

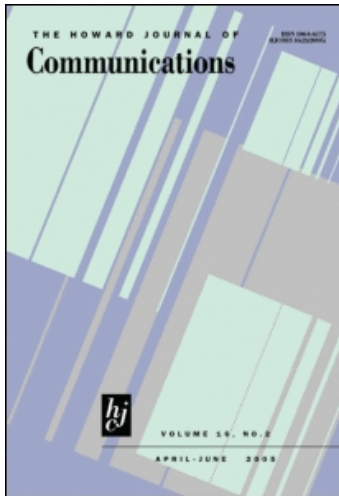
This article was downloaded by: [University of Arizona]

On: 29 August 2008

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 789363144]

Publisher Taylor & Francis

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Howard Journal of Communications

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713771688>

Portrayals of Older Adults in U.S. and Indian Magazine Advertisements: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Priya Raman ^a; Jake Harwood ^a; Deborah Weis ^a; Judith L. Anderson ^a; Grace Miller ^a

^a Department of Communication, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

Online Publication Date: 01 July 2008

To cite this Article Raman, Priya, Harwood, Jake, Weis, Deborah, Anderson, Judith L. and Miller, Grace(2008)'Portrayals of Older Adults in U.S. and Indian Magazine Advertisements: A Cross-Cultural Comparison',Howard Journal of Communications,19:3,221 — 240

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10646170802218214

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10646170802218214>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Portrayals of Older Adults in U.S. and Indian Magazine Advertisements: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

PRIYA RAMAN, JAKE HARWOOD, DEBORAH WEIS,
JUDITH L. ANDERSON, and GRACE MILLER

Department of Communication, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

The authors investigated cross-cultural media portrayals of older adults and other age groups across the lifespan through a content analysis of U.S. and Indian magazine advertisements (N=1,464), focusing on the characters portrayed in these advertisements (N=1,445). Forty U.S. and Indian magazines were randomly selected across genres such as sports, women's interest, news, general interest, and entertainment magazines. The authors examined the association of age of characters with product advertised, health and gender of characters, and relational context of portrayals. Results indicated that older adults as well as children and teens were underrepresented in both cultures. Overall, women were overrepresented in younger age groups and underrepresented in older age groups, with this pattern being stronger in India. Indian advertisements portrayed characters in spousal relationships significantly more than U.S. advertisements. References to aging and older adulthood were more common in U.S. advertisements, as were overall associations between ill health and older adulthood.

KEYTERMS *aging, cross-cultural, India, magazine advertisements, media, United States*

Adopting a cross-cultural and a lifespan approach, the authors examined portrayals of older adults and other age groups across U.S. and Indian magazine advertisements. Advertising images reflect culture and may create culture.

Portions of this article were presented at the Ninth International Conference on Language and Social Psychology, State College, PA, June 2004.

Address correspondence to Dr. Jake Harwood, Department of Communication, University of Arizona, PO Box 210025, Tucson, AZ 85721. E-mail: jharwood@u.arizona.edu

They are snapshots; necessarily concise and immediate, capturing the *zeitgeist* and the prevailing ethos in a particular society. McLuhan (1964) credited advertisements as “the richest and the most faithful daily reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities” (p. 232). As such, they are good fodder for those wishing to understand society’s notion of a compelling and persuasive image. A close scrutiny of these images reveal interesting features of what cultures value, who is important, and how certain groups and roles are privileged (e.g., Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Srikandath, 1991). For instance, in an analysis of magazine advertisements from the United States and the Middle East, Al-Olayan and Karande (2000) examined the differences in depictions of men and women and the amount of information provided for advertised products. Similarly, Maynard and Taylor (1999) examined the portrayal of teenage girls in magazine advertisements from the United States and Japan, concentrating on verbal and physical expressions of “girlhood.” More recently, So’s (2004) study of women’s magazine advertisements from the United States and Australia examined information, emotional and sexual content in the advertisements.

In line with these previous efforts, our article investigates what advertising images tell us about the nature of older adulthood and aging, the roles of older people, and the values attached to old age in the United States and India. Research on media portrayals of age and older adulthood has been less extensive than examinations of ethnic and gender differences. Nonetheless, a line of research has demonstrated the underrepresentation and negative representation of older adults (particularly older women) in U.S. media (Harwood, 2007). Very little work exists examining whether such portrayals are apparent across cultures. Given folk notions that older adults are more revered in Asian cultures, a cross cultural analysis of a representative slice of media messages between the U.S. and an Asian culture is merited. In a practical sense, such an investigation provides one perspective on examining the truth of such folk wisdom. More theoretically, cross-cultural portrayals of media content provide us with data to inform theories related to globalization, cultural imperialism and group vitality. Most broadly, the images under study provide us with a window into the cultural norms and practices of the United States and India, and how particular groups, specifically older adults, are represented and valued in these cultures. By 2050, almost a quarter of the world’s population will be over the age of 60 (Population Division, 2005); it is crucial for us to examine how aging is understood internationally, and whether different cultures are portraying different constraints and possibilities associated with the later years of adulthood.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA CONTENT

Ethnolinguistic vitality theory (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977) suggests that demographic, status, and institutional support indicators index a group’s

strength in society. Among important societal institutions that support group vitality, the media have received particular attention (Abrams, Eveland, & Giles, 2003). Groups that are portrayed frequently and in a positive light in media images have stronger vitality. Thus, content analyses of group portrayals in the media provide insight into the groups that are valued and devalued in society (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Harwood & Roy, 2005). This perspective helps to narrow our goals for the current study, namely, to examine (a) the prevalence of different age groups, and (b) the positivity of the portrayals of these age groups in magazine advertisements to understand the relative vitality of age groups across the United States and India. Of special focus are the frequency and treatment of older adults, and the values associated with older adulthood in these advertisements. Included in this general framework is an interest in the relative presence of men and women within particular age groups. Previous work suggests that negative expectations and associations with aging are stronger when applied to women than men (Kogan & Mills, 1992), and thus that older men might be seen as having higher vitality than older women.

