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Deception in Super Bowl Advertisements: An Analysis of Deceptive Story Lines

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DECEPTION IN SUPER BOWL COMMERCIALS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF DECEPTIVE STORYLINES

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Christopher Near

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Christopher Near in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

DECEPTION IN SUPER BOWL COMMERCIALS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF DECPTIVE STORYLINES

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Master of Communications

Many ethical studies have focused on advertising; however, they have yet

to focus specifically on Super Bowl advertisements. This thesis examines the

ethical issue of portraying deceptive acts within the storylines of Super Bowl

advertisements from 1988-2008. Results indicate that 196 of the 2,172

advertisements studied, contain deceptive storylines. Most often the

advertisements depicted white males, ages 30-64, using deception. Also,

deception was usually done out of self interest at the expense of others. The

deception often led to negative social, material, and emotional consequences for

the person being deceived, with mostly positive outcomes being shown for the

person doing the deceiving. These, and other actions, provide a model of behavior

that may have a negative impact on society, which warrants future research on this subject.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Deception, in its various forms, has long been a part of society and culture in America. Uses of deception are extremely varied as are the consequences of its use. Both good and bad can come from deceiving others. According to recent studies, behavior that was once deemed unacceptable and improper is now becoming more tolerated and even encouraged in certain facets of our society (Patterson & Kim, 1991; Leslie, 1992). Lying and deception are also often overlooked such as when a male is asked by his date whether he thinks she is fat or not, or in the purpose of self interest to avoid getting ticketed by a traffic officer (Leslie, 1992).

No studies to date have looked at deception within the storylines of Super Bowl advertisements leaving a gap to be filled in understanding the content and context of some of the nation's most viewed advertisements.

In past years, before cable systems and satellite dishes that offer literally hundreds of channel options, viewers had little choice in what they watched on television. In fact, the highest rated program based on the Nielsen's rating system was an *I Love Lucy* episode that aired during the 1952-1953 season receiving a 67.3 rating (Brooks & Marsh, 1995). In that same time period it was also not uncommon for multiple shows to have a Nielsen rating of over 50. The final episode of M.A.S.H, aired in 1983, holds the record for episode watched by most viewers totaling 106 million (Yahoo News, 2008). Today, with such a vast number of options through cable and satellite providers, top rated shows such as *American Idol* or *CSI*, rarely reach 20-30-point ratings (Brooks & Marsh, 1995; Kelly & Turley, 2003).

One of the very few exceptions to lower rated programs on TV in recent history is the Super Bowl. Over the years the Super Bowl has consistently managed to bring in some of the

largest audience ratings of the modern era of television. Since 1972 the Super Bowl, time and again, has had ratings of 39.0 and greater (Linnet & Friedman, 2001; "Ratings Even," 2002). In 2008, Super Bowl XLIII became the second most viewed program of all time reaching 97.5 million viewers, over 60% of American households (Yahoo News, 2008). The Super Bowl has become an anomaly in an era of dispersed viewing as it consistently attracts nearly half of the households across the nation for one day every year.

In addition, the football game itself is not the only attraction. In 1984, Apple computers released a groundbreaking ad that changed the face of advertising (Maney, 2004). The ad was creative and edgy, breaking the mold of the more conventional and straightforward approach previously used for so many years. Seeing the attention that was garnered by this ad, networks began to draw more attention from viewers, which led to more advertisers wanting a share. The advertisers increased interest then led to the skyrocketing prices of advertising spots during the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl has become a sort of pop-culture ritual in America. Weeks before the Super Bowl even airs, lists are posted on websites and blogs naming all of the advertisers involved as well as the prices they paid for their spots. Pirated copies of commercials are leaked to websites where thousands of people can take a sneak peek at some of the most talked about ads each year. The attention and popularity that advertisements earn has even reached the point that some viewers, approximately four to five percent, are tuning in to the Super Bowl just to watch the ads (Elliot, 1997). The intrigue and popularity of Super Bowl ads today has made this line of study that much more important.

Since 1965, commercials on TV have more than tripled with an average increase of 20% a year (Eder, 1990). Furthermore, in 1983 the FCC dropped regulations governing the time

commercials could make up in an hour. Then, in 1984, the FCC dropped the limits on TV and the time that could be devoted to commercials in an hour of programming (Eder, 1990).

Consumers are inundated with advertisements on a daily basis whether they like it or not. TV viewers now see almost a full hour of commercials during the average evening of primetime broadcasts. What's more, says McClellin (2003), telemarketers are interrupting dinner in millions of homes every day, and spammers are filling emails with countless amounts of unsolicited ads. The average person cannot escape advertising as they see it on billboards along the street, on gas pumps while they fill up, and even in garbage cans at public venues (Marshall, 2004).

Whether for good or for bad, advertising has been found to have a considerable effect on the lives of consumers in the U.S. and around the world (Pollay, 1986). Anti-drug and smoking campaigns in the media have been successful in helping youth and adults to quit or avoid those addictive substances. Other beneficial advertising programs include health and conservation, which are responsible for benefiting society in numerous ways (Davis, 1994).

Advertising is often criticized for misleading and deceiving viewers leading to potentially negative results in the case of health and environmental products (Davis, 1994). According to research by Davis (1994), when advertising is deceptive, even in the least threatening situations, the consumers are still being fooled into doing or purchasing something other than what they originally wanted.

Under current FTC regulations, it is illegal for advertisers to knowingly deceive viewers with faulty products or promises. However, there are no restrictions against showing deceptive or unethical behaviors within the storyline of an advertisement. An advertiser may not be allowed

to deceive viewers about a product, but a character within a storyline can be portrayed in an entirely deceptive or unethical manner, if so desired.

While many studies on deception in media, specifically advertising, have been conducted, very few have looked at ethics in the storylines of commercials and currently, none have looked at ethics within the storylines of Super Bowl advertisements. The purpose of this study is to look at deceptive acts within the storylines of advertisements aired during the Super Bowl from 1988 to 2008 (the most current year at the time of this study) and to determine the prevalence, the nature, and the consequences of such acts.

Chapter two of this thesis contains the literature review, looking at past studies on deception with a special emphasis on deception taxonomies, deception in media storylines, ethics in advertising, and research on Super Bowl advertising. The chapter also contains the theories section with information on Bandura's social learning theory and Gerbner and his associate's cultivation theory, along with a description of their relevance to this thesis. Chapter two concludes with the research questions that were used in determining the direction of this thesis. Each question is preceded with a short paragraph on the relevance and purpose of the question.

Chapter three includes the methodology section, which details the process of this study including the sample selection, the deception taxonomy used, the unit of analysis, the coding scheme, the relevant definitions, the coding procedures, and the coder reliabilities.

Chapter four is the results section explaining all of the results of each of the nine research questions. The section also includes four tables with results on the frequency and percentage of deceptive advertisements, frequency and percentage of each deceptive type, frequency and percentage of products in deceptive ads, and the number and percentage of rewards and consequences for deceivers and deceived.

Chapter five is the discussion section, which elaborates on the results section. Some of the discussions look at the frequency of deception and the possible effects of repeated exposure to deceptive storylines. Discussions also look at potential stereotypes being portrayed among the deceivers and the deceived. Humor as a masking device within deceptive storylines is also discussed in this section.

Chapter six includes the limitations and future research portion of the thesis. Some of the limitations include the size of the sample as well as the restrictions on characters coded for. Future research should be aimed at furthering this study by studying effects from deceptive advertisements and expanding the sample size. Chapter six finishes with the conclusion. This portion summarizes the general findings of the thesis. The section also reviews the importance of the thesis and where this line of research should go next.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Deception

Deception, in its many forms, has generally been studied in one of two ways (McCornack, 1992). First, researchers have looked at deception with the purpose of categorizing it into types or distinct groups. The second, and less common method, involves looking at deceptive messages as message forms that are altered or manipulated in various manners to achieve various goals (McCornack, 1992). The majority of researchers have looked at deception studies in the previous manner, attempting to classify deception into distinct categories (Aune, Metts, & Ebesu, 1990; Burgoon, & Buller, 1996; Chisholm & Feehan, 1977). In one study conducted by Metts (1989), she looked at form and function of deception within close relationships. Three distinct deception categories were created to be part of the study. They included *falsification*, *distortion*, and *omission*. A fourth category entitled *escape* was created to cover any other types of deception that didn't fall into the other three categories (Metts, 1989). Subjects were then interviewed about deception within their relationships and researchers classified their acts of deception into one of the four previously mentioned deception types.

In research by Burgoon and Buller (1996), three different classes of deception were used in studying accuracy in deception detection. The three types of deception included *falsification* (completely untrue answers), *equivocation* (vague or ambiguous answers), and *concealment* (withholding or omitting relevant information). Participants in the research were then asked to lie to a group of novices and a group of experts with the purpose being that the two groups were to decide when deception was being used and when it was not (Burgoon & Buller, 1996).

One of the major purposes of creating and using the above deception taxonomies was to be able to categorize deception as well as measure exactly how much deception was being used in the relationships being studied as well as discovering the types of deception being used (Aune, Metts, & Ebesu, 1990; Burgoon, & Buller, 1996; Chisholm & Feehan, 1977). Determining the prevalence and nature of the deception helps in understanding the relevance of the subject at hand. Discovering heavy uses of deception and which types are prevalent also assists in understanding how these factors influence other areas of related research, such as consequences and effects of deception.

As mentioned previously, the majority of deception research has attempted to classify deception types into distinct categories. However, other research argues that by attempting to classify deception in distinct categories, researchers may be ignoring or oversimplifying certain types of deception not thought of before. Steven McCornack (1992) proposed a new theory (information manipulation theory) that attempted to reconcile some of the previous gaps in defining deception as distinct types. Information Manipulation Theory posits that many forms of interpersonal deception break many of the rules governing past deception research. McCornack's theory attempts to look at message design rather than message topic. By doing this, he argues that one is able to look at many subtle conversation cues and signals that otherwise go overlooked. By dissecting messages and looking at the *amount* of information disclosed, the *distortion* of information, the use of vague or *ambiguous* language, and the actual *relevance* of information shared, deception can be found in places it previously could not, according to McCornack (1992).

Yet another way that deception and deceptive messages have been studied is classified as multi-dimensional. Researchers such as Ekman (1985) and Turner et al. (1975) put forth the idea

that there are only two main ways of deceiving another, but that within those two categories there are infinite possibilities of manipulating information. Ekman (1985) argued that the two ways one can be deceptive include concealing and falsifying. Essentially a person is deceptive if they are knowingly withholding information, which would be considered concealment, or they falsify information by presenting lies as truths (Ekman, 1985).

