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The Pink and Blue Problem:

Altercasting in Gendered Advertising

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Media and Communications Senior Thesis

4.15.2020

Abstract

When you meet a baby for the first time, and you don't know its sex, if its wearing pink clothes, most people will automatically assume it's a girl; or if they're wearing blue clothes, it's automatically a boy. **The pink and blue problem is the enforcing of gender stereotypes through color, associated roles, and imagery.** The root of this problem is that many people are unaware of the difference between "sex" and "gender", and that they can be mutually exclusive. Your sex is the body you're born with, and all the parts that come with it, while your gender is how you identify as a human being. Your sex and your gender do not have to match, though many times it's assumed that they do when a child is born. As they develop, kids are surrounded with gendered toys, clothes, and products that continue to enforce what each gender should be: pink for girls, blue for boys. This immediately puts the child in a box, as they are given no room to figure out their gender identity for themselves. They are forced onto certain items and associations because of their sex, and shown the norm through pink and blue. For my thesis, I will be analyzing advertisements for different products, analyzing the discourse used, and using the theory of altercasting to demonstrate how this pink and blue problem has a serious impact on developmental youths.

Introduction to Altercasting

Roles are an essential part of life. Each person has multiple roles to fulfill whether it be a sex, an occupation, a familial role, a religious role; roles are a major part of every day life. The theory of altercasting analyzes these roles, how they affect people and those around them, and how someone can push another person into a role.

The Theory

Altercasting is a theory of persuasion that is defined as "projecting an identity, to be assumed by others with whom is in interaction, which is congruent with one's own goals" (Weinstein and Deutschberger, 1963). The theory involves two parties, the Ego and the Alter. The Ego is the one who pushes and persuades the Alter to take on a role. The role theory subgroup has two subgroups of its own; tact and manded, and then six processes; structural distance, evaluative distance, emotional distance, support versus support seeking, interdependence versus autonomy, and degree of freedom allowed to the Alter, all of which are combined in different ways to create successful altercasting.

History

The theory of altercasting was created by Eugene Weinstein and Paul Deutschberger in 1963. In 1964, Eugene A. Weinstein, William DeVaughn, Mary Glenn Wiley tested altercasting in their study by putting people in social roles. The three created a situation that might occur, and tested to see how the participants would act, and if altercasting would arise in the social situation. The researchers took twenty male and twenty female students, grouped same sex pairs together,

and instructed one of the two to act out. The three then observed how the other in the pairing was forced to manipulate their role to accommodate the one acting out. Some experiments were conducted soon after the theory was published, the most well known being Stanley Milgram's "lost letter technique."

Subgroups

Altercasting is split into two subgroups: manded altercasting and tact altercasting. Manded altercasting is an aggressive approach when an altercasters new or existing role is made more prominent and revealed directly to the viewers. In other words, manded altercasting is when "people are told who they are or are supposed to be by making an existing role more noticeable." An example of this could be attaching a category to the role therefore attaching responsibilities associated; "as a media and communications major, you should understand media theories." With this statement, the role is told directly to the viewer and the role is made explicit. Tact altercasting is a more passive approach when a role is presented in ways that could trigger others to take on a specific role that compliments the altercasters goals. In other words, tact altercasting is when "we put ourselves as senders in a role that 'evokes' a natural counter-role for the other" (University of Twente, 2004). An example of this could be when a student is struggling in class, a professor may be forced or pressured into a more active role of helping the student succeed.

Processes

Beneath theory of altercasting is divided into six processes: structural distance, evaluative distance, emotional distance, support versus support seeking, interdependence versus autonomy, and degree of freedom allowed to the Alter. These six processes were defined by Weinstein and Deutschberger in their publishing *Some Dimensions of Altercasting*, and can be combined in any matter of ways to create successful altercasting. With this, all six processes are put onto a seven-point scale based on the range of effectiveness and justification of research it can produce. The first process, structural distance, "the physical position of relative authority Ego is directing Alter to play out in the current encounter. A rating of seven on this dimension indicates maximum authority ceded by ego to alter with a rating of four as structural parity." The second process, evaluative distance, is "the relative evaluative status of Ego and Alter as presented selves, independent of the structural distance involved. One can be in a subordinate position and still, through skillful playing, cast Alter into a 'one down' identity, making it clear that Alter is not as superior, holy or infallible as his position might imply. A rating of seven indicates maximum worth ceded by ego to alter; a rating of four, evaluative parity." The third process, emotional distance, is "the 'primariness' or 'secondariness' of Alter's relationship with Ego as projected by Ego. To what extent is Alter cast into a role in which he is presumed to be involved with Ego's feelings, needs, and everyday concerns? A rating of one indicates maximum involvement or intimacy." The fourth process, support versus support seeking, is "Ego's indications to Alter that Alter is in an identity requiring Ego's help or assistance (a rating of one) or, at the other extreme, being required to give aid and comfort to Ego (a rating of seven)." This process is similar to the subgroup of tact altercasting in which one forces another into a

