THE MAN YOUR MAN SHOULD BE LIKE:
MASCULINITY AND THE MALE BODY IN OLD SPICE’S
SMELL LIKE A MAN, MAN AND SMELL IS POWER CAMPAIGNS

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2014

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the highly popular Old Spice commercials as a contemporary cultural guide on masculinity; it addresses a number of issues related to the construction of masculinities in contemporary American culture. Both Old Spice campaigns under analysis offer great insight into cultural ideals related to the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Through a detailed textual analysis of the commercials in these campaigns, I unravel those ideals and analyze how masculinity is constructed through the protagonists’ appearances and bodies, sexuality, behaviors, as well as their character patterns and mannerisms. I argue that while both Old Spice campaigns suggest that hegemonic masculinity is the only acceptable form of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity is perpetuated in two very different ways. In the Smell Like A Man, Man campaign, satire is used as a means to disguise the blunt promotion of hegemonic masculinity. The Smell is Power campaign, on the other hand, uses a very blunt approach: its overt character clearly encourages the viewer to directly align with hegemonic notions of masculinity. Both campaigns are thus representative of a certain ambiguity that is so often to be found in postmodern texts. The analysis in my thesis therefore analyzes how both campaigns serve as prime examples of how paradoxical American beliefs about masculinity are in contemporary, postmodern America.
To my family and friends,
and especially to those who have become both.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help of a lot of people. First of all, I would like to thank my thesis committee chair, Dr. Becca Cragin, for her incredible help throughout the past two years, and in the thesis writing process. Her insightful feedback, guidance, and encouraging words kept me critical, motivated and enthusiastic about my work. I would also like to thank Dr. Marilyn Motz and Dr. Rebecca Kinney for their advice, feedback, and assistance.

Special thanks also go to the faculty, staff, and graduate students of the Department of Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University. You all have inspired my passion for popular culture scholarship, and have encouraged me to become the scholar I am today. The past two years have been an incredible time for me, and I could not have asked for a better graduate school experience.

I would also like to thank the people who are most important to me: my family and friends. I would like to thank my German family as well as my newly-found American family for their constant support in everything I do. You mean the world to me, and I am beyond grateful to have all of you in my life. I am equally appreciative of all my friends in Bowling Green, Bryan, Hamburg, and around the world. You guys are the best, and you make me love every second of my life.

Finally, I want to thank you for reading this piece of work. I have worked very hard on this thesis, and I hope you have as much enjoyment working with it as I did.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Innovative Approach: The Smell Like a Man, Man Campaign</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Smell is Power Campaign: “The Scent of Courage”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity in TV Advertising: Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Outline</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. THE SCENT OF MANLINESS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF HEGEMONIC MACULINITY IN OLD SPICE COMMERCIALS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Protagonists as the Epitomes of Hyper-Masculinity</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyper-Heterosexuality as a Signifier of Hegemonic Masculinity</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Relation to Femininity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Male Gaze as a Contributor to the Construction of Hyper-Masculinity</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. THE SMELL OF POWER: MASCULINITY, THE MALE BODY, AND HOMEOVISTIVITY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Male Body as the Ultimate Signifier of Masculinity</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hyper-Masculine Body in Relation to Other Male Bodies</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Male Body, Hyper-Masculinity, and Homeovistivity</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Look at your man. Now back to me.

Now back at your man. Now back to me.

Sadly, he isn’t me.”

– Isaiah Mustafa (“The Man Your Man Could Smell Like”)
INTRODUCTION

When consumer goods company Procter & Gamble launched a new campaign for their flagging body wash brand, Old Spice, in 2010, they could have only dreamed about the overwhelming success their Smell Like a Man, Man campaign would achieve. Shortly after launching its first commercial in February 2010, the campaign quickly made the brand the most successful one in its market segment (O’Leary), and also forced its way into the lives of millions of people (Procter & Gamble 26), making “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” – the protagonist of the campaign – not only an irreplaceable benchmark in advertising, but also a spectacular phenomenon in contemporary popular culture. The question can then be asked, what made this particular campaign such a huge success? In this thesis, I will argue that the representation of masculinity in the commercials was a key factor in their immense success: although the target audience of the actual product is men, this Old Spice advertising campaign was primarily aimed at women (J. Edwards). By using former NFL player Isaiah Mustafa as the protagonist who speaks directly to the female viewers, the campaign claims to respond to women’s conception of a perfect partner, suggesting that a woman’s ideal partner has to be one thing above all others: extremely masculine. As such, the campaign – while satirizing gender norms explicitly – exploits and enforces images of hegemonic masculinity (the “publicly avowed, preferred model of manliness”, Hatty 117) by doing so, and as such, the brand encourages women to be obsessed with their male partner’s masculinity, which is directly compared to that of the campaign’s male protagonist, as portrayed by the hyper-masculine Mustafa.

Even though Isaiah Mustafa is still referred to as the Old Spice Man, by launching a second campaign, the Smell is Power campaign, in January 2012, the brand successfully
managed to promote yet another character that significantly supports the brand’s image of hegemonic masculinity: former NFL player Terry Crews. While the Mustafa campaign uses a very subtle approach in its promotion of hegemonic masculinity, the Crews campaign explicitly endorses the hegemonic male ideal, as Crews embraces aggression, domination, strength, competitiveness, and violence; all of these are key traits of hegemonic masculinity (Hatty 181). As such, the brand in both cases suggests a certain insecurity of men over their bodies, and both Old Spice campaigns send a similar message regarding masculinity and significantly promote traditional gender stereotypes. In order to do so, the campaigns not only exploit gender stereotypes regarding masculinity, but also stereotypes of the male body. The main characters’ bodies act as signifiers for the brand’s overall image of masculinity, as the hyper-masculinity of both protagonists is exemplified by their African American appearance as well as their athletic bodies.

Both Old Spice campaigns were launched in recent years (2010, 2012), which means that they were introduced to an environment that is highly saturated by advertising images. This does not only mean that brands need to be more creative than ever in the ways their advertising campaigns approach these highly media-saturated audiences, but also (and more importantly) that those campaigns which stand out and become well-known by a wide variety of the population must have hit a nerve in contemporary society. As such, these television commercials are “leading cultural indicators” (Entman 162) and display our society’s cultural values on gender, masculinity, and the body. Both Old Spice campaigns under analysis in this thesis were highly popular, and thus offer great insight into contemporary cultural ideals of masculinity as well as the construction of masculinity in contemporary American culture as few other commercials do. In his work, scholar Lance Strate examines the correlation between advertising
and the construction of masculinity. He uses the example of beer commercials and argues that these commercials “constitute a guide for becoming a man, a rulebook for appropriate male behavior, in short, a manual on masculinity” (419). A similar approach can be seen in both Old Spice campaigns: the commercials construct hegemonic masculinity and, as such, provide a very specific model for manhood for the viewers; they can be seen as a cultural “manual on masculinity” as well.

**An Innovative Approach: The Smell Like a Man, Man Campaign**

In 2009, Procter & Gamble had to face a crisis in the sales of their former popular brand Old Spice: sales were down and the 72-year-old brand had to compete against much stronger competitors such as the popular Axe line of men’s personal grooming products. The Old Spice brand also had to fight an image of being outdated and obsolete, as “every young man in America has a memory of his father or grandfather’s pungent [Old Spice] aftershave – and young men don’t want to wear their father’s cologne” (J. Edwards). Research by the brand’s lead advertising agency, Wieden + Kennedy, revealed that 60 percent of consumers buying men’s body wash products were women making the purchase for their partners (J. Edwards). More surprisingly, the research also revealed that most men considered using such products as unmanly (Newman). As a result, the campaign had to appeal not only to men (in order to create demand), but also primarily to women who oftentimes were the ones who executed the final product purchase (J. Edwards).

The solution to the unique challenge of reinvigorating the Old Spice brand can be considered one of the most innovative approaches in recent years: the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign. The campaign offered a modern alternative to the rugged Old Spice seafaring man of previous generations by introducing hyper-masculine Isaiah Mustafa as “The Man Your Man
Could Smell Like,” a character that succeeded in simultaneously being the man women want as well as being the man other men want to be (Potter). After the first commercial aired a few days before Superbowl XLIV in February of 2010, the campaign became an instant and huge success and was extended to an overall of eight spots that were released between February of 2010 and March of 2011. According to Procter & Gamble’s Annual Report of 2011, the campaign increased the volume of Old Spice body wash by 40 percent – an all-time high for the brand. In June 2010, the sales of Old Spice were up to 106 percent from the prior-year period (Neff). The campaign was extended to a total of eight television commercials; it has also generated 33 million YouTube views as well as four billion total impressions (Procter & Gamble 26).

Obviously, the campaign must have hit a nerve in the target audience. Gary Stibel, CEO and founder of The New England Consulting Group, sees the campaigns giant success in its ability to target not only at the proclaimed primary target group of women, but rather at both sexes, as “it [is] targeted to people who are attractive or want to be attractive” (O’Leary).

The Smell is Power Campaign: “The Scent of Courage”

In contrast to the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign, the Smell is Power campaign did not claim to appeal to both sexes. Instead, the target audience of this campaign, starring Terry Crews, was young males (Norton). The campaign was also created by Wieden + Kennedy and introduced the new scent “Danger Zone” as “The Scent of Courage” in the form of body spray, deodorant and body wash (Norton). Smell is Power featured a total of five commercials: two 30-second and two 15-second television commercials as well as one 15-second spot that only appeared on Old Spice’s social media channels. The first commercial “Blown Mind” aired during the NFL’s NFC Divisional Playoff Game on January 14, 2012; the remaining four spots began airing in the first week of February 2012. In each of these commercials, Crews
demonstrated how the scents of Old Spice body spray can transform a regular smelling man into a man who smells like power (Norton), a man who, so one can say, appears more masculine when using Old Spice body spray. From Old Spice Brand Manager Josh Talge’s point of view, Terry Crews was the perfect testimonial for this undertaking:

The power of scent and smelling good helps inspire confidence, and body spray is a valuable tool young guys can rely on to fuel this power. […] This campaign is targeting younger guys who might need a little more advice when it comes to blocking odor, and we felt there was no one more appropriate to offer his wisdom on the subject than Terry Crews, who resonates well with this target and is the epitome of all things power. (Norton)

That Crews is identified as the “epitome of all things power” also played a role in the second phase of the Smell is Power campaign: the final two spots of the campaign, “Bounce” and “Charmin,” were two innovative, co-branded commercials with the Procter & Gamble brands Bounce and Charmin. Whereas the first few seconds of each spot appear to be ordinary commercials to promote Bounce and Charmin products, each television spot is eventually taken over by Old Spice spokesperson Terry Crews, who busts through each ad to illustrate how Old Spice body spray “smells so much like power it sells itself in other brand’s commercials” (Norton). This technique of “taking over” alien commercials explicitly displays the importance and dominance of hegemonic masculinity in Old Spice commercials.

