

Gender Stereotypes in Halloween Costumes

by
Samantha Searles

A THESIS

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Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Psychology
(Honors Scholar)

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Aurora Sherman

Previous research has shown that gender stereotypes are present in advertisements and in popular culture items. We conducted a content analysis of Halloween costumes to examine the presence of gender stereotypes in the poses of the models, weapons, and costume role (e.g. hero, counter authority, mythical creature, royalty). A sample of 990 costumes was randomly selected from a larger pool of costumes from four different U.S. costume retailers. An exploratory analysis for Spanish costumes was also conducted with a sample of 100 randomly selected costumes from the Spanish website Party Fiesta. Chi-square analyses revealed that in both datasets, men were more frequently posed actively, had active hands, stable/grounded stance, and stable/grounded feet. Women were more frequently posed with decorative hands, with a curved spine, off-balanced or displayed stance, and off-balanced or displayed feet. Male models were twice as likely to be pictured with a weapon as female models, though this did not reach significance in the Spanish dataset. Female models were more likely to take on costume roles of princess and mythical creature, while male models were more likely to take on costume roles of heroes and counter authorities. The results of this study indicate that gender stereotypes are present in Halloween costumes. Gender socialization consequences are discussed.

Key Words: Gender stereotypes, gender socialization

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Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Psychology and Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in International Studies project of Samantha Searles presented on May 23, 2018.

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Samantha Searles, Author

Halloween is a unique holiday, providing a chance for adults and kids alike to dress up and take on different and exciting identities. According to the National Retail Federation (2017), survey data indicated that 179 million Americans planned to celebrate Halloween in 2017 and 49.2% of respondents said they planned on dressing up. The holiday was projected to generate \$9.1 billion in revenue, with Halloween costumes accounting for the largest share of spending at \$3.4 billion. Celebrating Halloween, particularly by dressing up, is a socially accepted tradition where kids are encouraged to wear costumes to school, and many employees are allowed to wear costumes to work. As a college student, I have even been offered extra credit in class on a few occasions for wearing a costume to class on October 31. Because of the popularity of Halloween and the societal enthusiasm for dressing up, it is important to investigate the messages that are conveyed through Halloween costumes.

The present study seeks to determine whether gender stereotypes are portrayed in Halloween costumes. Previous research on Halloween costumes has investigated gender role flexibility (Ogletree, Denton, & Williams, 1993), caregiver promotion of stereotypical play (Abrahamy, Blake Finkelson, Lydon, & Murray, 2003), sexualization (Lennon, Zheng, & Fatnassi, 2016), and gender stereotypes (Nelson, 2000; Murnen, Greenfield, Younger & Boyd, 2015). Two prior studies revealed that gender stereotypes are present in Halloween costumes (Nelson, 2000; Murnen et al., 2015), however, Nelson's (2000) research is out of date, and Murnen et al.'s (2015) analysis was limited to 180 popular Halloween costumes, and included other popular culture items including dolls, action figures, and valentines. Therefore, a comprehensive study of Halloween costumes is lacking from the literature.

Furthermore, the present study also investigates Spanish Halloween costumes to see whether U.S. patterns replicate cross culturally. In Spain, the reasons for celebrating Halloween are mixed. Some reports say that celebrating Halloween has always been a part of Spanish culture, since the holiday originates from the Celtic holiday All Hallows Eve, and many regions of Spain, particularly Galicia, have deep Celtic roots (Aguirre, 2014). Other reports say that Halloween is an Anglo-Saxon holiday that has become a Spanish holiday through global influences and markets (Cruz Ortiz & Almagro García, 2014). Regardless of why Spaniards celebrate Halloween, it has become an increasingly celebrated holiday since the turn of the century, so much so that there is a current debate about whether Halloween should be celebrated in schools (Cruz Ortiz & Almagro García, 2014). In conducting a cultural comparison of costumes between the U.S. and Spain, I will be exploring the extent to which Halloween costumes are affected by global influences.