Along those same lines, Turner, Edgely, and Olmstead (1975) hypothesized that there were two main types of deception, which they classified as concealment and distortion. This hypothesis was tested in a study looking at deception in relationships. After reviewing their results the team concluded that there was in fact a third type of deception, which they named relevance. They found that most types of deception fit into their aforementioned categories, but that sometimes the subjects would change the direction of the conversation so as to avoid certain topics leading them to form a new category to account for this type of deceptive behavior (Turner et al., 1975).

Chisholm and Feehan (1977) designed a comprehensive deception taxonomy of their own to gauge deception use. Other taxonomies have been limited by oversimplifying categories and leaving out potential forms of deception including non-verbal cues and other subtle forms of manipulation. However, the model developed by Chisholm and Feehan avoids this by breaking down deception into two main categories of *commission* and *omission* and from there, breaking deception down into eight sub-categories or types. Four under commission (acquire, continue, cease, and prevent) and four under omission (acquire, continue in, cease, continue without). The first two cases of each category are described as positive deception and the last two cases are described as negative deception. By developing eight mutually exclusive types, this taxonomy broadens the spectrum of deception study by covering more obvious verbal and non-verbal cues

as well as other more subtle forms. The categories of commission and omission also help to distinguish the types of deception as either aggressive or subversive as one involves more outright falsification and the other involves withholding information.

Researchers have developed different instruments to measure deception in its many forms whether it is by isolating distinct instances and categorizing them or through analyzing entire messages and looking for obvious and subtle clues of manipulation. As deception has been defined and categorized, researchers have been able to use these ideas and methods to study various media in an attempt to understand when, how, and why deception is used along with the potential effects stemming from its use. For the purposes of this study, the taxonomy created by Chisholm and Feehan (1977) was used. By incorporating eight mutually exclusive deception types, Chisholm and Feehan manage to avoid the oversimplification that has hindered other taxonomies. Past taxonomies have been described as weak for ignoring more subtle forms of deception, however, Chisholm and Feehan's categories are inclusive of the more subtle forms of deception, such as non-verbal cues and physical gestures. Furthermore, Chisholm and Feehan's taxonomy also covers ambiguous and vague statements by incorporating the omission category, which accounts for passive and ambiguous forms of deception. Their taxonomy also includes concrete definitions and descriptions that allow for measurable and quantifiable results valuable in studying all forms of deception portrayed through the medium of television.

Deception in Media Storylines

In the past, there have been several studies that have looked at deception in media storylines and come up with significant findings. The study that most closely resembles this research examined lying behaviors in primetime situation comedies (Leslie, 1992). The intent of

the study was to identify the frequency of deception, to describe the lying behaviors within the programs, and to establish the ethical principle driving the determined behavior (Leslie, 1992). What Leslie discovered from this research was that lying was prevalent in all of the shows studied. The majority of the lying (39%) was done out of self-interest or for self-preservation. Based on behavioral cognition theories, they concluded that exposure to these programs would certainly have negative effects on viewers (Leslie, 1992).

Negative effects from media usage have been the subject of many studies. Leslie's content analysis showed that deception was being glamorized and even rewarded at times (1992). The way in which rewards and consequences of unethical behavior are portrayed can have an impact of viewer's belief patterns and thought processes (Leslie, 1992; Stern, 2005a). In a recent study by Stern (2005a) she discovered that among portrayals of characters in teen films very few of them showed consequences for unethical or illegal behavior. Instead, the characters were often portrayed as popular, good looking, and exciting, as they participated in deceitful and unethical behaviors. One study showed that negative depictions of harmful or unethical behaviors decreased young people's desire to participate in certain activities or act in certain ways (Kotch, Coulter, & Lipsitz, 1986). The manner in which unethical behaviors are portrayed through media, even in fictional portrayals, has the potential to carry over into real life situations (Kotch et al., 1986; Leslie, 1992; Stern, 2005a).

Another more recent study chose to look at ethically loaded news programs. The study involved surveying viewers of news programs to determine how they viewed and perceived the portrayal of news with potentially ethical situations (Lind, 1996). As they surveyed them, they tried to determine if any patterns emerged. What they found was that there really was no pattern. The study attempted to find relationships between gender and deception, as well as race and

deception, but instead little to no consistency was found among the viewers whether female or

male or in relation to their race. Responses to views on ethics were as varied as the programs

themselves, which was consistent with past research done on this subject (Lind, 1996).

Lind and Rarick (1992) also looked at viewer's attitudes toward ethical breaches in

television programming. This was accomplished through a telephone survey with nearly 300

respondents. By having the respondents rate eight hypothetical news and entertainment

scenarios, Lind and Rarick discovered that viewers were more willing to accept ethical violations

in the entertainment programs rather than in news programs. They also reported that while

viewers were accepting of ethical violations in some programming they nearly all agreed that

issues like adult programs and violence were a "big problem" that needed to be dealt with,

although not through government regulation (Lind & Rarick, 1992).

Along with the news and primetime television, studies have also looked at ethics in

reality television. While reality television has in fact been around for many years, it has only

recently begun to gain widespread popularity with new formats and presentations such as Big

Brother and Survivor, among others (Couldry, 2006). This unique style of television prompts

many questions about ethics in "real-life" situations where cameras are taping every word and

act of participants as they live in confined areas. Couldry (2006) argued that Reality TV is

leading to a shift in how we perceive truth through the television. Reality TV leads us away from

a disposition to be honest and genuine, and towards a disposition that is judged genuine by far-

off viewers through the medium of surveillance cameras transferred to home televisions across

the world. Couldry (2006) feared that the long term consequences of viewers believing Reality

TV as actual reality would be negative at best. Couldry argued that the potential consequences

could include desensitization to deception or possibly influencing viewers to mimic the unethical behaviors portrayed on the programs (2006).

A related study on reality TV takes a more in depth look at the ethical responsibilities of everyone involved ranging from the producers to the camera operators and also the participants involved. Thomas Mascaro (2004) conducted a case study in which he looked at a specific episode of Law and Order that dealt with ethics within reality television. Mascaro suggested that even though the camera lens itself should be unbiased, the camera operator does not need to be. He argued that the camera operators are not free from the responsibility to intervene if questionable or dangerous circumstances arise. Similarly, Mascaro argued that the producers of such shows are morally and ethically obligated to be upfront and honest with the participants about the nature of the show as well as the corporate goals in place. Once the participants have been fully informed, they are responsible to use their own values and morals to decide whether they should participate and how they will participate, once involved (Mascaro, 2004).

Mascaro's study looked at a number of reality shows presented over the past decade (2004). Rather than looking at just one or two years of episodes, Mascaro chose to look at a longer period of time in order to gauge whether potential trends in unethical portrayals existed or if unethical portrayals over a long period of time could lead to unforeseen negative consequences. Looking at unethical portrayals over time can lead to uncovering trends that may otherwise go unnoticed as well as understanding potential effects on viewers that are more likely to occur over longer periods of time (Gerbner, 1994; Mascaro, 2004).

Ethics in Advertising

Studies in advertising have mostly looked at deceptive messages in advertisements aimed at the consumer rather than looking at the ethical behavior of the characters within the advertisements. As stated by Darke and Ritchie (2007), for years deceptive advertising research has looked at identifying specific claims that lead consumers to make mistaken decisions (Burke, Milberg, & Moe, 1997; Johar, 1995; Shimp & Preston 1981; Snyder, 1989). Examples of the research involved include studying incomplete comparisons (Shimp & Preston, 1981) and implying a superior product without testing it against other similar products (Snyder, 1989).

One study, conducted in 1980 by Thomas Barry, looked at advertising deception in children's programming. Barry began by building his own deception criteria model designed to determine levels of deception within an advertisement. Barry found that advertising to children is a complex issue where answers to whether deception exists are not simply black and white. Barry (2006) concluded that "if we have not systematically determined that impact we cannot justify either that advertisement to children or its subsequent abolition!" (p. 17).

Children and minorities seem to be favorite targets of the field of advertising. Children wake up in the morning from their beds blanketed with Superman sheets and pillows. They are dressed in their Batman pajamas as they sit down to a breakfast of Nintendo cereal with their Simpson's backpack on the floor next to them (Clark, 1992). Children are surrounded by media more-so than ever with goods and products being pushed at them constantly.

In an empirical study conducted by Williams and Mulhern (1993), they looked at legislation aimed at limiting advertising directed to "greater risk" consumers such as heavy alcohol drinkers, youth, ethnic and minority groups, and women. Their study covered good ethnic targeting and targeting that could have negative consequences. While little evidence of a

causal relationship could be found through the studies, they were able to determine that companies involved in ethnic targeting were at the very least being perceived as racist and unethical in many of their practices whether they intended it or not (Moore, Williams, & Qualls, 1996; Williams & Mulhern, 1993).

Measuring who is involved in deception is especially valuable as well. Stereotypes can be perpetuated through media, which can lead to various consequences. A vast amount of negative labeling can be damaging psychologically (Allport, 1979). Studies show that harmful stereotypes, including being unfairly portrayed as violent or deceptive, can lead to less than optimal performance by the members of the stigmatized group (Allport, 1954; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Other studies have shown that such labeling leads others to have detrimental attitudes toward the groups stereotyped (Devine, 1989; Devine & Elliot, 1995; Hepburn & Locksley, 1983); make untrue references toward a person or group (Stephen, 1985); act differently around distinctive groups (Allport, 1979; Foley & Kranz, 1981; Gordon 1986; Manusov, Winchatz & Manning 1997); affect individuals' self-esteem, and hinder communication (Biernat & Vescio, 1983). Specifically looking at deception, if a certain group of people are being portrayed as deceitful, there is the possibility for negative consequences such as psychological harm and societal ostracism (Biernat & Vescio, 1983). Society could unfairly attach labels to groups of people based on what they witness through media, rather than reality. By measuring certain groups such by race, gender, or other categories it can be determined whether stereotypes are being perpetuated or whether new stereotypes are being created.

As recent studies have focused on looking at deception geared toward minorities and misrepresented groups, other studies have looked at deception from an entirely different angle. Shabbir and Thwaites (2007) recently looked at the relationship between humor and deception in

advertising. They found a strong relationship between humor and deception to mask specific types of deceit. Over 73% of the 238 ads they looked at contained some form of deception and within those deceptive ads they found that over 74% of them used humor to mask the deception. They found that many types of deceptive devices were used as well as all forms of humor, but that certain forms of humor were used specifically with certain types of deception.

Shabbir and Thwaites (2007) also looked at the relationship between products, brands, and their usage of deceptive or covert stimuli. The researchers said, "It is possible, for instance, that the association of the product or ad with a covert stimuli to which the human mind is innately susceptible, such as the feelings of well-being associated with sex and humor, should be able to trigger or "prime" the subject toward desired behavioral consequences" (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007, p. 8). Their research brought up the idea that advertisers, by associating their products with humor or other positive feelings, could cause a priming effect on viewers causing them to think or act in ways contrary to their normal behavior.