**Masculinity in TV Advertising: Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature**

Many scholars have written about masculinity in recent years, and looking at male representations in media as well as the construction and perception of masculinity has been an increasingly important endeavor among scholars across multiple scholarly disciplines. In this
thesis, I apply feminist thought to the highly popular Old Spice commercials. Elana Levine points out that feminism challenged the ideological patterns (“common sense”) of many people, as for them men and women were considered to be different not only by their bodies but also by their thoughts, behaviors, and interactions with the world (125). In this work, I argue that both Old Spice campaigns purposely construct those differences and create an ideal that aligns with hegemonic notions of masculinity. For in the postmodern climate we live in today, masculinity can still be interpreted as a vague concept in a constant process of negotiation. Suzanne E. Hatty points out:

A postmodern analysis reveals that the self is in a state of continuous construction. The self in the postmodern era appears to have no center, and is not autonomous; anti-essentialist readings of the self now prevail. […] As we have seen, the self may now be understood as an array of constructed phenomena, loosely encapsulated within the sexed body. (27)

It is the immense popularity of the Old Spice commercials that confirms the importance of advertising scholarship in the realm of masculinity studies in academia, and scholars agree that analyzing television commercials reveals a lot about those “constructed phenomena,” or, to be more specific, about a culture’s individuals’ construction of self as well as a culture’s notion of masculinity (Strate 420, Hatty 176).

Scholars Jonathan E. Schroeder and Janet L. Borgerson argue that “advertising has become a complex, societal institution, blending seamlessly into the visual landscape, invoking a range of social, cultural, and ethical issues […] , and implicating itself in almost all information transfer” (65). As such, it provides a “shared common experience for a majority of the world’s inhabitants, and a reference point for conversation and interaction” (65). Robert M. Entman and
Andrew Rojecki underline that these reference points are actively created by the marketers, for "there are no people more expert in a society’s cultural values and taboos than those who create television advertisements" (162). Lance Strate also identifies commercials as a “form of cultural communication and carrier of social myths, in particular, the myth of masculinity” (420).

Strate elaborates on the idea of interpreting masculinity as a cultural myth as well as on the correlation between cultural myths and the construction of masculinity and gender. He states:

Myths […] are uncontested and generally unconscious assumptions that are so widely shared within a culture that they are considered natural, instead of recognized as products of unique historical circumstances. Biology determines whether we are male or female; culture determines what it means to be male or female, and what sorts of behaviors and personal attributes are appropriate for each gender role. The foundation [of masculinity] may be biological, but the structure is manmade; it is also flexible, subject to change over time and differing significantly from culture to culture. […] Ads also reshape the myth of masculinity, and in this sense, take part in its continuing construction. (420)

Masculinity, in the context of my work, can then be described as “the socially constructed way to be a man” (Otnes and Tuncay-Zayer 90). As such, masculinity is composed of gestures, acts, and enactments (Hatty 176). Television advertising as a transmitter of cultural meanings significantly contributes to the social construction of masculinity: Cele C. Otnes and Linda Tuncay-Zayer argue that advertising not only plays a big role in the way men think about themselves, but that it also is a major contributor to men’s notion of masculinity (88). As Otnes and Tuncay-Zayer point out, “men not only form personal conceptualizations of masculinity but also do so within
broader cultural ideologies – with advertising serving as one of the primary forces to shape these ideologies” (88).

However, in recent years many scholars have identified a new depth to the study of masculinity and the way those ideologies related to masculinity are being shaped. Suzanne E. Hatty points out that “we can no longer speak of masculinity in singular terms in Western society” (181), and that instead “masculinities are now viewed as multiple or plural, with a number of different forms of masculinity coexisting in society at any one time” (181). Hatty bases her work on the works of masculinity scholar Raewyn Connell. In her work, Connell established the concept of hegemonic masculinity:

There is an ordering of versions of [...] masculinity at the level of the whole society [...]. This structural fact provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity in the society as a whole.

“Hegemonic masculinity” is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. (183)

Masculinity is now conceptualized as hierarchical (Dean 534), with hegemonic masculinity being at the top of the societal hierarchy. As such, hegemonic masculinity is the “publicly avowed, preferred model of manliness” (Hatty 117). In addition, Yue Tan et al. found that “while it [hegemonic masculinity] may not be the most common type of masculinity, it sets the standard against which the achievements of all other men (the majority) are judged” (239). This is crucial for my approach to analyzing the construction of masculinity in Old Spice commercials, for both campaigns under analysis significantly promote the most desired form of masculinity; they can herewith be classified as promoting the hegemonic ideal of masculinity.
Many scholars have attributed certain characteristics to hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is often based on normative heterosexual masculinity (Dean 535). It is associated with Western, white, and middle-class privilege (Doull et al. 330). Hatty points out further character traits of hegemonic masculinity:

Hegemonic or dominant masculinity embraces heterosexuality, homosociality [...], aggression, hierarchy, and competition. The opportunity and capacity to dominate Others is integral to hegemonic masculinity. The use of force and violence is viewed as one of the modes of behavior by which hierarchy is perpetuated in society. Consequently, violence [...] is implicated within hegemonic masculinity. (181)

Further, hegemonic masculinity in the United States is often “made synonymous with bravado and macho rigidity” (Jackson 86). It is thus barely surprising that hegemonic masculinity emphasizes “binary views of gender, [...] patriarchy as an essentialized necessity, [...] biologically determined behavior, [...] and heteronormative relational practices” (Kahn, Goddard, and Coy 140). In addition, James Joseph Dean has argued that several masculinities weave together into hegemonic masculinity (536).

Chapter Outline

The goal of this thesis is to situate the highly popular Old Spice campaigns Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power in the contexts of the previously described scholarship on masculinity. Through a detailed textual analysis of all commercials of the campaigns, I will analyze how masculinity is constructed as well as how hegemonic masculinity, as described above, is perpetuated in two different ways by both campaigns. Both the Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power protagonists can be identified as prime examples that align with
contemporary hegemonic masculinity; as such, they have great hegemonic power. As Suzanne Hatty points out,

[Hegemonic masculinity] depends on the circulation of mass media ideologies and images for its survival and prosperity. Many of the images of hegemonic masculinity are aspirational, depicting fantasy or fictional characters whose attainments represent the extremes of socially approved masculine achievements. (117)

In two chapters, this master’s thesis traces the various ways in which both characters in the Old Spice campaigns are representative of such extremes. As such, it analyzes how both Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews are framed as hyper-masculine Über-Men. In the first chapter of this work, I analyze how masculinity is generally constructed in the commercials; I examine the promotion and construction of traditional, hegemonic masculinity. By analyzing spots of each campaign and by relating it to the constructed binary oppositions with femininity in the commercials, I argue that due to their appearance, behavior, sexuality, and characterization both protagonists can be characterized as epitomes of hyper-masculinity. This chapter closes by identifying the male gaze as a contributor to the overt masculine image. It is the basis of my analysis of the correlation between and intersectionality of masculinity and the male body in Old Spice’s campaigns *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power*.

In the second and final chapter, I take a closer look at the role the male body plays in the construction of hegemonic masculinity in both campaigns. The athletic and muscular bodies of both protagonists not only act as signifiers that equate the product itself to masculinity, but also represent the male obsession with their body image – thus attributing a certain body insecurity to this target group. By analyzing the hyper-masculine bodies of the protagonists in relation to other
male bodies, I conclude this chapter by describing a concept that I termed *homeovestivity*; a state in which the body of an individual plays a crucial role for that individual, for it is in this state that an individual aligns its behavior with the behavior that is expected of a member of its sex (body) to an extent that makes its performance of a specific gender (in this case, the protagonists’ overt masculinity) *obvious* and, as such, even humorous. This reveals a certain ambiguity that is so often to be found in postmodern texts: the individual is highly self-reflexive and aware of the attributes, characteristics, and behavior patterns that are culturally associated with its biological sex, and it actively mocks them as a means of challenging them. This works in a way that promotes hegemonic masculinity: although the individual seems to be mocking the hegemonic ideal, the individual ultimately reinforces that ideal by doing so. My analysis of the importance of masculinity and the male body in both *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power*, as displayed by the protagonists, is thus an important example of how hegemonic masculinity is constructed in postmodern texts. And, after all, that is the primary cultural significance of both Old Spice campaigns under analysis in this thesis: to mirror what it means to be a man – *the* man – in contemporary postmodern American culture.
CHAPTER I.
The Scents of Manliness:
The Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Old Spice Commercials

Although the *Smell Like a Man, Man* commercials and the *Smell is Power* campaign are aimed at different target audiences – with the former targeting primarily women and the latter targeting men –, both campaigns have one significant aspect in common: the promotion of hegemonic masculinity. In both campaigns, the male protagonists are shown to be aggressive, dominant, heterosexual, and competitive. As such, they promote the “image of the young macho-man lifestyle [that] has been strongly static throughout American history, mirroring and perpetuating the hegemonic male ideal” (Krauss 6). In her essay, advertising and psychology scholar Katherine Krauss identifies this hegemonic male identity as well as its importance for the Old Spice consumer by comparing Old Spice commercials from the 1950s and the 2000s:

Advertisements directed toward male consumers suggested that the qualities of the products would reflect the qualities of the owner, the qualities of a “real” man. The traditional image of masculinity was, and still is, defined by characteristics such as heterosexual, competitive, individualistic, aggressive, strong, successful, capable, and authoritative (Feasey 2009; Gentry & Harrison 2010). The ideal man is financially responsible, outdoorsy, athletic, and completely undomesticated. (7)

As my analysis in this chapter will show, these character traits still hold true for the *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* campaigns of the Old Spice brand; Krauss’ findings thus support my own argument about the more recent Old Spice campaigns. Further, Krauss concludes that in contemporary society men buy products that support their public image of a man, and that in order to be conceived as a real man, a man must act manly (8), as “the link between the male hegemony and marketing strategy is clear: a man buys products that make him feel like more of
a man” (8). As such, men are attracted to products and advertisements that prove their masculinity and that set forth the image of a chauvinistic male (Krauss 9). The overwhelming success and the great popularity of both the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign and the *Smell is Power* campaign can be linked directly to the brand’s promotion of this image of hegemonic (“macho-like”) masculinity through the two protagonists of the campaigns as well as their behavior, presentation, and character patterns. Further, throughout both campaigns the brand promotes traditional gender stereotypes by using this image of hyper-masculinity. However, both campaigns do so in slightly different ways. While the Crews campaign directly equals its protagonist to power and dominance (thus framing him as the epitome of male masculinity), the Mustafa campaign is much more subtle in its approach: since an equally blunt approach might intimidate the primarily female target audience of the campaign, the commercials use satire to tone down the underlying sexist nature of the marketing message. As such, while seemingly mocking the hegemonic masculine ideal, the brand ultimately reinforces that ideal.