Globalization and cultural imperialism perspectives examine increasing cultural contact and particularly the influence of globally powerful cultures on weaker cultures. Such influence is understood to lead to global convergence in the nature of media messages, in particular a convergence of media in less powerful cultures toward the style and content of more powerful nations, such as the United States (Tomlinson, 1991; Sengupta, 1996). Thus, our study examines cultural differences and similarities in messages about older adulthood across the two cultures. Although *differences* can be interpreted as reflecting indigenous beliefs about older adulthood, *similarities* may provide evidence for globalization or imperialism type patterns diffusing from the United States to India. Examining the United States is clearly appropriate in this context, given its position as the global leader in media production and export, as well as the target of most critiques concerning media imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991). India provides a good contrast given (a) the widespread use of the English language, which permits easier transfer of U.S. media (as well as easier cross-cultural comparison); and (b) its rapid modernization and industrialization in recent years, phenomena that are associated with Westernization. As noted later, Indian approaches to old age differ in interesting ways from the United States, and hence provide an interesting contrast. As the second most populous nation on earth, and a growing world economic power, India also deserves more attention from scholars in its own right.

MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES

Studies of media content uncover the substratum of images to which consumers are exposed (Harrison, 2006; Lapinski, 2006). Consequently, theoretical

predictions concerning media effects *must* involve content analytic findings. This is a reciprocal process, as claims of media effects theories are also important in designing content analytic studies. As such, we draw on two media effects theories to inform our design, in much the same way as effects theories have informed prior content analytic work (e.g., National Television Violence Study, 1998). *Social cognitive theory* suggests that media display imagery that is processed by consumers and symbolically encoded (Bandura, 2001). Hence, concepts that are heavily associated in the media will tend to become cognitively associated and reinforced for media consumers. Research on media content therefore provides an avenue for understanding the symbolic world within which older adults are portrayed, and hence the symbols that may come to be associated with older adulthood for consumers. *Cultivation theory* similarly suggests that heavy consumers of media believe that media images accurately reflect the real world (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997), and hence these individuals' perceptions of the world will shift to match the media reality. For the current study, we assume that a media universe in which older adults are rare or absent will lead to perceptions that the demographic strength of this group is low, at least among heavy media users (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1980). Of course, cultivation theory is primarily a theory of television consumption, hence the application to magazine advertising is somewhat novel. Nonetheless, cultivation theory has been applied to many different media including advertising (Kwak, Zinkhan, & Dominick, 2002). Exposure to advertising actually resembles the nonselective exposure described in classic formulations of cultivation theory better than much other media exposure. That is, exposure to advertising is less susceptible to critiques of cultivation that focus on consumer selectivity (Potter, 1993).

THEORIES OF STEREOTYPING

Prior research on stereotyping has focused on the generally negative attitudes held toward older adults (Kite & Johnson, 1988), even in Asian cultures (Harwood et al., 1996). However, recent theorizing (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2002) has examined more specific dimensions of stereotyping such as likeability (on which older adults sometimes are perceived fairly positively) and competence (on which older people are typically perceived fairly negatively). These dimensions have been argued to be fundamental to human judgment across many domains (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005). Hence, we derive some of the dimensions of our content examination from these dimensions—we focus particularly on images pertaining to health (competence) and affect/emotion (likeability). Health is also an interesting dimension to examine because of extensive work examining the chronic associations between age and health (Estes et al., 2001)—hence, we consider

the ways in which older people and themes of aging are associated with health (e.g., whether older characters are predominantly featured in advertisements for health-related products). Finally, we examine grooming because this has been identified as a key influence on positive/negative stereotyping (Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000; Hummert, Garstka, Ryan, & Bonnesen, 2004). Poorly groomed older adults tend to be stereotyped more negatively than their well-groomed peers.

We also examine relational portrayals, including the grandparent—grandchild relationship. Changing demographics around the world now mean that the grandparent—grandchild relationship is extending further into grandchildren's adulthood (Hodgson, 1995; Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998). Media portrayals of older adults that focus on interactions with their grandchildren might send a message about viewers' perceptions of the societal roles filled by older adults. It might even influence perceptions of what behaviors are appropriate and available in perceivers' own families. Hence, it is crucial that we understand how and when this relationship is portrayed so as to understand both societal values associated with the relationship, and potential effects in terms of, for instance, modeling of the relationship. These ideas reflect an application of social cognitive theory to media portrayals of personal relationships (see also Segrin & Nabi, 2002).

PORTRAYALS OF OLDER ADULTS IN U.S. MEDIA

Content analyses of U.S. media portrayals have shown that across diverse media older adults tend to be portrayed less frequently than would be expected by their presence in the population (Robinson, Skill, & Turner, 2004). Portrayals tend to be negative in most media content (Robinson et al., 2004), but somewhat more positive in advertising images (Roy & Harwood, 1997). Overall, compared with older men, older women are extensively under represented and negatively stereotyped (McConatha, Schnell, & McKenna, 1999; Stern & Mastro, 2004). These patterns are consistent across media (Vasil & Wass, 1993). Few studies have examined the details of such portrayals, but work has shown that old people are portrayed fairly frequently in family settings but rarely in interaction with grandchildren (Harwood & Anderson, 2001). Earlier research illustrates that older adults are rarely shown as romantically involved and only occasionally shown as being married (Cassata, Anderson, & Skill, 1980; Signorielli, 1982). Dail (1988) determined that older characters interacting with family members engaged in more positive behaviors than older characters interacting with non-family members.