Along with intentional deception and ethical breaches within advertising, researchers have also looked at the unintended effects that advertising can and does have on viewers. According to Clark (1992), even when good intentions abound, there are instances such as advertisements in magazines that portray females as objects or that overemphasize the "ideal" body size. These images, whether intended or not, often lead to women having unhealthy attitudes about their bodies causing eating disorders and other harmful obsessions (Clark, 1992).

While some studies have looked strictly at the deception within advertisements, others have taken a different angle, which involves studying deceptive advertising through the consumer's response to future advertising claims. Along those lines, they have also begun to

look at deceptive advertising and its role in creating negative stereotypes and a general distrust in the eyes of the public towards advertisers and marketers.

One study showing negative consequences from deceptive advertising found that deceptive advertising leads to consumers forming broad, negative stereotypes toward future advertisements (Pollay, 1986). Pollay suggested that communication in general relies on honesty and that breaching that trust leads to the general conclusion that no one can be trusted. Furthering that argument, Pollay went on to say that false advertising turns the public into a mass of cynics incredulous of media, advertisers, and authority in general (1986). Pollay's research on distrust was recently strengthened by Kramer who said that distrust is a force so powerful that it will likely lead to a continual bias in one's personal judgment (1998).

As the public's distrust of advertisers grows, it may lead to magnified consequences as shown by the research of Main, Dahl, and Darke (2007). They found that exposure and identification of false claims in advertising can lead to an overreaction of hostile feelings towards the advertisers. These hostile feelings can then lead the consumer's to prejudge future claims and even form conspiracy theories based on past exposure to false claims whether that distrust is reasonable or not (Main, Dahl, & Darke, 2007; Kramer, 1998).

Furthering this line of research, Darke and Ritchie (2007) have branched out by looking at how deceptive advertising engenders distrust leading to negative responses from consumers towards same source and secondary source advertisers. Darke and Ritchie wrote, "Consumers do not need to know exactly how they were mislead by an advertising claim; they merely need to perceive a discrepancy between the impression that the advertisement generated and the performance of the product to know they have been fooled (2007, p. 2). In studying the perceived discrepancy of consumers, Darke and Ritchie discovered through their research that

deceptive advertising is actually having an adverse affect on consumers. Instead of increasing sales, it is forming a negative bias, which undermines the credibility of future advertising.

Obermiller and Spangenberg elaborated on ad skepticism (1998). They suggest that despite the resources, subtlety, and sophistication employed, advertisers face many challenges to selling their products and one of the foremost is ad skepticism. Obermiller and Spangenberg reported that advertisers have created much of the skepticism that consumers share. All products are portrayed positively, but not all products are equal and not all products work as advertised. Consumers that are high in ad skepticism are looking to other sources such as the Internet, to verify the validity of ad claims. They concluded that advertisers that want to combat ad skepticism need to put effort into the new sources that skeptics are going to in order to gain more information than what is provided in a formal ad (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 2000).

As the above research has shown, as the amount of advertisements grows so to does skepticism towards those advertisements. Although there are many factors influencing this movement, the trend of skepticism is only increasing. Ads attempting to deceive viewers have made up the bulk of studies looking at ad skepticism. While studies on deceptive storylines have not specifically been done, discovering the amount of deceptive acts in Super Bowl commercials could be beneficial as it would indicate whether the levels of deceit in their commercials might be adding to skepticism in viewers or not.

Other studies on deception have looked at the relationship between advertising deception and the influence from external factors. Aupperle, Carol, and Hatfield (1985) studied external factors influencing advertising deception, which included factors such as legal considerations like laws and regulations, business performance results, general industry considerations, corporate considerations such as pressure from management, and interpersonal considerations

including one's environment, peers, supervisors, clients, and other important individuals. Internal influences leading to deceptive advertising include personal experiences, levels of ethical development, morals, values, and internalized social norms (Carrol, 1979, Ferrell & Gresham, 1985). Later studies came up with four individual categories that help to determine how advertisers reach decisions on how to advertise. The four categories are personal values/ethical orientation, the opinion and anticipated response of management and peers, legal constraints/considerations, and business/economic considerations (Strong & Meyer, 1992; Trevino, 1986).

As mentioned previously, advertising is on the rise measured in sheer abundance, as well as time allotted in different media. As advertisements increase, so too does the importance to study and understand them. Not all advertisements created are equal. Some commercials undoubtedly garner more attention than others, which leads to the spectacle of advertising which the Super Bowl has become.

Research on Super Bowl Advertising

Although the Super Bowl regularly garners great interest from media, very few studies have been done specifically on the Super Bowl or the advertisements from them. Pavelchak, Antil, and Munch (1988) conducted a tri-city study of pleasure and emotional influence on content recall from Super Bowl XX. They chose the Super Bowl as the event due to its national popularity and high emotional involvement from viewers. Content recall was found to be negatively related to emotional intensity. This means that the more emotionally involved the viewers were in the game, the less they recalled the content of the advertisements aired. They

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found no relationship between emotional level, pleasure level and the ability to recall, meaning that level of pleasure for a viewer did not affect recall like level of emotion did.

Newell, Henderson, and Wu (2001) conducted a similar study replicating some of the work started by Pavelchak, Antil, and Munch in 1988. They also looked at advertisement recall from the Super Bowl. Like the previous study, they found that being highly involved on an emotional level in a game may inhibit viewer's recall of advertisements. Furthermore, the higher the level of intensity of the game, the greater the chance of inhibitory effects on advertisement recall. This information is valuable in understanding how the potential effect of advertisements may be influenced by the programs they are aired within.

The third and most recent study on Super Bowl advertisements was conducted by Kelley and Turley (2004). They conducted a content analysis on Super Bowl ads from 1996-2002 to study the content and context of ads from the Super Bowl. They discovered that the most popular and effective ads were those that offered goods and not services, used emotional appeal, avoided making straight announcements, used animals, and did not make quality claims. They showed that the most favorable ads differed from the least favorable ads among a number of outlined categories. One of those categories was humor, which they found to be significantly linked to the popularity of advertisements. Every one of the top 70 ads they looked at used humor in their advertisement. Only 27 of the bottom 70 advertisements contained humor. These findings suggest that advertisements containing humor are more likely to be popular and remembered (Kelley & Turley, 2004). These findings would also suggest that deceptive Super Bowl advertisements containing humor would likely be more popular and remembered as well.

As shown by the vast amount of literature related to media and ethics, there is potential for viewers to be affected by certain content. Many studies have looked at deception and ethics

in media ranging from film to newspapers to commercials. It is important to understand the

content within media in order to move to the next step; understanding how content may affect

viewers. The potential impact of media on viewers can be better understood through media

effects theories.

Theories

Two theoretical constructs provide a relative framework from which to understand the

potential influence of deception in Super Bowl Advertisements: Bandura's social learning theory

and Gerbner's cultivation. Both of these theories offer insights into the potential effects of

viewing certain media messages over defined periods of time. While this thesis does not attempt

to show that deceptive storylines have effects on audiences viewing them, prior research does

suggest that messages viewed repeatedly over time can have an effect (Bandura, 1994; Gerbner,

Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1986).

Social Cognitive Theory

Human learning is not only achieved through direct contact and experience. Bandura

(1994) posited in his social cognitive theory that the human's ability to learn is gained through

observational learning as well as direct experience. Observational learning gives humans the

knowledge and skills needed to acquire skills and alter behaviors. As a result of one's

observations from media, previously unknown skills and habits can be learned. Other scholars

have noted that TV, especially, is a model of how to live and act for the American people (Mead,

1978). Within the medium of television, it has also been argued that advertising is especially

impressionable on viewers as those exposed to them are most likely to pay attention and recall

their messages due to their simple, distinct, and repeated patterns (Stern, 2005a; McCullick et al., 2003).

The ability to pick up skills and techniques through observing different forms of media has the potential to impact audiences, both for good and for bad. While adults are not immune to media effects, they have been found to be especially influential on younger viewers such as teens and children (Mayes & Valentine, 1979). Given that the Super Bowl is viewed in nearly half of all American homes each year, it is perfectly reasonable that the advertisements aired and the messages portrayed through them could have a very strong influence on viewers. After parental influence, media are the most influential source of learned behavior for youth and children (Mayes & Valentine, 1979). This argument only grows stronger as we are inundated with more and more media technology each year.

The continued exposure to repeated media messages, combined with social cognitive theory, has been said to likely influence viewer's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, especially those of younger adults (Stern, 2005a, 2005b; Bandura, 1977). Younger viewers are more likely to be influenced by media messages on a cognitive level than adults. This isn't to say that adults are immune to the effects, but children and teens are more likely to be affected. Using Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory on Super Bowl advertisements, it would suggest that marketing to younger people or using younger actors in Super Bowl ads would be of great importance as social cognitive theory would suggest that the younger viewers are more susceptible to influence based on their level of cognitive reasoning, as well as the fact that viewers tend to identify with characters they relate to (1977). If younger characters or role model characters are portrayed as unethical, the younger viewers able to identify with those characters would then be more susceptible to influence and behavior imitation (Stern, 2005a, 2005b; Bandura, 1977).

Rewards and consequences portrayed in media, according to social cognitive theory, would have the potential to influence a viewer's thoughts and behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Models of behavior are most likely to be learned, followed, or imitated when the viewer either identifies with characters or looks up to them as a role model (Stern, 2005a). Characters portrayed as popular, wealthy, beautiful, and powerful are also more likely to be imitated (Stern, 2005a). In other words, social norms are taught based on incentive. In the case of deception, if a popular and good-looking person is shown deceiving other people for personal gain and being rewarded for their deception, then viewers of these deceptive acts would be more likely to remember and follow those behaviors. Consequently, if a role model is shown being honest and being rewarded for their honesty, then the viewer would be more likely to frown upon deception and follow the model of honesty.

Research has shown that people do not have to have first-hand experience with situations to develop beliefs or norms on how they would react (Goldman, Brown, & Christiansen, 1987). For example, a person does not have to be confronted by a drug dealer to know if they would buy drugs or not. Beliefs and ideas towards deception can be formulated in people's minds through observing long before they are physically involved in an act of deceit.

Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner wrote that the media create a worldwide view, although potentially erroneous, which gradually becomes a reality for media viewers due to the repeated and continued format of the message (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Along those same lines, popular culture and the mass media are strong influencers in shaping how people view themselves and their relationships in their homes and communities (Paik & Comstock, 1994). Gerbner furthered

the idea of cultivation theory by stating that the media create a worldwide view, although possibly inaccurate, which becomes reality for some viewers (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Gerbner and associates go on to argue that as fiction becomes reality to heavy media users, their ideas, habits, and behaviors can potentially mimic the behaviors witnessed in television or other mediums (1976). For example, the idea of media effects might suggest that if the media portray similar unethical representations with no consequences or shown in a positive light, over time, it could lead viewers to "cultivate" the idea that lying or deceiving others is good and/or beneficial to them. The ideas could then become actions, which could eventually lead to habits.

