required an understanding of the stereotypes, but also the values (e.g., “appropriate” sexual behaviour), traditions (e.g., males asking females to marry them), and technologies (e.g., using electronics equipment) that are culturally specific. Much of the humour in these commercials involved violating cultural norms by reinforcing, contradicting, or exaggerating culture-specific knowledge to the point that it becomes humorous.

At times, the humour in these television commercials resulted from initially presenting a popular stereotype, with subsequent information contradicting the widely accepted cultural stereotype (e.g., the athlete is not superior because the “couch potato” was able to climb the mountain faster than the athlete - #26; the female in labour is not passive, helpless, and dependent on her husband - she likes her car so much she drives herself and her scattered, stressed-out husband to the hospital - #44). In addition to the

humour generated from the contradiction between what the viewer expects from the stereotypical character and what actually occurs, the viewer finds these commercials pleasurable to watch because they allow viewers to enjoy a sense of power and control they might not experience in their day-to-day lives (e.g., those not as physically active as mountain climbers are superior to athletes; mothers have control over the one and only family car).

Due to the heavy reliance on widely accepted stereotypes that are highly gender-specific, the same commercials with the gender roles reversed would not be considered humorous; rather, they would be considered offensive (e.g., a male fantasizing about his ideal female rather than a female fantasizing about her ideal male - #22; a female putting an alarm in her yard to protect her daughter from the male cleaning the pool - #11; a male telling a female to get her breakfast and the female complying and looking concerned that she did it "right" - #6; a female in an electronics store looking incompetent - #5, #65). One interesting twist is that the sounds of a female reaching orgasm while she is alone in the shower is permissible (#66), but the same sound and innuendo coming from a male would likely not be acceptable. In fact, the "female orgasm," popularized by the scene in the movie *When Harry Met Sally*, has become a part of popular culture; a male equivalent has not.

The presentation of the stereotyped identity of characters as individuals and in relationships highlights particular concerns. First, older females were presented as lonely, angry and displaced (elderly female and many cats - #7; elderly female alone watching a romantic television show - #64; elderly females being displaced in their role by

convenience food - #35). These images are clearly associated with the emphasis and value our culture places on youth and with the fear of aging.

Second, the identity of individuals in long-term relationships was presented in a negative and stereotypical manner through the use of dingy settings, unattractive characters, and costumes and make-up to accentuate these features (e.g., #6, #15). In both of these commercials, swanky music is playing in the background to highlight the negative way that sexuality is portrayed in these couples. Watching those characters in those settings would not leave viewers with a positive image of individuals in long-term relationships or with a desire to become like them.

Third, the majority of humorous television commercials contained male characters who were presented in various unflattering roles. Males were presented as incompetent (being unable to hit a baseball - #32), stupid (highlighting lack of technical ability - #5 and #65; cat outsmarts male to get a treat - #75), immature (father putting his own needs before that of a young child - #19, #43), insane (talking to a piece of pastry - #30), and easily tricked by females (#55, #23). The use of humour displaying “successful” males (frequently with the successful or powerful male losing their power or looking foolish) exemplifies the secret hopes or desires of the majority of the population who do not experience power and success in their work or leisure activities. These commercials provide an appropriate outlet for their feelings of frustration and hostility toward those with greater power.

From the analysis of this set of humorous television commercials, it appears that a popular target for humour or “stupid group” is that of the average adult male who is

portrayed as controlling, fat, lazy, technologically illiterate, power-hungry, overly competitive, easily tricked, unable to care for himself, and incompetent in the kitchen or with children.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

The complex information contained in these commercials communicated numerous meanings based on the various elements within each commercial. This level of complexity and sophistication stands as the end result of a massive production process. Fueled by immense financial resources, comprehensive research, and painstaking development, the finished product we view as a television commercial is a marvelously crafted and engineered cultural experience focused on changing the behaviour of the largest possible audience. The power of these impeccable micronarratives emanates from the meanings we associate with their content; meanings derived from our own experiences.

In making a television commercial, the experiences of individuals and groups within a society are reproduced within a social and cultural framework of common understandings. To accurately interpret the communications (including humour) of a particular society, one must be able to understand current experience within the contemporary social and cultural context. Only through an understanding of the history and development of a particular society is it possible to fully appreciate and comprehend the contemporary social and cultural context.

Social Change and Gender Roles

One of the most significant changes in our society over the past 50 years has been the changing roles of males and females in the workplace and in the home. Prior to this time, females rarely worked outside the home. During World War II, increasing numbers

of females began working outside the home. In 1950, approximately 33.9% of all females in the United States worked outside the home. The number of females working outside the home has steadily increased and is projected to reach 63% in the United States by the year 2005 (Lemming & Tripp, 1994).

Working outside the home provided females with greater economic self-sufficiency and independence. In addition to being important consumers of goods as part of a more traditional role (e.g., groceries, household products), females increasingly became consumers or decision-makers for big-ticket items such as vehicles (Robinson, 1998). Some consider this shift to females becoming an important consumer group as being "among the most profound marketplace transitions of our lifetime" (Swenson, 1990, p. 51).

This trend was evident in this sample of commercials by the noticeable lack of emphasis on females in traditional roles as central characters. Females were found most frequently in commercials for vehicles and in relation to males, who were the main characters within the commercials. When males and females were presented together, the male was usually the primary character and the humour in the commercial was at the male's expense.

A second important social trend, a logical extension of increasing numbers of females in the workplace, is lower birth rates. Due to technological advances in birth control, females have become able to control the timing of pregnancies and to delay child-bearing while pursuing careers. This has led to changing roles for males and females within the family, clearly reflected in this sample. When an intact family is shown within a

commercial, there are never more than two children, representing the new stereotype of a “family unit.”

Advances in reproductive technology and growing acceptance of alternate lifestyle choices have also resulted in the evolution of the family unit to include non-traditional constellations such as individuals choosing to remain single, individuals choosing to have children without a partner, individuals who are separated and divorced (with or without children), interracial relationships, couples remaining childless, blended families, and same sex marriages and families. These new non-traditional families are noticeably absent from this sample of commercials for obvious reasons; the risk of offending viewers and having this negative emotional experience projected onto the product is too great.

Changes in family structure and the consequences of these changes were demonstrated through the use of animals in this set of humorous television commercials. Animals played important roles in these commercials reflecting the increased role that they play in our lives. In particular, for individuals living alone, in small families, or in single-parent families, animals may serve the role of companion and/or protector. Because of the meaningful role they play within our families, animals provide advertisers with a relatively safe target they can personify to effectively generate humour. When animals were present in commercials, they were primarily responsible for generating the humour within the commercial. Advances in computer technology allow advertisers to use animals to generate humour through the use of special effects. A wonderful example of this is the commercial (#50) showing a “typical family.” The father is searching for the villain who ate the last donut and looked to all family members, then finally the goldfish who

answered “Don’t look at me,” while its mouth was covered in chocolate. In the commercials where animals were used, only two were for products associated with animals.

The social trends outlined above have resulted in important changes in the roles assumed by males and females within the family unit, also reflected in these commercials. In two commercials (#19, #43), males are shown eating with their young children. Both of these commercials portray males as self-centred and somewhat immature. In another commercial where a male is presented with his children (#32), he is portrayed as incompetent. None of the commercials in this sample containing males and children in a family unit portray the male in a positive way. These changes in the male role within the family unit are also found in an exaggerated form in prime-time television where a large number of males are portrayed as single parents and a large number of males emphasize family roles over work roles (Moore, 1992).

Although females are present in some of these commercials, the interaction that generates humour is between the male and the child. This highlights the relative ease with which advertisers use male roles to generate humour and the difficulty or reluctance of advertisers to use a traditional (and non-exaggerated) female role to generate humour. The continuing imbalance in responsibility for household tasks and childcare (with females continuing to assume the majority of the responsibility), and the associated and continuing frustration with this inequality (Burr, 1998), leads to females enjoying these commercials. Through understanding and appreciating the humour directed toward the males in these

commercials, females are provided with a socially acceptable venue for dealing with their negative feelings related to this inequity.

If the roles of male and female characters in these commercials were reversed, these same commercials would likely be viewed by females as being quite offensive and disrespectful of the role females play in caring for children. Although many popular jokes focus on “the female’s role” in the home (barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen), highlighting this as a source of tension between males and females in our culture, advertisers avoid this use of humour due to its potential to alienate an important consumer group.

This sample of commercials also emphasized the level of ambivalence, confusion, and chaos regarding the changing roles and relationships for males and females (Pearson, 1985). The underlying tension and hostility in these commercials, and the use of males as the targets of humour, allows females to experience a vicarious sense of aggression regarding their dissatisfaction with the division of labour within the household. Even though females are entering the workforce at an unprecedented rate, the role of males inside the home has changed little. When males contribute to completing household work, they do not assume responsibility for 50% of the household chores. When they take on chores, they tend to choose the preferable or less demanding housework (Burr, 1998; Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997).

The way in which this area is addressed in commercials is very important because some females remain in traditional roles, while others choose to pursue careers or some combination of work inside and outside of the home. In this case, advertisers walk the fine

line by using female characters to generate humour only when the traditional role is highly exaggerated and the tone is hostile (e.g., angry at their role being displaced by convenience food - #35; waging a “battle” against dirty dishes - #45). Advertisers approach marketing to females very differently now and concede that the way advertisements were used to target this group in the past, such as demonstrating the need for the female to use a particular product so she could be a better wife and mother (Robinson, 1998) is no longer successful due to the greater sophistication of consumers in general. They indicate that “educated working females can no longer be reached through marketing approaches that play on the guilt of not having a spotlessly clean house” (Swenson, 1990, p. 10).

Representation of Male Characters

Although the large numbers of commercials with male characters in this sample was consistent with the historical over-representation of male characters in television and commercials (Burn, 1996; Burr, 1998), the roles they play within these commercials [i.e., the common pattern of dominant, powerful male that ends up being tricked or looking foolish in the end - coach, father, business executive (Burn, 1996)] highlights the political sensitivity of the time in which we live, in particular, the evolution of the feminist movement. The emphasis on portraying males negatively and the noticeable absence of females portrayed similarly, was highlighted by the interpretive community. They stated that similar commercials highlighting the incompetence of females would be perceived as critical or mocking. Consequently, commercials portraying females negatively would not be considered “politically correct” and definitely would not be considered humorous.

Several other males with whom this study was discussed brought up an important characteristic in the way males typically communicate with one another that is different from the way they communicate with females, or the way females communicate with one another - demonstrating affection by making fun of one another. Although females in close relationships also engage in this behaviour, it was the opinion of the males with whom this was discussed that females were “too sensitive” and that the males would not typically act the same way in their relationships with females as they do in their relationships with males.

The over-representation of male characters was one important finding from this study; however, a more significant finding is the way that these male characters were depicted, namely, as a form of “stupid” group. It appears that both males and females appreciated humour directed at males. Why then, is it appropriate to direct humour toward the incompetence of males in both traditional and contemporary roles (e.g., climbing the corporate ladder, assuming additional household and parenting responsibilities) but not females?

To address this question, it might be useful to reflect on how humour is used within society. Two of the ways humour can be used are as a form of aggression and as a way to feel superior to others. If we accept the research documenting that even when both partners in a relationship work outside of the home, in general, females continue to be responsible for the majority of the household and parenting responsibilities (Burr, 1998; Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997), a logical extension is that females would be dissatisfied with this inequity (Goodnow & Bowes, 1994).

Humour theory suggests that humour is an appropriate way to deal with hostile or aggressive impulses (Ziv, 1984). Further, it suggests that shared humour makes one feel part of a group (Berger, 1995a; Ziv, 1984). Both of these criteria are present in commercials focusing on males as incompetent or stupid. Advertisers nurture, develop, and manipulate a “shared experience of femalehood” through using males as a “stupid group.” This allows females viewing the commercial to experience validation and reinforcement for the injustice they perceive and consequent hostility they experience (Burn, 1996). These factors assist in uniting the content of the commercial with the personal experience of the viewer, making the commercial and the product personally meaningful for the viewer - a major achievement for a commercial.

However, these ideas do not explain why males enjoy the humour directed toward males as a “stupid group.” Returning to humour theory, a defining attribute of superiority theory is that it allows an individual or group to feel superior over another individual or group (Berger, 1996; Haig, 1988). The many jokes directed to the many forms of “stupid groups” provide a testament to the wide use of humour in this way (Berger, 1995a). Research on male-male relationships highlights the competitive nature of males with one another (Burn, 1996). Commercials presenting males as lazy, stupid, incompetent, etc. allow the male viewer to be drawn into the commercial by comparing himself with the male character in the commercial. The advertiser also draws the male viewer into the commercial by connecting with the viewer at a deeper level, elucidating his shortcomings that are not usually openly acknowledged (i.e., feelings of incompetence regarding new technology, resenting the need to place the needs of a child before his own). Due to the

way the male character is portrayed, the male viewer cannot help but feel superior, regardless of any flaws or imperfections he possesses. This process has the effect of drawing the male viewer into a quasi-competitive role with the character; a competition that will always leave the viewer feeling superior. The end result is a positive and meaningful connection between the male viewer, the “stupid” male in the commercial, and the product. Similar to the acceptability of using exaggerated traditional female roles, exaggerated roles emphasizing the incompetence of male characters may be beneficial and foster the gender identity of males (Burn, 1996).

The ability of both males and females to experience narratives using humour directed toward males as funny may also be a reflection of the widespread knowledge and experience of the traditional male stereotype (dominant, powerful, competitive) by the Baby Boomers and Generation X, who also happen to comprise the demographic to which most advertising is directed. Humorous television commercials may provide both male and female viewers with a venue for “laughing at” or releasing the hostility or aggression directed toward a teacher, coach, father, boss, friend, or other powerful male perceived as attacking his or her self-esteem in the past. A psychoanalytic interpretation emphasizing the inability to directly express anger toward authority figures and the tendency to sublimate the aggressive tendencies and deal with them in a more socially acceptable manner may be appropriate for this observation.

The tendency for humour not to be directed toward females in the same way highlights gender differences in communication. Gender-specific patterns of communication are common in relationships (Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997; Kimmel,

2000), with females communicating in more of a “face-to-face” (Kimmel, 2000, p. 207) style and being more likely to share their feelings, and discuss a wider variety of topics than males. The relationships of males tend to be more focused on participation in activities with more of a “side-to-side” (Kimmel, 2000, p. 207) orientation. This indirect style of communication is consistent with the report of positive feelings between males being communicated by making fun of one another. The content of this communication likely contains themes of competition and aggression, making humour an important technique in communication between males. This communication pattern may also have the effect of desensitizing males to being portrayed as members of a “stupid group.” However, an additional explanation is possible.

Consistent with previous research (i.e., Bretl & Cantor, 1988), in this sample a prevalent pattern of males serving as “experts” in the role of narrator was observed. This pattern of male “experts” serving as narrators provided an interesting twist to this sample of commercials. Even though many of the commercials in this sample targeted males as a “stupid group” and presented roles contrary to popular stereotypes (e.g., fathers as selfish demonstrated by teasing their children - #19 or stealing their food - #43; fathers not being good enough at sports to teach their children - #32; males not being competent and confident in understanding technology - #5, #65), an underlying assumption that the “voice of authority” should sound like a middle-class white male was prominent.

It seems contradictory to have males portrayed as a “voice of authority” and members of a “stupid group.” Although a clear pattern of portraying male characters negatively was evident throughout this sample, a typical “stupid group” tends to be

characterized as a marginal and peripheral group of individuals with less status and power, not the dominant members of a society who wield the greatest amount of power. Perhaps it is the dominant position of males and the security they experience in that position that allows them to be portrayed in negative ways without serious implications.

Portrayal of Successful Individuals

A third major trend found in this sample of commercials involves the way that individuals who are successful are portrayed. Through the media we repeatedly see the stereotypical "successful" individual who is physically attractive, physically fit, and highly successful in business. Since the vast majority of the population does not fit this unrealistic stereotype of "success," the hostility experienced toward those who achieve this standard, as well as the hostility directed inward toward ourselves for not achieving "success" is reflected in this set of commercials. This is accomplished by the advertiser understanding the psychological need of the viewer to direct risk-free hostility toward those with greater power or success, and providing the viewer the opportunity to do so within a humorous context. Although successful individuals may constitute a "stupid group" that consumers enjoy watching when the successful individuals ultimately fail, it is not clear from the commercials in this sample that successful people in general could be considered a "stupid group." The over representation of male characters and the stereotypical portrayals of males focused on success and power might be responsible for successful individuals being considered a "stupid group." However, in this sample there are not sufficient numbers of successful female characters to make the distinction of a "stupid group" of successful individuals separate from the "stupid group" of males.