congruent role. The fifth process, interdependence versus autonomy, is "the extent to which Ego projects Alter as being tied to him by bonds of common fate, perspective, or concurrence of interests. A rating of one indicates complete identity, a rating of seven complete separateness." The sixth and final process, degree of freedom allowed to the Alter, is "the range of behavior Ego allows Alter within the encounter. Strictly speaking, this dimension does not characterize Alter's role but the altercasting process itself. A rating of seven on this dimension indicates maximum range given Alter by Ego, while a rating of one would be in- dicative of extreme coercion" (Weinstein, Wiley, and DeVaughn, 1966). With these processes and the associated rating-scale, the ratings are used to sort through individualistic responses to altercasting, as each person will have a different, unique response.

Impacts

Individual Effects

Altercasting is a subgroup to role theory; with the part that roles play in altercasting, some roles are naturally absorbed into a person's identity, while others can be influenced or pressured. Manipulation is a major factor in altercasting, and while it can have both positive or negative effects, manipulation will always be present with altercasting. Roles within altercasting can put a variety of pressures, especially social pressure, that ensure that roles are taken on and carried out.

Group Effects

Along with the individual impacts, altercasting also impacts society as a whole. The basis of the theory relies on how roles function within our society. As humans are social beings, and

are constantly in one role or another; this means that the probability for altercasting to occur is very high. Humans are very focused on control; with this, the Ego can gain control, while the Alter can lose control, both of which can have adverse effects (Layder, 2004).

Duality

With altercasting, there is a certain duality, as it can have either positive or negative effects on who encounters it. Since the theory is based on pushing people into roles and the associated behaviors, one could say that we can force positive or negative roles onto people.

Positive Effects

An example of the positive effects of altercasting is an article published in the American Journal of Nursing in 1971. The article depicts nurses having to deal with difficult patients in psychiatric hospitals. The article informs nurses that sometimes, with difficult patients, they need to employ unusual methods of persuasion, such as altercasting. Altercasting is normally an extremely effective tool because it can easily go undetected. Instead of requesting something directly or demanding something of the patient, the nurse is recommended to understand the patient on a deeper level in order to understand what role to take on. They can then discreetly coerce the patient into doing whatever needs to be done. Though manipulation is usually frowned upon, this can be seen as a positive case as the nurses are only helping their patients.

Negative Effects

Altercasting is usually closely associated with manipulation; as the basis of the theory is to subtly persuade someone into a role, this can come across as trapping people and forcing them into roles without their knowledge. Another key aspect of altercasting is meeting the goals of the

Ego. With this, and humans being social creatures, "social interaction being goal-directed suggests central questions about the relationship between actors' goals and their means for pursuing them" (Blumstein, 1975).This can have a very negative connotation for those pushing roles onto others.

Cases & Experiments

Lost Letter Technique Investigation

One of the more well known altercasting experiments was the "lost letter technique". The experiment was conducted in 1969 by Stanley Milgram testing whether altercasting was more effective than direct requests. Over two thousand "lost" letters were "placed on car windshields throughout a metropolitan area along with a business card containing a handwritten altercasting or direct request message to mail the letter. The frequency of letters returned was used as a primary measure of compliance" (Turner 2010). The experiment concluded and unfortunately the results didn't yield any conclusive results on the effectiveness of altercasting, but did give an indication that manded altercasting was less effective than tact altercasting, as the aggression of manded altercasting had a negative impact on the subjects.