According to Cultivation Theory, television, among other forms of media, has a significant ability to shape or "cultivate" views of social context and reality for people. The ability to influence is not based on a specific type of show or episode, but rather on patterns and continued messages seen over various periods of time, (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001). Cultivation theory argues that continued exposure can begin with a subtle impact, but has the potential for serious, long term effects. (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986).

Applying Cultivation Theory to deception in Super Bowl advertisements, viewers of Super Bowl ads, over time and with repeated exposure, could become influenced by the acts of deception and consciously or unconsciously begin to incorporate what they have seen and learned into their lives. Research on viewers of situation comedies revealed that heavy viewers of these programs significantly differed from light viewers in estimating the amount of problems real-life families incur (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007; Morgan, Leggett, & Shanahan, 1999). These same studies also found that heavy viewers of television were generally more supportive of nontraditional family values, including use of deception, and humor to mask deception.

Another aspect of cultivation theory that can be applied to deception in Super Bowl advertisements is the "mean world syndrome." Gerbner described this idea as television or media reinforcing our worst fears or apprehensions related to violence (Gerbner, 1994). If a person sees a lot of violence on TV, then they will be more inclined to believe that the world is as violent as portrayed on TV. Statistically, the world is far less violent then it is presented on TV. This idea can also be applied to deception. If a person is exposed to large doses of deceptive acts in media, then they would be more likely to see the world as a deceptive place. This could lead to unwarranted skepticism or other unforeseen consequences. Yet another consequence of heavy media usage associated with cultivation theory, would be desensitization. Under Gerbner's mean world syndrome, heavy violence viewers can become desensitized and lose the ability to understand the consequences of violence, to empathize, to resist, and also to protest (Gerbner, 1994). When applied to deception, this would mean that people exposed to large amounts of deception in media would lose the ability to understand real life consequences of deception as well as the ability empathize, resist, or protest acts of deception. The long term effect of being exposed to heavy uses of deception could leave viewers desensitized and numb to its effects.

Currently the content of deception in the storylines of Super Bowl advertisements is relatively unknown. Aspects of advertisement content such as the amount of deceptive acts, the types of deception, the consequences of using deception, and so forth, are unknown leaving a gap in the body of research, which this study looks to fill. The subsequent research questions will direct our examination into the following study.

Research Questions

Leslie's (1992) study of deception in situation comedies found various forms of deception in every show studied. It is not probable that every advertisement will have deception in the storyline; however, it is important to determine the frequency of deceptive storylines in Super Bowl advertisements in order to speak to the question as to whether they might be influential, and to institute a foundation for future studies. This leads to the first research question:

RQ[1]. What is the frequency of Super Bowl advertisements containing deceptive storylines?

Chisholm and Feehan (1977) created several different categories for deception. Which of these categories are used most often in storylines of Super Bowl advertisements? The following research question will apply these separate deception categories to the storylines to discover whether deception by commission or deception by omission (and their subsequent subcategories) are more common.

RQ[2]. What types of deception are most prevalent in the Super Bowl advertisements?

Past research has looked at the portrayals of different groups through the media and how those portrayals can determine how certain groups are viewed and treated in society (Allport, 1979; Foley & Kranz, 1981; Gordon 1986; Manusov, Winchatz & Manning 1997). The use of stereotypes and deception has the potential to cause psychological harm or societal ostracism towards the victimized group (Biernat & Vescio, 1983). The ensuing research question will help to determine if certain groups, more than others, are being portrayed as deceitful.

RQ[3]. Who is most involved in deceiving, in terms of race, age, and gender?

Much like the prior research question, the following question looks to discover the portrayals of groups portrayed in deceptive advertisements, possibly connected to stereotypes and deception. Specifically, the following question will look at trends, stereotypes, or unfair depictions among those being deceived.

RQ[4]. Who is most involved in being deceived, in terms of race, age, and gender?

Shabbir and Thwaites (2007) looked at the relationship between products, brands, and their usage of deceptive or covert stimuli. The use of deceptive stimuli has been linked to possible manipulation of viewers on a psychological level (Shabbir and Thwaites, 2007). The following question will be used to determine which brands and products may be most associated with deceptive storylines.

RQ[5]. Which products and brands are most associated with advertisements containing
deception?

Research by Main, Dahl, and Darke (2007) looked at the presence of deception in advertising over long periods of time in order to determine longitudinal effects. Long term effects included a general cynicism developed by society towards advertisers. This question will look at the presence of deceptive storylines over a 21 year period to first, determine any trends in frequency and second, to aid in future research on possible effects from long term exposure to deception.

RQ[6]. Have Super Bowl advertisements containing deception changed over the past 21
years?

Stern (2005) recently looked at portrayals of unethical behavior by teens in film and how their acts were rewarded or punished. Actors in the media can serve as role models that viewers may try to imitate (Stern, 2005). The following question will look at how the deceptive acts in

Super Bowl advertisements are both punished and rewarded. This will help in understanding whether deception is being portrayed as positive or negative in its various contexts.

RQ[7]. What are the rewards or consequences of the deceptive acts?

Shabbir and Thwaites (2007) research on the relationship between hidden stimuli and products in advertising showed that there is potential for manipulating viewers. By understanding whether the deception is related to the product or not, this information can be utilized in building a foundation for future study on the effects of deceptive stimuli linked to certain products.

RQ[8]. Are the rewards for the deception related to the product?

Research has shown that humor is often used as a tool to mask deception in certain contexts (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007). Using humor to mask deception is argued to be a form of manipulation, which may hide certain agendas or motives from viewers (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007). The same research also argued that humor as a masking device could act to trigger or "prime" viewers toward desired behavior. The following research question will determine the frequency of deceptive ads containing humor, which can later be used in future effects related studies.

RQ[9]. Do deceptive ads tend to be humorous?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The population for this study was all Super Bowl advertisements from 1988 to 2008, based on the archive compiled by Adland, which claims to have "the world's largest Super Bowl commercial archive." (Adland, 2008). Currently, this is the most comprehensive collection of Super Bowl advertisements on the Internet, and for this reason it was chosen. Through 1988, the collection includes nearly all of the ads aired during the Super Bowl as well as most of the ads from the pre and post game shows. This study will be a census of all the ads from the Adland archive for the years 1988-2008. The total number of advertisements spanning the 21 years is 2,172.

Super Bowl commercials were chosen because they represent some of the most viewed ads on one of the most viewed programs on television in America. Corporations pay millions of dollars for these ad-spots because they know that nearly half of the nation will be tuning in. With the ability to possibly influence the masses, it becomes very important to know what types of messages are being portrayed, who is being portrayed, and how they are being portrayed with respect to deception and ethical decision making.

The years 1988-2008 were chosen because they represent the past 21 years of some of the most popular and potentially influential advertisements viewed by nearly half of the homes in America annually.

Unit of Analysis and Coding Scheme

Deception was defined as intentionally misleading or attempting to mislead another person through a false statement or act (Bok, 1978). The deception model created by Chisholm

and Feehan (1977) was chosen for this project because it provided mutually exclusive categories for the deception types expected to be seen in the ads under this study. Furthermore, there was no overlap found between the categories of deception and each category was broad enough to cover all occurrences of deception in the commercials studied.

Chisholm and Feehan's (1977) deception taxonomy uses eight types of deception within two main categories. Deception was broken down into two main categories of deception by commission (Commission occurs when the deceiver actively deceives or attempts to deceive the receiver through one of the defined deception types), and deception by omission (Omission, meaning not that the deceiver has simply failed to act, but rather that the deceiver knowingly had a chance to correct the deception and did nothing).

The coding sheet for the content analysis is provided in Appendix A, and provides coding instructions for all of the variables. However, some elements merit further discussion. This section will explain how deceptive acts, rewards, and consequences were evaluated.

The deceptive acts were coded for deception type using the model created by Chisholm and Feehan (1977) because it offered a comprehensive and mutually exclusive list of categories of deception types. To better clarify, there were eight total types of deception, four each under deception by commission (when the deceiver actively deceives or attempts to deceive the receiver through one of the defined deception types) or deception by omission (when the deceiver knowingly had a chance to correct the deception and did nothing). An example of the first type of deception by commission, *acquisition*, would be if a man falsely tells a woman at a party that he knows the president of the United States. If at the same party, a friend of the man elaborates on the lie, protecting the man and causing the woman to continue the false belief that the man knows the president, then this would be an example of the c*ontinue* type. The c*ease* type

of commission would occur if one person at the party believed that there were enough drinks at the party, but was lied to by another person that they had run out. This person would cease to believe the truth. Finally, the last type of deception by commission, *prevent*, would occur if the person bringing drinks to the party covered the generic labels with brand name labels, thus preventing the guests from knowing the truth.

The four types of deception by omission are similar. The first type of deception by omission, *acquisition*, would occur if a friend of a man who lies to a woman about knowing the president of the United States says nothing and allows the woman to acquire the false belief. If a woman approached a man thinking that he knew the president when he actually didn't, and the man didn't correct her, this would be the second omission act, c*ontinue in*, due to the fact that he allows her to continue with the lie. An example of the omission type of *cease*, would be if two women are conversing with a man. The man correctly believes that the Chicago Cubs won their previous game. One of the women is a White Sox fan and falsely tells the man that the Cubs lost their previous game. The other woman present knows that the Cubs really won, but does nothing and allows the man to cease believing the true outcome of the game. The final omission category, *continue without*, would occur if a man at a bar interested in the outcome of a baseball game were sitting next to a man who is aware of the outcome, and is aware of the man's desire to know it, but says nothing and allows the other man to go without knowing the truth.

Also coded for was whether or not the outcome of the deception was product related or not. Coding then included whether there were rewards or consequences shown for both the receiver and deceiver (Herek & Glunt, 1988; Lippman & Johnson, 1988; Zuckerman & Gordon, 1988). Rewards include: m*aterial gain,* the gaining or maintenance of an object or possession through deception; *physical gain,* the gaining or maintenance of health or physical support i.e.

avoiding death; *social gain,* the acquisition or maintenance of support, friendship, or other social bonds; and *emotional gain,* gaining a greater personal worth or feeling good about one's self.

Consequences coded for include: *material harm,* the loss or destruction of a physical possession or object; *physical harm,* mild, moderate, or severe physical injury, *death*-actual physical death as a result of deception; *social harm,* betrayed friendship or loss of trust from others, ostracism, degradation, would also include jail time; and *emotional harm,* misgivings about one's personal worth, hurt feelings (Herek & Glunt, 1988; Stulberg & Buckingham, 1988; Lippman & Johnson, 1988). In the case that there were no consequences for both deceiver and receiver it was coded as *nothing*.