In one television commercial for donuts, we see a “couch potato” climb a mountain with ease as he is eating donuts, while the experienced, physically fit mountain climber takes longer and struggles to get to the top. A commercial for specialty television also utilizes the trend to be more physically active while still appealing to the “couch potato” in all of us. An obese male watching speciality television is so consumed by the high quality of the television he is watching that he forgets about the time, resulting in him losing so much weight that his clothes hang on him. Both of these commercials allow us to vicariously experience superiority and success even though we enjoy eating donuts and watching television. This is accomplished by presenting the “couch potato” character viewers can feel superior to in the beginning of the commercial. Over the course of the narrative, the viewer observes the “couch potato” (who the viewer already feels a sense of superiority over) become superior to his portrayal at the beginning of the commercial. The success of these characters occurs in spite of their activities of eating donuts and watching television.

These commercials expose a theme of engaging in “bad” behaviours in which we “should not” be engaging. However, by viewing the commercial, we become aware that others also engage in these “bad” behaviours. This awareness allows us to rationalize that this behaviour is common and becomes more permissible, based on the information provided in the commercial. This is extremely important because the consumer has to be assured that behaviour is acceptable before the product associated with the behaviour will be purchased. With the added special effects (i.e., male eating donuts climbing mountain faster than physically fit male, overweight male watching television loses a great deal of

weight) the viewer is allowed to consider the “bad” behaviours (i.e., eating donuts, watching television) as acceptable, and potentially beneficial or we can laugh at ourselves or forgive ourselves for these “bad” behaviors.

Consistent with the stereotypical “successful” individual represented as physically attractive, physically fit, and highly successful in business, the typical professional athlete possesses all these attributes. These individuals have demonstrated their superior physical prowess through their success in a particular sport and are physically attractive (or can be made so through the use of professional makeup artists and hair stylists). Through their agents, professional athletes negotiate salaries and financial compensation for endorsements paralleled only by the most successful actors and actresses (who also happen to possess the physical attributes associated with success).

The prominent role of sport in our society was found in numerous television commercials that included football players, hockey players, soccer players, basketball players, and individuals parachuting. None of these commercials was for a product remotely related to the sport. They were for food, beverages, and computer equipment. These commercials draw on our associations with sports and those who play sports to make a positive connection between ourselves and the product. For example, if children want to achieve their dreams of becoming a professional hockey player or football player, or if adults want to associate themselves with the characteristics of professional athletes, they should eat, drink, or use a particular product.

One very interesting observation was that in this sample all of the main characters involved in the sporting activities were male, which reflected gender differences in how

males and females involved in sports are depicted in the media (Burns, 1996). This pattern reflects two important components of contemporary society. First, it was the traditional role of males to engage in sporting activities to demonstrate their physical prowess and superiority over one another. It is only within the last decade that females have been competing in sports at national and international levels (e.g., baseball, hockey) that were traditionally considered “male.” Second, sports heroes are almost exclusively male. When a commercial is produced that utilizes the recognition of a “famous” person in the area of sports, male sports figures are recognized by both male and female viewers, while female sports heroes (e.g., from figure skating, gymnastics, tennis, golf, downhill skiing) are likely not as easily recognized by as many viewers.

Reinforcing Social Roles and Values

Humorous television commercials possess the capability to reflect and determine contemporary societal issues by taking experiences familiar to the viewer, infusing the experiences with meaning related to the product, then giving it back to the viewer in the form of a highly polished and entertaining narrative. These narratives serve to reinforce stereotypes, roles, and values of mainstream society. Roles and values not considered acceptable by the majority are not represented due to the risk of alienating important consumer groups. Humour used within the context of television commercials achieves the same objectives as humour in other forms. Humour in television commercials conveys and reinforces values consistent with the “in-group” of mainstream society (sex, religion, power), creating “out-groups” and scapegoats of those who violate the norms of the dominant group (Haig, 1988; Powell & Patton, 1988).

Historically, commercials have evolved from basic presentations of product information to amazingly complex cultural episodes using the most recent advances in technology during production. Although the fundamental purpose of the television commercial remains the same (i.e., to influence consumers to purchase a particular product over another), the ability of humorous television commercials to demonstrate and influence social change makes them a powerful form of popular culture.

Limitations of the Current Study

During the completion of this study, several limitations relating to the content and process of analysis became evident and could be addressed in future studies. The main limitation of this study is its focus on one particular set of humorous commercials. Due to this specific focus, an ongoing, longitudinal study that tracks the trends uncovered in this study and how they change over time and with social and cultural issues is not possible.

A larger sample could provide additional information leading to different conclusions. For example, this sample is insufficient to determine if successful individuals comprise a “stupid group” separate from the male “stupid group.” If a larger sample is desired, further studies could simplify the process of analysis by limiting the number of elements being examined. Technical aspects such as lighting, cinematography, music, elements related to humour, characters, or the representation of relationships between characters could be the focus of the entire study.

Because advertisers rely to such a great extent on contemporary issues and trends to generate humour through characters, settings, intertextual referents, etc., any research using a set of television commercials must recognize that the sample represents a

“snapshot” of the contemporary social and cultural issues at a particular time. Given the rapid rate at which people (e.g., movie stars, sports heroes, politicians), events (e.g., Gulf War, Zsa Zsa Gabor slapping a flight attendant), music (e.g., movie themes, top 40 hits), language (e.g., “vote you off the island”), or other “fads” and fashions (hair styles, beauty secrets - Shania Twain’s use of “udder butter”) become a part of popular culture, the results of any study examining how contemporary issues are reflected by popular culture are intrinsically limited to the period of time in which the sample was gathered.

The commercials used in this analysis were collected approximately two years ago. In the past several months, two new humorous commercials are being televised that suggest the way that females and children are being depicted within this media is changing. In both commercials, young boys are shown with their mothers, with another young boy either present or implied. In one commercial we see how, by watching uncensored cable television, the young boy accumulates a colorful vocabulary that is highly censored in the commercial. In the other commercial, an honest young boy tells his friend’s mother the things his mother tells him about her, and we see an example of a female expressing competition and hostility toward another female. As the child shares this information, the female listening experiences a series of emotions ranging from being pleased that she is being acknowledged by the other female to realizing that this boy’s mother experiences hostility toward her when he says, “My mom says it must be nice for you to have so much free time ...” The emergence of these commercials suggests that characters (i.e., females and children) are being represented in commercials in ways that are not captured in this study.

An additional limitation of this study was the use of undergraduate students to rate the humorous intent of the advertiser. Although the students were instructed to rate the humorous intent of the advertiser and not the humour itself, it is possible that the raters' appreciation of the humour within the commercials had an impact on their ratings. Because the ages of the raters were lower than the target group for most of the commercials, this may have influenced which commercials were retained for the final analysis. If raters from different age groups were used, some of the commercials retained for the final analysis might be different.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This study focused on the analysis of numerous elements within a reasonably large (i.e., $n=75$) set of humorous commercials. Future studies might explore fewer elements (e.g., representation of gender, stereotypes) at a greater depth to identify and analyze prominent themes. This may provide more specific information regarding the use of that particular element and the way in which it is used to influence viewers.

Because this sample focused on humorous television commercials, a similar examination of the social and cultural issues found within non-humorous commercials would be very interesting. Such a study could examine specific elements (i.e., characters) and determine if they are used in the same way in non-humorous commercials.

Presentation of opposite or contrasting elements (characters, color, etc.) within the same commercial heightens the contrast between characters, settings, etc. The use of the current methodology allowed an interesting analysis of how specific elements outlined by Fowles (1996) and Foss (1996) contributed to the overall composition of the commercial.

The use of a semiotic analysis to determine if any themes exist in the way symbols are used within humorous television commercials, and if they differ from the symbols used in non-humorous commercials, would be extremely interesting.

Although there has been considerable change in what is considered a “family unit,” families represented in this sample focused on the traditional nuclear family. Anticipating a change in the way family units are depicted in commercials, an ongoing, longitudinal study examining the way in which family units are represented in commercials would provide important information regarding the way that this change occurs in society and how this change is reflected in or influenced by television commercials. Such a study could utilize two groups, with one group viewing commercials containing non-traditional families at specified intervals over an extended period of time. Questionnaires examining attitudes toward non-traditional families could be completed by both groups at various points during the study to determine if attitude change had occurred with greater exposure to non-traditional families in these commercials.

Gender differences played a larger-than-expected role in this study. Gender differences were evident in the characters in these commercials, and in the interpretation of the commercials by members of the interpretive communities. Differences in interpretation could be attributed to different perspectives on the content based on one’s gender, and in the ability to understand some of the intertextual referents that are more familiar to one gender than the other. An analysis of detailed interpretations of males and females viewing the same commercials, or two groups of commercials that are similar in every way but have the gender roles of the characters reversed, may provide more specific information

based primarily on the gender differences of the viewers and of the characters in the commercials.

Another option for future research would be to conduct an in-depth examination of commercials for particular products. In this sample, commercials for vehicles appeared to be more focused toward female consumers and commercials for hair products appeared to be highly sexually charged. It would be very interesting to determine if these patterns are also found within non-humorous commercials for similar products.

The way in which relationships were depicted in this sample was also very intriguing. Future research could identify and analyze commercials depicting specific relationships (e.g., family relationships, work relationships) in isolation or in comparison to commercials depicting other relationships (e.g., friendships, dating relationships) to provide more specific information regarding the way in which advertisers use relationships to appeal to consumers.

An additional area for future study would be the examination of how intertextual referents are used either within television commercials, or more broadly, within different areas of popular culture using humour. There are examples of how intertextual referents are successfully used to generate humour in popular movies (e.g., Austin Powers containing references to earlier spy movies) and popular television shows (e.g., Canadian politicians or current events in *This Hour Has 22-Minutes*, American politicians, movie stars, or current events in *Saturday Night Live*). Determining which intertextual referents are used will provide information regarding content that viewers found memorable enough during the first viewing to remember and recognize it when it is used intertextually.

Summary

My personal experiences during this project highlighted the importance of commercials being meaningful for the viewer. Over a period of over two years, the reactions of several hundred individuals upon hearing about the topic of my dissertation clearly reflected the central role of humorous television commercials within our culture and the importance of the meaning the viewer is able to associate with the commercial. Almost without fail, upon hearing my topic, listeners would spontaneously respond, "Did you see the one ... ?" and recount their favorite humorous television commercial. Frequently they would continue to discuss the reasons they found the commercial humorous ("It reminded me of ..."). These reasons were always grounded in their own personal experiences because it is only through personal and cultural experience that we have a basis to understand humour. Often, the viewer's life circumstance and emotional reaction was portrayed within the commercial itself.

One important and unanticipated consequence of this project was the opportunity to bring scientific research to members of the general public. Contrary to many areas of research, the focus of this particular study is one that members of the general public can readily understand. Because they are the target and consumers of the humorous television commercials, their examples, reactions, and opinions of humorous television commercials were very important. For many of these individuals, this was the first time that they were able to participate in an academic discussion about a familiar topic and be considered an "expert."

The idea that humorous television commercials both reflect and influence contemporary societal issues was supported at three different levels within this study. First, the sophisticated nature of today's television commercials reflects the evolution in technology and the prominent role advertising has come to play in business. Second, the content of the narratives within the commercials themselves reflects the massive social change that has taken place over the past 50 years. Third, the use of humour, stereotypical characters, and intertextual referents reinforces mainstream values and the current "in-groups" and "out-groups" within our society. Most importantly, the humour used in these commercials opens the door to address sensitive issues in a public forum in a manner that would not otherwise be possible.

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Appendix A

Deciphering Advertisements (Fowles, 1996)

Context for the Ad

1. What *product category* does the advertised commodity fall into? What are the names of some of its *competitors*? Comparatively, how are the competitors faring? Are there any noticeable advertising campaigns we should be aware of? Have any of these commodities been in the news lately for any reason?
2. Which *medium* did this ad appear in? Specifically, in which magazine or television program? Time of the year (and day?) Any thoughts about the *placement* of the ad? Why might it appear where it does rather than someplace else?
3. Judging from the ad's placement, what can be inferred about the *intended audience* for the ad? Describe them as carefully as possible. (It is very important to view the ad through their eyes, to the extent possible, and to decipher the ad from this vantage point.)

Looking at the Ad

4. Considering the *aesthetics* of the composition, is there any reason why the ad is structured as it is? Describe the layout (if a print ad) or the scripted sequence (if commercial). Any reason for this particular structure? Why this typeface, or that caliber voiceover? Do these items "say" anything? Comments about color (or lack of it), about the musical score or the sound effects? Do any of these considerations help establish an overall mood for the ad?
5. Is the artwork in the ad *photographed* or drawn? Why might the agency art directors have specified the mode they did? Why did the photographers (or illustrators) use the

particular lighting they did, select the particular angle on their subjects? Why the particular short (long, medium, or close-up) or the particular focus (sharp or not sharp)? Any retouching in evidence?

6. In the imagery, what is being pushed into the *foreground*, and what is placed in the background? Why?

7. Precisely what is the *commodity* that is being sold? This needs to be stated as dryly as factually possible. Once it has been described, it should be *subtracted* from one's conception of the ad for the time being. The pictorial material that is left constitutes the ad's *symbolic appeal*.

8. We need to create the longest possible *list of the various elements* pictured in the symbolic appeal. It helps to pretend that we represent a combination of property master and casting director. What would the items be, or the individual, that are required for the creation of this ad? What is the setting to be specified, and why? How are the models or actors to be posed, and why?

9. Taking these items one at a time, what are some of the *meanings* an item would have for members of the intended audience? What does each signal regarding status, leisure/work, gender, disposition, attractiveness, responsibility, domesticity, age, vitality, personality, mood, and so on? Ask, "What might this item, this feature, mean to the targeted consumer" (It helps to begin with those items that occupy the largest amount of time and space and then work down to the smaller details.) To look at the allocation of meanings another way, what would someone from Outer Mongolia have to know to make sense of a particular item?

10. What can be inferred about the *states of mind* of the humans in the ad? What might the relationship be between this attitude and members of the intended audience?
11. Establish a locale for this scene. Situate the symbolic appeal in *space*. Where does this happen? Does this locale have any significance for the intended audience?
12. Locate this scene in *time*. Past, present, or future? What is the temporal location suggesting?
13. Consider the ad now *as narrative*, playing out in time. If a print ad, can we supply a story, and what would that story mean to the intended audience? Is there a story in the television commercial, and how might the intended audience interpret it?
14. Sometimes, it is not what is in an ad that pulls people in but *what is missing*. Is there anything missing in the imagery that consumers would feel moved to supply and thus to be engaged?
15. Is the symbolic appeal in this ad *idealizing* anything, and if so, what is it?
16. By way of summary, imagine some people who are perfectly in the beam for this ad. What state of mind might they bring to the ad, and what does the ad supply them with?
17. Is there anything that we should know about the *earlier use* of these symbolic materials in either advertising or popular culture? Are there *intertextual referents* here to be acknowledged? Items extracted from popular culture?
18. As a creative construction, an ad will frame some things in and will exclude the rest of the world. What are some things that are logically related to the themes of the symbolic appeal that the creative personnel have *framed out*? Why?

Implications of the Ad

19. What might this ad be inferring about the nature of *relationships* between people?

Describe the nonverbal communication within the frame of the ad. Who dominates?

20. What might this ad be saying about what it is to be a man? A woman? About *self-identity*? About attractiveness?

21. Is the ad conveying anything about *social status* or class?

22. What kinds of other *cultural beliefs* (or ideological tenets) are promoted in this ad?

Again, it helps in responding to a question like this to imagine oneself as an Outer Mongolian or an alien. Viewed from outside, what seem to be the values of the senders and receivers from this message?