Of course, media producers are under no obligation to portray social groups, including diverse age groups, in ways that accurately or positively represent them in the population. As researchers, our goal is not to indicate that advertisers have erred in failing to portray certain groups, or

by portraying those groups in a particular fashion. Rather, the goal is to understand where advertisers' values lie, how they perceive the nature of effective appeals to their audiences, and indeed who they perceive their audience to be. Older adults are a particularly interesting group in this regard. Although they have more disposable income than other groups (Taylor, 1995) and more leisure time in which to spend that income (Kelly, 2000), older adults are continued to be viewed by advertisers as a less desirable audience. In large part, this is driven by stereotypes (e.g., that older adults are "set in their ways" with regard to brand choices and buying habits; that older adults don't buy particular products); stereotypes for which there is little evidence (Healey & Ross, 2002). Indeed, until older adults are seen as a desirable market and targeted by advertisers, it is difficult to know whether they will respond to advertising and shift brands. Shifts in these attitudes are just beginning to appear in the advertising industry (Kelly, 2000; www.thematuremarket.com). In a complementary fashion, our interest in these portrayals derives from their potential effects; as noted earlier, although we are not examining effects, current effects theories provide indications of how the quantity and quality of media portrayals is likely to influence consumers' perspectives on older adults and older adulthood.

INDIA—OLDER ADULTS AND MEDIA PORTRAYALS

In this section, we address relevant Indian cultural phenomena and also discuss the (relatively sparse) content analysis work on Indian media images. The first theme we explore is that of patriarchy. Women are subordinate to men in Indian society—differentiated gender roles and patriarchal norms are substantially more explicit than in the United States. The majority of Indians are followers of Hinduism, a religion that gives higher status and importance to males (Majumdar, 1958). Sons in Hindu families are responsible for the care of parents and the propagation of the family name, as well as being the sole performers of family rituals and religious rites (Sharma, 1980). Most Hindu families favor sons over daughters when it comes to making decisions about issues like nutrition, education, and inheritance of family wealth (Arkasali & Khadi, 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 2001). This patriarchy cuts across socio-economic strata and is reflected in patriarchal themes in Indian media and advertising images (Behera, 1989; Gupta & Jain, 1998). As such, we might expect the U.S. patterns of portrayals of older women to be present and even exaggerated in Indian media.

A second notable cultural theme is filial piety (respect for old age: Subrahmanium, 1988; Thomas, 1988). Old age in Indian culture is traditionally associated with qualities such as wisdom and spiritual growth, along with a move away from seeking "pleasure" and toward a more ascetic lifestyle. Religious texts emphasize that old age and older people be respected by

younger people. However, in modern Indian society, technological change, urbanization, increasing education, globalization, and the move toward a nuclear family mean that older people have fewer meaningful roles; they tend to be marginalized in everyday family decisions and hence filial piety may be eroding (Bhat & Dhruvarajan, 2001). No research that we are aware of has examined this shift as manifested in Indian media.

Finally, family is very important in Indian culture (D'Cruz & Bharat, 2001). In line with India's collectivist tendencies (Hofstede, 1980), we expect to see family values reflected in Indian advertising. However, modernization may be eroding the importance of family roles. For example, Srikandath (1991) found that Indian television advertising often promoted the values of technology, modernization, and consumerism in contrast to more traditional collectivist values. Research on Indian media messages has typically focused on specific familial roles (e.g., homemakers: Munshi, 1998), but not on a holistic analysis of the Indian family *per se*. Prior work comparing U.S. and Indian media messages in terms of family roles is non-existent.

The discussion above leads us to state our goals in terms of specific research questions. First, we aimed to document the quantitative presence of older adults in magazine ads across these two cultures, including the relative presence of men and women within those age groups. Given the value of a lifespan perspective in examining old age (e.g., Carstensen, 1992), we looked at age portrayals across the entire lifespan, not only portrayals of older people. Comparison with other age groups is essential in providing full context for observations of older people.

- RQ1: Are older adults and other age groups over/underrepresented in U.S. and Indian magazine advertising as compared to actual population demographic breakdown data?
- RQ2: Are ratios of males to females different across older adulthood and other age groups' portrayals?

Second, we attempted to describe the nature of these portrayals. As argued in the section on stereotyping above, our analysis focused on portrayals relative to health (e.g., portrayed as healthy/unhealthy), grooming (e.g., portrayed as well-dressed/ill-dressed), and affect (e.g., portrayed as happy/sad) portrayals. In addition, building from the discussion of aging and personal relationships we examined whether older adults were portrayed as spouses, siblings, children, parents, or grandparents, and whether they were shown interacting with family relatives. Included in this were examinations of the products that different age groups were associated with, because products can reveal aspects of the broader social representation of aging and older adulthood (e.g., if older adults are portrayed in association with health products).

- RQ3: What are the manifestations of health (good/poor) as associated with older adulthood vis-à-vis other age groups?
- RQ4a: Are older adults portrayed as well/ill groomed as compared to other age groups?
- RQ4b: Are older adults portrayed as displaying positive or negative affect as compared to other age groups?
- RQ5: Are older adults portrayed engaging in particular/differential relationships as compared to other age groups?