Further coding included recording the demographics of characters involved in deception such as race, age, and gender (Lachlan, Smith, & Tamborini, 2005). Non-human characters were not coded for, but cartoon images of humans or computer generated images were coded. In the cases where animals were involved in the deception they were not the actual deceivers or receivers, they were being used as tools to deceive and thus not coded. Coding also included product information such as the name of the actual product, the brand, and a brief description of the advertisement itself.

Finally, coders recorded whether or not the advertisement intended to be humorous or not according to the classifications developed by Speck (1991). Humor was broken down into three separate categories. If the advertisement matched any of the categories, it was then coded as humorous. The categories include: *Arousal-safety:* Containing heightened emotional content of any sort with or without resolution, *incongruity:* any type of simple joke or pun that is easily understood by the viewer, and disparagement: any attempt to derive humor from disparaging remarks or content. Examples of each type of humor can be found in the coding book

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(A copy of the coding book and coding sheet can be found in Appendix A).

Coding Procedures

Four independent coders, two undergraduate students and two graduate students, were used to examine the Super Bowl advertisements. Coders were trained by studying the coding book and watching approximately 100 commercials not included in the sample. After watching a portion of the advertisements, the group then met to discuss results and to measure reliability. After multiple viewing sessions and group meetings, totaling approximately 36 hours between the four students, the coders reached an acceptable level of consistency and thus proceeded to code advertisements from the chosen sample. Whenever questions arose during the training process the team would meet and discuss the questions until they came to a unanimous decision for that given question.

To assess intercoder reliability, 10% (217 of 2,172 total commercials) of the Super Bowl advertisements used in this study were randomly selected and coded by all four coders. The remaining 90% (1,955 of 2,172 total commercials) were coded individually by the four coders.

The agreement between coders, using Holsti's (1969) formula, was greater than 89 % (.891) for all categories combined. Reliabilities for the five coding categories were as follows: *incident* (.886), *demographics* (Race, gender, and age of deceiver and receiver) (.904), *deception type* (.873), *outcomes* (.932), and *product information* (.864).

CHAPTER 4

Results

RQ[1]. What is the frequency of Super Bowl advertisements containing deceptive storylines?

In answer to the first research question, of the 2172 Super Bowl advertisements viewed from 1988 to 2008, 196 (9%) contained deception within the storyline. Some commercials contained more than one deceptive act; in those cases each incident of deception was recorded. Including multiple acts of deception within an advertisement, there were 268 total acts of deception recorded in the advertisements. These individual incidents allow for the accounting of different deceivers or receivers in the same advertisement. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of ads found to contain deceptive storylines within each year studied.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Deceptive Advertisements

Year	# total ads	# deceptive ads	% deceptive ads
2008	95	4	*4*
2007	65	9	*14*
2006	142	10	*7*
2005	128	13	*10*
2004	195	11	*6*
2003	128	15	*12*
2002	143	17	*12*
2001	120	13	*11*
2000	88	9	*10*
1999	165	17	*10*
1998	82	12	*15*
1997	75	8	*11*
1996	69	6	*9*
1995	78	11	*14*
1994	86	10	*12*
1993	85	8	*9*
1992	77	2	*3*
1991	105	6	*6*
1990	94	4	*4*
1989	76	8	*11*
1988	78	3	*4*
Total	2172	196	*9%*

An example of an advertisement with more than one incident of deception occurred in a 2007 Bud Light advertisement. This advertisement depicts a bride and groom approaching the altar as part of a backyard wedding ceremony. The bride and groom are clearly expecting a traditional ceremony performed by a priest. The couple then realizes that the best man has hired an auctioneer instead of traditional priest to perform the services. Instead of a long, well-orated sermon, the auctioneer races through the vows within a matter of seconds. The anxious crowd hurries off to enjoy the complimentary beer leaving the newly married couple alone and confused at the altar. Since the best man deceived both the bride and the groom, on the coding sheet incident No. 1 refers to the best man deceiving the groom and incident No. 2 correlated with the deception of the bride.

However, not all commercials with more than one incident contained one deceiver and two receivers. For instance, in a 2008 American Airlines commercial multiple incidents of deception occur, each with a different number of deceivers and receivers. The ad consists of a number of scenes involving coworkers in a team building setting. In the first scene a group of coworkers allow an individual to believe they will catch him as he falls backwards into their arms. However, the group intentionally moves out of the way allowing him to fall. In two separate scenes, two individuals are shown sneaking out of the team building activity, hiding from their boss, in an attempt to relieve themselves from boredom. Finally, two men are shown evading their coworkers as they attempt to catch a plane back home leaving their other coworkers behind to participate in team building activities.

RQ^2. What types of deception are most prevalent in the Super Bowl advertisements?

The most prevalent types of deception in Super Bowl ads were those of commission (*n*=155, 58.4%), in which a deceiver or group of deceivers actively attempts to deceive another

person or group of people. Of the 268 total acts of deception, nearly 60% of them fell into the commission category. Of the 155 incidents of commission, deception by *acquisition* (*n*=85, 31.7%) was the most frequent. This type of deception occurred when a deceiver caused the receiver to gain a false belief, such as in a 2005 ad in which a father purposely lies to his young daughter—"If you eat an Emerald nut, unicorns will disappear forever" or "the Easter bunny will get whacked if you touch my Emerald nuts"—to keep from sharing a product.

The second most common form of deception within the commission category was prevention (n=54, 20.1%). This form of deception occurred when a deceiver actively prevented the receiver from knowing a truth. In an ad for Emerald Nuts starring Robert Goulet, deception by prevention occurs in an office after hours. Goulet goes around the office messing up people's desks and work areas when they aren't around. At one point, one of the employees unexpectedly shows up and finds his work area messed up. He looks all around for signs of who might have done this, but Goulet prevents him from knowing the truth by hiding on the ceiling at the last moment.

Within the commission category, the third most common form of deception was *continue in* (n=12, 4.5%). This occurred when a deceiver actively caused a receiver to continue in the belief of a lie. This category was less common, as it generally took more time to develop. For *continue-in* deception to occur, there would have to be an initial act of deception followed by a second act attempting to perpetuate the lie. This type of deception occurred in a 2008 Bud Light advertisement. The setting was a cheese and wine party with young couples meeting at an apartment. The women all congregated in the front room while the men all gathered in the kitchen. One man arrived at the party with a large cheese wheel in hand. What the women at the party didn't know was that the man had hollowed out the cheese in order to smuggle in some

beer for the men to enjoy in the kitchen. The man that hid the beers had allowed his wife to believe that he was excited to go to the party simply for the cheese and wine. Following this initial deception the man emerges from the kitchen to get more cheese, causing his wife to continue in her initial false belief.

The fourth and least common type of deception within the commission grouping was that of *cease* (n=4, 1.5%). This deception occurred when a deceiver caused the receiver to stop believing a truth. One of the commercials that contained this type of deception occurred in a 1993 Nike spot starring Michael Jordan. A pair of Michael Jordan's shoes is stolen by another man. Jordan catches up to the man and insists that he give them back. The man repeatedly says "no" and Jordan repeatedly says "yes." In an attempt at reverse psychology, Jordan starts saying "yes" and the other man switches his position and starts saying "no" he doesn't want the shoes and he gives them back to Jordan. The man realizes he has been tricked and he tries to get the shoes back, but it is too late. In what was found to be a rare form of deception, Jordan made the other man stop believing that he wanted the shoes he had stolen.

The most common type of deception within the omission category was *continue without*, (n= 68, 25.4%) meaning the deceiver allowed the receiver to continue without a truth, even though the opportunity to reveal the truth was presented. This deception was exemplified by a Bud Light ad in 2005 where two friends go to a big football game. One of the friends has a girlfriend that stayed at home. What the boyfriend didn't know was that he was given tickets to the game so that his girlfriend could get him out of the house and be with another man. This other man gave the tickets to the boyfriend and the girlfriend simply did not tell her boyfriend the real reason why the tickets were given out. In this case the girlfriend let her boyfriend go without the truth in order to be with another guy.

The second most common type of deception within the omission category was *continue in* (n=32, 11.9%), which occurs when a person already believes something not true and the deceiver allows that person to continue believing a lie. For instance, in a 2003 Budweiser ad, an uninterested man sits across from his girlfriend who is rambling on about a friend of hers. As the girlfriend gossips, the man tunes her out and glances over her shoulder to watch a football game on television. At the end of the commercial, the man's girlfriend calls him a great listener. Instead of telling the truth, he thanks her, thus allowing her to continue in her belief that he was listening the whole time.

The third most common form of deception within the omission category was *acquisition* (n=13, 4.9%). Acquisition occurs when the deceiver allows the receiver to gain a false belief. An example of this type of deception occurred in a Yahoo ad in 1999 where a balding man uses the Yahoo search engine to find a store that sells wigs. The man purchased several wigs and tried them out around town. Instead of being ridiculed for his previous comb-over, he received glances and winks from beautiful women on the street. Although the man did not actively tell the people that his wigs were actually his real hair, he did allow people to believe that it was his, thus committing deception by omission.

The final omission category of *cease* (n=0, 0%) was not found to be present in any of the advertisements.

Table 2 shows the relative frequencies and percentage of each deceptive type found in the Super Bowl advertisements.

Table 2
Frequency and Percentage of Deceptive Types

Deception Type	N	%
Commission		
Acquisition	85	*31.7*
Prevention	54	*20.1*
Continue-in	12	*4.5*
Cease	4	*1.5*
Omission		
Continue Without	68	*25.4*
Continue-in	32	*11.9*
Acquisition	13	*4.9*
Cease	0	*0*
Total	268	*100%*

RQ³. Who is most involved in deceiving, in terms of race, age, and gender?

Deceiver Race

Results from running frequencies on the data collected indicated that the vast majority of deceivers where white (n= 193, 79.4%), followed by African Americans (n=33, 13.6), then Asians (n=5, 2.1%), then Other (n=11, 4.5%), and finally Hispanics (n=1, .4%). Since characters in advertisements not containing deceptive storylines were not coded for, further tests to analyze whether whites were more likely to deceive than all other characters could not be run. The large number of white characters found in the deceptive ads is likely related to the large number of white characters overall in all of the advertisements. Nevertheless, when someone was shown as a deceiver, that person was most likely white.

Deceiver Age

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The age of deceivers in the Super Bowl advertisements showed Adults (n=107, 44%) to be most involved in deception, closely followed by Young Adults (n=95, 39.1%), then Seniors (n=18, 7.4%), then Teens (n=15, 6.2%), and finally the group labeled Child (n=8, 3.3%). This breakdown of age groups is also similar to the overall representation of all characters in all of the ads studied. Based on frequencies, the young adults and adults were most likely to be shown deceiving others.