Additionally, previous research on gender stereotypes in Spanish media such as daily newspapers (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011) and television commercials (Valls-Fernandez & Martinez-Vicente, 2007) has shown that gender stereotypes are present in similar patterns to the U.S., but research on Spanish costumes has yet to be conducted.

To understand gender stereotypes, it is first important to understand how stereotypes come about. The way that people think is highly organized (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and one way in which people organize their thoughts is through categorization. Categorization helps people structure the information they take in and allows people to minimize the amount of cognitive effort it takes to process information (Fiske & Taylor,

1991). Because humans take in an enormous amount of information every day, categorization is vital for thinking efficiently. However, a consequence of creating categories related to people is that specific information is sometimes generalized to a group of people, and that specific information then effects how an individual interacts with that group. For example, a person might learn that a boy is good at math, and then expect all boys to be good at math. This how stereotyping occurs (Aronson & Aronson, 2012). Stereotypes have both a descriptive component and a prescriptive component. The descriptive aspect consists of traits and characteristics that people expect an average person from a group to possess. The prescriptive aspect consists of behaviors that people expect a person from a group to engage in (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). For example, stereotypes about women describe them as passive and cooperative, and prescribe that women should get along well with others and be nurturing (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

To understand gender stereotypes, it is also important to understand gender. Sex and gender are differentiated by biological and social categories; one's sex refers to the biological category of intersex, male, female, or other biologies, while gender refers to psychological characteristics and role attributes assigned to a sex (usually only the male/female binary is used) in a society (Helgeson, 2002). There are multiple aspects to one's attitude towards people of different biologies and gender identities. The affective or feeling based component that involves prejudice toward people based on their biological or gender category or categories is called sexism, while the behavioral component is called sex or gender discrimination. Gender stereotypes represent the cognitive aspect of one's conception of sex and gender categories and expectations about how they will be represented or expressed (Helgeson, 2002).

Gender stereotypes are social constructs that describe and prescribe the roles that people are expected to play in society, based on their gender. In a study that identified gender stereotypes in U.S. culture, participants rated characteristics perceived to be desirable for a man and characteristics perceived to be desirable for a woman based on societal definitions of desirability (Bem, 1974). The significant characteristics associated with women included: affectionate, cheerful, childlike, compassionate, does not use harsh language, eager to soothe hurt feelings, feminine, flatterable, gentle, gullible, loves children, loyal, sensitive to the needs of others, shy, soft-spoken, sympathetic, tender, understanding, warm, and yielding. The significant characteristics associated with men included: aggressive, ambitious, analytical, assertive, athletic, competitive, defends own beliefs, dominant, forceful, leadership, independent, individualistic, makes decisions easily, masculine, self-sufficient, strong personality, willing to take a stand, and willing to take risks. The traits associated with women are said to be communal or expressive traits, while the traits associated with men are said to be instrumental or agentic traits (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016). If gender stereotype traits are strictly enforced, gender roles can become hyper-feminine and hyper-masculine (Murnen et al., 2015). Hyper-femininity prescribes that women take on a sex-object and/or subservient role (Murnen et al., 2015), while hyper-masculinity prescribes that men are tough, violent, dangerous, and callous toward women and sexual activity (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993). Put together, these characteristics represent gender stereotypes of how women and men in the U.S. are supposed to behave and what they are supposed to be like. In a validation study of the gender stereotyped traits reported by Bem (1974), Holt and Ellis (1998) asked 138 participants the same question, “How desirable is it in American society for a man

(woman) to possess each of these characteristics” (Holt & Ellis, 1998, p. 932). They found that more than 25 years later, participants rated the same 20 masculine items as more desirable for men and 18 of the 20 feminine items as more desirable for women. In another study of the traits reported by Bem (1974), participants ranked the same feminine traits as more desirable for women, and the same masculine traits as more desirable for men, despite having rated themselves as desiring a mix of both masculine and feminine traits (Auster & Ohm, 2000). Altogether, these findings suggest that gender stereotypes of what is desirable for a woman and a man in the U.S. have persisted over time, even though some evidence suggests that people do not desire to have only feminine or only masculine traits themselves.