METHOD

Sampling Units: Magazines

Five popular magazine topic areas were chosen for this study. The topics were selected by examining circulation data for the United States and India and choosing those that were ranked highly in both countries (Audit Bureau of Circulations, India, 2002; Audit Bureau of Circulations, United States., 2002; Indian Readership Survey, 2002). For example, automobile magazines were not selected because, although popular in the United States, they are not popular in India. We selected sports magazines, women's magazines, news magazines, entertainment magazines, and general interest magazines (*Reader's Digest*) as representing the genres with largest readership in both countries. Within each topic area, we selected the top magazines for each country by examining the same circulation and readership data. We focused on English-language magazines for both countries to allow easier content comparisons. The implications of using English magazines rather than other language magazines are elaborated in the discussion. Although Hindi and other regional language have higher print readership in India, English language publications are typically skewed toward urban, middle-, and upper-class readers (Indian Readership Survey, 2002). Thus, the profile of the readers of English language magazines is more comparable to the profile of American magazine readers. The Indian magazines used in this study were *Sportstar*, *Femina*, *India Today*, *Stardust*, and *Reader's Digest* (Indian edition). Corresponding magazines from the U.S. were *Sports Illustrated*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Reader's Digest* (U.S. edition).

To obtain a random sample of magazines, we first randomly chose a month from the year 2002. This month was April. This month and every third month thereafter were then chosen to generate four months spanning one year (April, July, and October 2002, and January 2003). We then randomly selected one date within the month (the 10th day). Issues of the magazines in the study that were published closest to the 10th day of each month were then procured. Thus, we had four issues of five magazine types in two countries (total $N = 40$ magazines). Two issues of *India Today* were not obtainable and were replaced with the nearest available issues in time.

Reliabilities and Coding

All coding was performed by the authors, one of whom is Indian. Although independent coders would have been preferable, the project was sufficiently large and the training sufficiently detailed that obtaining independent coders was impractical. For all variables, written definitions were developed through extensive practice sessions with advertisements not from the current data set. All five coders independently coded a random sample of 147 advertisements in our sample to check reliability. Reliability for most variables reached clearly acceptable levels ($>.80$). A few variables had lower levels of reliability; we retained variables with reliability above $.65$. Although this pushes the lower bounds for acceptable reliability (see Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, for a review of intercoder reliability norms in published mass communication research), much published work includes similar reliability levels (e.g., Schmitt, Woolf, & Anderson, 2003). Also, they are not out of line with accepted recommendations (e.g., Krippendorff, 1980, suggested that reliability levels of $.67-.80$ are acceptable for drawing tentative conclusions).

Unit of Analysis and Variables

All advertisements greater than a third of a page were coded. Thematically connected advertisements for the same product spanning multiple pages were coded as a single advertisement. Medical and legal disclaimers and inserts or tear-outs were ignored. Coders coded the whole advertisement, and then coded each individual character in the ad. A character was defined as any human face in which features were visible, or any human character that was extremely prominent in the add (even if face is not visible).

In all, 580 Indian and 884 U.S. advertisements were coded ($N = 1,464$). For most analysis, country of origin is included as a variable; this was determined by the origin of the magazine and hence was not coded. At the level of the advertisement, coders noted the size of each advertisement (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .90$) and the product being advertised (from a total of 16 product genres such as clothing, health products, automobiles, food, etc.: $\alpha = .86$). They also noted the number of characters in the ad ($\alpha = .95$) and textual references to age/aging ($\alpha = .65$). The latter involved any textual reference to getting older or aging, or a verbal reference to an age group (e.g., "middle-aged," "teen," "elderly").

The advertisements included 1,445 characters (472 Indian, 973 U.S.), each of which was coded individually on all of the variables listed in Table 1. Each character was rated as being a primary or secondary character based on size of depiction, and positioning. They were coded as real (photos) or not (e.g., cartoons). In addition to gender (male, female, cannot tell) and ethnic origin (e.g., Asian Indian, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, White etc.), coders estimated each character's age in years based on the

TABLE 1 Intercoder Reliability for Character and Family Role Coding (Krippendorff's α)

Variable	α
Role (primary/secondary)	0.78
Type (photo/cartoon)	0.89
Gender	0.95
Ethnic origin	0.81
Age (in years)	0.92
Health	0.79
Grooming	0.69
Affect	0.70
Family role (<i>portrayed as</i>)	
Grandchild	1.00
Child	0.89
Parent	0.89
Grandparent	1.00 ^a
Sibling	0.95
Spouse/sig. other	0.93
Family role (<i>portrayed with</i>)	
Grandchild	1.00 ^a
Child	0.97
Parent	1.00
Grandparent	1.00 ^a
Sibling	0.95
Spouse/sig. other	0.93

Note. $N = 132$ characters for reliability sample. Characters were also coded in terms of the location in which they were portrayed, their occupation, activity level, and attractiveness. These variables were dropped due to poor intercoder reliability.

^aThese did not demonstrate any variability in the reliability sample, hence coefficients could not be calculated. Reliabilities reported are from pilot coding of advertisements not in our data set.

character's visual appearance (e.g., wrinkles). For analysis, this age coding was collapsed in decades (seven categories: 0–9, 10–19, up to 60+). Characters were coded as unhealthy if they were shown as unhealthy or disabled either in the picture or in verbal content of the ad. Health problems included minor ailments like colds or headaches. Grooming (clothing and hair) and affect (emotional state) were both coded on three-category ordinal scales (e.g., high/positive, middle, and low/negative). However, low/negative portrayals were very infrequent on both dimensions, and so they were collapsed with the middle level, resulting in dichotomous variables (positive vs. neutral/negative). Finally, we coded for family roles portrayed. Each character was coded in terms of whether they were shown *as* being in any of six family roles, and whether they were portrayed *with* any of six relatives (grandchild, child, parent, grandparent, sibling, and spouse/significant other). For instance, an adult woman playing with an infant was coded as mother, and as *with* child. An older adult shown writing a card to a grandchild would

be coded as grandparent, but not *with* grandchild, unless a grandchild was physically shown in the same context.