Since the start of the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign with the release of the “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” commercial, a spot introducing Isaiah Mustafa as the Old Spice Man, the brand challenged the male viewers’ manliness, for the campaign promotes hegemonic masculinity, and this form of masculinity, as pointed out in the introduction, oftentimes may not be the most common kind of masculinity but sets the standard to which all other men are compared (Tan 239). In both this campaign and the subsequent *Smell is Power* campaign, the male viewer is therefore intentionally de-masculinized, or even feminized. Further, the male viewer is expected to feel the urge to become more masculine – and the Old Spice product as the ultimate signifier for masculinity is constructed to act as a bridge to achieve this goal. The
product therefore promotes hegemonic masculinity: both protagonists are shown to be strong, assertive, powerful, aggressive, competitive, active, and heterosexual.

This can best be seen in the Mustafa campaign. In all commercials of this campaign, the protagonist explicitly asks the female target audience to think about their partner’s masculinity, thus forcing them to compare their partners’ masculinities to that of the Old Spice Man and accusing their partners of not being masculine enough. In the commercial “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” Mustafa only wears a towel, and while he looks directly into the camera for the entire time, he says:

Hello, ladies. Look at your man. Now back to me. Now back at your man. Now back to me. Sadly, he isn’t me. But if he stopped using ladies’ scented body wash and switched to Old Spice, he could smell like he’s me. Look down. Back up. Where are you? You’re on a boat with the man your man could smell like. What’s in your head? Back at me. I have it. It’s an oyster with two tickets to that thing you love. Look again. The tickets are now diamonds. Anything is possible when your man smells like Old Spice and not a lady.

While he speaks, the viewer is exposed to the different situations Mustafa finds himself in: he starts off standing in a bathroom with his shower running in the background. Shortly after, the scenery changes to Mustafa being on a boat in the ocean. Finally, as the camera zooms out we see him sitting on a horse, as the commercial resumes with the campaign’s slogan “Smell Like a Man, Man” being displayed on screen. While aiming these words at his female spectators (as the opening line is “Hello, ladies”), the text implies that Mustafa represents what most women view as an ideal partner – due to his overtly masculine behavior. The ideal man, according to the Old Spice brand, is herewith shown as physically strong, African American, and heterosexual. Just
by analyzing Mustafa’s monologue it becomes obvious that the actual Old Spice product acts as a signifier for masculinity; it is even equated to masculinity, which necessarily means that all other body wash products are not as masculine, even feminine or “ladies scented.” A similar approach of feminizing the male audience can be seen in the Smell is Power commercials. Although protagonist Terry Crews never makes references to the male viewer directly, it is implied that the target audience is in need of a smell that signifies power and dominance. That smell can only be generated by the Old Spice product; the product is herewith framed as a guarantor of hyper-masculinity. The question can then be asked, what makes us identify the protagonists of both campaigns as hyper-masculine? How is masculinity constructed in both campaigns? And how is the hegemonic masculine ideal ultimately reinforced?

**The Protagonists as the Epitomes of Hyper-Masculinity**

When analyzing the construction of masculinity in these Old Spice commercials, one necessarily has to take a closer look at the behavior of the two protagonists in Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power – as both Mustafa’s and Crews’ behavior can be classified as masculine behavior. A common stereotype of masculine men is that they are aggressive, assertive, adventurous and competitive (Berger 211, Hatty 181, Mansfield 23), and thus powerful. This can best be seen in the Smell is Power commercials. Even the slogan “Smell is Power” itself equates the Old Spice product (as the bearer of the smell) to power. In the spot “Vending Machine,” Crews falls from the top edge of the screen right into a locker room, in which he meets another male person. As this person is shown to be less masculine (mostly signified by his lack of muscles and his pale skin color), Crews shouts out loud: “Old Spice body spray can change the regular smell of men into a man who smells like power.” While shouting at the man, Crews’ breath, that can be interpreted as the actual body spray, turns the male person into a pharaoh – a
signifier for great power. As such, the average male person is shown to gain power just by getting in contact with Old Spice body spray, as exemplified by Crews’ breath. Another example for the high representation of aggressive and competitive themes in the Smell is Power campaign can be seen in the spot “Bowling”: in the first few seconds, the viewer sees Crews’ head being used as a bowling ball by himself. As soon as his head hits the pins, they disappear in a giant explosion. Once again, the Old Spice product is equated to power and aggressiveness; it thus reinforces the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

This can also be seen in the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign, even though the protagonist’s aggressiveness is presented in a more subtle way. Although the protagonist seems soft and even-tempered at first sight, Isaiah Mustafa still shows highly competitive behavior against body wash brands other than Old Spice and is also very competitive when it comes to other men. In the spot “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” Mustafa literally sets himself as the benchmark of what men have to smell like, look like, and be like in order to be considered masculine and thus desirable for women. Also, in the spot “Questions” he actively asks the female viewer “Does your man look like me?” and immediately answers “No.” Shortly after, he resumes “Can he smell like me? Yes.” And in the spot “Super Fan,” his competitiveness is even showcased in his attitude towards a mundane thing: a megaphone. When teasing the audience about a special announcement, he resumes: “I would use a megaphone to share it but the announcement […] would show up any other world’s megaphones no matter how powerful.”

The high degree of competitiveness and aggressiveness also emphasizes another core belief of hegemonic masculinity: the dominance over others. As noted by Suzanne Hatty, “[t]he opportunity and capacity to dominate Others is integral to hegemonic masculinity. The use of force […] is viewed as one of the instruments of power and as one of the modes of behavior by
which hierarchy is perpetuated in society” (181). This dominance can best be seen in the spots “Bounce” and “Charmin” of the Smell is Power campaign. At the beginning of both spots, the viewer gets the impression that commercials for the Procter & Gamble brands Charmin or Bounce are shown. However, after a few seconds Terry Crews bursts right into the spots and concludes: “Old Spice is too powerful to stay in its own commercials” (“Charmin”) or “Old Spice body spray smells so much like power, it sells itself in other people’s commercials” (“Bounce”). As such, he is shown to even dominate other brand’s commercials; his urge for dominance is shown to have no bounds – once again, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is reinforced, as the brand depends on an image of the male as dominant.

This accentuation of dominance underlines another aspect of hegemonic masculinity: the man as the active part in the gender dichotomy (Craib 88). In his book Media and Male Identity: The Making and Remaking of Men, Jim Macnamara points out that traditional gender roles see males as “hunters and providers, protectors, breadwinners [...] and leaders” (49). This is also supported by James O’Neill’s perception of masculinity: “The qualities of masculinity [...] seem invariable, and are associated with the male as breadwinner, provider, worker, the active and public half of the species: a man is strong, aggressive, rational, independent, task-oriented and successful” (O’Neill, qtd. In Craib 88). This masculine activeness and task-orientedness – the man as “the breadwinner, provider, worker” – can be seen in both the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign and the Smell is Power commercials. In the spot “Questions” of the former campaign, Isaiah Mustafa is placed in a kitchen setting. And while simultaneously holding a cake and working with a power tool, he asks the female audience “Do you want a man who smells like he can bake you a gourmet cake in the dream kitchen he built for you with his own hands?”, just before he confidently answers for them (“Of course you do”). Mustafa’s masculinity is herewith
reinforced, as he is shown as the builder, the active maker, whereas the female counterpart (exemplified by the female spectator of the commercial) is suggested to be rather passive, as she is the one who is not able to build the “dream kitchen” or bake the “gourmet cake.” Further, in the spot “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” Mustafa is shown on a boat while sailing. As such, he is once again portrayed as being extremely active.

In addition, Terry Crews is portrayed as active in the *Smell is Power* campaign. The fact that Crews is actively participating in a sport in the spot “Bowling” and his active part in taking over other brands’ commercials in “Bounce” and “Charmin” act as clear signifiers for his overall active appearance. Further, his athletic body with its huge musculature implies a very active lifestyle. This appearance also underlines both protagonists’ high level of independence, as “the myth of masculine independence is embodied in confident and confident-inspiring appearance” (MacKinnon 89).

When taking a closer look at the content of both campaigns, one more aspect can be identified that significantly contributes to the brand’s construction of hegemonic masculinity: the masculine man as somebody who actively takes the lead and seeks risk, the masculine man as an adventurer and frontiersman (Mansfield 23), as “manhood is linked with challenge, risk and with mastery over challenges from nature, technology and other men” (MacKinnon 93). In the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign, both the choice of picturesque landscapes, the depiction of Mustafa at exotic settings in “Scent Vacation,” “Fiji” and “Komodo” and the use of exotic sites act as signifiers for this sense of adventure. In the spot “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” Mustafa is seen on a boat on a wide ocean, followed by a sequence showing him sitting on horse at a lonely beach with palm trees in the background. In “Boat,” he is shown on a boat on a river surrounded by trees. And in “Questions,” the protagonist is seen balancing on a tree in a river
surrounded by picturesque mountain scenery. While maintaining his balance, he asks the female audience “Should he [your man] use Old Spice body wash? I don’t know. Do you like the smell of adventure?”; shortly after this scene, the protagonist jumps into a giant waterfall, only to eventually land in a giant jacuzzi. After asking “So ladies, should your man smell like an Old Spice man?” the jacuzzi breaks away, revealing that Mustafa is sitting on a motorcycle. This motorcycle, as well as the scenic mountains in this spot, clearly operate as signifiers for an adventurous lifestyle.

In all of these examples, Mustafa is shown in an outdoor setting for the majority of the spots. He is shown to be the master of nature (in the instance above, he is able to balance on the stock of a tree); the outdoors is shown to be his domain. For his commercials are rarely set in a private setting (the bathroom scene in the beginning of “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” is one of the rare instances where this is the case) but in nature, Mustafa’s hyper-masculinity is reinforced, as “the setting most closely associated with masculinity are the outdoors” (Strate 82). Further, the mastery over nature as well as the foreignness of the outdoor setting also frames Mustafa as a frontiersman which is “the archetypal man’s man in our culture” (Strate 83). Thus, the dominant use of outdoor settings not only acts as a signifier for Mustafa’s framing as an adventurer and frontiersman, but also as a celebration of his masculinity which herewith aligns with the hegemonic ideal.