Though Bem’s (1974) list of characteristics for women and men were specific to American society, gender stereotypes that women are expressive and communal, while men are instrumental and agentic, have been used as the basis for gender studies across many cultures (López-Sáez, Morales & Lisbona, 2008). In a study comparing gender stereotype perceptions in Spain between 1993 and 2001, López-Sáez, Morales & Lisbona (2008) found that the content of gender stereotypes (i.e., women are higher in communal and expressive traits and men are higher in instrumental and agentic traits), remained stable over time, even though there was a decrease in gender-role stereotyping of who (men or women) should be in the work place or at home. This finding is similar to findings in the U.S. suggesting that gender stereotypes are durable (Holt & Ellis, 1998; Auster & Ohm, 2000; Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016).

When gender stereotypes are endorsed, meaning that a person supports the idea that men or women should take on a specific role because of their biology or gender,

gender becomes a constraining social category that limits the way people can express themselves. For women, the endorsement of gender stereotypes goes a step further, resulting in sexism. Sexism refers to how a whole class of people is oppressed relative to another based on their biology or gender; in U.S. and Spain societies, as with most of the world, women are oppressed relative to men (Zell et al., 2016). Sexism can have negative impacts, such as gender inequality in society (Brandt, 2011). Gender stereotypes precede the negative impacts of sexism, and it is therefore important to recognize where and how gender stereotypes occur in a society.

For as long as scientists have been studying psychological concepts, researchers have been interested in differences between men and women (Helgeson, 2002). A number of early psychologists started with the goal of finding gender differences in psychological functioning and then used biased measures to confirm their expectations. For example, scientists set out to prove that men were intellectually superior to women and “proved” this by looking for and finding evidence that men had larger brains or brain structures than women. However, when the methodologies of this type of research were put under scrutiny and brain-to-body ratios were taken in to account, scientists found that there was no evidence to support these claims and were forced to conclude that there were no differences in intellect between men and women (Helgeson, 2002).

In contrast, modern research supports the gender similarity hypothesis, which states that men and women are similar on most, but not all traits (Hyde, 2005). In a review of forty-six meta-analyses on male and female gender differences, Hyde (2005) found that there were no significant differences between men and women on cognitive functioning, verbal or nonverbal communication abilities, or social or personality traits,

with the exception of a few specific cases. Hyde (2005) also demonstrated that there were more differences among women and among men than differences between women and men. That is, women are more different from each other than they are from men as a group, and vice-versa. Despite the magnitude of similarities shown by scientific investigations, women and men are still often portrayed as being very different. For example, the New-York Times best-selling book *Men are From Mars, Women are from Venus* argued that the differences between men and women are so fundamental that they might as well be from different planets (Reis & Carother, 2014).

Gender stereotype prescriptions contribute to the perception that women and men are very different because they call for different behaviors and attitudes for men and women (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Gender stereotypes come from historical and traditional views of women and men, in which each gender had a specific and well-defined place in society, and have sometimes carried over into the interpretation of scientific studies on gender differences (Brannon, 2011). Often studies that find many similarities between men and women focus on reporting the differences found, rather than the overwhelming majority of similarities. For example, the Strong Vocational Interest Blank, which helps people identify their interests and dislikes in order to find a career field, has a masculinity/femininity scale that was based on gender differences, even though women and men had shared interests on 87% of the items (Helgeson, 2002). Similarly, Maccoby & Jacklin (1974) reviewed over two thousand gender differences studies and found that women and men were similar in everything except verbal ability, visual-spatial ability, mathematical ability, and aggression. However, secondary reports

of their study focused on these four differences, rather than on the numerous similarities (Hyde, 2005).