RESULTS

Most analyses used chi-square. For two-way chi-squares, significant results are interpreted using adjusted standardized residuals for each cell. These yield z -scores for which significance can be interpreted as with any standardized scores ($z > 1.96$ indicates $p < .05$, etc.).

RQ1 and RQ2: Character Demographics

To assess the relative vitality of older adults and other age groups across cultures, proportions of each decade relative to local census bureau data were examined (Census of India, 2001; Population Division, 2005.) As shown in Table 2, both cultures underrepresent children, teens, and over 50s relative to population data, and overrepresent 20–39 year olds. The overall level of discrepancy between population data and our sample was greater in India than the U.S. (see Table 2 note). By far the greatest single discrepancy was among Indian 20–29 year olds, who were over 50% of the sample but are only about 17% of the Indian population. This reflects the pattern of previous work showing that the “tails” of the lifespan are underrepresented in media messages (Harwood & Anderson, 2002).

We examined the association between age and gender portrayals using 2 (male/female) \times 7 (age in decade categories) chi-squares in each culture. In U.S. advertisements, the distribution of men and women was not equivalent across age groups, $\chi^2(6) = 15.09$, $p < .05$, Cramer's $\phi = .13$. The 20–29 age group was predominantly female ($z = 2.50$), whereas the 50–59 age group was male ($z = 2.80$). This pattern in India was similar, but stronger, $\chi^2(6) = 60.68$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .37$, where the 20–29 age group was predominantly female ($z = 7.30$), whereas characters in all age groups above the age of 30 were predominantly male (all z 's > 2.00). These results are consistent with previous research showing a media preference for younger women and older men (McConatha et al., 1999). The results suggest that such effects may be stronger in patriarchal cultural contexts.

RQ3: Health

A 2 (healthy/unhealthy) \times 7 (decade) chi-square analysis in each culture investigated whether unhealthy characters were distributed equally across age groups. In the United States, age and health were associated, $\chi^2(6) = 90.21$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .32$. Individuals in their 20s were healthy ($z = 4.00$), whereas those in their 50s ($z = 4.00$) and particularly

TABLE 2 Frequency of Characters by Age Group: Comparison with Local Population Data

Age group	United States				India			
	Frequency	Column %	Population %	% difference	Frequency	Column %	Population %	% difference
0-9	85	9.40	13.59	-4.19	38	8.50	23.27	-14.77
10-19	94	10.40	14.41	-4.01	14	3.10	21.94	-18.84
20-29	176	19.50	13.70	5.80	226	50.80	16.88	33.92
30-39	257	28.50	13.83	14.67	113	25.40	14.12	11.28
40-49	146	16.20	15.22	.98	20	4.50	10.05	-5.55
50-59	65	7.20	12.54	-5.34	18	4.00	6.26	-2.26
60+	80	8.90	16.70	-7.80	16	3.60	7.47	-3.87
Total	903				445			

Note. For U.S., $\chi^2(6, N = 903) = 237.784, p < .001, w = .51$, average absolute difference between column % and population % = 6.11%. For India, $\chi^2(6, N = 445) = 482.22, p < .001, w = 1.04$, average absolute difference between column % and population % = 12.93%. Total number of characters is smaller than the total number in the data set because age was not identifiable for some characters.

those above 60 ($z = 7.1$) were portrayed as unhealthy more frequently than other age groups. A similar trend emerged in India, $\chi^2(6) = 35.00$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .28$. Those in their 20s were shown without health problems ($z = 2.90$) whereas those in their 40s and 60s were shown disproportionately as unhealthy (z s = 4.50 and 3.3, respectively). The small number of older adults in the Indian data means that these results should be treated with caution.

Further informing our examination of RQ3, at the level of the advertisement, we examined whether textual references to aging were distributed equally across advertisements for different products. They were not, $\chi^2(15) = 81.73$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .30$. References to age were more common in advertisements for health products ($z = 8.0$), as well as charities ($z = 3.5$) and financial services ($z = 3.4$). These results were the same when the analysis was performed separately for the two cultures. These results should be interpreted with caution due to the low reliability in coding references to aging.

In addition, we examined whether particular aged models were associated with product types (originally coded at the level of the advertisement). Low frequency product types were dropped because their ads featured relatively small numbers of characters. We examined the cross-tabulation of age groups (by decade) against seven product categories that included sufficient characters (clothing, health products, automobiles, electronics, entertainment, food, and financial services), and found a significant association, $\chi^2(36) = 367.53$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .24$. Children and teens were featured in food advertisements (z 's > 3.6), the decade of the 20s was associated with automobiles and clothes (z 's > 2.3), the 30s were associated with automobiles and entertainment (z 's > 3.5), and the 40s with health and entertainment (z 's > 2.5). For models in their 50s and over 60, the only category in which they were overrepresented was in health ads (z 's = 4.0 and 6.5, respectively). When broken down by cultural origin the patterns are similar but with a few interesting differences. In India, adults aged 60+ are featured frequently in advertisements for financial products and services ($z = 4.6$), a trend that is not suggested in the U.S. data. Meanwhile, the association of older characters with health products holds in the U.S., but is absent in the Indian sample. Sample sizes in India are small for this analysis, so the results presented should be treated with caution. Overall, though, the analyses in this section provide corroborating evidence for a strong link between aging and ill health in these advertisements.

RQ4a and b: Grooming and Affect

In the United States, those in their 30s and 50s are portrayed as disproportionately well-groomed (z 's = 2.5 and 4.1, respectively), whereas children and teens are portrayed as less well-groomed (z 's = 4.3 and 2.8, respectively).

