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Women's Studies

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Gender Socialization- Greeting Cards

When going into the card section in any store, it is clear to which section is for which gender. There are many things which create the divide between the cards for each gender. If the divide between “girly/feminine” colors and the “boyish/masculine” colors did not divide the sections, vendors make sure to indicate which cards are for girls and boys by clearly labeling them as “for him”, “for her”, “for daughter”, “for son”, etc. The children's cards and the adult's cards are differentiated through the content on the cards as well. The children's cards consist of very bright colors and a variety of cartoon characters. Cards for girls may have flowers or pictures of baby animals, while cards for boys will have pictures of cars, dinosaurs and monsters. Besides these things specifying the cards to a gender, the fonts and the messages are different depending on age and gender as well. For cards for women, the writing is more cursive or swirly, as these fonts are more feminine, while cards for men have more “masculine” fonts, such as block letters or a plain font. For children, the fonts are very “childish”, seen as a bit messy and a bit like comic book fonts. The messages in the cards are also an indicator of the gender separation between cards. For women, the messages are sometimes more meaningful and contains “more emotion”. For men, the messages are more direct and to the point.

Cards for Kids

Vendors create a distinct divide between cards for boys and cards for girls. They will indicate who the card is for by labeling the section, first with the event the card is for, and then

who the card is intended for. For example, the vendors will express the birthday cards by labelling the section as “birthday- for daughter” or “birthday- for son” and so on. The colors also give away which section is for each gender. The cards section for girls would be mostly full of bright colors and will mostly be pink, while the section for boys will have more blues, greens, and blacks. The fonts are also different for girls and for boys. Cards for children use fonts that are considered as “childish”, such as comic book fonts for boys and curly, swirly fonts for girls. For cards that are non-gender specific, the cards will have a plain and minimalistic design to it. The cards are not very bright or colorful and consist of neutral colors, such as yellow, black and white, and have very little to no pictures on the front. The messages in the cards are also very simple, in a “childish” font, with a lot of black space

Cards for Adults

Cards for adults are tailored towards specific genders much like children’s cards. Vendors indicated with cards are for each gender by labelling the sections as “for him” or “for her”. Also similar to children’s cards, cards for women are cards for men differ through colors, fonts, and messages. The colors divide the cards by making them more “masculine” or “feminine”. Cards that are tailored more for men consist of darker colors, such as black, dark blue, dark green, and some neutral colors. This idea of “masculinity” and “femininity” is also expressed through the fonts and messages of the cards. Cards for women consist of cursive writing, or a font with a more “feminized” style, and a more heartfelt message, which most of the time include emotion. Cards for men have a more plain font, or a “masculine” font, and the messages are direct and to the point. For gender neutral cards for adults, the cards are very similar to the gender neutral cards for children. The cards are very minimalistic with neutral colors and sometimes with

pictures of silhouettes of people or objects. The writing is also very plain, using a regular font or block letters.

Analysis

When looking at the variety of cards in stores, it is very clear that vendors make sure to create a divide between the cards based on gender. The divide is created through gender stereotypes. When looking at the cards, children's cards seem to be more gender-specific than cards for adults. As children, we are told that girls and boys are different. They like different things and should act a certain way. Greeting cards play into these stereotypes. They show that the color pink, princesses and flowers are things a girl should like, while boys like the color blue and green, monsters and dinosaurs. These stereotypes are ingrained into people's minds from when they are little. Adult cards are less gender specific than children's, and this may be due to the age difference. As people get older, they mature, as do their tastes. The colors on the cards are not as obnoxiously bright and loud, but are more dulled down and "mature". The messages in the women's cards are more heartfelt and meaningful while the men's cards are direct. There are less pictures on the cards, and instead are replaced with more "mature" designs.

Greeting cards definitely play into gender stereotypes which are ingrained into our society, and although it is not too obvious, intersectionality does play a role in this setting. Cards are seen as a very feminine thing. It is something which people put emotions into, and expressing emotion is something which is seen as feminine. Most of the time, the people that are buying cards for special occasions are from the middle class. Cards come in a variety of designs, colors, shapes, sizes, and, more importantly, prices. Most of the time cards are expensive, unless someone is buying a plain card. The more fancy the cards are, and the more content it contains,

the more pricey the card becomes. Another thing that plays into the intersectionality of greeting cards is the age group that are buying the cards. A majority of the time it is middle aged or old people. This is the age at which they are buying cards for their family and friends. Although we may think that intersectionality does not play a role in things such as greeting cards, we analyze the situation and see that the people buying the greeting cards are usually caucasian, middle class, older women.