23. From a Marxist perspective, advertising is seen as the instigator of a “commodification” of human life, in that purchasable commodities are equated with noncommercial human needs and capabilities and made to substitute for them. Let’s bring the product back into the discussion now, and ask if the advertisement, by linking the product to a symbolic appeal, is attempting to *commodify* a particular area of human experience. Is Taster’s Choice trying to substitute instant coffee for romance?

(pp. 171-174)

Appendix B

Description of 75 Commercials Included in Analysis

Commercial 1 - Bud Light

A middle-aged, overweight, and obviously angry football coach enters a team room. He sees five players sitting around icing their feet and sitting in the hot tub and yells, "You guys are in here again? I can't believe this - you're always in here *nursing your injuries*. I have never seen such a group of cream puffs in my life! This is football!" He yells directly behind largest player, who is African-American, "I need guys that can play!" The large African-American man jumps as if he is frightened. All of the players are looking down at the floor seemingly remorseful, as the camera shot highlights their facial expressions. The coach storms out of room angrily. A white player of average build with black under his eyes states, "Man, I thought he'd never leave!" Other players bring their hands and feet out of the ice, where they were supposedly for medical purposes, holding bottles of Bud Light. One player does this with his toes. The voice-over begins, "For the great taste that won't fill you up and never lets you down - make it a Bud Light." Another player in a hot tub brings a hot dog on a roasting stick out of the water and asks, "Hot dog anyone?"

Commercial 2 - Chunky Soup

An African American football player walks into a locker room with soup on a tray for a white player and states, "Hey Johnny, there's a new Chunky Soup, sweetie pie." The white player responds, "Hey, Chunky. . . Did you just call me sweetie pie?" Other player replies, "No, uh ... sweaty guy. There's a new Chunky Soup, sweaty guy. Chunky baked potato with cheddar and bacon bits. A hearty soup loaded with big chunks of baked potato to fill

my little Johnny bear right." The other player grabs the African American player's face and pulls off a mask, revealing the African American player's real identity as that of the white player's mother. He whines, "Mom..." She replies, "Gotta make sure you're eating good." "How long have you been wearing this?" he asks, holding the mask. "Since the half," she replies. The commercial cuts to the narrator presenting the product and product information.

Commercial 3 - Cantel AT & T

A television is situated on a kitchen cupboard and is playing a program of a woman providing instruction on how to wrap a gift. An ape is diligently watching this instruction with supplies ready to wrap a gift. The woman begins, "Elegant gift wrapping says a lot about your gift and it also says a lot about you. Now we're going to start with the textured foil. Even if you're all thumbs, wrapping like this is easy. Now, I like to precut the tape so I can just place it on the gift." As the woman is speaking, we see the ape with paper other than foil wrap, taking long pieces of tape rather than short, yet able to wrap the gift nicely. The woman's voice fades into background as a voice over announcing Cantel's "Pay as you go" program is heard. The product is shown in a display in area similar to the room in which the commercial is taking place. The shot returns to the ape in the kitchen and the instructions provided by the woman's voice continues. "Here we have the final gift. Of course, don't forget to remove the price tag before you begin wrapping." The ape realizes that the price tag was not removed before the gift was wrapped and closes its eyes to communicate this. The woman's voice continues, "I think this is beautifully wrapped and I would be happy to see..." her voices fades away.

Commercial 4 - Lotto 649

This commercial is divided into two parts. The commercial begins by showing a graphic with a woman's name in the top half of the screen and "Lotto 649 Player" in the lower half of the screen. The woman is shown sitting in her cab during a traffic jam in a downtown area of a large city. She is wearing a cap, a plaid shirt, and no make-up. The woman yells, "Oh come on. Hey. Move it! I'm trying to earn a living here. I'm not getting any younger. Oh brother!" A graphic is shown indicating that woman has won the lottery. The second part of the commercial begins with the woman's name on the top ½ of the screen, with "Lotto 649 Winner" in the lower ½ of the screen. Now the woman is riding in the back of a limousine, wearing make-up, pearls, a fur coat, and has her hair done. She hangs her head out of the window of the limousine and says, "For crying out loud, what's going on here? Hello ... Is anybody listening? I'm in a limousine here. Keep it moving." As the woman is speaking, a voice over informs that "You could win millions playing Lotto 649, but don't worry - you'll still be you." Another matching graphic is used to inform viewers that the current jackpot is 5 millions dollars. The shot returns to the woman leaving the limousine. As the limousine driver is holding the door, she tells him, "Don't forget to play the plus."

Commercial 5 - Sony Store (2)

Three men are standing in front of VCR. Two men in suits (the salesmen) are standing on either side of a casually-dressed customer. All three men are facing the camera. One salesman states, "It'll be fine." The other salesman adds, "You're ready." The customer reaches out to change the time on the clock on the VCR. The salesmen look at each other

and smile proudly. The customer changes the time successfully, steps back in amazement, then states, "Wow. You guys are like Yoda." The salesmen look at each other questioningly.

Commercial 6 - Butter

A woman approximately 50 years of age and wearing a pink bathrobe is sitting at a kitchen table reading a women's magazine. As she is reading, the viewer hears her voice asking questions to the quiz "Is the Honeymoon Over?" in the "Constellation" magazine. We hear her voice as she reads, "When was the last time you got flowers?" The woman places a check mark in the box marked "Never." "Does he hold the door open for you?" The woman again checks "Never." Then she asks the man dressed in blue pajamas (presumably her husband), "Could you . . . umm . . . get me some breakfast?" When he opens the fridge he has a choice between butter (on his top right) and margarine (on his bottom left) and chooses butter. He brings his wife her waffles with blueberries and butter, garnished with strawberries. When she takes her first bite, the man has a worried look on his face and breaks into a wide grin provoked by the anxiety he feels in the situation. In the next scene we hear the woman kick open the door and see her carrying the man to their bedroom.

Commercial 7 - Milk (2)

A cuckoo clock indicates it is 6:00 p.m., time for the cats to be fed. An elderly woman in the house with many cats says in a sing-songy voice, "Yumm yummm time. Everyone's going to get some. Mommy's got your milk right ... " Her voice fades away as she looks into the fridge and realizes she is out of milk. She looks in the cupboard and finds some milk powder stating, "Oh look, just like milk. You won't know the difference . . . Almost

ready." With an evil look in her eye, she mixes up the milk and haphazardly pours it into the many dishes lying across the floor saying, "Yummy yummy, nice kitty. Oh oh." When the cats realize it's not real milk, they being meowing, close the blinds, lock the deadbolt on the door, and turn off the power in preparation to retaliate for the powdered milk served to them. The voice over asks, "Got milk?"

Commercial 8 - Molson Canadian

A distant view looks down on hundreds of monkeys working on typewriters in a massive warehouse-type environment. The architecture of the building is outstanding and in contrast with the warehouse-type sweatshop atmosphere. The narrator states, "An infinite number of monkeys on an infinite number of typewriters will eventually define all that is Canada." One monkey is labeled #1967 (Canada's centennial year). The camera shot moves to boardroom where a man (American) is speaking in a highly animated manner to other men (presumably Canadians) sitting on the opposite end of a large wooden board table. He is discussing how hockey is broadcast on television. The architecture of the board room is similar to the initial room, with high ceilings and arches but is in wood rather than stone. He begins, "Gentlemen, down South we have trouble following your puck. So what we want to do is to introduce this blue streak on the screen every time someone passes the puck and when they shoot it - red streak. Blue pass - red shoot. You get it boys?" During this speech, the viewer is shown the hand of a man listening with his finger tapping, likely in irritation. The viewer hears a yell in the background, "Whooooa," and the American is thrown out of the boardroom, through the air, and down the hallway. Following him down the hallway is a blue streak like the one he is describing to be used

with the puck, indicating "pass". The shot goes back to group of monkeys and typewriters. The shot then changes to a television screen that changes to the Canadian beer logo with other television screens and a sci-fi-looking environment in the background.

Commercial 9 - IBM Business Solutions

A black screen is shown with a narrow blue band on the top and on the bottom. The blue bands remain until the end of the commercial when product information presented. At the beginning of the commercial, the words "culture shock" appear in white letters at the left margin in the centre of the screen. The camera moves to a man and woman, obviously tourists, stepping down into a darker area presented like a cave. The woman says, "Look, they make olive oil. Take a picture. Here." An elderly woman dressed in black and standing slightly stooped over emerges. The Italian woman says, "Bonjournio" with a heavy accent. The man says, "Oh, hi how are you? Is this your business?" The old woman replies, "Yes." The man responds, "We have a business, too." His wife adds, "Yes, yes, we have three stores in Ohio," holding three fingers up in front of the old woman's face speaking slightly louder, insinuating that the old woman may have trouble understanding. The old woman thinks and says, "Ohio, we sell to Ohio... and California and Canada and Argentina and Australia..." The Italian woman hands them a business card. The wife reads the card and says, "They're on the Internet. How can they afford it?" The shot moves to a black screen with blue border on the top and bottom. The words "IBM Netnfinity webserver. From 2,999" appear. Another slide appears that reads "e-solutions" and then the last slide appears without the blue borders reading "IBM Solutions for a small planet" with "1-800-IBM-CALL" in small white text.

Commercial 10 - Long Distance Service 10-10-345

We see two male characters in a run-down apartment. The walls are gray, the lighting is poor, consisting of one light without a lamp shade. There are no curtains on the window and graffiti on the wall says "10-10-345 " and "Wanna get lucky?" The characters have human bodies and dog's heads. The main character has an Australian accent and has the head of a German Shepherd cross dog. The other character doesn't speak and has the head of an English Sheepdog. The shepherd is playing the electric guitar and the viewer gets the sense that these characters are burned out rock and rollers. The shepherd cross says, "Dial 10-10-345 for your long distance calls. It's always 10 cents a minute and you could win a prize. Rock on!" He starts singing "10-10-345 you could win a prize. 10-10-345 you could win a prize. 10-10-345 you could win a prize." At one point during the singing, the other dog lights lighter in background, indicating appreciation for the performance. The shepherd cross begins speaking again, "Hey, I don't normally do endorsements, but they threw me a little bone. You've got to have something to bury in the back garden, don't ya Reg?" The other dog replies "Ya". A voice over states, "Be a lucky dog. Dial 10-10-345 today."

Commercial 11 - Radio Shack (2)

This commercial begins with a statue of cupid overlooking the lavish pool area. In the background, the viewer sees the pool where the action takes place. Romantic music is playing in the background. A beautiful woman wearing heart-shaped sun glasses and walkman headphones is laying on a lounge by the pool. The lounge area is covered, making the setting appear like a covered four-poster bed. The woman is working on a lap-

top computer, while a young, attractive male is cleaning the pool. The weather is sunny and warm. The movements of both characters are slow and seductive. The man removes his t-shirt to reveal a well-muscled torso. A camera shot of the woman is taken from between the man's legs. At this point, water from the pool is also spraying upward into the shot between the man's legs. The woman sits up and removes her headphones, then removes her sun glasses, then removes the sucker from her mouth. When the man moves closer to the woman, he walks past a sensor and an alarm goes off with a man's voice announcing, "Step away from my daughter." A male voice over begins, "Radio shack has handy products for the whole family. Even overprotective dads. Radio Shack. You've got questions, we've got answers."

Commercial 12 - Saskatchewan Lotteries

This commercial begins with a close-up shot of the top of a newspaper with the left side cut off. Part of the headline is cut off, but the viewer can still read it, "Story of the Century." Music in the background sets the tone of a detective show. The color in the majority of the commercial is black and white. The commercial is set in a confectionery and the first shot of the characters is of Leslie Nielsen (a famous comedian) reading the newspaper. His voice is narrating, "It was the story of the century, but I had bigger things on my mind." The viewers see a distant camera shot with a stuffed whale sitting on his head. " . . . like what's the story with this crossword game? Then, the kid at the counter caught my eye, which is funny because I didn't throw it." The male character at the counter is holding a large eyeball (approximately 3" in diameter) in his hand. He rolls his eyes at the joke. "That's when I saw the crossword ticket." The male behind the counter

holding the ticket motions to it with his eyes, like it is some sort of secret or illegal interaction. A woman's voice over begins, "Play the new crossword game at your lottery ticket centre. Scratch the square, spell the word, and you could win up to \$50,000 instantly." A pile of crossword tickets is displayed in black and white, with the top one in color. The male narrators voice returns. "I told him this crossword could be my ticket to the big time. He said he'd keep an eye out for me." The young male places a large letter "I" on the counter. The narrator responds "Oohhh" and winces, supposedly at the poor pun.

Commercial 13 - Pentium II Processor (2)

Four characters jump out of a plane wearing parachutes. Music is playing in the background to set the mood. After they free fall for a short period of time, the characters pull the string for the parachute. Three of the characters have their parachutes open, but the fourth character is falling down to the ground faster than the others. He looks up and sees only part of his parachute and a window from a computer screen indicating that the parachute is still being processed ("Processing parachute"). This is repeated two times. As the man is plummeting to the ground, we are shown the window one more time, asking "Please Wait," gauging the progress of the computer in processing the man's parachute. We are shown the anxiety on the face of the man with the parachute that doesn't open. The music in the background becomes faster, heightening the mood of fear, then we hear the man scream. The final text box contains the words of the advertised product "Time for a Pentium II Processor?" The voice over of a male asks, "Time for a Pentium II

Processor?" The trademark music jingle and icon for "Intel Inside" appear with the internet address for the company underneath.

Commercial 14 - Fairfield Inn By Marriot (1)

The commercial begins by showing a man dressed in hunter's clothing (flannel shirt and insulated vest), sleeping with his head on a log in the middle of the forest. Because there are few leaves on the trees, it appears to be early spring or late fall. The shot moves to display four hooves walking toward the man. The shot moves up to show the hooves, legs, and stomach of a large animal. We see a close-up of the face of a deer and the lyrics of a song begin, "I'll be you sweetheart if you'll be mine . . ." We see the man sleeping, then the shot moves to show the side of the deer's head and a twinkle in (her?) eye. The shot returns to the man with his head is resting on a log. This time it is shot from a different angle and we see the dry branches from the log appear like antlers on the back of the man's head. We hear a sound from the deer that sounds like a giggle, demonstrating pleasure or happiness. We see the hooves of the deer move closer to the man and a shot of the man's face as he wakes up and sees the deer in front of him. The shot moves to the lake we see in the background and then we hear sounds (screams) from both the man and the deer that indicate they are distressed. The shot moves to the hotel room with the male voice over, "Don't sleep just anywhere. Stay at Fairfield Inn by Marriott." The name of hotel, prices, and 1-800 number are shown on a blue panel over the shot of the room. The voice over continues, "It's clean, it's comfortable, it's friendly. Fairfield Inn by Marriott. You can expect more."

Commercial 15 - Panasonic Palmcorder

The commercial begins with a shot of the outside of a seedy motel room, with a scientist in a white lab coat looking out the window, then pulling the curtain closed. The words "Video Stability Test" are in white text in the lower portion of the shot. Music is used to set a "sleazy" atmosphere. The next shot shows the inside of the room with the scientist holding a clipboard and standing next to the bed. A middle aged man and woman in their nightclothes, presumably husband and wife, are laying on the bed. They are notable for their tackiness and lack of attractiveness, and serve as a stereotype of middle-aged husbands and wives. The scientist puts coins in a slot to make the bed vibrate. The woman looks at the man and licks her lips, the man looks back through the corners of his eyes. The woman holds her video camera up and we see her view of a ceiling fan moving to the vibration. The text "Image stabilization" is at the top of the view through the camera lens and "The Competition" is at the bottom of the view. A male voice over says, "The competition." The view moves to the man's camera with "Image stabilization" across the top of the view and "Palmcorder" on the bottom. The voice comments, "The Panasonic Palmcorder," then continues, "The Panasonic Palmcorder. Notice how the image from his camera is more stable, as if he weren't moving at all." We see a shot of the man's stomach, sticking out from underneath a white undershirt. His overweight belly is shaking as the bed vibrates. The woman responds, "So, what else is new." The voice over continues, "Stable even when you're not. And the tapes play in your VCR." Large black text appears on a white background that reads, "Stable even when you're not." We hear a

clang that sounds like a heavy metal door slamming. The product is shown and we hear another clang and the word "Panasonic" appears in text.