It is especially in the spots “Komodo” and “Scent Vacation” that the brand frames Mustafa as an adventurous, exploring individual that actively seeks risks. In “Komodo,” Mustafa is placed in front of an ancient temple; he is surrounded by mountains full of trees. While talking to the female viewer, Mustafa says that the Komodo product can take them to “the freshness of distant cultures” and that he will do so too. Also, he is not dressed in a pair of shorts (as he
usually is), but wears a linen sheet with tropical patterns printed on it instead. As such, Mustafa’s appearance is framed as adventurous; the foreign clothes act as a signifier for his adventurous nature. A similar presentation of the protagonist can be seen in the spot “Scent Vacation.” In this spot, Mustafa asks the audience “Where can you go when your man smells like me?” only to resolve by saying “Close your eyes and I will show you. Do you feel it? The sand between your toe tips?” While talking to the implied female viewer, the protagonist is placed in beach scenery with tree-fringed mountains and the blue sky in the background; Mustafa is wearing a long skirt made from straw, similar to the traditional Hawaiian clothing item pāʻū. Again, he is presented as an explorer of a foreign setting – the brand herewith frames Mustafa as a frontiersman and as an adventurous, risk-seeking individual.

Further, the adventurous character of the protagonist (who is actively shown to seek risk) is also underlined by both the aesthetic setup of the spot as well as by its visual structure. In all spots of the campaign, Mustafa is shown in various settings which follow each other without any cuts in the camera work. Rather, it appears as if the entire spot was recorded in one single shot. This makes the spots seem high-paced, and Mustafa is presented as the one who does not lose control of this pace, but instead who is in control of the tearing pace at all times.

As for the Smell is Power campaign, the campaign’s subline is the best indicator for the brand’s expectation of men to be adventurous: the line “The Scent of Courage” encourages the male viewers to be courageous – by actively taking risks and challenges or by seeking adventure. As Katherine Krauss summarizes:

[Old Spice commercials] sell men on the desire of pleasure-seeking and, generally, living a life that is fun, adventurous, and void of responsibility. [...] A man is not a man unless he lives a life that is in pursuit of an irresponsible
pleasure, whether that is traveling, dating girls, or so on. Although obviously
fantastical, the mediated image portrays that ‘real’ men have fun and adventure.

(18)

By doing so, the product itself is equated to foreignness and significantly contributes to the
audience’s conception of the masculine man as being a frontiersman, adventurous, and willing to
take risks; hegemonic masculinity is herewith reinforced.

**Hyper-Heterosexuality as a Signifier of Hegemonic Masculinity**

When it comes to looking at what is characterized as desirable in both Old Spice
campaigns, one inevitably has to take a look at how sexuality is put in relation to masculinity in
the two campaigns; for especially the Mustafa campaign makes extensive use of stereotypes
related to male sexuality in order to emphasize the protagonist’s hyper-masculinity, and thus to
promote the hegemonic ideal. In his work *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*,
postmodernist Richard Dyer analyzes the symbolism of male sexuality. He finds:

> Sexuality, male or female, is not so much shown directly as symbolized. It is not
> just censorship that insists on this – sexuality is on the whole better represented
> through symbolism. Colours, textures, objects, effects of light, the shape of things,
> all convey sexuality through evocation, resonance and association; […]. What is
> significant is how sexuality is symbolized, how these devices evoke a sense of
> what sexuality is like, how they contribute to a particular definition of sexuality.

(111)

How does the Old spice brand define its characters’ sexualities then? The importance of
heterosexuality and implied high sexual activity plays a crucial role in the construction of
hegemonic masculinity in both Old Spice campaigns, as both aspects are directly linked to the
protagonists’ masculinity. Both the Mustafa and the Crews campaign present the protagonists as highly heterosexual individuals; both protagonists can be identified as signifiers for overt heterosexuality, as they promote the perception of a masculine male to be heterosexual. And while his heterosexual nature can only be assumed by Crews’ urge to live out his instincts (as signified by his violent and aggressive nature) in *Smell is Power*, the promotion of heterosexuality as well as hyper-heterosexuality can best be seen in the Mustafa campaign: in five out of six commercials in *Smell Like a Man, Man*, the protagonist’s first words are “Hello ladies” or simply “Ladies,” indicating that the commercials are aimed at women. As such, Mustafa eliminates any doubt regarding his heterosexuality in the first few seconds of each commercial, and he is characterized as the ultimate heterosexual individual.

In contemporary popular culture, it is a very common stereotype that black people are seen as more sexual than whites (hooks, “Black Looks” 34; Streitmatter 157; Hoch 52). Bell hooks states that it is a convergence of racist sexist thinking that has projected a hyper-sexuality onto the black body (hooks, “We Real Cool” 67). Ronald L. Jackson II even finds more drastic words when he states that “like the minstrel brute who is sexually perverse and thuggish, contemporary representations of Black males are socially constructed to comply with the stereotype of the sex-crazed Black male” (79). Although not completely depicted as a “sex-crazed Black male” and rather framed as a seductive player and macho figure than as a brute or sexual attacker, Mustafa does in some spots suggest sexual activities to the audience. The best example for this can be seen at the end of the spot “Scent Vacation”: after jumping into water, Mustafa says “I hope you like water, because we are neck-deep in the sweet waters of friendship and trust,” only to eventually lay down on a giant red piano that is placed in front of a fireplace. He resumes “You see – when your man smells like the fresh scents of Old Spice, you can go
anywhere. Unless of course you prefer to stay here.” By saying this, sexual tension is created between Mustafa and the implied female viewer. It is indicated that, if the female viewer was in the situation pictured in the commercial, and if she decided to stay, Mustafa would initiate sexual intercourse with her. Sexual intercourse (or, more importantly, heterosexual sexual intercourse) is herewith assumed by Mustafa to be the next logical step in the scenario presented on the screen. The image of the hyper-heterosexual macho man is herewith celebrated and perpetuated, and hegemonic masculinity is reinforced.

This example shows that heterosexuality and sexual activity play a crucial role in the brand’s campaign strategy of promoting hegemonic masculinity. Though each campaign addresses different target audiences, the ultimate goal of both campaigns is to make its male consumers more attractive to their female counterparts. As such, even if sexual activity is never explicitly picked out as a central theme, it is present in almost every commercial, for both campaigns “very clearly sell the idea of sex to men as a required masculine desire [...], the use of soap, deodorant, shaving gel, and cologne are presented as sex increasers” (Krauss 11). Both African American protagonists are implied to be sexually very active – as they are shown to be the most convinced Old Spice consumers one can imagine. The Old Spice product suggests a guarantee for more sex for every man that makes use of the brand, and a “real” man is expected to want more sex (Krauss 18). Both campaigns are thus expressive of “the use of the black male body in mainstream popular culture to signify hyper-sexuality” (Chi-Yun Shin 208). The identification of the male protagonists as masculine is herewith put in a framing of hegemonic heterosexuality. It thus perpetuates the notion of hegemonic heterosexuality and becomes a very important signifier for hegemonic masculinity.
The Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Relation to Femininity

In my analysis this far, I have concentrated on the construction of masculinity by scrutinizing the two protagonists of the campaigns as well as their behavior, presentation, mannerisms, and character patterns. However, an analysis of the construction of masculinity in Old Spice campaigns seems incomplete without taking a look at the construction of masculinity in relation to femininity. Though women are almost never shown in both campaigns, one can examine the way the ads construct femininity by analyzing the protagonists’ behavior and implications about women as well as by looking at the way the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign addresses its primarily female audience. The ad campaigns’ construction of masculinity directly correlates with its construction of femininity, as both can be identified when looking at the brand’s constructed binaries between males and females. As such, the brand actively constructs a binary between masculine and feminine behavior in the campaigns in order to emphasize the qualities of hegemonic masculinity in contrast to qualities of femininity. For my analysis of the construction of hegemonic masculinity, it is therefore relevant to apply structuralist theory in order to identify the binary oppositions that are attributed to both males and females in the campaign, as “femininity, on this [structuralist] approach, can best be understood as the structural opposite of masculinity [and vice versa], with both mythologies deeply embedded in the structures of patriarchy” (Macdonald 35). As such, an analysis of the brand’s construction of femininity reveals further notions of hegemonic masculinity that are being perpetuated by the Smell Like a Man, Man and the Smell is Power campaigns.

Throughout both campaigns one is exposed to the binary oppositions of active vs. passive (as discussed earlier in this chapter) as well as independent vs. dependent. By addressing the female viewers in a commanding fashion in “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” as well as
by presenting the only women present in all of the commercials of both campaigns as barely more than a housewife stereotype (“Bounce”), females are inevitably equated to being passive and dependent. This can best be seen in the spot “Questions” I described earlier: Mustafa is shown to be the builder of things, whereas the female viewer is implied to be the receiver of the things Mustafa as the active part built (e.g. the “dream kitchen”); the female person is thus portrayed as passive, whereas the protagonist is shown to be overtly, almost ridiculously active. While this aspect of hegemonic masculinity is thus treated comedically in the commercials, it ultimately reinforces the concept of females as being passive.

This is best emphasized by the spot “Scent Vacation.” In this spot, the female viewer is attributed an active part at first sight. While being in beach scenery, Mustafa asks the female viewer “Where can you go when your man smells like me?” and eventually resumes “You see, when your man smells like the fresh scent of Old Spice, you can go anywhere.” Although it is implied that the female person is the active part, for Mustafa says she can go anywhere she wants, one also has to keep in mind the overt judgment that the female viewer can only go anywhere she wants, if her man smells like Old Spice. As such, she is shown to be highly dependent on and submissive to her male counterpart; hegemonic masculinity is herewith reinforced.

Another binary that is represented by both Old Spice campaigns and directly results from the depiction of females as being submissive to dominant males is the binary of public space (male) vs. private space (female). Indeed, many scholars agree that the depiction of women as the ones who are responsible for household chores and whose place is in the home is still a very common stereotype in contemporary advertising (Lin 254, Macdonald 13, Neuhaus 62). The constructed public space vs. private space binary can thus most overtly be seen in the co-branded
spot “Bounce” of the *Smell is Power* campaign. Before Terry Crews takes over the spot, the viewer sees a woman doing laundry. When Crews enters the screen, he sniffs the woman and resumes “You smell like line-dried freshness,” to which she replies “You smell like power”. Whereas Crews is equated to power once again, the woman is reduced to the household chore she is pursuing. Also, Crews is shown to be invading the woman’s private space – as signified by the laundry room –, a privilege which is granted to Crews as the person who is in charge of the public space, as it is the public space he is entering the commercial from.

Also, as discussed before, in both the *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* campaigns the protagonists are shown as adventurers and frontiersmen; their life is herewith shown to be taking place in public space, whereas it is implied that the female’s place is at home. That is why Mustafa builds the “dream kitchen” for the female viewer in the “Questions” commercial. Also, the impossibility of women to escape their home on their own seems to be a dominant theme in the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign. In “Boat,” “Scent Vacation,” “Komodo” and “Fiji,” Mustafa suggests that the man who uses Old Spice can take the female viewer to foreign and exotic places. This necessarily implies that the female viewer cannot go on her own; rather, she is tied to her home setting, while it is the masculine man who is portrayed to have access to public space. While these spots definitely play with the female desire for overcoming the borders of her home, it eventually suggests that the female viewer cannot overcome this state without having a partner who uses Old Spice. Yet again, hegemonic masculinity is satirized and, as such, perpetuated by emphasizing the male protagonists’ mastery over public space and, by doing so, reinforcing its dominance.