In India, those in their 20s and 50s are well-groomed (z 's = 3.0 and 2.6, respectively); children and teens are less well-groomed, although the effect only approaches significance for teens in India (z 's = 4.7 and 1.9, respectively). No trends emerge for the 60+ group in either culture. Finally, no significant age-related trends emerged in affect portrayals, United States: $\chi^2(6) = 5.41, p = .49$; India: $\chi^2(6) = 9.94, p = .13$.

RQ5: Relationships

Cultural differences in relationship portrayals (both portrayed as and portrayed with) were examined by examining 2×2 cross-tabulations of relationship type (present/absent) and culture (United States/India) both across and within age groups. Indian advertisements more frequently featured people portrayed as and with spouses than the U.S. [respectively, $\chi^2(1) = 15.87, p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .10$; $\chi^2(1) = 12.94, p < .001$, Cramer's $\phi = .09$]. No other cultural trends in relational portrayals were significant, including any involving older adults specifically.

DISCUSSION

To return to some of the theoretical themes of the introduction, we find evidence for cross-cultural similarity in the low vitality of older people in these media messages. The pattern of underrepresentation commonly found in U.S. media is replicated in the Indian magazine advertisements, along with the (less discussed) underrepresentation of children and teens, which is even stronger in India than the United States. As noted in the introduction, we are not convinced by arguments that this underrepresentation is warranted by notions that older adults do not buy the products advertised and hence that advertisers shouldn't be interested in older people as a group. The majority of products advertised were relatively mundane items that all people consume (food, clothing, automobiles, toothpaste, etc.). It is also not the case that older adults do not read the magazines under consideration here: For instance, *Sports Illustrated*, *Newsweek*, and *Reader's Digest* are all among the most popular magazines read by either older men or older women (Robinson et al., 2004).

The analysis also revealed similarities in the age distributions of women versus men and unhealthy characters, and links between age of character and product being advertised. Notably, age-health connections appear to be consistent across the two cultures. Themes related to older adulthood or older models are used to market health-related products. Thus, we see advertising as contributing to stereotypes that intimately connect older adulthood and ill health (Estes et al., 2001). A qualitative analysis of these same advertisements reveals other patterns of similarity, such as portrayals of

grandparenting that are remarkably similar across cultures (see <http://tinyurl.com/33zwtl>).

These trends, of course, should be understood in the context of both corporate structure and language issues. First, the Indian edition of *Reader's Digest* is clearly linked to a U.S.-owned organization. The effects of such links on advertising content are difficult to trace precisely, but it would be reasonable to suggest that such effects exist. That said, the vast majority of advertisements examined were "local"; for example, an arbitrarily chosen issue of the Indian *Reader's Digest* included ads for an herbal product brand ("Himalaya Shallaki"), an Indian brand of orange juice ("Real Activ"), a tourism promotion for Kerala (a popular Indian destination for internal tourism), and an advertisement for milk that focused on purity and bacteria control; only a Singapore Airlines ad on the charms of travel to Australia could have appeared in the U.S. magazine. The remaining Indian magazines were entirely Indian owned and operated. Hence, the similarities that emerge between the Indian and U.S. advertising were not simply due to advertising being "imported" wholesale from the United States to India; rather it is a reflection of similar themes within content that is clearly locally produced and locally relevant. A crucial issue here is that we examined only English language Indian magazines. These magazines undoubtedly appeal to the more educated and middle-class readers; including those who aspire more highly to a "Western" lifestyle. Hence, it is quite likely that advertisers target those consumers with messages that appeal to such aspirations. More divergence between U.S. and Indian magazine advertising might be apparent in Hindi (or other) language media in India.

In contrast, certain areas of cultural divergence reflect interestingly on the relative cultures. The overrepresentation of young women in Indian magazines was stronger than that in the United States. Younger women have greater vitality than older women, and thus, a higher "value" or status in Indian society. This is in contrast to the traditional but perhaps eroding respect given to old age. The overrepresentation of young women speaks to broader patriarchal themes in Indian society, wherein the portrayals of younger women may be "objectified" versions of the Indian feminine ideal. Similarly, the frequent portrayals of marital relationships in India reveal a cultural onus on that relationship that appears less strong in the United States. The products with which older people were associated also differed. The United States featured substantial association of older people with health products as predicted based on current negative stereotypes of old age. In contrast, Indian advertisements used older models extensively in advertisements for financial services, a finding that may reflect the fiscal uncertainty faced by older adults in the changing landscape of Indian family structures and society. Finally, indications emerged of the different *place* that is appropriate for older people in the two cultures. The thematic work indicated unique patterns of older people shown with age peers in the United States

but with (large) extended families in India. Such messages provide insight into what are seen as culturally appropriate social roles that older adults may inhabit. In the United States, age peers may play a more significant role in older adults' lives, particularly when older people are living in age-segregated living environments, such as planned retirement communities (Waldron, Gitelson, & Kelley, 2005). In contrast, the family is the focus for older adults in India, with age-segregated living being reserved for the indigent, as traditionally older adults live with their eldest son or near their children.

The cultural commonalities and differences observed may reflect a general global mixing trend that scholars are observing. However, as media influences become more global, they nevertheless are forced to encounter and adapt to local cultural patterns in order to survive and convey their message. The media thus become something of a melting pot, and Western media have to integrate a corporate message with local cultural norms in ways that will appeal to local audiences (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996). Similarly, in times of diffusion and change, local media messages may adopt elements of Western media so as to avoid looking outdated, while simultaneously retaining a significant local dimension (Cheng, 1997; Zhang & Harwood, 2004). Such a perspective provides a sophisticated outlook on globalization that acknowledges the significant cultural changes that it engenders, while also viewing local media and people as active participants in the process, rather than passive victims.