Identity Bargaining Experiment

In another example, Philip Blumstein conducted an experiment where he set up "role-playing encounters, where male subjects interacted with female confederates trained to make identity demands on the subjects through explicit bargaining statements, self-presentation, and subtle altercasting." In one situation the subject was to begin a relationship with a stranger, and in the other, he was supposed to further an already existing relationship. Half of the subjects

were instructed to have submissive behavior, and the other half were instructed to have aggressive behavior. An example of the submissive behavior, or tact altercasting, could be "I have been dating this one guy, but we broke up because he was always pushing me around and would never let me have my own say about what we would do when we went out. You wouldn't treat me that way, would you?" This is a good example of tact altercasting because the girl is subtly pushing the boy in the right direction to fulfill her own goals. Along with that, an example of the aggressive behavior, or manded altercasting, could be "I like boys who don't come on like they owned me, but let me take some initiative." This is a good example of manded altercasting because the girl is making the role known to the boy. Subjects took part in two ten-minute sessions, each with a different girl; the subjects were "expected to project greater relative worth of the girl when their non-central identity was threatened by the girl's altercast. As predicted, greater autonomy was expressed when the valued identity was under attack" (Blumstein, 1975).

Applications & Uses

Advertising

As altercasting is a theory based on persuasion, it is used greatly in media and communications, mainly in marketing and advertising. An advertisement is built to subtly push the viewer into doing whatever the creator of the ad wants them to do; this is a direct example of altercasting, as the basis of the theory is to push someone into a role to fulfill personal goals. In this case, the advertiser (the Ego) is pushing the viewer of the advertisement (the Alter) into a role (a purchaser of a product or service) to fulfill the personal goals of the Ego (making sales).

Conclusion on Altercasting

In conclusion, altercasting is a lesser known media theory, but is very popular within the field. It's used in many situations, but as the theory is supposed to be subtle, not very people know about it. Once the theory is understood though, it's easy to see it everywhere. As a fairly simple theory, it's easy for people to use it in everyday life, whether it's on purpose or by accident, as people often want to pursue their own goals, it's common to push someone into a particular role in order for someone to get what they want. Though this can sound quite devious, altercasting has proven here that it is a well-rounded theory used for unlimited amounts of reasons.

Introduction to the Pink and Blue Problem

As a refresher, altercasting is a theory of persuasion that is defined as "projecting an identity, to be assumed by others with whom is in interaction, which is congruent with one's own goals" (Weinstein and Deutschberger, 1963). The role theory subgroup has two subgroups of its own; tact and manded, and then six processes; structural distance, evaluative distance, emotional distance, support versus support seeking, interdependence versus autonomy, and degree of freedom allowed alter, all of which are combined in different ways to create successful altercasting. I will be looking at the pink and blue problem through the lens of altercasting.

The pink and blue problem is the damaging gender stereotypes in American society that tell boys and girls they need to be associated with certain colors, products and events. In a photography project by JeongMee Yoon, it is shown that children are stuffed into pink and blue boxes, with little to no room to figure out who they are as individuals. In America, gender

stereotypes are pushed onto children before they are even born. Gender reveals shower pink or blue powder onto soon-to-be parents, rooms are painted, and toys and clothes are bought. Before children even come into this world, choices are made for them. The pink and blue problem is something that's been sitting in American culture for a long time. Certain things in media and advertising such as gender reveals and binary fueled toys and clothes limit choices for children. This issue needs to change and evolve as it confines development youths to small boxes and labels of gender conformity, limits opportunity for individualism and self-exploration, has major mental impacts on children, and discriminates against minority groups who see "gender" in a reformed and progressive way.

Here, I will be analyzing altercasting in advertising that relates to the pink and blue problem, analyzing the discourse used in said advertisements, and conducting interviews and surveys with non-cisgendered people to see how they've been affected.

Article Evidence

Though gender stereotypes are nothing new, many people are ignorant to the fact that there aren't just two genders. Gender is extremely fluid, and putting people into categories of pink or blue is extremely limiting and constricting to those who don't conform to binary standards. Many people who define themselves as outside the binary restrictions have taken to the internet and created personal blogs to voice their experiences and their opinions.

"The belief that there must be equality around race lines, around gender lines and around sexual preference lines continues to get stronger and stronger with younger generations," said Dipanjan Chatterjee, an author on a recent report about why brands need to embrace a different

approach to gender (Adams 2020). Any gender other than the binary are normally completely excluded in marketing because organizations choose only targeting one or the other. By having a version for girls and a version for boys, those who don't identify as either, or define themselves in a different way, are totally omitted. In an article written for *Retail Dive*, "Why Marketers Must Evolve Their Outlook on Gender", Peter Adams highlights a new effort made by Starbucks to include the LGBTQ+ community, and how it shows the serious issue of binary advertising.