Another binary opposition that promotes hegemonic masculinity and that is represented by the Old Spice campaigns is related to the emotional state of the characters. A common
stereotype of women is that they are more emotional than men (Macdonald 63) – a stereotype which is also promoted by the Old Spice campaigns. While it is suggested that the female viewer of the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign is very emotional, the protagonists’ behavior and presentation implies that a masculine man has to be in control of his emotions, or even cannot be emotional at all. This is, for instance, supported by the wording of the commercials “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” “Fiji,” and “Scent Vacation.” In “Fiji,” Mustafa claims that her partner’s use of Old Spice would guarantee the female viewer a “personalized love song melody” or a “romantic puppy surprise.” In “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” the Old Spice Man has “two tickets to that thing you love.” And in “Scent Vacation,” Mustafa invites the viewer to go “neck deep […] in the waters of friendship and trust.” All these statements are directly aimed at the female viewers’ emotions; women are thus satirized as being highly emotional beings, whereas the male protagonists are shown not only to be in control of their emotions, but also to have the ability to point out a female’s emotional character and to use this ability to keep their patriarchic superiority intact and, as such, to reinforce their masculine power.

Finally, the last binary that reinforces hegemonic masculinity by comparing it to notions of femininity is the binary of subject vs. object, or thinker (mind) vs. follower. This binary is especially apparent in the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign. In all eight spots of the campaign, Isaiah Mustafa is shown to be an individual that knows exactly what every woman desires; he knows exactly what the female spectator wants. From diamonds or “two tickets to that thing you love” in “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” to adventure in “Questions” and exotic places in “Fiji” or “Scent Vacation,” Mustafa as the Old Spice Man is shown to be the ultimate connoisseur of female desire. He is herewith portrayed as the mind, the active thinker in the gender dichotomy, whereas the female spectator is characterized as the one who is being
vulnerable to and at the mercy of the scrutinizing and manipulating gaze of the male protagonist. These examples therefore perfectly illustrate the way the brand utilizes the construction of binaries between masculine and feminine behavior: the commercials purposely construct a binary distinction between men and women to emphasize the qualities of hegemonic masculinity in contrast to qualities of femininity in order to sell the product.

The Male Gaze as a Contributor to the Construction of Hyper-Masculinity

Looking at the analysis of the construction of hegemonic masculinity in *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* so far, one can with no doubt say that the Old Spice brand – by using two different approaches for each target audience – significantly promotes hegemonic masculinity. As such, it is hardly surprising that the majority of people who were involved in the creation of both campaigns were men. Ten out of the twelve people who were credited for the “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” commercial were men (“Film Lions 2010”). Out of 18 people who were involved in creating the *Smell is Power* campaign, only three were women (“Art Directors Club / 91st Annual Awards”). Both *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* are thus expressive of, as Laura Mulvey phrases it, the “determining male gaze” (346). What is perceived as the ideal partner for a woman in *Smell Like a Man, Man* is thus not based on research or even constructed from a female’s point of view, but primarily made up from a male perception. “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” is thus not an indicator of what women actually want to see in their ideal partner, but rather of what men think women would expect in an ideal male. From this male point of view, women are said to look for one thing in a male above everything else: hyper-masculinity, as embodied through Isaiah Mustafa. As such, a closer look at the expression of the male gaze in both campaigns reveals that the men producing both campaigns are, while attempting to ridicule such, ultimately promoting traditional gender roles;
they are highly expressive of the patriarchic and hegemonic power relations that determine what it means to be considered masculine.

Finally, the male gaze is not aimed at the female person on screen, but rather at Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews. As such, it is not a female person that is valued for her to-be-looked-at-ness, but the two male protagonists. This is highly problematic. Mulvey argues that the portrayal of women as sexual objects through the male gaze signifies desire of the male (346). This desire can also be attributed to the *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* campaigns, even though this desire is not aimed at a female, but a male body. What the depiction of Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews as hyper-masculine reveals is the desire of men to be considered as equally masculine, and thus to be identified with the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. This explains why a feminine product like body spray can successfully market itself to men by playing on their gender insecurities. By doing this, the campaigns encourage men to become obsessed with their masculinity, and thus with their body image, which (as I will argue in the following chapter) is necessarily connected to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. While this is certainly good for Old Spice’s business, it might not be as good for contemporary society – as this masculine image is thoroughly constructed in the commercials and, for most men, this level of masculinity is impossible to reach.
CHAPTER II.
THE SMELL OF POWER:
MASCULINITY, THE MALE BODY, AND HOMEOSTASIS

My analysis of the construction of hegemonic masculinity in the previous chapter shows that both Old Spice campaigns significantly promote hegemonic masculinity. However, in order to do so the campaigns not only exploit gender stereotypes, but also stereotypes of the male body. In her essay “How To Build A Man,” Anne Fausto-Sterling analyzes how one becomes a man from a cultural perspective, and, by doing so, she states the significant importance of the body in the social and cultural construction of gender:

In the current intellectual fashion, men are made, not born. We construct masculinity through social discourse, that array of happenings that covers everything from music videos, poetry, and rap lyrics to sports, beer commercials, and psychotherapy. But underlying all of this clever carpentry is the sneaking suspicion that one must start with a blueprint – or, to stretch the metaphor yet a bit more, that buildings must have foundations. […] It is called the body. (128)

In her work, Fausto-Sterling argues that “at birth, then, masculinity becomes a social phenomenon” (131). This social phenomenon is based on the body: as Fausto-Sterling points out, the gender socialization of individuals depends on whether that individual is born with male or female genitalia (131). If born with male genitalia, masculine socialization occurs, and “there must be no doubt in the boy’s mind, in the minds of his parents and other adult relatives, or in the minds of male peers about the legitimacy of male identification” (Fausto-Sterling 131). This is crucial for my analysis of the construction of masculinity in the two Old Spice campaigns, as the cultural construction of masculinity is attached to a biologically determined form: the male body. If, as Fausto-Sterling points out, the construction of masculinity as well as a masculine identity is
based on the male body, then how does the Old Spice brand depict the male body to construct the protagonists’ masculine identities which, as I argued in the previous chapter, aligns with hegemonic notions of masculinity?

Many scholars have attributed a crucial role to the male body in the construction of masculinity; and it has been argued that the male body becomes gendered as masculine. In his book *Cultures of Masculinity*, author Tim Edwards points out that “male body does not [necessarily] equal masculine” (140). Rather, Edwards argues that studying bodies and, more importantly, their cultural meanings can be a challenging endeavor, for “studying the body does indeed lead inevitably to an entire series of problematic dualisms: nature versus culture, male versus female, black versus white, active versus passive, mind versus body […]” (Edwards 140). Even more importantly, Edwards points out that “what is also opened up here is the importance of power and processes of normativity, status and the inscription of meaning: what – and who – passes muster in the hierarchy of appearances and physical capacities” (140). While admitting that there is a lack of scholarship on the male body from a cultural studies perspective as well as a lack of feminist accounts of the male body (156), Edwards concludes that “the male body has become a major signifier of masculinity within Western societies and indeed it has become an open cipher for contemporary culture *per se*” (140) and that the body is an obvious signifier of gender (158). As such, “the male body has often come to form a […] symbol for many, much wider cultural processes concerning masculinity” (Edwards 156). Scholars Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs would agree that “given the importance of sex assignment in Western culture, [the] body is always already gendered” (29). Consequently, the male body as the ultimate signifier of masculinity plays a crucial role in our culture’s notion of masculinity (MacKinnon 5). In her groundbreaking book *The Male Body*, scholar Susan Bordo agrees that “we need to
think about the body not only as a physical entity – which it assuredly is – but also as a cultural form that carries meaning with it” (26). The goal of this chapter is therefore to analyze how the male bodies of Terry Crews and Isaiah Mustafa carry meanings of hegemonic masculinity, for in both the Smell Like a Man, Man and the Smell is Power campaigns the construction of masculinity is linked to the male body of the protagonists. Even more importantly, I will argue that through the depiction of the protagonists’ bodies as ideal masculine bodies, it is suggested that the ideal male body has to align with hegemonic notions of masculinity; it has to represent strength, power, aggressiveness, and domination. The bodies of Crews and Mustafa are thus loaded with significant cultural meaning.

Interestingly, the Old Spice brand chose to introduce two particular bodies in their campaigns; the protagonists of both Old Spice campaigns are not unknown to the masses viewing the commercials. With both Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews (who have been former NFL players, and thus been known for their masculine bodies), the brand decided to let celebrities be the spokesmen of their campaigns. In his work Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society, postmodernist Richard Dyer analyzes the glorification of celebrities in our culture, and points out the importance of celebrities in the construction of concepts of identity, such as masculinity:

We’re fascinated by stars because they enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social production […]. Stars represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed. Much of the ideological investment of the star phenomenon is in the stars seen as individuals, their qualities seen as natural. […] Stars are also embodiments of the social
categories in which people are placed and through which we make our lives –
categories of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation […]. And all of
these typical, common ideas, that have the feeling of being the air that you
breathe, just the way things are, have their own histories, their own peculiarities of
social construction. (15)

As such, the presentation of Terry Crews and Isaiah Mustafa as well as their characterization as
hyper-masculine shapes the way the audience thinks about masculinity. Both protagonists rose to
fame through their accomplishment as football players. As such, they represent physical
characteristics as well as behaviors associated with professional football players: athleticism,
strength, aggressiveness, and determination. The protagonists’ status as celebrities herewith
underlines the brand’s perception as the ultimate masculine brand; further, their star status
herewith underlines their own classification as the epitome of masculinity. The question can then
be asked, how does the depiction of the body and body image in the *Smell Like a Man, Man*
and *Smell is Power* campaigns support the perception of both Old Spice protagonists as hyper-
masculine? What features of the male body displayed in both Old Spice campaigns underline the
perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity? In short, what role does the male body play in the
construction of (hyper-)masculinity?

**The Male Body as the Ultimate Signifier of Masculinity**

The crucial role of the male body in the construction of masculinity is reflected in both
the *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* campaigns, as some physical characteristics of
the bodies of the protagonists underline their perception as hyper-masculine: the protagonists’
muscularity, hair, and skin color as well as the use of their voice, tone, and eyes support the
characters’ alignment with hegemonic masculinity. Most of these physical features (with the
exception of skin color) are features of the body that an individual can to some extent control or modify; as such, they play a very important part in the performance of masculinity (for the individuals choose to alter these features in a certain way) and act as signifiers in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. And while these practices certainly vary over time and among different groups, both Old Spice campaigns under analysis in this work can be viewed as prime contemporary examples of how certain features of the male body are modified (and thus depicted) in a way that promotes the hegemonic ideal of masculinity.