Commercial 16 - Staples (3)

A middle-aged man wearing a faded old blue bathrobe is sneaking toward the Christmas tree to look at the gifts. As he takes two steps toward the tree, the floor creaks loudly with each step. He picks up a wrapped gift that is obviously a tennis racquet and ball. He tosses the ball aside and picks up another gift that is obviously a drill. He squeezes the trigger and the end spins around. As he is doing this we hear the voice over in a man's voice, "It's hard to surprise people over the holidays." We see a dog wrapped in Christmas wrap and hear the dog panting and the wagging of the dog's tail as it rustles the wrapping paper. "So give them something different. Shop at staples ... " The voice over describes several products available and their prices. A comic-strip-like cloud appears above the man's head as we are shown products and prices. The cloud disappears and the dog drops the tennis ball at the man's feet. The voice over continues, "...Staples, your Christmas gift headquarters for guaranteed low prices." The product logo appears in red with a white background in the centre of the shot, but slightly tilted, "Staples - The Office Superstore" with print stating, "Your Christmas Gift Headquarters for guaranteed low prices" in red lettering underneath the logo.

Commercial 17 - Play Station

The Play Station logo is flashed on the screen. The scene begins with three men in what could be an old airplane hangar or warehouse. It is set up to look like a spy post with sophisticated equipment. We see sunlight slipping through cracks in a large door and from

spot lights located high above the people. One man is seated in one of approximately 20 chairs with two men facing him. One man is standing across the room at attention with a stiff expression, the other man is walking toward him. We are unable to see this man's face due to the lighting casting a shadow across his face. The man walking toward the man who is sitting says, "This is an extremely sensitive covert operation. You'll be one man against a whole squad of hi-tech special ops." A shot from the video game is shown. "If you want to survive, you've got to have brains." The camera moves to show trainee doing child's puzzle putting large colored shapes into the right slot. "You'll have to be in peak physical condition." We see man jumping over a pylon, jumping on pogo stick, and splashing in a child's paddling pool. The second man stamps "Passed" in large red letters on an official-looking form. "The entire free world will be in your hands, soldier. Failure is not an option." The shot shows the trainee twirling a hula hoop around his waist, rubbing his stomach, and patting his head at the same time. The second man asks the man in charge, "Aren't these tests kind of easy, sir?" He replies, "Suicide mission." The trainee loses his concentration and looks worried. The voice over provides product information.

Commercial 18 - SportsCentre

The commercial begins with one of the anchors of Sports Centre introducing the marketing strategies they have used successfully. Many different scenes are interspersed and the beginning of the commercial seems somewhat fragmented. Anchor Larry Beil, identified by his name and title under his face when he is speaking, begins. "We've been experimenting with a live studio audience and it's kind of been catching on." There is a shot of a few people sleeping in chairs. Only about 1/3 of the chairs are filled. "The

episode that we gave away the Dan Patrick bean bag buddies, that was a huge success."

The next shot shows a packed audience with adults and children chanting "bean bag buddies" with the date and time of the show at the bottom of the screen (Bean Bag Buddy Night, 7:48 p.m., July 17, 1998). We see a large chicken (a person in a costume) handing out the bean bag buddies. The anchor continues, "These little guys are valuable, people love them." We see two twin girls fighting over one bean bag buddy, and a man and another little girl bargaining over another bean bag baby. The man says, "I won't take a penny less than \$300." The little girl sticks her hand out with \$200 and states, "Here's 2 bills, take it or leave it!" The set resembles a riot zone with people climbing all over the chicken. Security is called and is trying to neutralize the situation. The shot returns to the anchor, "I don't know how we're going to handle the crowd for the Charlie Steiner buddy, he sure is cute." The shot returns to the riot scene with the chicken. In the background we hear security calling for help, "Mascot is down. Code red. Please send backup." The words "This is SportsCentre" are printed across the screen during the last few seconds.

Commercial 19 - Spam

The commercial takes place in the kitchen with a man and a young child eating lunch. The father is sitting down to eat a spamburger hamburger. The baby has other food to eat - peas, etc. The father says tauntingly, "Look what daddy gets. Looks good, huh? You eat those peas. This is daddy's." The voice over begins with man's voice. "When you make a spamburger hamburger, watch out." During the voice over we see the father making the burger and hear him making noises suggesting he will enjoy it. The baby throws the rattle and hits the father on the head. When the father bends over to retrieve rattle from the

floor, the baby shoots a pea off the end of a spoon. The voice over continues, "Cause the premium pork and ham spiced to perfection make it so good . . . it's gone." The father retrieves the rattle, but when he sits up at the table his burger is gone. The pea the baby shot ends up in the father's empty plate. The baby burps, then giggles. The voice over comments, "Spam - so good, it's gone." The product is displayed, then the spamburger displayed on the can disappears.

Commercial 20 - Nissan Ultima

The commercial begins with two valets sitting in front of a large luxury hotel with a huge entrance. One valet is middle-aged, overweight, and balding. The other valet is young and thin. They look quite bored and the older valet is slumped down reading a newspaper. Music that was primarily chords in the background develops a clear melody - mana mana bu bee bu bee bee ... (most familiar for most viewers as being from Sesame Street). We hear a car pull up, though we don't see it, and the older valet nudges the younger valet with his knee. We see the younger valet respond by getting up then returning after we see an ordinary blue car go across the screen, indicating that the car is parked. Then, a Nissan Ultima pulls up. The younger valet sees it first and raises his eyebrows with interest. The camera moves to the older valet who also shows interest in the new car that pulls up. The camera shows a distant shot with them both looking at the car, then at each other to see who will park this car. They both stand up and a young, tall, attractive dark-haired man wearing black pants, a black jacket, and a white shirt emerges from the car. He tosses the keys to the young valet. From behind, the older valet grabs the younger, thinner man around the arms and chest and they fall to the ground. The young valet throws the keys in

the air so the older one can't get them. The next shot shows them rolling across the hood of the car wrestling - the winner will get to park the car. The next shot shows the younger valet holding onto the older valet as he moves toward the back door. The older valet opens the rear passenger door and hits the younger valet in the head with it once, then kicks the keys under the car to the other side. The older valet edges ahead and is going through the back seat when the younger valet takes the back seat that folds down (a feature of this car) and squishes the older man's head between the seat and back of the seat several times. He must climb over the older valet because in the next shot we see him emerge first from the back seat by doing a somersault, only to be tackled again by the older valet. We are shown the keys lying on the pavement, just out of reach of the two valets. During this struggle, a second car that is identical to the first has pulled up beside it, but we don't see it yet. An older man dressed in lighter colors who is wearing a hat and carrying a dog holds both (identical) keys in the air looks down at both valets on the pavement. The shot moves to a more distant angle to show both cars and all three men. The man carrying the dog is in the foreground of the shot smiling. The two valets appear to be struggling in the background, with each reaching out to push the other in the shoulder area. The voice over describing product is the voice of Tom Bosley, best known as the father in Happy Days. "The Nissan Ultra. Unexpected luxury from just \$18,998." The last shot is one of the product in front of the empty seats for the valet staff. The seats are empty because the valets are still fighting over the car, even though there are two cars. The name of car "Ultima" and starting price is shown in text "\$18,988" above the car. Underneath, in small print, we see the price of the car "\$22,998 with lots of stuff." The

Nissan logo is shown in the middle of the screen with the company slogan "Enjoy the ride" in large letters at the bottom of the screen.

Commercial 21 - Energizer Batteries - Advanced Formula

There is equipment in the background and a close-up of man with thin face, big glasses and a black shirt. He resembles a mechanic. He brings a pair of binoculars up to his eyes and we see through them. The Energizer Bunny is coming down the highway in the distance. In the background we hear the faint sounds of the bunny beating the drum. The first man says, "Showtime . . . Heads up." This causes the group of men parked on the highway in the middle of nowhere to begin to scramble to get things ready for the "pit stop." One of the men holds a card with the word "New" and a picture of the energizer battery to indicate to the bunny the place for the pit stop (although there is no other place for the bunny to go). The music in the background is playing a spy theme. We see the bunny getting closer and the men organizing the tools and equipment necessary, including one large metal case with the words "Advanced Formula" in capital letters in large, bright text on a large label. We hear sounds of the men talking and someone say, "Bring on the bunny" and the sounds of people saying "go go go go" in preparation for the important event. The bunny arrives and is surrounded by the men who are all dressed in black. The case is opened and we see one battery set in the middle of the case, with black insulation material surrounding the important piece of equipment. Once the battery is replaced on the bunny, the bunny declines, as if on a hoist, and begins to move ahead very quickly. At this time we hear someone say, "Showtime." As was the case at the beginning of the pit stop, the words "Simulated Demonstration" are printed at the bottom of the screen for a few

seconds. At the end of the commercial, we see the bunny moving at a high speed down the highway and hear the sounds of a race car changing gears. We hear one man say, "See ya around," and an older man that appears to be knowledgeable due to his age and experience say thoughtfully, "Kid, welcome to the big league." The voice over at the end is a male voice presenting product information. "Introducing the new energizer advanced formula. No battery lasts longer." The name of the product is displayed on the top of the screen and a disclaimer about product performance is displayed in smaller letters across the bottom of the screen as we see the bunny speeding into the horizon.

Commercial 22 - Salon Selectives

A man and a woman are in a living room. The man is average looking and somewhat disheveled - unshaven, crumpled clothing, shirt unbuttoned. He is eating snacks out of a bowl as he is watching a sporting event on television, with his feet on the table in front of him. The woman is sitting in chair across the room reading a woman's magazine. She is looking at a quiz, "Is He Right For You?" The woman looks over at the man and blows out a deep breath as if demonstrating her disappointment. Romantic music begins with the lyrics, "The look of love is in your eyes. The look your heart can't disguise." As this is occurring, the man undergoes a metamorphosis from head to toe. With each change the camera focuses on the woman's face then back on the changing man. With each change there is increased sexual tension displayed by the woman twirling her hair with her finger, tossing head back, etc. The man totally changes beginning with his clothing blowing off of him. Then we see physiological changes beginning with his stomach and chest, moving to mouth, nose and eyes, then feet. The new man is not eating snacks and has his feet on the

floor. We even see a tear running down his face. This "new man" stands and walks over to the woman who gazes at him in amazement. Just as he leans to kiss her, he belches and we see all of the changes disappear and the original man is back. The woman looks at him with disgust and she rolls her eyes. He asks, "What?" The scene changes to the product description with the voice over, "If only you could customize a man the way you can with Salon Selectives." We see the head and shoulders of the woman in the commercial turning around with different hairdos at each rotation. The product is displayed under the woman's head with text "Salon Selectives."

Commercial 23 - Map Gap (2)

A man and woman are beginning to play a game. The woman says, "OK. Ready?" The man says, "OK," and they sit down. The woman is holding a game card with word sounds that the man must combine into a sentence. The woman looks on, encouraging him. We hear the man saying, "Will ymn ..." and see the letters printed on the card. He continues to struggle to make out the sounds and the woman excitedly is encouraging him. We see several shots of the man's face as he is trying to solve the puzzle. The male voice over begins, "This couple is playing Mad Gap." There is a space in the voice over. We continue to hear the male sounding out the letters on the card. The voice over continues, "Mad Gap, the new game where the words you read sound like something completely different. Of course, you don't know what it is until you hear it." The shot moves to a group of people playing the game, then to the male and female. The male finally decipheres the sounds and says, "Will you marry me?" The woman responds, "Yes!" excitedly and hugs him. The man looks puzzled at what has just occurred. The voice over returns with

product information. "Mad Gap - it's not what you say, it's what you hear." "Here comes the bride" plays in the background.

Commercial 24 - Sports Select

The commercial begins with a shot of two green circles with an orange background. The circle on the left has a green ring around it and is yellow toward the outside and more green closer to the centre. The name Jason is written in large, bold, black capital letters. There is a "&" between the circles and a yellow outline around the circle on the right with green closest to the outside, turning more yellow on the inside. The name Tyler is written in large, bold, black capital letters. The male narrator states, "Jason and Tyler" (their names enlarge when they are said). In the next scene we see two more circles with the words "Head to Head." As the narrator reads this, these words also become enlarged. During the entire commercial, there are a variety of cheers and portions of music associated with professional sports games. Pictures of Jason (short dark hair, heavy set facial structure) and Tyler (brown hair, longer, more delicate facial features) come into the circles. Both are in their early 20s. Jason says, "We're going to run you out of the ring." Tyler responds, "No one scores on the Hoover puck-o-matic." Jason continues, "Our power play is wicked." Tyler retorts, "It bites." Jason looks confused and asks, "Puck o what?" Tyler shrugs his shoulders. Jason begins again, "We're going to kick butt." Tyler dismisses him with non-verbal gesture. Jason continues, "Oh yes, butts will be kicked." Tyler reacts by saying, "Give your head a shake, man." Jason replies, "Hey, it's your money..." Tyler responds sarcastically, "Not really, you lent me the cash." Jason asks, "Really?" Tyler is shown snapping his fingers to the music. The narrator states, "Play

Sports Select and get into the game." A circle is in middle of screen with variety of sporting equipment flashing on and off - puck, baseball, football, basketball with the "Sports Select" logo and "Get in the Game" written underneath in black letters. The scene returns to the two circles with Jason and Tyler. We see the heavier set Jason (who seems to have been outsmarted by the less athletic Tyler) go through the background and into Tyler's circle to tackle him.

Commercial 25 - Nintendo Sports Game

Two men are seated on the couch. The background is that of a typical "bachelor pad," with lots of clutter in the background. The walls are covered with pictures, photographs, etc. Two middle-aged men are sitting on a old couch. One is slightly balding, his remaining hair is frizzy, and he is wearing a purple t-shirt with a yellow shirt over it and blue jeans. He is sitting on the left of the couch and is the resident of the apartment and owner of the Nintendo machine. The man on the right, Gary, is dressed in a blue and white checked shirt over a blue t-shirt and green shorts. He appears to be somewhat more attractive and wholesome-looking than the other man. The first man asks his friend, "Well Gary, what Nintendo Sports game would you like to play today?" When he asks this he sounds rather formal, like a professional gambler. When Gary doesn't answer, the other man gives him options and scenes from the different games are shown. We hear the first man describing the scenes in these games in the background. "There's washing the floor with Gary court side. Major league Gary-bashing with Ken Griffey Jr. NHL Gary's going down all night. WWF Gary in the ...hold with" The first man is very animated as we see shots of each game with him beating Gary. The man is moving on the couch and

yelling and moving controls in the air. At the end of the commercial, Gary appears frustrated with the situation and expresses this with a frustrated sound "aaaahhhhh," throws down the controls, and gets up and leaves. The first man seems puzzled at Gary's departure and asks "What?" Product information follows with a male voice over, "Nintendo Sports. What friends are for." He smells his armpits to see if Gary left because he smelled, totally oblivious to how he treated Gary. Again he asks, "What?"

Commercial 26 - Dolly Madison

The commercial begins with an unidentifiable shot. We are then able to see that it is the side of a steep mountain. We see a man in a red shirt and blue pants and mountain climbing gear climbing the mountain. There are various shots to illustrate the height of the mountain, steepness of the slope, and difficulty of the climb. In the distance the climber notices another figure. This person appears to defy gravity and is standing on the surface of the mountain and is at a 90 degree angle to the side of the mountain. He is looking around, clearly enjoying himself. He is dressed in tan pants and shirt with a red vest over top and a tan knit hat. He looks around and states, "Wow, nice view." He pulls out a mini donut covered with icing sugar, displaying name of product to the camera in the process. He throws the donut in the air and catches it in his mouth, again defying gravity. We hear the male voice over, "It's gotta be the Dolly." The screen switches to product information where Dolly Madison products are displayed with the voice over, "Dolly Madison is good to go." We see the mountain climber reaching the top of the mountain with considerable effort. The other man, already at the top is sitting cross legged and greets the mountain

climber, who obviously took longer to climb the mountain than the guy eating donuts. He looks over excitedly and yells, "Hey man. I know you."