In the commercial discussed in the article, Starbucks shows someone who just transitioned being referred to as their previous name, one associated with their previous identity. As time goes on, and they still aren't able to be referred to as their new name instead of their old one, they go to Starbucks, and finally have the satisfaction of being referred to by their true name and identity. This was a good first step in highlighting the need for a changed outlook on gender in advertising, but there's still so much more work to be done.

In a personal blog written by Aradhana Pandey for HuffPost, she details the damage that is caused by gendered advertising. In the blog, "Pink And Blue: The Colours Of Gender Stereotyping", Pandey explains the history of the pink and blue problem, and how it all started. She also explains the effects of colour bias can have on impressionable young children. She writes "in a study, it was noted that up to the age of two children showed no preference for the colour of particular toys or objects of interest. However, around the age of four, when they were more aware of their gender, boys began to shun pink toys." She also wrote " researchers found that adults gave boys sports equipment, cars, tools and blue clothing while the females were given dolls, furniture and pink clothing."

Advertisement Evidence

Gendered advertisements have been pushed onto the public for decades throughout the United States. For many products advertised to the public, there will be two versions, one for girls and one for boys. This is an issue because, normally, the exact same product is being sold, but the colors may be changed, or the description surrounding the product may differ, and one may even be more expensive than the other. Gendered advertising forces the viewer to put themselves into a category, and for those who don't define themselves by the gender binary system are severely affected by this.

Tagged language, or marked terms, are terms that are frequently used in binary oppositions. "A term is marked when it has a relationship with a seemingly 'neutral' generic counterpart" (Mooney and Evans pp. 110). It means that a term is not equal in its weight, but the one (unmarked) is neutral or more positive in contrast to the other term. This concept of neutral language with a gendered "equivalent" can be found in terms like host and hostess, actor and actress, or waiter and waitress. In this case, this is referring to the marked terms in advertising products, in which a product is referred to neutrally when it's designed for boys, but given a label when it's designed for girls. For example, Lego makes its standard products, and aims them at boys, whereas there's a whole separate product, Lego Friends, aimed at girls. There is also a *Lego Club* magazine, but there is also a separate magazine called *Lego Club: Girls*. By creating a neutral product (Lego Club) and then a separate product for girls (Lego Club: Girls) it not only shows girls that they are unequal to boys because the girls product is marked, while the boys product is neutral. Not only does this cause issues for the binary genders, but this could also

make those who don't define themselves in binary terms are being left-out and considered

unequal.

Covers to *Lego Club: Girls* magazine versus the "regular" *Lego Club* magazine

Along with the marked language within many of these products and their advertisements,

there is also a great difference in presentation and overall tone. Countless advertisements

showcase products aimed at the binary genders represented by pink or blue.

Discourse Analysis

Not only do advertisements push gender stereotypes in their imagery, but they also push

constraints in their discourse and tone of speech. I am looking for discourse that specifically

alludes to gender stereotyping and enforcing associated gender roles on the audience. By

analyzing the discourse in each advertisement individually, tracing their patterns, and then

analyzing their effect as a group, I think I'll be able to highlight how serious the issue is, how it

impacts the audience, and why things need to be changed.

Because many of the sources collected rely on visuals in order to communicate their

target audience, it's important to utilize evaluative indexicals. Evaluative indexicals are a broad

category of signs that point to relevant context. It's also important here to analyze narrating and

narrated events (those who are speaking and who they're speaking about) as it highlights how

those who make the commercials view the binary genders. Pragmatics and implicature will also be another main method of analysis. Since most of the advertisements in use here are being analyzed for their imagery and tone, analyzing the little discourse in commercials through pragmatics will yield the most results. Pragmatics give context to language, and are all about implicature and how it contributes to the overall discourse; and implicature and assumptions is exactly what we shouldn't be doing in relation to gender. This means it will be interesting to analyze the sources for pragmatics and see how it contributes to the discourse overall.

Obviously each individual advertisement and commercial has its own impact, but when looked at as a group, gendered advertisements have a lot to say. It's important to not only analyze the individual discourse of the sources, but also the analysis of the sources as a group and trace their patterns. By tracing the behaviors, reactions, and ideals attached to each advertisement, it will be easy to see the big picture surrounding this issue.