Deceiver Gender

The results for the gender involvement showed that males (n=211, 86.8%) where much more involved in deceiving or attempting to deceive others than females (n=32, 13.2%). *RQ[4]. Who is most involved in being deceived, in terms of race, age, and gender?*

Deceived Race

In terms of race, those on the receiving end of deception were again typically white (n=159, 78.3%), followed by African Americans (n=30, 14.8%), then Asians (n=6, 3.0%), followed by other (n=5, 2.5%), and finally Hispanics (n=3, 1.5%). Whites far exceeded the all other races portrayed as being deceived. However, this is most likely due to the overall overrepresentation of this group in all advertising.

Deceived Age

The age of receivers of deception in the Super Bowl advertisements showed Adults (n=93, 45.8%) to be most often deceived, closely followed by Young Adults (n=82, 40.4%), then Seniors (n=14, 6.9%), then Teens (n= 9, 4.4%), and finally the group labeled Child (n=5, 2.5%).

Much like the results for deceivers, adults and young adults were most likely to be portrayed as being deceived.

Deceived Gender

The results for the gender involvement in receiving deception shown below, demonstrated that again, males (n=147, 72.4%) where much more likely to be shown being deceived than females (n=56, 27.6%). However, the number of female receivers doubled compared to the number of female deceivers. This suggests that when females appear in advertisements with deceptive acts, they are twice as likely to be shown as victims than as the perpetrators of the act.

Instances where more than three people were involved in the same act of deception were coded as a group. The same rule applied to the receivers. Due to the varying sizes and make up of each group, it was impossible to generalize demographic information such as race, age, and gender; therefore groups were simply recorded as a group and nothing more. A total of 93 instances of Group were coded for, with 25 groups assigned as deceivers and 68 groups assigned as receivers. An example of an ad with a group of deceivers and a group of receivers occurred in a 2007 E-Trade commercial. In this ad, customers are shown standing in line at a bank, when the bank manager shouts at them to get on the floor and start handing over their money. The bank's tellers come out from behind the counter in masks to collect the dough. Even the bank's security guard is in on the act, locking the doors to prevent any heroes from escaping.

RQ[5]. Which products and brands are most associated with advertisements containing deception?

Of the 13 categories comprising the different products being advertised in the Super Bowl, there were four products that represented the majority of advertisements containing

deception. The four main products associated with deceptive advertising were alcohol (n=44, 22.4%), food (n=33, 16.8%), non-alcoholic drinks (n=24, 12.2%), and vehicle (n=19, 9.7%). These four products made up over 61% of all of the advertisements found to have deception. The other nine product categories made up the remaining 39% of deceptive advertisements associated with deceptive Super bowl advertisements.

Among brands, Budweiser and Bud Light combined (*n*=35) to have the most commercials containing deceptive storylines, making up just under one fifth (18.5%) of the total. The next closest product, Pepsi, had less than half as many deceptive ads (n=15, 8%), followed by Federal Express (n=7, 4%), then Lay's and AT&T, both with the same number of deceptive advertisements (n=5, 3%). The remaining 129 deceptive advertisements were divided up among 82 different brands.

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentages of all product categories found in advertisements containing deception.

Table 3
Frequency and Percentage of Products in Advertisements Containing Deception

Product	Count	% Within Deception	% Within All Ads
Alcohol	44	*22.4*	*.020*
Food	33	*16.8*	*.015*
Non-alcohol drink	24	*12.2*	*.011*
Vehicle	19	*9.7*	*.009*
Other	19	*9.7*	*.009*
Financial	16	*8.2*	*.007*
Clothing	9	*4.6*	*.004*
General Merch.	9	*4.6*	*.004*
Shipping	7	*3.6*	*.003*
Entertainment	6	*3.1*	*.003*
Travel	5	*2.6*	*.002*
Job Search	4	*1.5*	*.002*
Public Serv/charity	1	*.4*	*.000*
Total	196		*.090*

RQ[6]. *Have Super Bowl advertisements containing deception changed over the past 21 years?*

A small (r^2=.233) but statistically insignificant (p.=.155, one-tail) correlation exists between year and the number of ads with deceptive acts. The number of ads with deceptive storylines appears to be more random over the years than showing any consistent pattern. Table 1 can be referred to again to see the overall breakdown of the number of advertisements containing deceptive acts.

RQ[7]. What are the rewards or consequences of the deceptive acts?

Deceivers were far more likely to be rewarded for their deception than those who were deceived. On the other hand, those who were deceived were more likely to experience negative consequences. Over 73% of the deceptive acts committed received some type of positive reward. Material and emotional gain were the most common rewards of deception, followed by social gain. Physical gain rarely occurred. Deceivers rarely experienced negative consequences. Only 17% of the deceptive acts resulted in negative consequences. The most common negative consequences for those being deceived were social and emotional harm (7.1% each).

Among the deceived, the results of rewards and consequences are almost entirely opposite. Only 13% of the deceptive acts resulted in a positive reward for the deceived, while 53% resulted in negative consequences. Occasionally the deceived gained socially or emotionally from the deception (6.7% each), but most often they were likely to lose emotionally (21.6%) materially (21%), or socially (15%). Table 4 shows the number and percentage of both positive and negative consequences for deceivers and deceived.

Table 4
Number and percentage of rewards or consequences for deceivers and deceived

Reward or Consequence	Deceiver		Deceived	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Positive Rewards	197	73.8	35	13.1
Material Gain	86	32.1	5	1.9
Physical Gain	3	1.1	1	.4
Social Gain	70	26.1	18	6.7
Emotional Gain	86	32.1	18	6.7
Negative Consequences	45	16.9	141	53.0
Material Harm	6	2.2	56	20.9
Physical Harm	8	3.0	23	8.6
Death	0	0.0	0	0.0
Social Harm	19	7.1	40	14.9
Emotional Harm	19	7.1	58	21.6

Chi-square analyses were run to determine if the relationships between deception and positive rewards were significant. A one sample chi-square was run on deceivers and positive rewards (X^2=40.608, df = 1, N= 266, $p<.001$) indicated a significant relationship. The same test was also run on receivers of deception and negative consequences (X^2=26.395, df = 1, N= 265, $p<.001$) also indicating a significant relationship. These tests indicate that the results did not happen by chance and that among deceptive ads, deceivers are more likely to be rewarded for their deception and receivers are more likely to receive negative consequences as a result of deception.

RQ[8]. Are the rewards for the deception related to the product?

Among the positive rewards, the majority were found to be product related (77.7%). Nearly 80% of all ads portraying positive rewards were linked directly to the product, meaning that the product being advertised was linked in some way to the act of deception. This connection between deception and product was counted for both positive and negative consequences among receivers and deceivers.

RQ[9]. Do deceptive ads tend to be humorous?

      Almost all of the advertisements with deceptive acts were found to have humorous intent (94.4%). Of all ads found to contain deceptive acts, 185 out of 196 attempted to be humorous in some form. However, since humor was only coded among the ads containing deception and not all of the ads, only the deceptive ads can be commented on. Although, the extremely high number of humorous ads among deceptive ads would suggest that the many of the remaining ads not containing deception also used humor.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Deception has long been a loaded discussion in the world of ethics within society and across the globe. If deception helps someone, does that make it okay? If the deception is self serving, does that make it wrong? When is it okay to lie and when is it not, or is it ever okay to lie? Deception in society, while positive and negative, has the potential to induce harm in varied aspects of everyone's lives involved in it. Consequences may include emotional harm, social harm, physical harm, and even death, among others. The vast array of media available in our modern era makes the possibility for media influence much greater than in years past. Children, teens, and even adults have all been found to be susceptible to media influence in one way or another. By targeting some of the most popular advertisements in America and studying the prevalence of deception as well as the types of deception they have, it can be discovered what types of deception are being promoted through advertising and what types of messages are being sent to viewers across America.

Of the 2,172 ads covered in this study, 196 of them contained deception in their storylines. Approximately 9% of all Super Bowl advertisements studied contain deception in their storylines. This means that in an average year if a viewer saw all of the advertisements aired during the Super Bowl (not counting about 100 other commercials aired during the pre and post game shows), on average they would see about 66 ads of which about six ads would have deception in their storylines. As was shown in the literature review, strong research efforts have shown that advertising is especially impressionable on viewers exposed to simple, distinct, and repeated patterns (Stern, 2005a; McCullick et al., 2003). Super Bowl advertisements constitute simple, distinct, and repeated messages. Furthermore, even though the advertisements are aired

during the Super Bowl that is just the beginning, as they are consistently aired for weeks and even months after the Super Bowl on various networks (Maney, 2004). This means that viewers are being exposed to these deceptive storylines more than just one day out of the year. This repeated viewing over a long period of time falls in line with Gerbner's cultivation theory, which would suggest that repeated exposure over a long time might affect the viewer's outlook on society as well as their interaction in their community and home (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Following the identification of advertisements with deceptive storylines, comes understanding and identifying what types of messages were being presented in order to understand if the potential impact on viewers will be positive or negative. This study looked at eight different types of deception within the two main categories of commission and omission. Of those eight categories, there was only one (Cease/omission) that never occurred in the ads found with deception. While the *cease* by omission category never occurred, the other seven occurred with varying frequency.

Among all of the deception types, there were two that stood out as the most common. Those types were *acquisition* (commission) and *continue without* (omission). These two types of deception made up over 57% of the deceptive acts committed (*acquisition* 31.7%, *continue without* 25.4%) in the advertisements. Interestingly, the more active form of deception, *acquisition,* was most common among the age group of adults ages 30-64, while the less active form, *continue without,* was more common amongst the age group of young adults ages 18-29. This would suggest that older generations are being portrayed as more aggressive liars telling flat out lies while the younger generation is more subversive withholding information as a form of manipulation. Nevertheless, both ends of the deception spectrum are being portrayed fairly equally in the deceptive advertisements.

The prevalence of *acquisition* and *prevent* types of deception suggests that the short time to develop a storyline may determine which type of deception is used. Since the *continue-in* type requires some time to build off a previous lie, advertisers may be opting for the quicker solution of using more simple and direct forms of deception. Exceptions to this could include series of stories broken up over multiple advertisements, although those instances are rare, possibly due to cost.

The deception typology used in this study did not measure or rank degrees of deception. However, the two categories of deception, *commission* and *omission*, were distinguished by the former being a more aggressive or active form of deception while the latter, omission, was characterized as being less aggressive as deceivers typically allowed deception to occur, rather than actively cause it. Generally, the ads with deception by commission were more blatant and obvious in their presentation. The advertisements containing deception by omission usually had more subtle and subversive forms of deception.