Commercial 27 - Beggin Strips

A golden retriever is sleeping, snoring, dreaming of bacon (we see cartoon-like bubble with 3 strips of bacon) and smelling bacon (we hear the sniffing). He (based on male-sounding voice of dog that shares the dog's thoughts) wakes up and begins to search for the bacon. "Bacon, bacon, where's the bacon? I smell bacon. He looks on the stove and finds empty frying pan. Bacon, bacon - gotta be bacon - only one thing smells like bacon and that's bacon!" He looks around kitchen. "Bacon, bacon, bacon, bacon - there!" He locates bag of Beggin Strips in a basket on the bottom shelf of a cupboard. "There's a bag - what does it say? I can't read!!! Pleeease, please, give me what's in the bag. Chewy yummy smokey bacon." A woman, the dog's owner says. "Here you go," and hands the dog a Beggin Strip. Dog thinks aloud, oh boy oh boy oh boy mmmmmmmmm it's bacon." The product information voice over is presented in a woman's voice, the same as female character. .No, it's Beggin Strips brand dog snack from Purina. Dogs don't know it's not bacon." The dog in background says, "It's bacon!" The commercial ends with shot of the package and text to the left bottom of the screen in capital letters but fairly small in relation to product "DOGS DON'T KNOW IT'S NOT BACON."

Commercial 28 - Bell Express View

A middle-aged man who is slightly bald and very overweight walks over to treadmill in a gym. He gets on the treadmill located between a young, thin, black woman and a young, thin white male. The overweight man takes the remote control and flips through the

channels as he begins his workout. We see eight different shots of the man with different types of programming (children's show, sports, hockey, soap opera, movie, weather, etc.). A considerable amount of time has elapsed and he is sweating profusely but remains on the treadmill watching television. The lights are turned out and we see a mop sweep across the floor. The morning comes and the same two people from the beginning of his workout the previous day are wearing different clothing and step on the treadmill on either side of him. The man looks at his watch. Realizing he has been on the treadmill for a long time, he hurries off but finds he has trouble walking because the clothes that fit him the day before drape around him because he has lost so much weight while he was on the treadmill. The voice over begins while man is still watching television, "The most sports, the most hockey, endless movies. Over 100 channels of as much TV as you can handle. Bell Express View." A shot of hardware with company name and price written in text is displayed. "Hardware available for as little as \$12.49 a month. Weight loss not included."

Commercial 29 - Bryant & Stratton

Two men are in an office, sitting on opposite sides of a desk. One man is older and well dressed, very polished. The other younger man has longer, curly hair. He is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and tie and is slightly overweight. The older man begins, "So you've been out in the working world for a while." The younger man nods eagerly in agreement and replies confidently, "Ohhh, I've got skills." The older man continues, "Great, perhaps we can find a place you can use those skills. We are two-year career college that trains people for lifetime employment. What were you thinking about doing?" The younger man thinks for a minute and says, "Well, I can flare my nostrils." He

demonstrates. "And I can do this with my head (moves scalp back and forth). Gotta be worth something. Oh ya, and my fingers..." (puts both hands together then wiggles fingers in unison). A male voice over begins, "Bryant Stratton... it's not for everyone (younger man takes coin from out of his ear). It takes a career-focused person to get a degree here." The shot moves to a black background with white lettering identifying company, motto, logo, and telephone number. "To find out if we're right for you, call us." Younger man lifts a tool up to the side of his head. The older man looks concerned and goes, "Um..."

Commercial 30 - Toaster Strudel

The commercial begins with shot of man in a kitchen, taken through the doorway. The setting is similar to a visitation room in a prison or an interrogation room in a police station, as portrayed on television or in movies. The furnishings are sparse, the walls are yellow, and the light is hung directly over the table. A man is sitting across from two plates - one contains crumbs from what was there and the other contains a toaster strudel with a "Happy Face" in icing. Behind the two plates we see an ugly upholstered chair about 20-years old. We see a shot of the man with dark hair and wearing a blue t-shirt. He has crumbs on his face that match the ones in the empty plate. He says to the other toaster strudel in a slow, measured voice, "Listen, I know you are wondering what happened to your pal." The camera angle switches to focus directly on man's face. He begins speaking louder, in a defensive and disturbed manner. "It's not my fault. I can't help myself. He comes in here with his hot flaky pastry, all that real fruit filling and his little icing smile..." He is looking to the ceiling and smiling, recollecting how attractive he felt it was. "... somewhat like your own." He grins and looks directly at the other pasty with a crazed

look in his eyes. We hear the music from the shower scene in "Psycho" and the icing smile turns into an "O" shape and the toaster strudel has developed icing eyebrows to demonstrate a facial expression of fear because the pastry knows what will happen to it. The shot moves to the product package being taken from a freezer. It is surrounded by fog from the freezer, then is shown when it has been toasted and is hot and being broken apart to reveal fruit filling. A male voice over states, "Pillsbury Toaster strudel. It all comes together to make a tasty obsession." "There, now you'll always be together," the crazed man says as he looked satisfied, rubbing his stomach. Two plates containing only crumbs were shown in the background.

Commercial 31 - Saskatchewan Lotteries

The commercial begins with shot of Leslie Nielsen's back as he is at the counter of a convenience store looking at lottery tickets. This setting is similar to that of other Saskatchewan Lottery commercials, including the same clerk behind the counter, acting as a sidekick. Leslie Nielsen turns and looks toward the camera and says, "Winning the lottery. Some would have you believe it's about being lucky. But the trouble with luck is that some have it and some don't. So you have to be lucky to have luck. So how do you know if you're lucky if you're not lucky enough to know it? So forget about luck. Winning is about mental sharpness (taps his temple with his index finger, clerk behind counter looks on and shakes his head, expressing his feelings that Leslie Nielsen is quite odd). So when you choose a scratch and win ticket, don't just choose any ticket - choose the WINNING ticket (takes ticket and scratches). Excuse me," he says to clerk. The clerk replies, "Yes?" Leslie Nielsen asks, "Can you exchange this for a WINNING ticket?" The clerk looks at

someone off camera with disbelief. Leslie Nielsen states, "See what I mean? Mental sharpness. (He taps his temple again). See you later." Leslie Nielsen walks out of camera range.

Commercial 32 - Saturn Wagon

A middle-aged man is asleep in a recliner with the newspaper across his lap. He is wearing a white t-shirt with a plaid shirt over top and sweat pants. His stomach is sticking out from under the t-shirt. He awakens to a thumping noise and quickly runs to the window. When he looks out the window, he sees three children playing ball on the front lawn, pitching balls toward the van in the driveway. The batter keeps missing the pitches and the ball is hitting the side of the car. He yells, "Oh no," then runs downstairs repeating, "No no no no" rhythmically as he goes down each step. He walks outside and yells, "What are you doing? Give me the bat!" He takes the bat from the kid and the kid responds, "Oh man..." The father begins, "Your stance is all wrong. Check this out. Come to papa." Father swings and misses pitch and the ball hits the van. The voice over begins, "The Saturn wagon with easy to maintain dent resistant doors." Two different shots of product information are displayed; one provided information about the dent resistant doors and price and the other displayed the company logo. Both shots showed text on black backgrounds. The shot moves back to the father who swings at the ball and misses, "Whoa, good pitch. I'll see you guys later." We hear the sound of one of the kids in the background go, "ah ha," commenting on the father not being able to hit the ball. The commercial ends with father walking across lawn and back into house.

Commercial 33 - Lipton Asian Side Dishes

A man is sitting at a table with a plate in front of him. The plate is filled with food, one of the items is a Lipton Side Dish. A female narrator begins, "Introducing Lipton Asian Side Dishes." The tune of "Chopsticks" begins to play in the background. The man has a pair of chopsticks and he is trying to eat the "Asian side dish" with the chopsticks. The first shot is fairly long in comparison to the rest of the commercial. Nineteen different shots illustrate how the man is trying to eat the rice with the chopsticks. Most of his attempts result in the rice falling back on the plate. He uses snow peas to move rice to his mouth in one shot and uses his fingers in the last shot before product information. The shots are choppy and all put together as a time-lapse collage, suggesting that the process of the man eating the rice with the chopsticks occurs over a considerable amount of time. The narrator continues, "Flavorful creations of noodles or rice. They will help solve just about anyone's dinner dilemmas. New Asian Creations from Lipton." The shot moves to product information, then we see the man has stabbed a chicken finger with his chopstick and is looking very pleased and twirling the chicken finger around.

Commercial 34 - Staples

A man who is clearly in a managerial role drops in to his employee's office as he is leaving for the day. The manager is in his 50s and is wearing a white shirt and dark tie. He is not wearing his suit jacket. He says very quickly and in a commanding tone, "Johnson, I'd like to see some ideas on saving the company money. I'll be back first thing in the morning." We see the Johnson sitting behind his desk in a nice office with large windows behind him. He looks very young and must prove himself to his boss, but looks distressed at this

request. Polka music starts playing in background with very high-pitched violin. Johnson commands himself to "Think!" We then see seven different shots put together suggesting the passage of the night. Through the shots of his pacing in his office, doing push-ups, throwing paper in frustration, sitting in a stall in the bathroom and sitting at his desk with a Ukrainian-baba type woman vacuuming his office. Throughout these shots we see him rubbing his face trying to keep himself awake we hear him saying, "Think!" to himself repeatedly. It becomes light outside and he is beginning to fall asleep. His head begins to fall toward the desk. As it is falling, as a man bringing the mail tosses a Staples catalogue that lands under Johnson's face as it hits the desk. The boss shows up at the doorway and asks, "Well, Johnson...?" Johnson wakes up and lifts his head with the Staples catalogue stuck to his cheek. The boss comments, "Staples, that'll save us a lot of money. Johnson, you're a genius!" Johnson beams with pride at pleasing his boss, still with the catalogue stuck to his cheek. A male voice over begins, "For all the supplies you need at guaranteed low prices, it's Staples, plus an in-house copy and print centre." The company logo with stapler stapling staples to form the word "Staples" is displayed. The commercial concludes with the conclusion of the polka.

Commercial 35 - Stove Top Oven Classics Stuffing

Two older women, in their 60s or older, are sitting in rocking chairs on a porch. The one who is larger, with dark hair is sitting closer to the camera and begins to speak angrily "We are not happy about this." A gray-haired woman in the background, also angry, encourages her, "You go girl!" The first woman continues, "But we weren't happy about baking all day either." Second woman continues, "but it was ours." The first woman

states, "New stove-top oven classics..." "... a one-dish chicken dinner," the second woman adds. Now the women are inside and the shot moves to the product. The first woman continues, "Sauce, seasoned stuffing..." The second woman adds, "All you add is chicken." The first woman states, "Five minutes to make...." the second continues, "thirty minutes to bake." The first one states, "Sunday taste....," the second continues, "Tuesday effort." The product is shown in the oven. In the next shot, the second woman is noticeably softer and less angry as she tastes the chicken and realizes how good it tastes and how easy it was to make. The second woman tastes the chicken, "MMMMmmmm." The first woman, obviously angry asserts, "Dabnabbit - what's next, Thanksgiving in a box?!" She hits the camera in frustration. A male voice over begins, "New stove-top oven classics. Sunday taste, Tuesday effort." The commercial ends with the women walking away down same porch as they were rocking on at beginning. The second woman says, "We need a martini."

Commercial 36 - Master Lock (1)

The commercial begins with a shot of a locked gate at night. The sign of a company is in the background, but is blurred by the light shining on it. Items behind the back gate are also blurred and unidentifiable. The camera shots are very choppy and change quickly. A man wearing black clothes and a black hat is in front of the gate and is attempting to break the lock by hitting it. The lock responds by yelling at the perpetrator, "What, you couldn't read the sign? We're closed here. Ohhh, nice swing, Alice." The man uses a tool to cut the lock. The lock reacts, "Hey, cut it out - that tickles!" A male voice over begins, "Introducing the new EX and other shrouded locks by Masterlock." The man brings a

rifle, loads it, then shoots at the lock. The lock retorts, "OK buddy, enough is enough, geez." The voice over continues, "Masterlocks are tough under fire." The voice of the lock in the background continues, "Nice try ya weenie! OK, who's next? You? (addressing audience) You look like you've done time."

Commercial 37 - Degree Deodorant

A young attractive man wearing blue shirt and tie walks up to a drink machine and puts money in to get a drink. He appears to be confident and in control as he waits for his drink, but the drink does not come out. He pushes the buttons and the slot he put the money through quickly and roughly, with a degree of frustration and sighs, "Man!" He looks at the place the drinks come out, then scans the empty cafeteria to make sure that no one is around. He moves to the floor and positions himself laying on the floor so he can get at the proper angle for his arm to move inside the machine to get his drink. This is also the way that young kids steal items out of machines. We see a shot of his arm from the inside of the machine. Just as he is close to reaching a drink, we hear a male clearing his throat. Suddenly, the young man looks around and sees two men and a woman standing behind him. The text on screen in the previous shot reads, "Out of order." The word "Activated" appears on the screen when the young man realizes he is caught by people who appear to be his superiors. The young man, with his arm still in the machine, looks at them and laughs nervously. The product is displayed against a blue background and a female voice over states, "New body-heat activated degree invisible. Self-adjusting protection that goes on clear."

Commercial 38 - Duracell Ultra Batteries

The commercial begins with a distant shot of a man getting out of a car. He is in the desert with no vegetation, just a tree with no leaves, and two birds sitting on a branch. The man appears to be in his 40s and is slightly overweight. His shirt is crumpled and the sleeves are rolled up. He walks around to the front of the silver car and lifts hood. Steam from the engine pours out from beneath the hood. The man takes out his cell phone and puts in Duracell batteries. A male voice over begins, "Introducing the amazing power of new Duracell Ultra." He pushes a pre-programmed button and a woman answers, "Mike's Towing, please hold." The man looks frustrated and sighs, "Oohh." The music on hold is from the 70s, "Play that funky music right boy..." The male voice over continues, "Now cell phones get up to 100 more minutes." We see the man start to tap his finger to the music while holding the cell phone. Soon he begins to dance on the deserted highway, moving his free hand and wiggling his hips using dance moves from the 70s. The male voice over continues, "New Duracell Ultra with a concentrated power source to give extra life to your high tech devices." The product is displayed in a computer simulated blue-black background. A woman's voice comes back and says, "Mike's towing, can I help you?" The man replies, "Hey, can you put me back on hold?" When the music resumes, we see a distant shot of the man dancing across the highway and the two birds in the tree moving from side to side to the music. The male voice over resumes and the product is displayed, "New Duracell Ultra. More power. More life."

Commercial 39 - Duracell Ultra

A man and a woman are walking on a path in an exotic location. There is water in the

background and birds are singing. They are quite ordinary- looking tourists. The man is carrying a camera and says to the woman with him, "Walk over there and I'll take your picture, alright?" The woman is wearing a scarf around her neck and a light blue sweater over a darker blue dress. The male voice over begins, "Introducing the incredible power of new Duracell Ultra." The man assumes the role of a commercial photographer, snapping many shots and casting the woman into a model role. He continues, "That's lovely, just lovely. Now, by the statue." The woman hugs statue, beginning to get into the mood. "Pout, pout." He squeezes his lips into a pout with his fingers and woman responds by puckering into the camera. Disco music begins and the woman takes the scarf and sweater off and throws them into the air. The male voice over states, "Now cameras get faster flashes - up to 100 more pictures." The man is thoroughly enjoying himself vocalizing "Woohoo." We can hear the man snapping the pictures with the pictures displayed by camera shots. The man and woman have now totally assumed the role of photographer and model, with the man making brief remarks ("oh yes") in between shots and the woman becoming much less conservative. The voice over and display of product is presented in an animated sequence. "New Duracell Ultra with a concentrated power source to give extra life to your high-tech devices." The shot returns to the man and woman. The woman is now dancing to the disco music in a pool of water in front of some classic architecture. The man is continuing to snap shots saying, "yes, lovely, work it, work it." We see a group of five men wearing black clothing, like Roman Catholic priests. One of the has a red sash around his waist, signifying that he is more important. The men are standing behind the man taking pictures, with the one in the red sash standing closest. At the end of

the commercial, we see the man with the red sash raise a camera and sneak a picture of the woman. The male voice over began with a display of the product, "New Duracell Ultra. More power. More life."

