

Constructing Gender and Technology in Advertising Images

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Feminine and Masculine Computer Parts

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It is commonly assumed that the computer is somehow masculine, the product of a highly masculine subculture of computing, and that consequently the computer excludes women. This assumption prevails in existing gender studies of computer advertisements. As a result, inquiries into the gender-computing relationship tend to focus on the aspects of computing work and education from which women are excluded. In this chapter, we adopt a somewhat contrarian viewpoint. We try to show that the computer is not uniformly masculine since it contains certain components that are strongly linked to feminine images and presumed feminine traits. At the same time, we maintain, women are not so much excluded from computing; they are included in computing but through a specific gender-stereotyped manner. As we show through an extensive analysis of 1500 computing advertisements, there is a dramatic overrepresentation of women shown working at the keyboard-input and the printer-output parts of the computer. We believe that these advertising images have been consequential in constructing the public image of the computer and in shaping, or at least reinforcing, gender-specific relationships to the computer.

By focusing on the links between computing education and computing work, we can understand how exactly women are included in computing. For

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