Before closing, we should reiterate two limitations of this research. First, as with much content analytic research on marginalized groups, we had a smaller sample of older adults than would be ideal (particularly in the Indian data). Hence, we caution against over-interpretation of results examining the detailed portrayals of older characters. Secondly, the "textual references to aging" variable had lower reliability than desired. However, our key age-related variable (character age) had good reliability.

A return to the theoretical themes from the introduction yields three primary conclusions. First, older adults in India do not appear to possess any greater cultural vitality than in the United States; underrepresentation appears the norm in each culture. The gap between portrayals of older women and older men appeared wider in India, suggesting links between patriarchal cultural values and media portrayals. Cultivation theory suggests that exposure to these portrayals will result in underestimation of the presence and importance of older adults (particularly older women) in society among heavy media consumers. Second, the associations between aging and health concerns in both cultures indicated that stereotypical associations of aging and older adulthood with health extend to media advertising. Social cognitive theory suggests that these associations perpetuate cognitive associations of old age and ill health. These links appear somewhat stronger in the United States, where older women are particularly featured in health-related

advertising. Third, although advertising emphasizes the negative evaluations of older people on the competence-related (health) dimension, it does not emphasize the complementary positive (warmth) dimension. At least on the emotional portrayals we examined, older adults were not portrayed as “warmer” than younger models. As noted in other research, older people sometimes suffer the brunt of the negative stereotype, without receiving the benefits of the positive (Cuddy et al., 2002); ours is the first work of which we are aware to suggest this pattern in media portrayals.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, J. R., Eveland, W. P., & Giles, H. (2003). The effects of television on group vitality. In P. J. Kalbfleisch (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 27* (pp. 193–219). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Al-Olayan, F. & Karande, K. (2000). A content analysis of magazine advertisements from the United States and the Arab World. *Journal of Advertising*, 29(3), 69–82.
- Arkasali, S. & Khadi, P. B. (1993). Attitude of rural mothers towards upbringing of their children. *Indian Journal of Behaviour*, 17(1), 5–15.
- Audit Bureau of Circulations. (2002). *Indian magazine circulation data*. Mumbai, India: Author.
- Audit Bureau of Circulations. (2002). *U.S. magazine circulation data*. Schaumburg, IL: Author.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, 3, 265–299.
- Behera, S. K. (1989). Gender role biases on Indian television. *Media Asia*, 16, 119–125.
- Bhat, A. K. & Dhruvarajan, R. (2001). Ageing in India: Drifting intergenerational relations, challenges and options. *Aging and Society*, 21, 621–640.
- Carstensen, L. L. (1992). Social and emotional patterns in adulthood: Support for socio-emotional selectivity theory. *Psychology and Aging*, 7, 331–338.
- Cassata, M., Anderson, P., & Skill, T. (1980). The older adult in daytime serial drama. *Journal of Communication*, 30(1), 48–49.
- Census of India. (2001). *Religious community by age-group and sex (Table C-15)*. New Delhi, India: Author.
- Cheng, H. (1997). Toward an understanding of cultural values manifest in advertising: A content analysis of Chinese television commercials in 1990 and 1995. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 773–793.
- Cheng, H. & Schweitzer, J. C. (1996). Cultural values reflected in Chinese and U.S. television commercials. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36, 27–45.
- Cuddy, A. J. C., Norton, M. I., & Fiske, S. T. (2002). This old stereotype: The pervasiveness and persistence of the elderly stereotype. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61, 267–285.
- Dail, P. W. (1988). Prime-time television portrayals of older adults in the context of family life. *The Gerontologist*, 28, 700–706.

- D'Cruz, P. & Bharat, S. (2001). Beyond joint and nuclear: The Indian family revisited. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 32(2), 167–194.
- Estes, C. et al. (Eds.) (2001). *Social policy and aging*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Frith, K., Shaw, P., & Cheng, H. (2005). The construction of beauty: A cross-cultural analysis of women's magazine advertising. *Journal of Communication*, 55(1), 56–70.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Signorielli, N., & Morgan, M. (1980). Aging with television: Images on television drama and conceptions of social reality. *Journal of Communication*, 30(1), 37–48.
- Giles, H., Bourhis, R. Y., & Taylor, D. M. (1977). Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity, and intergroup relations* (pp. 307–348). London: Academic Press.
- Gupta, A. K. & Jain, N. (1998). Gender, mass media, and social change: A case study of TV commercials. *Media Asia*, 25(1), 33–37.
- Harrison, K. (2006). Fast and sweet: Nutritional attributes of television food advertisements with and without Black characters. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 17, 249–264.
- Harwood, J. (2007). *Understanding communication and aging*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harwood, J. & Anderson, K. (2001). Social group membership and family involvement on prime-time television. *Electronic Journal of Communication*, 11(1). Retrieved August 27, 2001 from <http://www.cios.org/www/ejc/v11n101.htm>
- Harwood, J. & Anderson, K. (2002). The presence and portrayal of social groups on prime-time television. *Communication Reports*, 15, 81–98.
- Harwood, J., Giles, H., Ota, H., Pierson, H. D., Gallois, C., Ng, S. H., Lim, T. S., & Somera, L. (1996). College students' trait ratings of three age groups around the Pacific Rim. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, 11, 307–317.
- Harwood, J., McKee, J., & Lin, M. (2000). Younger and older adults' schematic representations of intergenerational communication. *Communication Monographs*, 67, 20–41.
- Harwood, J. & Roy, A. (2005). Social identity theory and mass communication research. In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 189–212). New York: Peter Lang.
- Healey, T. & Ross, K. (2002). Growing old invisibly: Older viewers talk television. *Media, Culture, & Society*, 24, 105–120.
- Hodgson, L. G. (1995). Adult grandchildren and their grandparents: The enduring bond. In J. Hendricks (Ed.), *The ties of later life* (pp. 155–170). Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hummert, M. L., Garstka, T. A., Ryan, E. B., & Bonnesen, J. L. (2004). The role of age stereotypes in interpersonal communication. In J. F. Nussbaum & J. Coupland (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and aging research* (pp. 91–121). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Indian Readership Survey. (2002). *Indian magazines readership data*. Mumbai, India: ORG-MARG.
- Johnson, P. S. & Johnson, J. A. (2001). The oppression of women in India. *Violence Against Women*, 7, 1051–1068.