The first example of discourse surrounding the pink and blue problem is two commercials for MoonSand, one targeting boys and one targeting girls. The key thing to pay attention to in these commercials is the terms they use to describe the product, and to an extension, those who use the products. Because the commercials don't contain any deitics of person, terms that refer to a person like "he" or "she", it can be hard to understand them to their full extent without visuals, but they contain multitudes of evaluative indexicals that help further the understanding of the issue. The narrating event (the narrator describing the product) says a lot about the narrated event (those who will use the product). This is important to keep in mind with this set of commercials because both are clearly calling out a certain gender with their imagery. In the boy's commercial, by using words related to construction and hard work like "build",

"demolish", "rough", "tough", etc. the narrator is seemingly implying that boys are handy and "ready to work". The girls commercial on the other hand, has terms such as "glittery", "beautiful", "friends", "wondrous", etc. Also notice that in the boy's commercial, the product is just referred to as a "set", whereas in the girl's commercial, the same products are referred to as a "playset". The pragmatics (giving language context) here are that boys are tough, and ready to work, not play; and that girls are not serious, and just want to play with things that are beautiful and glittery. It's a very unfair way to represent the genders seeing how they're playing with the exact same product, just in different colors.

The second example is from the ruler of playtime, Lego. In this set of commercials, again, one is representing boys, and the other is representing girls. And again, the products are exactly the same, just the way they're being represented is skewed by gender. Furthermore, there are very little to no deitics of person, therefore the visuals are essential to understanding who is being targeted by each commercial. In the boys commercial, Legos are suddenly very serious, as there are evaluative indexicals like "blood" "resources" "talent" "inconceivable" "unbridgeable" "in the zone". In the girls commercial, terms like "beautiful", "party", "chill with the girls", "styled", "fun", "coolest", etc.

Another thing to note in both sets of examples is the tone of voice used by the narrator. In the boys MoonSand commercial, the narrator uses a very intense voice, and is basically screaming at you through your screen, whereas in both of the commercials for girls, the narrators are speaking in a very sing-song voice. The way the narrating event is being delivered says a lot about how each genders narrated event is perceived.

The stark difference in the terms associated with each commercial imply similar things as

the previous example: when boys play with the product it's serious, they're building something and they're talented to do so, whereas with the girls, it's all about playing, not taking things too seriously, and making sure everything is beautiful. It's disappointing that the same products can be turned a different color, stuffed into different packaging, and not treated the same way.

Altercasting and the Pink and Blue Problem

Altercasting, as discussed earlier, can be directly related to the pink and blue problem. Altercasting as a theory is, at its base, how something or someone forces the viewer or recipient into a specific role. In the articles, blogs, and advertisements analyzed above, it is clear that enforcing binary standards through these mediums is very harmful for their viewers.

Altercasting is split into two subgroups: manded altercasting and tact altercasting. Manded altercasting is an aggressive approach when an altercasters new or existing role is made more prominent and revealed directly to the viewers, while tact altercasting is a more passive approach when a role is presented in ways that could trigger others to take on a specific role that compliments the altercasters goals.

An example of manded altercasting related to the pink and blue problem is any commercial that blatantly forces gender roles onto the viewer. The prime example for manded altercasting are commercials for toys such as kitchen playsets and baby-dolls. These types of advertisements are consistently forced onto girls and not boys. Traditionally, girls are pushed into home-maker roles, taking on tasks such as cooking, cleaning, child-care, etc. Even at a young age, girls are being groomed to unquestionably take on these roles suggested by these products. A specific example of this is a commercial for Barbie Gourmet Kitchen, where two

girls "play" with a sparkly, hot pink kitchen playset. This is a prime example of manded

altercasting because the influence is aggressive; the obvious purpose of the product and its

commercial is to push girls into the specific role of homemaker, as no boys are present in many

of these types of commercials. When young girls view that commercial or play with that product,

they're being altercasted into associating the play with their self-images. Many young girls aren't

aware that there is more in store in their future than getting married and having babies, and these

products and the media associated are the reason why.

An example of tact altercasting related to the pink and blue problem is any commercial

that features role-specific products, and associates them with either pink or blue. Since these

advertisements usually don't feature an actual person, the target for the ad is not directly forced

upon the viewer. This far more passive tactic is still effective because the semiotics of the colors

indicate the target audience: boys or girls. A good example of tact altercasting is this image from

Kinder candy.

Color-coded product advertisement for Kinder candy

The advertisement doesn't feature a person, so this passive, more subtle approach relies

on the choice of color and subject matter to influence the viewer. By making a pink side and a

blue side, the advertisement is indirectly making a girls side and a boys side, featuring

color-coded products that further enforce gender roles: cars for boys, dolls for girls.