An example of the more aggressive form of deception under the *acquisition* category was well portrayed in a 1999 ad for California Cheese. In this ad a family from Wisconsin has a run in with California State policemen. The police stop them for some routine questioning as to the purpose of their visit. When asked why they are visiting they lie and tell the police they are there to see the golden gate bridge and other landmarks, even though their true intention is to purchase California cheese. Out of fear and embarrassment, the family attempted to make the police believe that they were not there to buy cheese.

In contrast to the more aggressive form of deception, the first type of deception by omission labeled *acquisition* was exemplified in an advertisement by Yahoo in 1999. Here, a balding man uses the Yahoo search engine to find a store that sells wigs. The man purchases

several wigs and tries them out around town. Instead of being ridiculed for his previous comb-over, he now gets glances and winks from beautiful women on the street. Although the man did not actively tell the people that his wigs were actually his real hair, he did allow people to believe that it was his, thus committing deception by omission.

As previously mentioned, the omission form of deception is not usually as overt or aggressive as deception by commission. As seen in the above examples, this form of deception usually involves withholding information or simply allowing another to believe something false. Among all of the ads studied, the overall dispersal of deception by commission and by omission was fairly even. However, within those two categories there were two specific types of deception that were more common than others.

Although this study did not look specifically at the effects of the different forms of deception, using Bandura's social learning theory (1984) and Gerbner's cultivation theory (1976) can give us an idea of what types of deception may be most influential. Two key aspects from the aforementioned theories are; repeated exposure over a period of time, and simple, distinct, repeated patterns (Stern, 2005a; McCullick et al., 2003; Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). These ideas might suggest that deception by commission may be more easily incorporated into viewer's thoughts and behaviors. As modeled above, the acts of commission were generally more obvious and blatant forms of deceiving, usually telling lies or actively causing someone to believe something false. The acts of omission were usually more subtle and less aggressive, which may be less obvious to viewers causing them to be unaware of the actual manipulation. If this is the case, then repeated exposure to deceptive acts of commission over a period of time may be more influential than acts of omission. Although, according to our study, both acts were

equally represented meaning that the potential for consequences would not be affected by the quantity of exposure, but by the content.

Gerbner's *Mean World Syndrome* (1994) posits that heavy viewers of television violence may begin to see the world as a more violent place than it really is. Applying that line of thinking to this study, there is the potential that viewers of the deceptive advertisements over a long period of time may begin to see the world as a more deceptive or unethical place than it really is. Given the proper conditions including repeated exposure over a long period of time a deceptive world syndrome could become a possibility for some.

Along with seeing the world as a more deceptive place, there is also the possibility of viewers becoming more cynical towards advertising as well. As studied by Dark and Ritchie (2007) as well as Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998), due to deceptive advertising techniques consumers are growing more skeptical and cynical. Although deceptive storylines were only found in nine percent of the advertisements, it is possible that these displays of deception could ad to the already skeptical outlook held by many consumers of today. If that is in fact the case, then advertisers may be doing themselves more harm than good by incorporating deceptive storylines. On the other hand, many of the ads with deceptive storylines have ranked among some of the most popular Super Bowl ads ever. In any case the subject warrants future research.

Consequences for both the deceivers and those being deceived were looked at in this study. One of the recurring themes that came out of the results was that it is beneficial to deceive others. Rewards for deceiving others included gaining material goods, social gains such as popularity, emotional gains such as feeling good about one's self, and physical gains in the form of pleasure or health. Many advertisements also had multiple rewards for the deceiver. On the other hand, there were very few consequences shown for the deceivers. The consequences

usually included a social loss such as being made fun of by friends or a material loss of some type.

When comparing consequences versus rewards for deceivers, it is clear that advertisers are sending a message of rewarding deceitful behavior. The advertisers through their storylines have painted pictures of heroes who use deception as a means of meeting their desires whether they are physical, material, emotional or social. Meeting these goals is almost always done for selfish reasons and at the expense of others. Viewers, especially younger viewers that identify with these deceptive characters are at a greater risk of adopting their unethical ideas and behaviors in an attempt to gain all of the positive rewards that are portrayed in the various commercials (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001).

Receivers of deception were rarely rewarded in a positive manner and were usually shown as victims of deceit reaping various consequences. Rewards for receivers were rare. When receivers of deception were rewarded, it was usually done in an attempt to spare their feelings or to not embarrass them in a social setting. In one Bud Light commercial, a girlfriend brings her mother over to her boyfriend's home to meet for the first time. The mother has a ridiculously large buttock. The girlfriend is very proud of her mother and asks her boyfriends opinion of her. Clearly the boyfriend is uneasy about the mother's appearance, but he lies to the ladies and says he thinks the mother looks great. In this case, if the boyfriend was honest he would likely have hurt both of the women's feelings and possibly lost his girlfriend. Again, these kinds of examples were rare and the deception was selfish in part.

Consequences for receivers, amongst all categories, were far less prevalent than positive rewards for those labeled as receivers of deception. One example of an ad that involved both social loss and emotional loss occurred in a 2002 Fed-Ex ad, an employee suggests to his boss

that the company open an account online with Fed-Ex to save 10% on their shipping costs. After a moment passes, the boss pitches the same idea in the same meeting as his own, knowing full well that his was someone else's idea. With that, everyone applauds the idea and gives full credit over to their boss at the head of the table. Meanwhile, the employee who brought up the idea originally is ignored and left feeling rejected and humiliated.

In the end, the data collected suggests that people are being rewarded for deceiving others and it is generally at the expense of another person or group of people. Deception can be used to help other people, but clearly in the majority of commercials from this study it is being used for self-serving purposes, at the expense of others with little to no consequences. In fact, the deceivers are being rewarded for their efforts.

These types of deception can best be summed up within the third most popular commercial from 2007. In an ad for Bud Light, at a party two young men simultaneously come up to an ice chest and both place their hands on the only remaining beer. One man (the deceiver) asks the other if he wants to play "rock, paper, scissors" to decide who gets the beer. The receiver agrees, expecting to play the game in the traditional manner, and they count to three before they show their hands. The receiver puts his hand out in the shape of scissors. The deceiver pulls a rock out from behind his back and throws it at the head of the receiver knocking him down. The deceiver takes the beer and walks away. The receiver was clearly expecting a normal game of "rock, paper, scissors," but instead had an actual rock thrown at his head. The receiver ended up physically hurt, socially embarrassed, and beer-less, while the deceiver ended up with the much sought after beer. The message being presented here is very unethical, but it is portrayed in a humorous manner suggesting that it is okay to do something like this. It is okay to lie and hurt other people in order to get what you want.

The example above was fairly typical of the deception found in the storylines of the deceptive ads studied. The potential danger lies in the portrayal of the message. Viewers are being exposed to unethical messages promoting self-serving deception as a means of gaining happiness, possessions, and popularity. The fact that these types of messages make up the majority of the deceptive ads aired makes the messages more significant as repeated exposure to them could lead to influencing behaviors (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Also of interest from the results, were the findings related to the races, ages, and genders of both the receivers and deceivers. As was shown in the charts and graphs above, the vast majority of deceivers and receivers in these advertisements were usually white males between the ages of 18-29 years, and 30-64 years. This targeted group of viewers may be at risk for imitating the types of behaviors shown, but also the younger groups such as children and teens, as they often look to older role models for behavior patterns (Bauman, Botvin, Botvin, & Baker, 1992).

The presentations of race, age, and gender in the deceptive storylines are perpetuating old stereotypes and creating new ones at the same time. Interestingly, the statistics on the different races portrayed in the advertisements matched almost perfectly with U.S. Census statistics reported most recently (2000). However, there was one major exception. Hispanics were underrepresented by about 80%, appearing only four times. Some might attempt to argue that it is a good thing that the Hispanic community wasn't linked with deceptive or potentially unethical advertisements. However, Hispanics were underrepresented in the ads with deception both as deceivers and receivers of deception. Quite simply, the Latin community has been left out of these ads. Every other race that was studied appeared more than Hispanics, and they were very closely represented according to their actual U.S. population size. Hispanics make up

roughly 13% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2000), but they made up only 1.5% of the characters portrayed in deceptive advertisements. Out of the 196 ads with deception, there were only four Hispanics involved, one as the deceiver and three as receivers. Besides the portrayals of race, portrayals of characters in different age groups and genders also showed some interesting trends.

It is fairly clear from the results that advertisers are targeting the white male adult. The age groups represented in the advertisements coded for show that over 83% of the characters coded were part of the *young adult* or *adult* categories. U.S. Census statistics (2000) show that those age groups make up only 59% of the U.S. population. Children, teens, and seniors were all underrepresented throughout the advertisements. Again, these types of misrepresentations have the potential to mislead viewer's beliefs and distort reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Perhaps even more distorted is the portrayal of gender within the advertisements.

U.S. Census statistics (2000) report that women in the U.S. outnumber men 51% to 49%. The numbers show that in reality men and women are almost equally represented. However, the portrayals of men and women in commercials with deceptive storylines are grossly distorted. On average, for every three men shown there is one woman shown. This misrepresentation of gender is a continuation of the stereotype of male dominance over women. Viewers of these representations will be in danger of cultivating these types of misinformed stereotypes into their belief systems and personal realities.

Women's rights, equal opportunity, and age equality are all being undermined through the stereotypical representations of the white male adult in the deceptive advertisements aired during the Super Bowl. Over the 21 years of Super Bowl commercials studied, there has been very little change in the actual representations of storylines and characters involved. While

reality may show progress for minorities, the reality being portrayed in these television commercials is telling a completely different story with the possibility of altering the thought processes of viewers across America and even worldwide. While this study only covered characters linked to deception (deceiver and receiver), by the number of commercials studied, the popularity of these advertisements, and years covered it does give us an insight into the possible stereotypes being perpetuated across all advertisements.

Aside from understanding how the deceptive storylines were portraying races, age groups, and genders, finding out which products and brands were most involved in deception was very important. Within this study, alcohol (usually beer) advertisements were the most common perpetrators of deceptive ads, by more than double the percentage of the next closest product. Over 22% of the deceptive ads were alcoholic advertisements. Like the Bud Light "rock, paper, scissors" example above, most of the deceptive alcohol ads involved deceivers gaining rewards at other's expense including physical and emotional harm among others. This portrayal of unethical behavior being rewarded is disconcerting. A reward being given for stealing and physically hurting people sends a dangerous message. Whether intended or not, this message is teaching viewers, especially heavy viewers, that this type of behavior is not only okay, but that is encouraged, it can make you popular, make you feel good about yourself, and help you gain physical and material wealth. The precise effects of what these messages teach are unknown, but the potential is there (Bandura, 1994; Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Until it is known what the exact effects are and how to negate negative effects, we should proceed with caution. What's more, companies are being rewarded with higher viewer ratings and sales for using this type of marketing scheme of using deception and masking it with humor (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007).