Commercial 40 - Wheaties

A camera shot from the floor looks up and shows the back of a young boy's head. In front of the boy we see one tall man (Brendan Shenahan, a famous Canadian hockey player) directly in front of the boy and two more men in the shadow. All three men walk toward the boy. The man in front says, "Listen kid, we're short one player for the game. Can you help us out?" The boy says in a whiny voice, "I'm only eight years old." The man replies, "I'll whip you into shape." One of the men in background laughs an evil laugh. The shot moves to a hockey rink with the boy and Brendan Shenahan on ice. Brendan Shenahan is coaching the boy and providing encouragement. In one shot, we see the boy shooting the puck and missing the net. Brendan Shenahan reassures him, "It just takes practice." Brendan Shenahan dumps buckets full of pucks on the ice. In the next shot, the boy is doing push ups on the ice and Brendan Shenahan is counting "...202." In the next shot, we see the boy shooting the puck toward the net again. Brendan Shenahan encourages him, "Try again. Just hit the net kid." The boy shoots the puck so hard it goes through the net and the board behind the net. Brendan Shenahan conceded, "Not bad." The shot moves to the boy sitting in the kitchen eating a bowl of cereal, still wearing same hockey sweater. A male voice over states, "Now champions in Canada have a cereal to call their own. New maple flavored Wheaties, with the great taste of maple." The shot returns to the two other men talking by the rink boards. "That kid is the next Shenahan, only younger." The boy

walks up to Brendan Shenahan and says, "Hey Shenahan." Brendan Shenahan replies, "Listen kid, I don't think you're ready." The shot moves to the product with music from an electric guitar playing in the background.

Commercial 41 - Pentium II Processor (1)

This commercial begins with a shot of a soccer ball at a soccer game. We see hands coming to pick up the ball. The ball is thrown into play by a player with a red and black uniform. We see two players with yellow and black uniforms watching the play look back at their goalie. They see the feet and calves of the goalie being processed. A computer icon comes up on the screen "Processing Goalie." The yellow players, alarmed, run into the centre to set up a defense. We see the legs of the goalie rushing around the net in preparation for a shot with the icon "Processing Goalie." The players on the red team are setting up their offense and getting closer and closer to the net. We see another computer icon "Still Processing" and the goalie running aimlessly across the net. The red team gets closer and makes a shot that gets past the red goalie. The goalie, with no head or eyes runs across the goal straight into one of the posts for the net and falls down, legs flying into the air. The computer icon came on the screen, "Time for a Pentium II Processor?" Shot moves to a soccer ball with the product icon, then a separate shot with product identification, logo and tune.

Commercial 42 - Milk

Two detectives are interrogating a man in a bare, dark room. One detective wearing a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up starts, "Alright Tommy, you're looking at 10 to 15. Why don't you try to help yourself out?" Tommy is thin and has dark curly hair and a

moustache and beard. He is wearing a black leather jacket and looks like a criminal. The other detective stands up. Tommy is looking at items on table - cupcakes and a brown paper bag in the area of one detective's groin. The detective looks down then at Tommy and asks, "Are you looking at my cupcakes?" The camera angle shows the detective standing behind a table, with the cupcakes in front him. The cupcakes are in front of the detective's groin area. Coupled with the dialogue, we can make the connection between the "cupcakes" and the detective's testicles. The detective continues, "Go ahead take a bite." Tommy reaches and grabs a large chocolate cupcake and begins to eat it going "mmm mmm." He looks quite happy and satisfied but slows down his chewing. The detective remarks, "Atta boy. Now we can do this the easy way or we can do this ... the hard way." The detective removes a container of milk from brown paper bag and slides it across the table. We see the other detective smiling and Tommy looking quite panicked. In the last shot we see the words, "Got milk?"

Commercial 43 - Betty Crocker Potatoes (2)

A man in his 30s, wearing grey t-shirt with blue jean shirt overtop, is sitting at the kitchen table stabbing his fork into some food with a grimace on his face. We see a shot of a baby sitting in a high chair adjacent to this man. He looks toward the baby, then across the kitchen to see if his wife is watching. She is busy, so he takes one scoop of the potatoes on his plate and puts them onto the baby's plate. The voice over begins in a woman's voice, "We know how you feel about instant potatoes ..." The man puts another scoop of potatoes on the baby's plate. "... and we can't say we blame you." The man goes to put a third scoop of potatoes on the baby's plate, but his wife comes to the table so he has the

spoon ready to dump the potatoes onto baby's plate but reroutes them into his mouth and appears to be surprised at the good taste. He continues to scrape them back off the baby's plate and into his mouth. The voice over continues, "But Betty Crocker's Instant Potatoes taste so good, they'll surprise even the biggest skeptics." The camera moves to a shot of the potatoes, both prepared and the box. "Introducing Betty Crocker real mashed and scalloped 100% real potatoes done in seven different ways. If anyone can change the way you think about instant potatoes, it's Betty Crocker."

Commercial 44 - Grand Am (3)

The commercial begins with a shot of a front door of a house. We see the door open and a harried-looking man come out carrying a suitcase in one hand and another item in the other. A very pregnant woman, looking quite uncomfortable and obviously in labor, is behind him. He runs to the car and throws the items in the trunk, then returns to the house. We see several shots of the woman moving slowly to the car, breathing to control the pain of the contractions. She is holding her stomach as she is walking. The music to Blondies' "Don't Get Me Wrong" begins playing in the background. A male voice over begins, "When you're the owner of a Pontiac Grand Am - you don't want anyone else to drive it - ever." The man throws another load into the trunk and closes the lid. He walks up to the passenger door and hands his wife the keys to the car as she walks by, still in obvious discomfort. He gets into the passenger side and closes the door. We see him breathing heavily from his effort to pack the car and the anxiety of the situation. The woman walks slowly across the front of the car and gets into the driver side and begins to drive herself to the hospital. In the last shot we see several quick shots of a car driving and a green sign

with the letter "H" to illustrate this. The commercial ends with a still shot of a car with text and logo. A male voice over begins, "The all new redesigned Grand Am from Pontiac - built for drivers."

Commercial 45 - Cascade(2)

This commercial begins with a gold background and the words "War Stories" written across the middle of the screen. There are six people in a tai chi class held in an old building with large windows and a bulletin board on one wall. There are three women in the front row and a woman and an older man in the back row. Music from a country and western movie is playing in the background, as if two cowboys are ready to fight a duel. One by one, each of the women in the front row tell their war stories with dirty dishes. The first woman on the far left of the screen with dark curly hair put up and wearing a rust colored leotard begins, "Last night my husband overcooked the rice. We're talking bullets." The woman in the middle who is quite heavy and frumpy looking, wearing a lighter rust colored t-shirt under a jean jumper responds, "Uh huh, blue cheese omelette, no butter. Think about it!" The woman on the right side of the screen is a blonde with her hair in a pony tail, wearing a light orange t-shirt. She adds, "Lasagna, 400 degrees, guess who took a nap?" The frumpy woman in the middle responds with, "Whooooo." Her breathing in consistent with tai chi but the sound of this breath fit with the country and western duel music. The male voice over begins, "Sunlight. Dish it out. We can take it." A shot with the product on the left and washed dishes drying on the right ends the commercial.

Commercial 46 - Mr. Sub (2)

A young man is standing with a mop. He is dressed in white with a red apron with "Mr.

Sub" written in red across a white band at the chest level. The lights are dim and the room (supposedly a Mr. Sub store) is empty, and we assume closed. We hear the clink of a bell and music from India. In the next shot, we see a counter with a submarine sandwich on top. Behind the counter on the right and slightly farther back is the same young man dressed the same way. On the left we see an older man dressed in a white shirt with a white head band. We see "Mr. Sub" in small red letters on the left breast of his shirt and across the front of the head band. His coloring is dark and he has a moustache. His ethnicity seems consistent with the music. He speaks with an accent as a wise man using ideas from Eastern philosophy. The young man is commenting on style of the older man, "He's a visionary." The older man begins, "Close your eyes, clear your mind." The young man closes his eyes tightly, while jiggling up and down nervously. We hear the sound of the bell ring again. The shot returns to the young man who says of the older man, "He sees with vision." The bell rings and we see both of them in the shot. The young man is making the sub, and older man says prophetically, "Don't make the sandwich, let the sandwich make itself." The older man moves hands mystically over the sandwich. There is a quick change in the shot and we see the complete sub made magically by the wise man waving his hands over the area. The young man looks over his shoulder in amazement and says of the older man, "He is wise in the ways of the sub." The older man continues, "Do or do not - there is no (inaudible)." The young man cuts the finished sub. The male voice over describes new sandwiches with a close up shot of the sandwiches. The young man says, "He says it's not a sandwich, it's a sub. Mr. Sub." In the last shot, the young man is tossing meat on the sandwich while the older man watches.

Commercial 47 - Mr. Sub

A mother is sitting in a chair in a sitting room with very 70s décor - lime green couch, red curtains, lamp and flowers on corner table beside couch. The woman is in her 40s or 50s and is wearing a print blouse with a yellow sweater over top. The woman is obviously a mother talking about her son, "He started training just last week." The shot moves to young man with two older men, one on either side, all wearing white shirts with official-looking identification badges clipped on. The young man is wearing a red apron and hat. Of the older men, one is very muscular and acts as a drill sargent and the other man is smaller in stature and remains in the background. The young man asks, "Can I help you?" in rehearsal for a real customer. The muscular man yells back into his face, "I can't hear you!" The shot returns to the mother, "It's just something he felt he needed to do." The shot goes back to the three men, with the younger man asking again in a louder voice, "May I help you?" The muscular man yells back again, "I can't hear you!!" The shot returns to the woman who says, "I'm not surprised he chose to serve." The shot moves back to the three men. The muscular man measures the width of the sandwich with an instrument. The young man holds the sandwich in front of him with his arms extended, like he is displaying a rifle for inspection and the muscular man comments, "Good." The other man continues to hold his clipboard. The camera pans over pictures of the young man as a child that are sitting on a table in front of the woman. One picture shows a baby holding a large submarine sandwich, one picture shows a young man wearing a Mr. Sub hat and another person, one picture shows two young men that both look same as this young man but represent before and after, with one of the young men wearing Mr. Sub hat. The mother

states, "His father says he gets it from me." The shot moves to the young man who is blindfolded and putting meat on a sandwich. Both of the older men are watching him and yelling, "Go Go Go." The smaller man is timing the young man with a stopwatch. The shot returns to the mother who is asking, "Am I proud?" The shot moves back to the three men who are standing very close together with the older men standing on either side of the younger man. The thin man yells at the younger man, "Gonna cry?" The muscular man yells "Want your mommy?" The shot returns to the mother, who answers the question she just posed, "Who wouldn't be?" The camera pans over new products with a male voice over describing the products. The final shot looks up at the confident young man, obviously finished his training. He puts on his hat and we see a red and white Mr. Sub flag flying in the background against a blue sky. The mother's voice states, "It's not a sandwich, it's a sub."

Commercial 48 - Burger King (2)

A black man and a white man walk into restaurant. The Burger King motto "Have it your way" is written on the wall in the background in large letters. We know that the commercial is old because of the poor picture quality, clothing, hairdos, mannerisms, and music. The black man walks up to the counter and the black woman at the till asks, "Can I help you?" The year "1973" flashes on the screen. He responds, "If I wanted a whopper with no pickles, that wouldn't be a problem, would it?" The white man asks, "But would we get to hear you sing?" The black cashier replies, "No sir, you get to hear us sing." Another black woman and a white woman appear and they begin to sing, "Hold the pickle, hold the lettuce, special orders don't upset us..." Their mannerisms remind us of the Pips.

The camera switches back and forth from the men to the women. We see the men dancing to the music and singing with the women. We hear the sound of an audio tape being fast forwarded and see a blur on the screen. In white text we see the words, "25 years later" and see the same men wearing the same clothes go into a newer restaurant. The black man has gray hair and the white man is bald. They walk up to the counter and the black man asks, "If I want my value meal with rings ..." the white man interrupts "... instead of fries," the black man continues, "is that a problem?" The same 3 women, now 25 years older as well, begin to sing, "Value meals with rings or fries, it still costs the same great price. The camera shows men dancing to the women singing, similar to the earlier sequence. Viewers see camera pan over product. "You don't have to ask us twice to have it your way. Have it your way..." A male voice over begins, "When you have it your way, it just tastes better." The screen becomes smaller and the women singing are in a box within a screen with product information presented above the box .

Commercial 49 - Pepsi One

Skydivers are lining the sides of the cargo bin of an airplane. All except one, in an orange suit, are dressed in gray suits. At least one character is female. The instructor is standing in the middle as he tells the skydivers to, "Get ready to taste life for the first time, people." Suddenly, a man in a skydiving suit flies into the airborne plane. The man is Cuba Gooding Jr. In the next shot we see Cuba Gooding Jr. wearing a suit. He begins, "Watch out now. You want to taste life? Then take a big swig of this. New Pepsi One." He takes a large drink. He continues, "This one's got it all - the most awesome cola taste that's bigger than the wild blue yonder - but has only one calorie." He asks one person who is seated, "You

want to taste one?" The person replies, "Ya!" He asks another person, "You want to taste one?" That person replies, "Ya!" We see a more distant shot of the plane as he repeats the question and people start yelling, "Ya! Ya! Ya!" Cuba Gooding Jr. yells, "Come and get it," and begins throwing cans out of the airplane. The people are jumping out after the cans and the Cuba Gooding Jr. yells, "Go, go, go ..." The instructor asks, "Have you got one for me?" Cuba Gooding Jr. replies, "Put your tray in the upright position and prepare for takeoff, my man," and throws a can out the door. The can comes into the front of the screen and fits in with the text. "Only ____ has it all." The can is in the form of the "l" and moves in to fill the gap in the sentence. We see the instructor coming up behind the can and grabbing it. The male voice over states, "New Pepsi One." The commercial ends with music from an army movie.

Commercial 50 - Hostess Donuts

A man in a black and white plaid bathrobe walks into the kitchen. The music in the background sounds very "happy," with lots of strings, similar to the theme of "Leave it to Beaver." He walks over to the cupboard that has a box from Hostess Donuts on the top. He looks inside and all of the donuts are gone, only a few crumbs remain. He says, "OK. Who ate the last Hostess Donut?" The camera moves to his son who is wearing a black t-shirt with "12" on the front. The son states, "Don't look at me." The shot moves to the man who looks at the next person in an interrogating manner. The shot moves to his wife, who is wearing white t-shirt. She tells him, "Don't look at me." The man raises his eyebrows, then the shot moves to his daughter wearing a pink nightgown. She responds, "Don't look at me." "Well," he responds, "it didn't just get up and walk away, did it?" The man is

holding the empty box. In the background, the whole family hears water dripping. They notice that it is leaking out of the empty box and that there are some puddles on the floor. They all begin to follow the puddles of water down a hallway. It leads them to an aquarium with a goldfish inside. The fish has chocolate around its mouth and responds to the family by saying, "Don't look at me." The shot moves to the product displayed on a turntable. The voice of the fish says in the voice over, "Hostess, now that's the stuff." The shot returns to the man looking in the aquarium and shaking his head.

Commercial 51 - Immodium Quick Dissolve

Football players are standing along the sideline during a game. One player comes up on the right side and asks the player standing in the middle, "So, how are we feeling?" The player responds, "Fine." The first player asks, "Is it gone?" The player responds, "What?" The first player answers, "The diarrhea - how's the diarrhea?" The second player responds, "Come on. Have some respect." The first player asks, "Did you take the Immodium?" The second player responds, "Ya, I took it." The first player queries, " ...and?" The second player responds and gestures, "Touchdown!" The shot switches to a product display and product information. The male voice begins, "Immodium quick dissolve. Dissolves on your tongue in seconds and without water. For relief, often with one dose." "Relief with one dose" is printed under the product. The shot returns to the football game. The first player continues, "So you're relieved?" The second player responds, "Ya, I'm relieved. OK?" The first player, who turns out to be quarterback, leans over to take ball from the centre who happens to be the man who had diarrhea. The quarterback says, "Ya, so am I." The game progresses.

