

Review and Criticism

is still fairly descriptive and relatively atheoretical. But a theory that explained at least one type of framing effect existed when communication scholars began looking at framing, yet we have largely ignored prospect theory. Interestingly, Kahneman and Tversky's prospect theory is mentioned only once in passing in this volume.

References

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1984). Choices, values, and frames. *American Psychologist*, 39, 341-350.

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (2000). *Choices, values, and frames*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image

By Vickie Rutledge Shields with Dawn Heinecken. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. 224 pp. + 20 illus. \$49.95 (hard), \$19.95 (soft).

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The authors of *Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image* begin by addressing a question burning in the minds of many undergraduates: How do everyday bodies stack up against the perfect physiques omnipresent in mass media? Their work explores the complicated relationship between the idealized iterations of gendered embodiment present in mass advertising and the response of individuals to such representations. Shields, the lead author, often works through this relationship by example, offering illustrations from her own experience as a woman, mother,

and daughter in the midst of a media culture saturated with prescriptive notions of feminine comportment. Such personal reflections are complemented by a significant ethnographic study of how men and women respondents made sense of magazine advertisements.

In most of the book's nine chapters, the authors weave excerpts from respondent interviews into their analyses. Chapter 2 examines how interviewees respond to sexism and stereotypes in ads. Shields concludes that women, far more so than men, were unwilling to excuse hackneyed sexism: "Many women felt that the effects of these images on cultural ways of seeing women in this society are cumulative in nature" (p. 23). She concludes that men and women tend to understand the influence of advertising rather differently, with women adopting a "cultural/ritual theory of media effects" in contrast to men's "limited effects model" (p. 30). The presentation of extended narratives from respondents effectively forecloses on the possibility of representing one gender as a homogenous group with a universal reading strategy. We learn in chapters 6 and 7 that respondents' varying strengths in engaging in oppositional or negotiated decodings of ad images are linked to the messages of support they receive in interpersonal contexts.

Especially compelling is chapter 5, "Weighing In and Measuring Up," which presents a fresh take on the connections between advertising, weight, and self-discipline. Shields writes knowledgeably about fat phobia in both ads and the minds of respondents and explores the double bind wherein abject fat women, excused from any public perception of being sexually desirable, pursue the dream of being objectified just like magazine-ad models. She also draws

attention to an important but often overlooked point about the relative scarcity of eating disorders among Black women when she claims that women of color, faced with a norm based on White beauty, "may suffer less from eating disorders, but experience equally intense pain over beauty issues" (p. 104).

Shields presents a remarkably articulate personal narrative in chapter 6, "Elizabeth's Story." Written by a student in a gender and communication class, the description chronicles one young woman's relationship with gendered images in advertising over her lifespan. Shields uses the narrative as an opportunity to analyze how one moves from dominant readings through negotiated interpretations to arrive at a capacity for oppositional/feminist understandings of advertisements.

The activist impulse of *Measuring Up* is revealed in chapter 8, which is dedicated to considering positive interventions in image making. A thoughtful analysis of *Mode* magazine and its advertisements, for instance, evaluates the benefits of representing fat women as happy, confident sexual agents, all the while questioning to what extent beauty ideals have truly been transformed. Shields and Heineken question whether the newly acquired possibility of mass media objectification of fat women is indeed a mark of progress.

Measuring Up takes few missteps on the road to providing a clearer understanding of how people make meaning of ads and how those socially detrimental meanings might be altered. There are, however, some areas in which a different approach or method might have proven more productive. Shields's choice to limit her ethnographic research to reader response to magazine advertisements reproduces a misleading im-

pression that magazines are the most powerful and important vehicles for the inculcation of gendered body values. Although this is a conclusion at which many students are indeed eager to arrive, a richer understanding of the multiple media forces that shape self-image is warranted in a climate increasingly dominated by electronic media messages.

Another difficulty with the research comes in the authors' decision to query both men and women only about "how they personally see, or experience, the ideal female body in advertising" (p. 5). The sustained gaze of the researcher at women's, but not men's, bodies reinforces the impression that women's bodies exist to be looked at; however, the use of depictions of men in the ad sample would aid in eroding this unfortunate habit.

On the whole, *Measuring Up* offers sophisticated inquiry into the ways women understand themselves relative to the images that advertising presents. Its engaging writing, evocation of personal struggles with ad content, and explication of familiar ad campaigns make it useful for students and teachers of social effects of media and others with a general interest in advertising and cultural studies.