In all spots of both campaigns, the protagonists are shown half-naked, with no shirts on. Both Mustafa and Crews can be identified as very athletic; their huge musculature acts as a signifier for their overt masculinity, for “when one explores the construction of the ideal man today, certainly, size matters” (Dworkin and Wachs 73). Whereas the importance of an athletic body for being considered masculine is only implied by Mustafa’s presence in Smell Like a Man, Crews explicitly displays his musculature in Smell is Power. At the end of the commercials “Bowling” and “Vending Machine,” the voice-over stating the claim “Smell is Power” is actively supported by Crews who twitches with his chest muscles. By doing so, it is implied that Crews’ muscles themselves are equated to power. As Barbara B. Stern points out in her essay “Masculinism(s) and the Male Image: What Does It Mean To Be A Man?”, men are expected to be powerful, strong, effective and even domineering, and the male musculature can be identified as the symbolic embodiment of these traits (222). This phenomenon, as Tim Edwards points out in Cultures of Masculinity, has its roots in the association of physical labor with masculinity: “Laboring […] was also defined as ‘masculine’ through its relationship to the male body, requiring or developing musculature and strength and adding further signatures of physical labor and skill or quite simply getting one’s hands dirty as ‘masculine’ activities […]” (157). As such,
musculature is reinforcing the sense of masculinity as hardness (Edwards 159). Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs agree that strength and power are seen as the fundamental goals and attributes of the male body (84). By choosing athletic and muscular protagonists such as Mustafa and Crews for their campaigns, Old Spice equates both characters to strength and power and, as such, the product itself to masculinity.

That muscularity and athleticism is crucial for the male body in order to be considered masculine is also underlined by another bodily feature of the protagonists’ bodies: the skin color of both Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews. And while skin color cannot directly be altered or modified by the individual, the campaign does make use of techniques to embrace the protagonists’ skin color: in Smell is Power, for instance, Crews’ body is oiled with lotion which makes his body appear shinier. The question can then be asked, how is the protagonists’ skin color used to reinforce the equation of masculinity to athleticism and muscularity? In his book Black America, Body Beautiful, Eric J. Bailey describes “the African American who is advertising the product […] as physically fit, showing more well-rounded hips, thighs, and butt, as well as muscular physical attributes” (64). As such, African American models are often used to reflect the healthy, physical diversity of the African American population (Bailey 64). More importantly, having an African American body, as bell hooks points out in Black Looks: Race and Representation, for a boy meant “learning to be tough, to mask one’s feelings, to stand one’s ground and fight” (87). All of these traits (as I have proven in my analysis so far) can be attributed to the Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power protagonists.

It is the protagonists’ strength that reveals another widely accepted ideal of masculinity: the masculine man as being violent or glorifying violence. Kenneth MacKinnon points out that a “persistent cultural belief [in Western media] is that there is an almost unbreakable relationship
between men and violence” (11). While contemporary American culture seems to portray violence and masculinity as inseparable in general, the choice of two black protagonists epitomizes this ideal, as especially “black males [are] socialized in patriarchal culture to make manhood synonymous with domination and the control of others, with the use of violence […]” (hooks, “We Real Men” 54). Indeed, violence is used in Old Spice commercials to create an image of hegemonic masculinity – especially in the Smell is Power campaign. In the spot “Vending Machine,” Terry Crews intentionally destroys the front of a vending machine to get some of the snacks stored inside the machine. In “Bounce,” Crews violently bursts into the wall of a house in order to take over the commercial. In “Charmin,” Crews’ fist (holding the actual Old Spice can) is punched through a wall three times. And in “Blown Mind,” Crews’ violence is turned against himself, as his brain explodes after he announces that “Old Spice body spray will make you feel so powerful, it will blow your mind right in front of your face.” The most obvious example of the use of violence as a signifier for the protagonist’s hyper-masculinity, however, can be found in the spot “Bowling.” In this spot, Crews removes his head from his body and uses it as a bowling ball. While yelling the word “power,” the head is shown to burst a number of bowling pins, resulting in a giant explosion. The head then rolls back to the rest of Crews’ body, who picks the head up and places it back on his neck. From the moment the head hits the pins to when Crews puts it back on his body, he continues to yell “power.” Once his head is back in place, Crews completes his sentence by saying “in a can.” After finishing this sentence, steam comes out of the Old Spice can (accompanied by the sound of a ship’s horn) which is held up by Crews, only to blow down the protagonist’s head from the body again. As such, the spot concludes the way it started: with Crews’ headless body exposed to the camera; and while facing the camera, his chest muscles twitch to the sound of a bell. In “Bowling,” it is features of the
body that are used in this spot to display a certain degree of violence: it is the protagonist’s head
that is used to destroy the bowling pins. As such, it is the protagonist’s body (or, to be more
precisely, a part of his body) that is capable of showing such a high degree of violent behavior.
Regardless of their race, violence is seen as an appropriate way for males to behave (Thompson
158); in the ad campaigns, and the Crews commercials in particular, it is the black men that are
shown to embody this ideal the most, which makes them appear more masculine, and herewith
closer to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity.

Further, the spot “Bowling” emphasizes a mind vs. body dichotomy that can be linked
directly to hegemonic masculinity: while an emphasis on the body is considered the unmasculine
(or better: less masculine) part of the gender dichotomy, it is the mind that is portrayed as
representing male power and dominance, and thus hegemonic masculinity. This spot, however,
seems to focus on the body of Crews and his masculinity is surprisingly linked to the depiction
of his body in the commercial. Crews is herewith initially gendered as less masculine (though not
necessarily feminine) and his hyper-masculinity is temporarily invalidated. The question can
then be asked, how can Crews still be perceived as hyper-masculine? For the majority of the
spot, head and body are not united, but the body is fragmented; the mind is physically separated
from the body. As such, the body is shown to be functioning without the head – and, more
crucially, without the mind. This is also illustrated at the very end of the spot: once the can blows
off the head from the protagonist’s body yet again, Crews twitches his chest muscles one more
time, just to affirm that his body is functioning without the mind. The message seems clear: the
person does not need his brain in order to function. Interestingly, this idea is also perpetuated by
the spot “Blown Mind” in which Crews makes his brain leave his body (for “Old Spice body
spray is so powerful it will blow your mind right in front of your face”), yet is still able to stand
upright and talk, even though it is in an unknown language. While Crews is still shown as physically strong and powerful (through the display of violence) without the head on his body in “Bowling,” he is not seen to fulfill the hegemonic ideal until the head, and thus the mind, is reunited with his body. Crews’ masculinity is herewith reduced to his body, and it is not until the end of the spot that his hyper-masculinity is fully restored: shortly after Crews’ body picks up the head and places it back on his body, the actual Old Spice product is held up by Crews. For the first time in the entire commercial, the product is presented to the audience, and it is barely a mere coincidence that the product is presented at that exact time – the only time that body and head (mind) are united for a short time. The mind is herewith shown to be the most important aspect in Crews’ reconciliation as hyper-masculine, and the physical Old Spice product becomes the bridge to the desired level of masculinity. Further, the product is herewith equated to the mind on the one hand, and power on the other hand, as it is the Old Spice can’s steam that eventually separates the mind from the body yet again. The product is herewith shown to be not only the most crucial element in restoring Crews’ hyper-masculinity but also the element that the body needs to validate hegemonic notions of masculinity. While hegemonic masculinity is herewith reinforced, the brand once again relies on the male body in order to do so. Further, masculinity is fragmented; the only valid representation of masculinity is one that can only be accessed through the use of the Old Spice product.

The equation of the protagonists to athleticism and musculature as well as strength and power underlies the assumption of the active pursuit of another traditional masculine character trait: the participation in sports. Tim Edwards argues that the rising popularity of participating in sports in general as well as in weight lifting in particular is not coincidental with the decline of jobs that require physical labor in recent decades (157). In both Old Spice campaigns, it is
indicated by the protagonists’ huge musculature that they participated in weight-lifting activities. In his book *The Naked Man: A Study of the Male Body*, author Desmond Morris directly relates a man’s participation in sports to his attitude towards masculinity, as “everything from weight-lifting to mountain climbing, and from arm-wrestling to polar trekking is undertaken, not because it will serve any practical purpose but because it will enable certain males to show their disgust at the increasing softness of twenty-first-century men” (16). As such, by signifying high sportive activity the athletic bodies of both protagonists indirectly criticize less athletic bodies. Males with such bodies are devalued and their masculinity is invalidated, while the protagonists’ masculinities are ultimately reinforced. Even further, due to their athleticism both Mustafa and Crews qualify as what Morris describes as the “twenty-first-century hunter” that “can fulfill his urge to chase and aim by engaging in sport” (19), as “the ancient, primeval hunter may be dead, but the modern, symbolic hunter lives on” (20).

The association of athleticism and musculature with hegemonic masculinity is underlined by further aspects of the muscular bodies of the protagonists which are being staged as the ideal masculine bodies in the Old Spice campaigns. Since both Mustafa’s and Crews’ athletic bodies are well defined, neither body allows any display of fat; the lack of fat on their bodies perfectly correlates not only with women’s, but also with men’s attitude towards fat. Whereas the display of fat on men was tolerated as a sign for masculinity in earlier times, “fat is now a powerfully feared cultural transgression. For both men and women, any visible fat is presented as problematic” (Dworkin and Wachs 35). As Susan Bordo points out in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, fat is “being perceived as indicative of laziness, lack of discipline, unwillingness to conform” (195) – all of which can be interpreted as unmasculine behavior. Rather, the “firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct attitude; it
[…] suggests willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to ‘shape your life’” (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* 195). Therefore, Mustafa’s muscular, fatless body in the *Smell Like Man, Man* campaign acts as a bridge to the desired masculinity not only men wish to have, but also women want to see embodied by their partners. And one can even go a step further: whereas Mustafa is suggested to have the perfect body women want (as the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign is primarily aimed at women), it is implied that Crews incorporates the ideal body image that men strive for. As such, it is hardly surprising that he is shown to be even bigger and more muscular than Mustafa. As a result of this depiction, in both campaigns the highly sexualized and hyper-masculine bodies in this way become a benchmark for both the female viewer’s conception of masculinity and the male’s masculinity ideal, as “masculinity is commonly seen by essentialist accounts to emanate from the body and to be driven by it” (Edwards 152) and “[a]fter all, one can hardly be a man without a male body” (Edwards 140).