- Judd, C. M., James-Hawkins, L., Yzerbyt, V., & Kashima, Y. (2005). Fundamental dimensions of social judgment: Understanding the relations between judgments of competence and warmth. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*, 899–913.
- Kelly, C. (2000, July 10). Active lifestyle central to targeting. *Advertising Age, 71*(29), 8–9.
- Kite, M. E. & Johnson, B. T. (1988). Attitudes toward older and younger adults: A meta-analysis. *Psychology and Aging, 3*, 233–244.
- Kogan, N. & Mills, M. (1992). Gender influences on age cognitions and preferences: Sociocultural or sociobiological? *Psychology and Aging, 7*, 98–106.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kwak, H., Zinkhan, G. M., & Dominick, J. R. (2002). The moderating role of gender and compulsive buying tendencies in the cultivation effects of TV show and TV advertising. *Media Psychology, 4*, 77–111.
- Lapinski, M. K. (2006). StarvingforPerfect.com: A theoretically based content analysis of pro-eating disorder web sites. *Health Communication, 20*, 243–253.
- Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human Communication Research, 28*, 587–604.
- Majumdar, D. N. (1958). *Races and cultures of India*. Bombay, India: Asia Publishing House.
- Maynard, M. L. & Taylor, C. L. (1999). Girlish images across cultures: Analyzing Japanese versus U.S. Seventeen magazine ads. *Journal of Advertising, 28*(1), 39–48.
- McConatha, J. T., Schnell, F., & McKenna, A. (1999). Description of older adults as depicted in magazine advertisements. *Psychological Reports, 85*, 1051–1056.
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Morgan, M. & Shanahan, J. (1997). Two decades of cultivation research: An appraisal and meta-analysis. *Communication Yearbook, 20*, 1–45.
- Munshi, S. (1998). Wife/mother/daughter-in-law: Multiple avatars of homemaker in 1990s Indian advertising. *Media, Culture & Society, 20*, 573–592.
- National Television Violence Study. (1998). *National television violence study, 3*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. (2005). *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects*. Retrieved August 29, 2005 from <http://www.esa.un.org/unpp>.
- Potter, W. J. (1993). Cultivation theory and research: A conceptual critique. *Human Communication Research, 19*, 564–601.
- Robinson, J. D., Skill, T., & Turner, J. W. (2004). Media usage patterns and portrayals of seniors. In J. F. Nussbaum & J. Coupland (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and aging research* (2nd ed., pp. 423–450). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Roy, A. & Harwood, J. (1997). Underrepresented, positively portrayed: Older adults in television commercials. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 25*, 39–56.
- Schmitt, K. L., Woolf, K. D., & Anderson, D. R. (2003). Viewing the viewers: Viewing behaviors by children and adults during television programs and commercials. *Journal of Communication, 53*, 265–281.

- Segrin, C. & Nabi, R. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage? *Journal of Communication*, 52, 247–263.
- Sengupta, S. (1996). Understanding consumption related values from advertising: A content analysis of television commercials from India and the United States. *International Journal for Communication Studies*, 57(2), 81–96.
- Sharma, R. N. (1980). *Ancient India according to Manu*. New Delhi, India: Nag Publishers.
- Signorielli, N. (1982). Marital status in television drama: A case of reduced options. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 26, 585–597.
- So, S. L. M. (2004). A comparative content analysis of women's magazine advertisements from Hong Kong and Australia on advertising expressions. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 26(1), 47–58.
- Srikandath, S. (1991). Cultural values depicted in Indian television advertising. *Gazette*, 48, 166–172.
- Stern, S. R. & Mastro, D. (2004). Gender portrayals across the life span: A content analytic look at broadcast commercials. *Mass Communication and Society*, 7, 215–236.
- Subrahmanium, C. (1988). Foreword. In A. B. Bose & K. D. Gangrade (Eds.), *The Aging in India* (pp. v–vi). New Delhi, India: Abhinav.
- Taylor, S. C. (1995). Primetime's big sleep. *Modern Maturity*, November–December issue, 38–43.
- Thomas, R. M. (1988). *Oriental theories of human development*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991). *Cultural imperialism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Uhlenberg, P. & Kirby, J. B. (1998). Grandparenthood over time: Historical and demographic trends. In M. E. Szinovacz (Ed.), *Handbook on grandparenthood* (pp. 23–39). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Vasil, L. & Wass, H. (1993). Portrayal of the elderly in the media: A literature review and implications for educational gerontologists. *Educational Gerontology*, 19, 71–85.
- Waldron, V. R., Gitelson, R., & Kelley, D. L. (2005). Gender differences in social adaptation to a retirement community. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 24, 283–298.
- Zhang, Y. B. & Harwood, J. (2004). Cultural values in Chinese television commercials. *Journal of Communication*, 54(1), 156–172.