Commercial 52 - Motrin

The commercial begins with a high and distant shot of the main entrance of a bank. The shot moves to a man behind a desk. He looks important as he is signing papers and talking on the phone. He says to the person on the phone, "It's Mr. Manager now." He signs a paper and whispers to the person, "Get me a copy." He returns to his telephone conversation and says, "No, I didn't bring a lunch." In the background we hear someone yelling, "Attention fellow people! Grab a piece of the floor - the chicken has landed!" Bank robbers wearing chicken masks and black clothing come rushing into the bank. In the next shot we see one standing in front of two tellers and the manager. The tellers (one female and one male) are putting money into a bag and the robber is saying, "Oh ya, feed the chicken, feed the chicken." The manager is in the background with his hands up, his head nodding yes and saying, "OK." We hear a male voice over state, "There is pain ..." Next, we hear more yelling from the background. The voice is still male but higher pitched. Several people are shown rushing into the bank wearing pig masks. "Hey man this is a robbery. Everybody get down on the floor if you're not already ... not." The male voice over continues, "... then there's Motrin pain. Motrin relieves Motrin pain." We see the mask of the chicken as it is getting the money from the teller and the bank manager gulps. The product is displayed on a black background. In red box with white text above "Motrin relieves Motrin pain" is printed.

Commercial 53 - Kellog's All-Bran

The entire commercial consists of a pink flamingo walking along peacefully through shallow blue water. A box of cereal is shown in the lower left corner. Music is playing in

the background. We recognize the music as the theme from Definition but more recently it is found in Austin Powers. Toward the end of the commercial, we hear a male voice over, "This 30 second washroom break is brought to you by Kellogg's All Bran. Because if you're regular, it may be all the time you'll need." The last shot shows a black panel with the product displayed in the lower right hand corner with the text instructing the viewer to "Make it a part of your routine."

Commercial 54 - Armstrong Cheese

The commercial begins with an aerial view of some buildings in a dust cloud. The shot moves to a man flying an older airplane with an open cockpit. The man is looking toward the ground, throwing pieces of cheese at targets. A male voice over begins, "In a world that's forgotten about the simpler things in life, we bring you the taste of fresh air, green grass and clean living." We see another view of the man flying the plane. An aerial view of the ground shows dust clouds of areas he has already "bombed" with cheese. The first "bomb" is targeted at a railway yard. Initially, the track is surrounded by gray, dingy surroundings. After it is hit with the cheese, it is surrounded by green meadow. The second shot is of a downtown area. We don't see a before shot, but we follow the "bomb" down and see the pasture with cows that is left after the bomb. With the final "bomb," we see a woman walking down the street with a large white show dog. She is wearing a pink suit and sunglasses and looks very "uptown." After the woman is hit with the cheese, she still has the same hair color but she is wearing a blue dress with an apron over top and is surrounded by cows. The shot moves back to the man in the plane. He looks down and

smiles, satisfied at what he has accomplished. There is a shot of the product on display.

The voice over states, "Armstrong. Cheese tastes better here."

Commercial 55 - Acura

The commercial begins with shot of cars parked on a city street. A woman is running in the background and jumps into one of the cars. The man in the car is surprised and says, "Whoa, whoa, whoa." The woman begins speaking rapidly in Italian. The man driving the car doesn't understand her so she says, "Drive! Just drive!" hurriedly in English with a heavy accent. They are shown speeding through the streets. She commands him, "Straight, straight ... no no ... left go left go left... go around the circle ... right here, stop." She is speaking very quickly and appears very agitated, looking around as if to see if someone is following her as they are driving. At the end of the commercial, the driver asks, "Wait, who's after you?" The woman responds in English with no accent, "Nobody, but thanks for the test drive," and closes the door. The driver of the car smiles to himself. The male voice over begins, "The EL from Acura. Designed with purpose. Driven by passion." A picture of the product is shown with the price in text underneath. The manufacturer's symbol and motto, "Designed with purpose. Driven by passion." is displayed in text over car.

Commercial 56 - Milk (3)

A young girl with pig tails is pouring a glass of milk. She is small so she has to lift the carton of milk over her head to fill the glass. We see a second shot from a different angle, with a semicircle boundary on the top of the shot. In the next shot, we see a box of animal cookies with cellophane covering a half-moon opening, the location of the previous shot. The little girl reaches inside the box of animal crackers and we hear the crackers speaking,

"Oh oh, we've got trouble. Oh please, not me. That's gotta hurt." We hear a woman's voice in the background call the little girl, "Tracy..." and see the little girl run out of the room. Some crackers are left on the cupboard. "We've gotta do something." They jump through the cellophane and the elephant yells, "Charge!" The crackers run up to the glass of milk with the sounds of a stampede in the background and manage to push it over with a cracker yelling, "Timber" and a lamb cookie vocalizing, "Baaaa" while spilling the milk on the floor. They run back toward the box with a rhino yelling, "Run monkey!" and they all make it except a cracker in the form of a monkey. "I'm not going to make it," the monkey says and falls over on its front. The rhino yells, "She's got monkey!" The little girl returning to the kitchen, sees her milk spilled and yells, "Mom!" She throws down the monkey and runs out of the room. We hear the animals yell after her, "Go eat someone your own size!" The lamb states, "Baaaa" in the background. The last shot is of a black background with the words "Got Milk?" in white lettering. A male voice over asks, "Got Milk?"

Commercial 57 - Cantel AT & T(2)

The viewer sees a glass of milk and a banana left for Santa. Santa is brushing himself off after coming down the chimney. It is quite dark and Santa is looking around in the dark. Suddenly, we see a hand turn on a light. Santa is surprised. We see an ape sitting in a chair, waiting for Santa to arrive. The ape crosses his arms impatiently, waiting for Santa to show him his gift. Santa shows the ape the gift he brought for him - a rope attached to a tire. The ape looks at the gift and gives it a raspberry "ppllflsst." Santa then pulls other gifts out of his bag, trying to satisfy the ape. He brings out an abdonimator - the ape shakes his head no." Santa continues with a chia pet, dustbuster, tie, and "hair be gone" facial. The ape

purses his lips in frustration. Santa digs deep into his bag and displays a packaged cell phone. The ape goes "Oohh!" A male voice over begins, "Pay as you go with Cantele AT&T. With no monthly bill, no credit check and no contract. Now anyone can get a cell phone for Christmas." The product logo displayed in the top of the screen with "Now anyone can get a cell phone for Christmas." in text across the bottom. In the final shot, we see a young chubby boy with curly hair on Christmas morning. He is holding up the tire with a rope attached that was meant for the monkey and is looking confused.

Commercial 58 - Frosted Cheerios

A woman takes her seat on a bus. She looks very happy and bouncy and is clutching a box of Frosted Cheerios to her chest. A male voice over states, "Frosted Cheerios. So good the box never closes." We recognize the woman from a sitcom (Suddenly Susan) in which she plays a feisty, outspoken character - similar to the woman she plays in this commercial. The shot then moves to inside the bus and remains there the rest of the time. The first person to sit beside the woman is a bald man around 30 years old who has a moustache, tatoos, and is wearing a jean jacket. He tastes the cereal and says, "This is good. It is new?" She replies "It is if you're just out of prison." The next person to sit beside her is an older woman who is of small stature. She seems to be in the middle of a long, boring story, "... and then I moved to Cleveland." The main character cuts her off, "Whatever ... I'm eating." The next person to sit beside her is an older man who is bald with a moustache and a red plaid shirt. He asks, "Can I get some?" She responds, "Yes, but not from me," as she pushes him away from the box. The shot moves to a display of the product with a male voice over. "Every O is frosted the whole way around for a sweet taste that's part of this good breakfast." We

see an animation of the O being surrounded by frosting, then flying to the table with the rest of the breakfast. The shot returns to the bus. The woman looks out the window and sees cows. "Look, cows. Can we pull over and get some milk?" The male voice over continues with a display of the product, "Frosted Cheerios - so good this box never closes." The shot returns to the woman. She looks quite angry and desperate. We see only one cheerio left in the box. The woman yells, "If we don't stop for more cereal, things could get pretty ugly people!"

Commercial 59 - Sprite

The commercial begins with shot of boys playing basketball in a gym. A male voice over states, "Look under Sprite caps and you could win a free Sprite or a \$25000.00 pay cheque." In the background, one boy is sitting down on the bleaches with a cap from Sprite in his hands. When he lifts the liner, a professional basketball player (Grant Hill - Detroit Pistons) appears on one of his shoulders and says, "Two words kid, savings account." Another professional basketball player (Colby Brian - LA Lakers) appears on the other shoulder and says, "Oh, if that were that Colby, I'd take it traveling." Grant Hill continues, "You ought to know about traveling - you do it all over the court. You need steady long-term growth." Colby retorts, "I don't know what's weaker your advice or your game." Grant responds, "Weak?" Colby replies, "Ya weak." Grant looks around boy's head and threatens, "Hey don't make me come over there!" Colby responds, "Excuse me?" Grant says, "Do you want me to say it again?" The boy interjects, "I kind of have to get home." Grant snaps, "Is anyone talking to you?" The boy looks confused and says, "Uh, no." Colby replies, "I didn't think so." The male voice over states, "The sprite salary game. What you

do with the money is your choice." The words "Image is nothing. Thirst is everything. Obey your thirst." are displayed on the screen in white letters on black background. The product is displayed with the basketball players still bickering in the background.

Commercial 60 - White Castle (2)

The commercial begins with various shots with the camera tilted. A man is shown as he is driving a zambone over ice in dark rink. Organ music, similar to that found during a hockey game is playing softly in the background. Suddenly, we see a stream of steam coming under the door and across the ice. It makes its way to the driver, turns into a hand, and taps the driver on the shoulder, beckoning him to follow. The driver smells the steam and follows hypnotically. We now hear jazz music in the same melody with a heavy saxophone and the zambone following the stream of steam down the road. The male voice over states, "Watch out. Once the crave gets you - it's got you." The shot moves from burgers frying to a bag containing a burger ready for the man. He picks up the White Castle bag from the drive thru window and begins going back to the rink. In his wake is a sheet of ice. Someone goes to walk into the restaurant and slips on the ice left behind by the zambone. Superimposed on last scene we see "White Castle - What you crave." in white lettering on a blue background.

Commercial 61 - Labatt - Community Service

A man is sleeping in a small apartment with his head at the foot of the bed. The phone begins to ring and the answering machine picks it up and plays the greeting, "You know what to do." The man sits up and rubs his face. He is only wearing pants and looks in pretty rough shape. The male voice leaving the message on the answering machine states, "Wild

party last night, huh?" The man just waking up looks in his wallet and finds the name Cheryl and a phone number. He walks into bathroom and the man leaving the message continues. "So what happened to you? Last I heard you were heading for some body piercing place." The man looks down and finds that he has a nipple ring. He looks alarmed. Looks on the back of the paper where Cheryl's phone number is written. The card is for a body piercing and tattoo parlor. The man frantically searches arms for tattoos but doesn't find any. He looks at his nipple ring again and plays with it as if to say - it's not so bad - it's kind of cool. The voice on the answering machine continues, "Oh, man, that stuff is too weird for me. I'm sure you didn't do anything too stupid. Hey, you're the man, cool guy. Well, see you at the beach." The man turns around and the viewers see a huge tattoo in the shape of a heart covering his entire back. The name Cheryl is inscribed in the middle of the tattoo. The commercial ends with text, "Community Service - Know when to draw the line. Labatts."

Commercial 62 - Clear Solutions(2)

The commercial begins with distant shot of young woman wearing a green sweater and sitting in the middle of a huge table in a large, beautiful dining room. The table is full of food and the young woman's mother is on the right of the screen, her father on the left. There is opera music playing in the background. We hear the sound of sawing and realize that it is the woman's father cutting his fowl, only magnified. We hear the sound of teeth chattering and see her mother eating baby corn. The woman looks distressed and trapped and looks down at her plate, full of vegetables, meat, and potatoes with gravy. In white letters across the screen we see the words, "Live at home?" The scene moves to a dingy

apartment with acid rock music in the background. The young woman is wearing the same green sweater. She is looking around at her roommates. One is playing with his bare feet, the other is eating something and making the same noise as her mother was. She looks down and stirs her somewhat thick potful of macaroni and cheese. Across the screen in white lettering we see the text, "Live away?" The camera moves to shot of the product on a blue background. A woman's voice over begins, "At least there's a clear solution for your skin. Clear Solutions - Pond's 4 step skin care system for clearer looking skin."

Commercial 63 - Toyota Camry(2)

An older, successful-looking man is talking on the phone. There are many phones ringing in the background. He puts the phone to his shoulder, motions to one of his employees, and commands, "Murphy. I want you to pick my wife up from the airport. Her name is Thelma." In the next shot we see Murphy in the airport with "Thelma" written on a large card he is holding at chest level. He is one of many men dressed in suits with names of women on cards. A beautiful blonde woman in a tight white dress walks up to him and says, "I'm Thelma." He responds, "Really?" She says, "Really." They get into the car. The male voice over mentions options that come with this particular model of car. A song with words, "Lonely girl" is playing on the CD in the background. As they drive along, they are smiling at one another, almost flirting. The woman seductively pulls her skirt down because it has ridden up. She looks at Murphy and says, "Thanks for the ride." He responds, "My pleasure, Mrs. Burns." The woman looks confused, "Mrs. Burns, who's Mrs. Burns?" We hear the sound of brakes squealing. At this point, the voice over adds that car comes with anti-lock brakes. In the next shot we see an older, heavier woman with dark hair, waiting

impatiently at the airport with her luggage stacked around her. The male voice over continues, "The 1999 Camry. At least the road will be smooth." The commercial ends with the Toyota theme song (Everyday People) and white text on a black background appears "Toyota|value" changes to "Toyota|everyday."

Commercial 64 - Fairfield Inn(2)

An elderly woman is sitting in a chair in front of a television set with rabbit ears. She is wearing a blue dress with a white sweater over it, white slippers, a hair net, and has beaded idiot strings for her glasses. Although she is knitting, she is not paying attention to what she is doing and is totally engrossed in the television program, which is a love story. We hear the dialogue, "I love you Marsha I love you Tom. I love you Marsha. I love you Tom. I've always loved you Marsha....Oh Tom...Kiss me." As this is occurring, we see a dog sleeping in a basket sitting to the right of the woman's chair. The wool for the item she is knitting is in the box with the dog. Because the woman isn't paying attention, we see that the wool has become mixed up with the dog hair and that the woman is using the dog's hair to knit her item. By the end of the commercial, the dog is half bald and we see the dog's fur knit into the item the woman is knitting. A male voice over begins, "Don't sleep just anywhere." The dog lifts its head and whines in background. The voice over continues, "Stay at Fairfield in by Marriott. It's clean, it's comfortable, it's friendly. Fairfield Inn by Marriot - you can expect more." The company logo is presented in white letters on a blue background over a picture of a room with the room rates printed underneath in white text.

Commercial 65 - Sony Store(3)

This commercial begins with a shot of the side/rear view of the head of one of the

salesmen. In the background, across the top of the wall is written, "The Total Sony Experience" in large black letters. Another salesman moves into the picture, looking at something off to the side and asks the first salesman, "Have you talked to him yet?" The first salesman replies, "Mr. Hamilton? Ah, he's fine." The second salesman nods and asks, "How long has he been at it?" The first salesman looks at his watch, "Umm, a couple of hours." The second salesman responds, "Oh, not that long, then." The shot moves to an older man. The man is in his 50s and is attractive, looks successful, and is dressed in a polo shirt under a suit jacket. He is standing in front of some equipment at shoulder height, pushing one button repeatedly and watching the CD compartment open and close repeatedly. The man is smiling, obviously enjoying himself and pleased with his technological competence. The shot moves to a display of televisions of increasing size. Jazz piano music begins. A male voice over says, "It's not just a store - It's a Sony. OOOhhh, trinitron vega." The shot moves to display the store front. "The Sony Store." is displayed in print.

Commercial 66 - Best Western Hotel

The top 3/5 of screen is in black, the bottom 2/5 is in royal blue. In top part is the Best Western logo in gold with "3800 Hotels Worldwide" in gold letters underneath. The words "never too far from fun" fly in from left to right in small letters in the blue area and are flush with the left side of the screen. The shot moves to two bellhops in red uniforms (hats, jacket, pants) with gold buttons and decoration. They have just finished a golf game. "Pretty good round today, huh?" Walter, on the right, says to other bellman. "You did real nice, Walter," he replies. "Come on, what did I get?" Walter asks. The bellman replies

almost apologetically, "You shot an 82. I got a 68. So I beat you ... again." Walter is clearly frustrated, "Man, what do I keep doing wrong?" The other bellman tries to console him, "You were great on the front nine - got a par and two birdies right next to each other." The bellman continues, "It's that last hole - you shot a 12." Walter gestures, "Ya, well look at that thing!" The camera moves to shot of a windmill. They are obviously on a mini-golf course rather than a real golf course. Walter continues, "I mean, it just keeps going round and round. I can't beat it! I'm done here." He walks away, leaving the other bellman. The shot moves to a graphic similar to the graphic presented at the beginning, except that the logo is much larger and the white text underneath says "across the street from ordinary" with the 1-800 number for the hotel underneath. We hear the bellman say in the background, "I'll buy you a snow cone."