Further, male dominance and power is also reinforced by another part of the male body: the protagonists’ voices and use of language. As such, the use of language and the general tone of the commercials can be classified as masculine, as both protagonists have a deep voice, and a deeper masculine voice gives males a more frightening, thus domineering and powerful appearance (Morris 92). Voice, tone, and use of language herewith act as signifiers for the high level of assertiveness and aggressiveness not only in the *Smell Like a Man, Man* commercials, but also in the *Smell is Power* campaign. Although the protagonist in the former campaign is generally gentler in the use of tone and language, Mustafa’s way of talking still contributes to his overtly masculine image. By using imperatives aimed at the female spectator, Mustafa is shown to be not only overly self-confident but also very patronizing in his tone. He demands the female viewer “Look at your man. Now back to me. Now back at your man. Now back to me” or
“What’s in your head? Back at me” in “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like,” and asks the audience “So ladies, should your man smell like an Old Spice man?” just to tell her “You tell me!” immediately after in the spot “Questions.” While on one level the ad herewith functions as a satire of the domineering man, it still links masculinity to domination – and thus reinforces the hegemonic ideal.

The high level of assertiveness and aggressiveness in the use of language and the general tone can also be seen in the Smell is Power campaign. In all five commercials of the campaign, protagonist Crews is shown speaking with a loud voice and shouting (or even yelling at the viewer or other people in the commercial) the entire time. In almost every commercial of the campaign, special emphasis is put on the word “power”. In the commercial “Vending Machine,” Crews stresses the word so that the articulation of the word takes up three seconds. In “Bowling,” he even articulates the word over the course of six seconds. In each of these cases, both his choice of language and the sound volume act as signifiers for Crews’ assertiveness and aggressiveness, and thus reinforce the viewer’s perception of Crews as hyper-masculine. The spot “Blown Mind” utilizes the use of voice and language to signify masculinity in a different way. In the spot, Crews faces the audience by saying “Old Spice body spray will make you feel so powerful, it will blow your mind right in front of your face.” After finishing this sentence, his head opens up revealing his brain which explodes right after flying next to his head, saying “Goodbye”. Crews then utters a few sounds, and subtitles appear that read: “What a powerful mistake I’ve made.” In this example, Crews’ aggressiveness is aimed at himself this time. The very fact that he lost his language is used to emphasize his masculinity: he was so powerful and aggressive that he made his own brain, and thus uses of language, disappear. His own awareness of the “powerful mistake” he has made is herewith transmitted to the spectator: Crews is
characterized as aggressive, assertive and powerful – he is once again perceived as manly, his masculine aggressiveness is celebrated, and his overt masculinity is validated.

When looking at the male body and its role in the performance of masculinity, one also has to analyze further aspects of the male body that can be identified as signifiers for masculinity: the use of bodily hair, for instance. Hair (in all its facets: facial hair, head hear, etc.) plays a significant role in the construction of masculinity, for it can be controlled and actively altered in a way that supports hegemonic notions of masculinity. In *The Naked Man: A Study of the Male Body*, Morris analyzes the relevance of bodily hair in the construction of masculinity, and states that “the virility of the male’s copious head of hair is undoubtedly linked to the fact that […] it is the masculine body that becomes hairier” (29). As such, he resumes, “if extra hairiness is masculine, then all hair becomes symbolic of masculine power” (29). In both Old Spice campaigns, bodily hair is displayed multiple times; this use of bodily hair supports the masculine image of the protagonists. This can most obviously be seen in the use of facial hair: in seven out of eight spots of the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign, Mustafa is shown to have some kind of facial hair. And in all five spots of *Smell is Power*, Terry Crews wears a neatly trimmed beard that covers parts of his face. Both campaigns in this way make extensive use of the beard as “the most conspicuous gender signal of the human male” (Morris 96). The brand herewith suggests that in order to be considered masculine, a man needs to have facial hair.

It is all the more surprising then, that in order to create the ultimate masculine image, the length of facial hair needs to be chosen carefully. The facial hair of both Old Spice protagonists is rather short and does not hide too much of their face, their beards are not long but neatly trimmed into defined lines, only surrounding their mouths. The use of this particular style might have two reasons. First, overly long facial hair has negative connotations in contemporary
culture: “In the Western world today, outside the realm of religious extremism, bearded faces are largely limited to social rebels of one kind or another’’ (Morris 105). Long beards were once a symbol for overt masculinity, but they are now associated with lower social status and a less sophisticated condition (Morris 110). Second, clean-shaven faces with no display of facial hair at all do not emphasize the masculine ideal depicted in both Old Spice campaigns either. Rather, the “clean-shaven face […] is becoming more and more of a cultural appeasement display. […] In other words, the clean-shaven male is making a visual statement that is a request for cooperation rather than competition” (Morris 111). Characters with clean-shaven faces are thus perceived as soft, and “to be exposed as ‘soft’ at the core is one of the worst things a man can suffer in this culture” (Bordo, The Male Body 55). As such, both the depiction of long beards as well as clean-shaved faces would corrupt the protagonists’ characterization as the ideal masculine men. The neatly trimmed facial hair is, therefore, used in order to perpetuate the protagonists’ hyper-masculinity.

The spot “Boat” of the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign makes the connection between facial hair and masculinity even more obvious. In the spot, Mustafa is seen on a boat. He tells the viewer that “If your man used Old Spice instead of lady scented body wash, he could smell like he took you on more of these [pointing at the boat], while wearing this”. As soon as he finishes this sentence, he points to a bushy mustache on his face. He then says “Or this” and tears off the mustache, just to conclude “But probably this”, eventually tearing off the skin at the same spot only to reveal another, new mustache. While he does so, the claim “Smell Like a Man, Man” appears. As such, Mustafa’s manliness (which is, as I have argued so far, inevitably connected to the protagonist’s masculinity) is signified by his mustache in this spot. As the mustache can be seen as “a symbol of obsessive but inhibited sexuality and masculinity” (Morris 113) and “a
mustachioed figure is clearly not female” (Morris 113), the mustache acts as the ultimate sign of masculinity and in order to achieve this state of masculinity, as the commercial implies, one has to use Old Spice body wash instead of lady scented body wash.

The protagonists’ head hair also supports this idea. Mustafa has closely cropped, very short hair in all commercials of the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign. While long hair is being associated with femininity, this hair style with its “closely cropped hair is bristly and rough” (Morris 30); it underlines Mustafa’s masculinity. However, Terry Crews hair style in Smell is Power is even more so perpetuating hegemonic masculinity: he is bald. Morris classifies such baldness as a masculine trait:

By scraping away the scalp hair that would normally survive baldness, this gives the impression that the men concerned have deliberately chosen to do away with all head hair. […] They represent a] dominant, active lifestyle […] with the personalities of wrestler-kings, tough men who scorn orthodox fashions and who appear dignified, yet ready for a fight. Compared with the sneakiness of the toupee-wearers, there is something brave about their blatant defiance of the laws of hairiness, and they come out as easy winners. (35)

In this quote, Morris describes the bald man as someone who is seen to be self-determined, active and brave. All these character traits thus emphasize the hegemonic masculinity typified by hyper-masculine Crews.

In both Old Spice campaigns, even the smallest parts of the male body are used as signifiers of masculinity: the eyes of the protagonists. As Susan Bordo points out in her book The Male Body: A New Look At Men in Public and Private, this “face-off masculinity” is very common in contemporary advertising (186):
How do male bodies in the ads speak to us nowadays? In a variety of ways. Sometimes the message is challenging, aggressive. Many models stare coldly at the viewer, defying the observer to view them in any way other than how they have chosen to present themselves: as powerful, armored, emotionally impenetrable. “I am a rock,” their bodies [...] seem to proclaim. [...] Victory goes to the dominant constant in a game of will against will. Who can stare the other man down? [...] Whose gaze will be dominant? (186)

This “face-off masculinity” seems to be a dominant technique used in the commercials of both Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power, for in all spots the protagonists look directly into the camera, suggesting eye-to-eye contact with the viewer. With no doubt, this act of intensive staring is used as a signifier for the dominance and superiority of the strong male body not only over women, but also over other men. The protagonists are herewith portrayed as “bundles of raging animal instincts” (Bordo, The Male Body 229), and thus hyper-masculine.

While my analysis of the male body as the ultimate signifier of masculinity has thus far focused on physical features that can be altered, I want to conclude this section with a bodily feature that cannot be altered, but nonetheless significantly contributes to the framing of the protagonists as hyper-masculine. In the new edition of his groundbreaking book Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Male Body, author Peter Lehman points out a crucial aspect of the male body as the most important signifier in the construction of gender identity: the phallus (81). In his in-depth analysis of the novel The Nothing Man, he emphasizes the “impossibility of being a man without a penis” (85). Even further, “[the] man without a penis […] lacks the power, the masculinity – indeed, the phallus” (87). But what exactly is “the phallus”? In The Male Body, Susan Bordo describes the phallus as “a symbolic ‘double’ that is
entirely the creation of the cultural imagination” (84). As such, one necessarily has to analyze the use symbols of masculinity in the commercials in general, and the use of phallic symbols in particular in both Old Spice campaigns, as “advertisers overtly reference masculine symbols [...] to soothe the fears of being less of a ‘real’ man” (Krauss 8). In addition, many gender theorists agree that “men suffer from a pandemic crisis of masculinity [that they] seek to assuage through the compensatory consumption of phallic symbols” (Thompson and Holt 315). Both Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power make use of such phallic symbols; images of masculinity are used in the commercials of both campaigns to support both Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews as the ideal masculine men that are desired by both men and women. At the end of the spot “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” as well as in “Did You Know” Mustafa is shown sitting on the back of a horse. At the end of “Questions” he even has a giant motorcycle between his legs (without sitting on it) – all of which can be classified as phallic symbols. In the Smell is Power campaign, these symbols are even more obvious: in “Bounce,” for instance, Crews crashes through a wall sitting on a giant jet ski. The frequent use of phallic symbols like these successfully takes the hyper-masculine image of the protagonists to an extreme – the protagonists are perceived as the epitome of masculinity.