At its base, altercasting is pressure in different forms to change the way you act naturally. In addition to this, altercasting in pink and blue advertising puts pressure on non-binary viewers to change the way they act, feel, or identify. This pressure to conform can have serious impacts on the lives of those who don't identify with gender norms and their associated stereotypes.

How People Have Been Affected By the Pink and Blue Problem

The pink and blue problem can affect many aspects of a person's life such as their daily lives, their self perception, their perception by others, their personal growth, their relationships, and their mental health. As those who identify as non-binary are considered the minority in our society, they are significantly impacted by the gender stereotypes and roles forced upon them.

Daily Lives

In American society, gender is considered a very basic concept; you're either a boy or a girl, pink or blue. Something as "simple" as using the wrong pronouns for someone or assuming their gender in someone else's eyes can greatly impact the daily lives of the non-binary. As a minority, there is a great amount of discriminaiton aimed at this group, and this can not only impact their lives on a day to day basis, but can cause deep underlying problems that can last with them for an extremely long time.

Self Perception & Mental Health

In an extension of having their daily lives disrupted, the enforcement of gender stereotypes on non-binary people can greatly impact ones self perception and mental health. "Gender non-conformity often becomes target of oppression and stigmatization leading to negative mental and physical health outcomes" (Scandurra, 2019) Many of those who identify as

a form of non-binary are highly susceptible to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) rates of anxiety and depression in sexual minority individuals appear to be more than double those of their heterosexual counterparts. The continuous discrimination against non-binary individuals also result in elevated rates of suicidality, social anxiety, generalized anxiety, and trauma exposure.

The ADAA also wrote on the effects on self-perception saying: "as a result of the combination of discrimination and internalized sigma, SGM individuals may try to conceal all or part of their identities in order to reduce their vulnerability to more victimization. This concealment could be full (not being "out" about one's non-binary identity to anyone), situational (for example, avoiding disclosure of an SGM identity to the parents in their children's play group), or can involve downplaying one's identity (for example, not mentioning a partner's gender in casual conversation with strangers). The psychological costs of concealment, even though it is adaptive in the short-term for increasing safely, could actually increase stress, anxiety, and depression over time." With this, we can see how greatly this self-rejection impacts their overall mental health.

Perception by Others & Relationships

Along with self-rejection, those who identify as non-binary also endure interpersonal rejection at elevated rates because of their identitys. "When someone is rejected by someone close to them (like a parent or a close friend) *because* of their non-binary identity, or if they have experienced bullying or other forms of discrimination, an individual may experience chronic anxiety related to a consistent expectation of interpersonal rejection. Non-binary ndividuals may

also feel socially isolated and alone, which can make worse existing depression, suicidality, or social anxiety (ADAA, 2018). Another stresser for non-binary individuals who have not diclosed their identity is the anxiety of negative perceptions by others if they were to be "found out".

Personal Growth

With the assumption of gender and the enforcement of gender roles through altercasting in advertising, developmental youths can have their growth seriously impacted. With this, and the discussion of the serious impacts on non-binary individuals mental health, the anxiety of not wanting to be rejected by others can cause some to stunt their personal growth. This stunt in personal growth steam from self-monitoring behavior, an exhausting process that requires the one self-monitoring to constantly be aware of how they're acting, and alter their personality to fit the situation. This act of self-monitoring fully embodies the thoery of altercasting, as the non-binary individual is made to feel that they need to change themselves from whatever pressue they're getting. In this case, it's gendered advertising. Seeing these pink and blue pushes in the media is so damaging to non-binary identities because it makes them feel like they can't be themselves, and this seriously impacts their lives.

Patterns & Conclusion

It's clear to see that the pink and blue problem is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The gender stereotypes forced through advertising damages the developmental youths who view them. The mental health impacts that altercasting has on non-binary individuals is determental to so many aspects of their person. The gender binary system degrades those who

don't conform to it, and the enforcement of gender stereotypes in the media only discriminate against them further.

A step towards the solution to the pink and blue problem is to eliminate gender in advertising. Color-coding and the enforcement of gender stereotypes is not only damaging to those who don't define themselves in binary terms, but also those who do. Young people, no matter how they define themselves, are being put into categories and given little opportunity to explore their interests organically. By eliminating the pink and blue problem, every young person would be able to make decisions based on their personal interests, instead of what society said that they can choose from. And though many influential brands such as Target, Walmart, and Mattel have all taken steps towards eliminating gender in some of their products and advertising, there's definitely still a long way to go before this problem is solved. The hope and purpose of this paper is that people start to understand the pink and blue problem, and try to make the world a better place.

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