Commercial 67 - Sask Power

The commercial begins with jazz music. We see a young boy with dark curly hair and glasses sitting at a desk in a classroom. He is looking off to the side, distracted. The camera pans around the young boy, emphasizing the amount of time he is daydreaming. His face twitches. In the background, we hear a high-pitched woman's voice yell something barely audible, "Arthur?" then louder, "Arthur?" The camera swings to look up at an old woman with gray hair leering at the young boy, calling his name, "Arthur?" Arthur is startled and the camera shows the other students in the class laughing at young Arthur. We assume that this is not the first time Arthur was caught daydreaming in class. We then see a shot of an older male with curly hair and glasses sitting in the same position as Arthur was in the beginning of the commercial. His face twitches and he raises his head. We know that this is

Arthur all grown up. A male voice over states, "As part of the communities we serve, Sask Power is a proud sponsor of the imagination." The man is now a writer sitting at a table and autographing his books. We see his name, "Arthur Lloyd" in the background and the text, "the power to be you" off to the right side. The voice over continues, " ... and literacy programs like the Saskatchewan Book Awards." Arthur signs a book and hands it to a young girl, then takes another book to sign from people on other side of the screen. The Sask Power logo is displayed at the end.

Commercial 68 - Clairol Herbal Essense Shampoo

A woman is pushing a grocery cart down an aisle in a grocery store. A male voice is making announcements over the loudspeaker. "Stop by aisle 5 for Clairol's Herbal Essences. It takes you where no shampoo has gone before. The woman is walking up to a display of shampoo, Clairol Herbal Essences. The woman picks up bottle of shampoo and smells it. Then she begins to fantasize about being in the shower and washing her hair. We hear harp music and see the woman's apartment in a dream-like state, slightly blurry. We see hear her moaning with pleasure as she washes her hair. The man's voice on the intercom becomes much deeper and sexier as he continues, "with all natural botanical, organic herbs and pure mountain water. It will leave your hair looking beautiful." In the background we see the woman throwing her head back and writhing with enjoyment, moaning, " yes, yes, yes." Suddenly, she realizes that she is really in the grocery store and looks around, slightly embarrassed. Dr. Ruth was watching all of this and walks up to the woman saying, "If you think that's great, try the body wash." We hear the man's voice on

intercom again. This time it is no longer deep and sexy. "Clairol Herbal Essences. A totally organic experience."

Commercial 69 - Air Miles - Market Tire

Three men are sitting in a row of seats in an airplane waiting for take off. Two men are businessmen that are dressed identically and the man in the middle is dressed as a tourist. The businessmen are wearing white shirts and red ties and typing on white laptop computers. The man in the middle is bald, wearing an orange floral shirt under a navy jacket, and has a camera around his neck. He excitedly engages the other two men in conversation. "Ooh, this is exciting, isn't it?" The businessmen try to ignore him and mutter "mmhmm." They keep typing without looking up. The tourist continues, "You know, I got this trip with Air Miles," as he takes the card out of his pocket. The two men mutter, "Air Miles - good," in unison, still ignoring the man. The tourist continues, "Good Year is a good place to get Air Miles." The men reply, "mmhmm." The tourist babbles on, "Good Year is number one in tires. Why would you shop anywhere else, right?" Both men respond, "Right." He continues, "Boy it's going to be exciting talking to you guys all the way to Hawaii!" The two businessmen look at one another and ask, "Hawaii?" The tourist asks, "No?" The businessmen shake their heads "no" in unison. A male voice over provides product information about Goodyear tires. The tourist continues, "So gate 31A was going to Hawaii. Gate 31B was going to ... ?" "Winnipeg," the man on the left answers. The tourist says, "We're going to Winnipeg."

Commercial 70 - Tropicana Premium Single Size

A clear empty bottle with a narrow neck is laying on a gray surface with a black

background. Classical music begins to play as an orange rolls in front of the bottle. The orange goes, "hmmm," rolls around to the opposite side of the bottle and bumps it twice to the tune of the music. Then, it jumps on top of the bottle and bounces on it several times. The orange is obviously trying to fit into the bottle. The orange backs up, grunts, and aims for the top of the bottle. It bounces off, shakes itself, then moves back even further. The viewer hears a determined GGGgggrrrr" as the orange rolls quickly toward the mouth of the empty bottle. It hits the bottle with such force that it actually gets into the much smaller mouth of the bottle, changes the shape of the bottle, and knocks the bottle into an upright position. The male voice over states, "Finally, fresh squeezed taste in a bottle." The shot moves to display of the product with the text "in convenience stores" underneath. The voice over continues, "Tropicana pure premium single size. Perfect."

Commercial 71 - Match Maker Funds - Bank of Montreal

A man walks through a door with the words "Mutual Funds" written on the outside. The man walks in slowly, somewhat hesitant and anxious. He is average-looking, balding and wearing tan jacket. "Um, I'd like to get some..." A second man wearing a suit is standing behind the desk and cuts him off, speaking quickly and confidently. "Mutual Funds. OK Mr. Wheeler, kindly put your head in the vice and we'll get started." The man obediently puts his head in the vice sitting on the desk and the man in the dark suit turns the wheel to tighten the vice. He pulls down a chart with the letters "f" on the bottom, "s" in the middle and "c" on the top. He begins talking, "Now, Mr. Wheeler, when I say the letters "f" stands for bond funds, "s" stands for equities and "c" (inaudible)." The man wearing the suit pulls down an intimidating chart full of graphs and continues. "Now lets take a peek at the

funds available to you and see how their deviations compare with their compounded annual returns." The man tries to take a sip of coffee from a mug sideways with his head in the vice, still looking quite attentive. The man in the suit continues, "Before we calculate ..." and fades into the background as the male voice over begins and the scene moves away from the office to a plain background with a book containing information on Bank of Montreal's Matchmaker Mutual Funds. The voice over states, "There is a quick and painless way to get the right mix of mutual funds. Matchmaker available at Bank of Montreal." The logo replaces the book. The voice over ends, "It doesn't have to be complicated."

Commercial 72 - Act One

The commercial begins with man and woman speaking to the camera. The woman is standing slightly in front of the man. This makes her head appear bigger. The woman begins speaking, "I'm not shy exactly, I'm..." She is searching for the correct word. The man offers "inhibited?" She flashes him a dirty look and says "...reserved." The shot moves to the couple playing a board game with other people and the woman is jumping up and down yelling, "Show me the money! Show me the money!" The shot returns to man and woman. "No, no, I'm not a games person," the woman says quietly. The shot moves to the man impersonating a character. The woman excitedly yells, "Seinfeld!" The shot returns to the woman who says very softly, "I'm not a TV or movie buff." The shot returns to people playing a game. The man is on his knees pointing up with one finger saying, "The plane, the plane." The woman screams excitedly, "Fantasy Island!" The shot moves to a picture of the product with a male voice over. "It's the new game, Act One, read the lines..." The shot

returns to the party with the man reading lines and woman trying to guess the answer. She is having trouble so she says, "next one" and the man reads, "Life is like a box of chocolates," and the woman yells, "Forrest Gump - go Forrest, go Forrest..." and jumps around screaming. The voice over continues "...guess the title. Act One, now playing in living rooms everywhere." In the last scene the woman is standing like Leonardo di Caprio in the famous Titanic scene and she says, "I'm the king of the world."

Commercial 73 - Savane Wrinkle Free Pants

The first shot shows a woman talking on the phone. We see the end of the conversation. The woman is obviously angry and yells into the phone, "You jerk! I never want to see you again!" There is a picture of a man on the table beside the telephone. We assume it is a picture of the man she was speaking with on the phone. She picks up the picture, crumples it up, and throws it across the room. She misses the trash basket and the crumpled ball falls onto the floor. The woman looks at ball and is surprised to find that it is unwrinkling itself. The male voice over begins, "Savanne. Soft 100% cotton pants. They are the only pants made with process 2000 so they don't wrinkle." The woman, seeing the picture unwrinkle, looks frustrated and rewrinkles the picture. She steps on it and grinds it into the floor to make the wrinkles sharper. The male voice over continues, "Which means you'll always come off looking good, no matter what you've done." The picture unwrinkles again and the man looks up smiling, confident, and cocky. We see the shadow of a pair of scissors. The man sees the scissors, gets scared and runs out of the picture that is still lying on the floor. The last shot is of a tan background with text, "Savane. The original wrinkle-free cotton."

Commercial 74 - Chunky Soup

The commercial begins with the title, "The Chunky Crusade" in red letters across the blue sky. The shot changes and we see a steel trailer being pulled by a convertible. Don Cherry is driving the convertible and his sidekick is in the passenger's seat. Both men are wearing black sunglasses. The sidekick begins, "The Chunky Crusade - I love it! Here's a good guy. Get the chunky." They pull up to man, "Ya hungry?" "You got some chunky?" the man asks. "New tortellini with chicken," Don Cherry replies. In the next scene, the trailer is parked and opened. Under the canape we see many cans of soup lined up. Don Cherry and the construction worker are sitting on yellow plaid rocker-recliners in the middle of the highway. "How's the chunky, pal?" Don Cherry asks. "Hits the spot." the construction worker replies as he is eating the soup. Don Cherry asks, "Great soup hey?" The construction worker states, "Real satisfying." Don Cherry repeats, "Satisfying ... alright." A male voice over begins with picture of the product displayed, "New Campbell's chunky tortellini with tender chicken in a savory broth." The shot returns to the construction worker who is looking at his spoon exclaiming, "What a big tortellini!" Don Cherry is looking at his sidekick who is playing with the construction worker's equipment. The sidekick is playing with jackhammer and hits water. The water sprays into the air. Don Cherry says, "Ya got that right, buddy."

Commercial 75 - Whisker Lickins Cat Treats

A man is looking for his cat, running across living room calling, "Kitty, kitty, kitty,..." He gets on the floor, looks under couch, sees the cat, and exclaims, "Oh, Kitty!" The cat looks at him, uninterested. The man gets a little green mouse to try to get the cat to come out.

The cat doesn't respond. The man gets a blue scratching post. No response. The man gets a fish bowl with goldfish. No response. There is a shot of cat. The cat looks bored. The man brings a giant barrel of catnip. No response. He brings a huge ball of purple yarn. No response. He dresses up like giant mouse. No response. There is a shot of the cat, still looking bored. A male voice over begins, "If you really want to get you cat's attention, then get Whisker Lickins cat treats." The man jumps up and down and points to the cat as if to say he knows what will get the cat's attention. He comes back carrying some packages and says teasingly, "Whisker Lickins." The voice over continues, "Distinctively tasty flavors and shapes that no cat can resist." The product is displayed. The man is finally able to get the cat to come out from under the couch when the cat sees the treats. The man lays on his back and the cat comes up on his chest. The cat appears cuddly, but just long enough to take the package of cat treats, then runs back under the chair. The man sighs in frustration. The voice over states, "Whisker Lickins - whicker lickin delicious." The last shot shows the product. The picture of the cat on the package licks its lips.

Appendix C

Analysis of the Narratives Within Humorous Television Commercials

constructed from Foss (1996) and Fowles (1996)

A. Overall Description

1. What is the product and product category?
2. Who is the intended audience?
3. How is the commercial composed?

- scripted sequence
- color
- music
- sound effects
- lighting
- photography
- special effects
- items in foreground and background

B. Description of the Narrative

1. Setting
2. Characters
3. Narrator
4. Events
5. Temporal Relations
6. Causal Relations
7. Intertextual Referents

C. Implications of the Narrative

1. Relationships
2. Identity
3. Social Status
4. Cultural Beliefs

D. Humour

1. Theory of Humour
2. Function of Humour

Appendix D

Comprehensive Examination of the Narrative (Foss, 1996)

1. **Setting:** What is the setting or scene in the narrative? Is there a change in setting over the course of the narrative? How does the setting relate to the plot and characters? How is the particular setting created? Is the setting textually prominent—highly developed and detailed—or negligible?

2. **Characters:** Who are the main characters in the narrative? Are some of the characters non-human or inanimate phenomena, described as thinking and speaking beings? What are the physical and mental traits of the characters? In what actions do the characters engage? Do the traits or actions of the characters change over the course of the narrative? How are the characters presented? Are they flat or round?

3. **Narrator:** Is the narrative presented directly to the audience, or is it mediated by a narrator? . . . If a narrator is audible, what features mark the presence of the narrator? What in the narrative creates a sense of the narrator's presence? What makes the narrator intrusive or not? What kind of person is the narrator? . . . What kind of vocabulary does the narrator use? Does the narrator favor certain types of words, sentence structures, metaphors, or types of arguments? Is the narrative vividly told and detailed? Is the narrator wordy and verbose or straightforward and direct? How coherent is the narrative? Does the narrator adequately connect the various elements of the narrative to one another to create a cogent and meaningful narrative? What is the narrator's attitude toward the story being, the subject matter of the story, the audience, and him or herself?

If the narrative is being presented orally, what characterizes the narrator's pitch, pauses, tone of voice, gestures, emphasis, pronunciation, and other features of speech?...What kinds of powers are available to the narrator? What kind of authority does the narrator claim? What is the point of view adopted by the narrator? . . . Is the narrator omniscient, knowing the outcome of every event and the nature of every character and setting, thus telling the story from a god-like vantage point? Is the narrator omnipresent—able to skip from one locale to the other in the narrative? Is the narrator allowed to range into the past or future or restricted to the contemporary story moment? Does the narrator engage in time and space summarizing, a process in which vast panoramas and large groups of people are characterized in certain ways as seen from the narrator's exalted position? Does the narrator go beyond describing to engage in commentary such as interpretation and evaluation? Does the narrator engage in metanarrative discourse, or discourse in which the narrative itself is discussed and elements in the narrative are commented on explicitly—such as definitions of terms or translations of foreign words? How does the narrator report characters' discourse? Does the narrator use direct forms of representation, in which the exact words of the characters are reported? Does the narrator use indirect forms, in which the characters' speech and thought are paraphrased, suggesting more invention by the narrator?

4. Events: What are the major and minor events—plot lines, happenings, or changes of state—in the narrative?...How are the events presented? Are they characterized by particular qualities? How fully are the kernels developed by satellites? How do the satellites affect the

nature of the kernels? Are the events active (expressing action) or stative (expressing a state or condition)?

5. **Temporal Relations:** What are the temporal relationships among the events recounted in the narrative? Do events occur in a brief period of time or over many years? What is the relationship between the natural order of the events as they occurred and the order of their presentation in the telling of the narrative? Does the narrator use flashbacks and flashforwards, common devices to reorder events as they are narrated? How is the story that is told located in time with respect to the act of narrating it? Is the telling of the story subsequent to what it tells—a predictive or prophetic form? Is the telling in present tense, simultaneous or interspersed with the action depicted? Is the narration in the past tense, coming after the events recounted? What is the speed of the narrative? . . . Are particular events and characters narrated with higher speed than others? Does use of speed emphasize some events and characters over others?

6. **Causal Relations:** What cause-and-effect relationships are established in the narrative? How are connections made between causes and effects? Is cause presented prior to effect or after it? How clearly and strongly are the connections between cause and effect made? Which received the most emphasis—the cause or the effect? What kinds of causes are dominant in the narration? Are events caused largely by human action, accident, or forces of nature? In how much detail are the causes and effects described?

7. **Audience:** Who is the audience or the person or people to whom the narrative is addressed? Is it addressed to an individual, a group, or the narrator him or herself? Is the audience a participant in the events recounted? What are the signs of the audience in the

narrative? What can be inferred about the audience's attitudes, knowledge, or situation from the narrative? Is the audience represented in a detailed or sketchy manner? What seems to be the narrator's evaluation of the audience's knowledge, personality, and abilities?

8: Theme: What is the major theme of the narrative? . . . How is the theme articulated in the narrative—through the depiction of setting, characters, or events or through the narrator's commentary? How obvious and clear is the theme?

(pp. 402–405)