The Hyper-Masculine Body in Relation to Other Male Bodies

This is also emphasized by those bodies that are presented in some of the commercials but do not meet the criteria to be classified as (hyper-)masculine. Whereas Mustafa is the only person present in all eight spots of the Smell Like a Man, Man campaign, the viewer is introduced to another male character in one of the commercials of the Smell is Power campaign. As already briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, in the spot “Vending Machine” Crews is shown with another male person. When Crews meets the man, he – as usual – is only wearing
short shorts, whereas the man is wearing longer shorts as well as a t-shirt. When Crews discovers his male companion in the spot, he shouts that “Old Spice body spray can change the regular smell of men into a man who smells like power.” While yelling the word “power,” his breath causes explosions of fire on the man’s body, removing all of the other man’s clothes. The man is now shown to only be wearing boxers, exposing his pale white skin as well as his body stature which, despite its general slimness, displays some body fat that makes the body appear undefined and unmuscular. The spot herewith constructs a dichotomy between hyper-masculine Terry Crews and his male counterpart in the spot: Terry is shown to be muscular, dark skinned, with no displays of fat, standing upright, with his arms resting on his hips (which makes his body appear even bigger), and his chest pushed out. His counterpart, on the other hand, is shown to be skinny, white skinned, with his belly showing displays of fat, his shoulders sunken which makes him appear small and insecure. Whereas Crews is once again shown to be the epitome of masculinity, the other character is portrayed as unmasculine and rather feminine. This is most obviously expressed by the use of explosions when the man’s clothes are removed: the final explosion, as once again caused by Crews’ breath, detonates in the middle of the man’s boxers – the place where the man’s penis is indicated to be. The protagonist herewith literally blasts away the man’s manhood; as such, the man’s masculinity is temporarily destroyed.

In this state, the man attempts to ask “How is this supposed to …?” just to be interrupted by another wave of Crews’ explosive breath. This time, however, it puts clothes on his body and turns him into an ancient pharaoh. It is not until he is fully dressed in the pharaoh apparel that Crews lets the man finish his sentence (“Wow, you know what, I actually do feel more power”). The man’s masculinity is herewith restored; however, this masculinity is shown to be less powerful than Crews’ masculinity, for it is Crews who has the power to validate (and, more
importantly, invalidate) the man’s masculinity, as shown in the spot. In the hierarchy of masculinities, Crews (signifying the hegemonic ideal) is at the very top, whereas his counterpart is shown to be several stages below him. It is therefore hardly surprising that the spot does not turn the man into a pharaoh immediately, but chooses to expose the man’s body to the audience first. It is the body that is shown to be the man’s biggest weakness, his most crucial defect that prevents him from being considered masculine, and thus worthy of the Old Spice product. It is Crews’ action of covering him up in a pharaoh’s suit that restores his masculinity to a certain extent. As such, his body – engendered rather feminine with all its flaws – needed to be exposed to the viewer in order to invalidate the man’s masculinity, and, by doing so, to ultimately validate Crews’ own hyper-masculinity as represented by his body. As such, the use of satire is overlaid with obvious manipulations of men’s insecurities; and although the Crews ads are far less satirical than the Mustafa spots, both campaigns not only try to generate male anxiety (even though the Mustafa campaign does so in a rather subtle way), but both campaigns also, while seeming to mock the hegemonic masculine ideal, ultimately reinforce that ideal.

This example impressively shows that while it is important to have a male body in order to be considered masculine (as shown in the beginning of this chapter), it does not necessarily mean that ‘male body’ immediately equates to ‘masculine’. As Tim Edwards points out in *Cultures of Masculinity*:

Masculinity does not pertain to male bodies alone and indeed male bodies are not necessarily very ‘masculine’. One only has to think of the bodies of young boys, disabled men and elderly or frail men to realize that any such equation is not so simple. Male body does not equal masculine. (140)
It might be for this reason that there is no other man present than the protagonist in the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign and that there is only one man other than the protagonist depicted in the *Smell is Power* campaign (and this man, as shown, rather fits the description of a frail man). Since the male body as the ultimate signifier of masculinity plays a crucial role in the construction of masculinity in both Old Spice campaigns, such depictions of men would damage the brand’s construction of hyper-masculinity, and thus weaken the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity.

**The Male Body, Hyper-Masculinity, and Homeovestivity**

I have shown in this chapter that the male body plays a crucial role in the construction of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary culture. However, to conclude my argumentation on the male body as a carrier of cultural meaning fueled by our notions of masculinity, I will examine one final question: how does the perception of the body as a very important signifier of one’s gender identity affect one’s actions in everyday life? As Judith Butler has argued in her groundbreaking essay “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” using performances of drag as her main point of argumentation, gender (and, as such, masculinity as well as femininity) is a social performance. She writes:

> Drag is not putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, [...] that ‘masculine’ belongs to ‘male’ and ‘feminine’ belongs to female. There is no ‘proper’ gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex’s cultural property. [...] Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of*
imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself. (21)

In our society, as Butler indicates, “masculine” is still seen as belonging to “male,” and “feminine” to “female” – both of these gender constructions are based on the body. If gender is something that is performed by all of us, most commonly unconsciously, based on the possession of certain anatomical features (penis – male, vagina – female), then what does the overt performance of hyper-masculinity by both Isaiah Mustafa and Terry Crews reveal about the construction of gender through social performance? Both protagonists have biologically male bodies, and both protagonists perform cultural masculinity. However, they do so in a different way than most men do in their everyday lives.

The crucial aspect here is that the protagonists perform masculinity to an extent that makes it obvious they are performing. As such, their hyper-masculinity as expressed by their behaviors and bodies reveals the fragility of the performativity of gender. Their hyper-masculinity is expressive of what I, based on Butler’s concept of gender performativity as well as Louise Kaplan’s concept of homeovestism, term homeovestivity. Kaplan defines homeovestism as “an impersonation of the idealized phallic parent of the same sex to overcome shameful and frightening cross-gender identifications” (546); it is the performance of the gender that aligns with an individual’s biological sex. Homeovestivity, then, describes the state in which an individual aligns its behavior with the behavior that is expected of a member of its sex (body) to an extent that makes its performance of a specific gender obvious and, as such, even humorous. As an expression of postmodern thought, the individual is highly self-reflexive and aware of the attributes, characteristics and behavior patterns that are culturally associated with its biological
sex, and it actively mocks them as a means of challenging them. However, although it seems to be mocking the hegemonic ideal, the individual ultimately reinforces that ideal by doing so. That is also why the comedic character of both the *Smell Like a Man, Man* and the *Smell is Power* campaign works in a way that reinforces hegemonic masculinity. By projecting an image of hyper-masculinity on the bodies of the protagonists of the campaign, the homeovestivity of both Mustafa and Crews reveals our culture’s tendency to equate sex to gender and, while trying to mock it, ultimately reinforces traditional gender roles and hegemonic masculinity.
CONCLUSION

This thesis addresses a number of issues related to the construction of masculinities in contemporary American culture. In the introduction of this work, I posed the argument that the commercials displayed in the *Smell Like a Man, Man* and *Smell is Power* campaigns offer a cultural manual on masculinity; both campaigns offer great insight into contemporary cultural ideals related to hegemonic masculinity. Through a detailed textual analysis of all commercials of the campaigns, I argued that masculinity is constructed through the protagonists’ appearances, bodies and behaviors, as well as their character patterns and mannerisms. However, while hegemonic masculinity is perpetuated by both campaigns, it is perpetuated in two different ways.

In the *Smell Like a Man, Man* campaign starring Isaiah Mustafa as the Old Spice man who is characterized as the man that is desired by women and admired by men at the same time, the hegemonic ideal is being satirized. Satire, in this instance, is used as a means to disguise the blunt promotion of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, it is promoted in a much more subtle way: by mocking the hegemonic ideal, that ideal is eventually identified, reinforced and thus perpetuated.

In the *Smell is Power* campaign which is aimed primarily at men, on the other hand, hegemonic masculinity is endorsed explicitly. While most of the following characteristics are only indicated or expressed implicitly by Mustafa in *Smell Like a Man, Man*, protagonist Terry Crews is overtly characterized as the epitome of masculinity: he is aggressive, dominant, violent, loud, and domineering. While Mustafa talks to his primarily female audience in a soft, yet assertive voice, Crews mostly yells at his primarily male audience. While Mustafa displays his dominance through the choice of settings and a determined tone in his commercials, Crews does so through display of violence and aggression. And while Mustafa’s dominance and power is
illustrated by his indicated physical attractiveness to the female viewer, Crews’ power is more explicitly pictured by his huge musculature as well as his physical strength. While the Crews campaign directly equals its protagonist to power and dominance (thus framing him as the epitome of male masculinity), the Mustafa campaign is much more subtle in its approach: since an equally blunt approach might intimidate the primarily female target audience of the campaign, the commercials use humor and satire to tone down the underlying sexist nature of the marketing message.

In both campaigns, the protagonists’ male bodies play a major role in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, and the portrayal of each character’s body illustrates the two different approaches as well. While both bodies act as signifiers for the protagonists’ masculinities, Mustafa’s body is meant to be desired by the primarily female target audience. Unlike Crews’ body in *Smell is Power*, it is thus never shown to be violent or intimidating. His muscles, for instance, are big, but not as big as those of Crews. The body of Terry Crews, on the other hand, is constructed as a signifier of power and intimidation: his skin color is darker as that of Mustafa’s body, his musculature is even bigger, and his powerful voice oftentimes yells single words over several seconds. The athletic and muscular bodies of both protagonists, further, not only act as signifiers that equate the product itself to masculinity, but also represent the male obsession with body image – thus attributing a certain body insecurity to this target group. A close analysis of the protagonists’ hyper-masculine bodies in relation to other male bodies reveals the immense significance of the male body in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, as the cultural construction of masculinities is herewith attached to a biologically determined form of the male body. The ideal male body is not just ‘the male body’ anymore, but it is rather a ‘hyper-masculine’ body, a body that is equated to a notion of ideal masculinity, and thus a body
loaded with significant cultural meaning. This hyper-masculinity of the protagonists, as expressed by their behaviors and bodies, reveals the fragility of the performativity of gender, for it is expressive of what I termed homeovestivity – the state in which an individual aligns its behavior with the behavior that is expected of a member of its sex (body) to an extent that makes its performance of a specific gender obvious and, as such, even humorous. This reveals a certain ambiguity that is so often to be found in postmodern texts, as the individual is highly self-reflexive and aware of the attributes, characteristics and behavior patterns that are culturally associated with its biological sex, and it actively mocks them as a means of challenging them. However, although it seems to be mocking the hegemonic ideal, the individual ultimately reinforces that ideal by doing so. My analysis of the importance of the male body in both Smell Like a Man, Man and Smell is Power, as displayed by the protagonists, is thus an important example of how hegemonic masculinity is constructed in postmodern texts.

My analyses in this thesis reveal the importance of looking at commercials as “leading cultural indicators” (Entman 162) when it comes to the examination of masculinities in contemporary American culture. In two different ways, both Old Spice campaigns suggest that hegemonic masculinity is the only acceptable form of masculinity. This message, of course, is as drastic as it is problematic, because both campaigns suggest that in order to be considered a real man, a male has to be one thing above all others: extremely masculine. As such, when taking a closer look at the ideals of masculinity behind these two campaigns – both of which can be considered popular culture phenomena by now; they no longer just suggest Isaiah Mustafa or Terry Crews to be “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like”, but rather “The Man Your Man Should Look Like”, or even “The Man Your Man Should Be Like”.

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