The study also coded for whether or not the product being advertised was directly linked to the deception or not. Of the 268 individual acts of deception there were 202 directly related to the product and 66 that were not. Social learning and cultivation theory would suggest that this direct link of deception with product could cause viewers to associate deception with those products and brands. Thus, if the association with the deception is positive, such as rewarding the behavior, then repeated exposure could lead to linking deception with specific products and brands (Bandura, 1994, Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The commercials with deception portrayed separately from the product may or may not be influential like those with linked portrayals.

Using humor in deceptive advertisements was also a common method found in the Super Bowl advertisements studied. Noteworthy, is the fact that of the 196 individual advertisements found to contain deception, 183 (94%) of them were found to be humorous. Looking at the humorous advertisements as a whole, one could argue that no real harm is taking place because everyone understands the humorous intent of the storyline. Yet, quite often the object of the humor, or ridicule, is the victim of the deception. Just as likely, one could argue that using deception to demean others is seen by viewers as funny and could increase one's self image as being cool, hip, or, at least, not a victim. Furthermore, as found by Phillips (1997) and reported by Shabbir & Thwaites (2007), associating humor with advertisements can be a form of manipulation all on its own, as viewers associate arousal and pleasure from the humor with a specific product potentially influencing their attitudes and purchasing behaviors. While this study is not looking at the context of the humor or related effects, the sheer frequency of humor found in the Super Bowl ads does reaffirm assertions by Shabbir and Thwaite that humor is now becoming a norm in advertising, potentially as a means of influencing and manipulating viewers (2007).

CHAPTER 6

Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusion

The research uncovered here provides an estimate of the frequency, nature, and some basic connections in deceptive advertising. This study in particular documents how often and in what ways advertisers of Super Bowl commercials used deception within the storyline of ads in an attempt to persuade consumers toward their product. Given the lack of research in this area future research may consider deceptive storylines that exist in commercials aired during the year apart from those released during the Super Bowl in order to fill a gap in the body of knowledge.

As is the case for most content analyses, future research can branch out and begin to evaluate empirically the impact this type of deceptive advertising has upon the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of viewers both old and young. Some possible implications have been outlined in this study, but future studies would be useful in verifying or reputing such contentions. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that experimental or survey studies focus on viewer reactions to the various deception types. While commercials from the Super Bowl continue to be played throughout the year, researchers may explore the life of such deceptive ads, which can stem into studies about viewer recall. In addition, consumer-based research would be useful in understanding the effectiveness of such advertisements in connection with product sales.

One potential limitation of this study includes not studying all Super Bowl advertisements. This study only went back to 1988. Future studies may want to elaborate and study a complete census of all Super Bowl advertisements in order to gauge possible changes over time or other trends not apparent in this study.

This study was also limited by coding specifically only the characters involved in the acts of deception, both receiving and deceiving. Future research may wish to expand and look at all

characters in deceptive ads, not just the ones directly involved in deception, which would allow for greater statistical analysis and insights not found in this study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while deceptive storylines in Super Bowl advertisements do not make up the majority, they are in fact prevalent and are among some of the most viewed advertisements each year. The majority of the deceptive storylines offer a glamorous image of using lies and deception as deceivers are often rewarded on different levels usually at the expense of other people. Deceptive storylines are found in many different types of advertisements, but in this study the majority were found in advertisements selling alcohol. The deceivers and receivers in these advertisements were usually white males between the ages of 30-64 years. Viewers of Super Bowl advertisements should be aware of the popular strategy of including deception in storylines to try to sell a product. The reasons for using deception and the related consequences vary from culture to culture. This requires a broad understanding of deception and the possible effects that come from it. This area of research is relevant in nearly all societies and warrants future inquiries on different levels and in different media.

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Appendix A

Coding Book: Deception

Year: The coder will write the year number that the commercial was aired here.

Ad#: Each ad will have a chronological number assigned to it which goes here.

Y/N: The coder will put here either a **1** for yes there was deception in this ad or a **2** for no there was no deception in this ad.

Incident: When an ad has multiple acts of deception the acts will be differentiated here by numbering them in order for each act within the ad. The numbering of the incident starts over chronologically for each ad.

(D) Race: This is where the coder will record the race of the deceiver. Categories include: Caucasian (**1**), African American (**2**), Hispanic (**3**), Asian (**4**), and Other (**5**).

(D) Gender: Here the coder will record the gender of the deceiver; either a **1** for male or **2** for female.

(D) Age: Here the coder will approximate the age of the deceiver in one of four age groups including: Child (**1**), 0-ll years, Teen (**2**), 12-17 years, Young Adult (**3**), 18-29 years, Adult (**4**), 30-64 and Senior (**5**), 65 and over.

(R) Race: This is where the coder will record the race of the receiver. Categories include: Caucasian (**1**), African American (**2**), Hispanic (**3**), Asian (**4**), and Other (**5**).

(R) Gender: Here the coder will record the gender of the receiver; either a **1** for male or **2** for female.

(R) Age: Here the coder will approximate the age of the receiver in one of four age groups including: Child (**1**), 0-ll years, Teen (**2**), 12-17 years, Young Adult (**3**), 18-29 years, Adult (**4**), 30-64 and Senior (**5**), 65 and over.

(G) Group: If the act of deception or being deceived involves more than three people, then rather than code each individual it will be coded with the number **1** in the group column of either deceiver or receiver or possibly both.

Deception Type- The coder will enter the number (1-8) of the corresponding type of deception.

- ▪ **Deception by commission-** Commission occurs when the deceiver actively deceives the receiver through one of the below mentioned deception types.

Acquisition (1): When the Deceiver causes the Receiver to gain a false belief. (example: Molly (D) tells Suzy (R) that Jimmy has a nuclear bomb. Molly knows that isn't true, but she actively attempts to get Suzy to believe it).

Continue (2): When the Deceiver causes the Receiver to continue believing a lie. (Example: Suzy (R) incorrectly believes that the moon is made of cheese and Molly (R) knows that isn't true, but instead of telling Suzy the truth, Molly agrees with Suzy that the moon is made of cheese).

Cease (3): When the Deceiver causes the Receiver to stop believing something that is true. (Example: Suzy (R) believes that the earth is round, but Molly (D) lies to Suzy and gets her to believe that the earth is flat).

Prevent (4): When the Deceiver prevents the Receiver from knowing a truth. (Example: Molly (R) knows there are no guns at her school, Jimmy tries to tell Suzy that fact, but Molly (D) causes a distraction that keeps Suzy from learning the truth).

- **Deception by omission** (In speaking of omission it is implied not that the deceiver has simply failed to act, but rather that the deceiver knowingly had a chance to correct the deception and did nothing).

Acquisition (5): When the Deceiver allows the Receiver to gain or acquire a false belief. (Example: Molly (D) and Suzy (R) are at school and are told that the moon landing was faked. Molly knows that is not true, but she does nothing and allows Suzy to think that it is true).

Continue in (6): When the Deceiver allows the Receiver to continue to have a false belief. (A month after the class where Suzy (R) was misled to believe the moon landing was faked Molly (D) has the opportunity to tell Cheney the truth, but instead lets her continue believing in the lie).

Cease (7): When the Deceiver allows the Receiver to stop believing in something true. (Example: Suzy (R) stops believing that the world is round and Molly (D) knowingly does nothing to correct Suzy's belief.

Continue without (8): When the Deceiver allows the Receiver to continue without the belief in something true. (Example: Suzy (R) isn't sure if Saddam has been captured, but Molly (D) knows he has been captured. Instead of telling Suzy, Molly allows Suzy to remain unsure).

Positive Outcome- The coder will record a number (1-4) with a letter next to it, either D for deceiver or R for receiver for rewards representing positive outcomes.

Negative Outcome- The coder will record a number (5-10) with a letter next to it, either D for deceiver or R for receiver for consequences related to the deception shown.

Rewards

Material gain (1): The gaining or maintenance of an object or possession through deception.

Physical gain (2): The gaining or maintenance of health or physical support i.e. avoiding death.

Social gain (3): The acquisition or maintenance of support, friendship, or other social bonds.

Emotional gain (4): Gaining a greater personal worth or feeling good about one's self.

Consequences

Material harm (5): The loss or destruction of a physical possession.

Physical harm (6): Mild, moderate, or severe physical injury, would also include jail time.

Death (7): Actual physical death as a result of deception. Death to deceiver or other person as a result of the deception.

Social Harm (8): Betrayed friendship or loss of trust from others, ostracism, degradation.

Emotional Harm (9): Misgivings about one's personal worth, hurt feelings.

Nothing (10): No consequence or reward was shown as a result of the deception.

(O/R) Outcome Relation – Here the coder will record either a **1** for yes the outcome of the deception was product related (whether good or bad) or a **2** for no the outcome of deception was not product related.

Product: Here the coder will record the type of product that is being advertised. The following are the numbers assigned to each product type coded:

1-Alcohol, **2**-Non-alcoholic beverage (soda etc.), **3**-Food, **4**-Vehicles, **5**-Clothes, **6**- Financial, **7**- Entertainment, **8**-Travel, **9**-Shipping, **10**-General Merchandise, **11**-Jobe Search, **12**- Campaing/Public Service, **13**-Other.

Brand: Here the coder will record the brand of the product being advertised. Examples: Coca-Cola for a soda commercial, Coors Light for a beer commercial, Snuggles for a fabric softener commercial, etc.

Description: Here the coder will enter a brief description of the ad viewed.

Humor: Here the coder will enter either a **1** for yes the ad was intended to be humorous or a **2** for no the ad was not intended to be humorous.

Examples of humor:

1. *Arousal-safety*: Ad for a peanuts— A woman applies peanut odor to her body and men in the street all rush in her direction as a result.

2. *Incongruity:* Example: Ad for shampoo— A Man interrupts a wedding ceremony. Bride leaves proposed groom for this man whose hair was shinier and softer than the proposed groom. (The viewer is left to make a connection between the correct choice of husband and choice of shampoo brand.)

3. *Disparagement:* Example: Ad for a deodorant—Man playing tennis raises his arms in celebration and the odor knocks out the nearby crowd.

Operational definitions

Deceiver: The deceiver is the person initiating the deception.

Deception: Any intentional misleading or attempting to mislead of another person through a statement or act.

Receiver: The receiver is the person deceived or intended to be deceived.

Year	Ad#	Y/N	Incident	(D) Race	(D) Gender	(D) Age	G	(R) Race	(R) Gender	(R) Age	G	Dec. Type	Pos. Out	Neg. Out	O/R	Product	Brand	Description

Year	Ad#	Y/N	Incident	(D) Race	(D) Gender	(D) Age	G	(R) Race	(R) Gender	(R) Age	G	Dec. Type	Pos. Out	Neg. Out	O/R	Product	Brand	Description