Focusing heavily on the differences between women and men can have negative societal consequences. In an experiment assessing the relationship between perceptions of gender differences and corresponding endorsement of sexism, Zell, Strickhouser, Lane, and Teeter (2016) gave participants a psychological abstract that led them to believe a) that gender differences are small or b) large, and then asked them to write about examples that demonstrate similarities or differences, respectively. They found that people who were manipulated to think gender differences are large showed correspondingly increased endorsement of sexism, compared to people who were led to think gender differences are small, who showed decreased endorsement of sexism. Zell et al. (2016) showed not only that perceptions of larger gender differences are causally linked to higher endorsement of sexism, but also that perceptions of gender differences are malleable. This suggests that media and scientific reports that frame women and men as being fundamentally different are not only incorrect, but also likely to promote sexist attitudes among consumers.

Gender inequality is an issue that continues to afflict both the U.S. and Spain, in spite of the progress women in both countries have made in traditionally male domains over the last 30 years. In Spain, significant political, economic and social changes have taken place since the end of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Women now constitute the majority of university students in Spain, and have made gains in integrating into the workforce (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011). From 2002 to 2009, the percentage of women in the workforce rose from 42.7% to 51.7%, compared to a stable percentage of

67.2% to 68.1% for men (INE, 2010). However, women are still much more likely to be caretakers and homemakers than men, and men have a much higher median annual salary than women (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011). One explanation offered for this continued gender gap is “the fact that while women have incorporated into the work world, men have not equally incorporated into family life” (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011, p. 255). One study assessing how gender stereotypes have changed over time surveyed 277 people from three different regions in Spain and found that women were perceived to have become more masculine over time, but that men were not perceived to have become more feminine (Lopez-Zafra & Garcia Retamero, 2012). This finding seems to reflect the change in gender roles for women as they have entered the workforce and the lack of change for men as they have *not* integrated into traditionally feminine roles (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011).

In the U.S., the number of women in the work force, enrolled in college, involved in sports, and in leadership positions has increased since the 1980’s, but women still earn less money in almost all occupations and are underrepresented in political offices, sports media (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016), STEM fields (Leaper & Brown, 2017), and as main character leads in children’s books (Hamilton, 2006). One explanation for the continuance of gender inequality in U.S. society is that gender stereotypes of women and men have remained consistent, despite societal change (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016). In a study designed to gauge how gender stereotypes have changed overtime, Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro (2016) had participants rate how likely it was that a man, woman, or a person had a set of male-typed and female-typed characteristics. They found virtually no difference between how participants now and participants in the 1980’s rated typical men

and women on agentic and communal traits, male gender roles, male and female occupations, and male and female physical characteristics. The results of this study indicate that even though egalitarian views of women and men have increased over time, attributing stereotypical traits to others has not changed.

Given the findings from Zell et al. (2016) that believing in large differences between women and men causes increased endorsement of sexism, the persistence of gender stereotypes seems particularly problematic. Whether people consciously or unconsciously endorse gender stereotypes, their individual attitudes contribute to societal level sexism (Brandt, 2011). In a longitudinal study that used data from face-to-face interviews assessing both sexist attitudes and gender inequality across 57 societies, Brandt found that individual level sexism is temporally related to increases in societal gender inequality over time (Brandt, 2011). Gender stereotypes are, therefore, influential in the way society functions. In light of this information, it is important to understand how people learn gender stereotypes and where gender stereotypical messages occur in society.

People learn gender stereotypes through gender role socialization, which is the process of how models and objects in the environment teach girls and boys what behaviors are acceptable, in the context of a society (Helgesen, 2002). There are several theories of gender socialization. In Gender Schema Theory, Bem (1981) proposed that through the process of learning sex-specific behaviors and attributes, children develop a network of associations that guide their perceptions of what is masculine and what is feminine. New information is then processed through this cognitive network, or gender schema, and interpreted in relation to gender. Girls and boys often receive different

information about gender through the way they are treated, even if this differential treatment is unconscious (Abraham, 2003). As Bem (1981, p. 355) noted, "Adults in the child's world rarely notice or remark upon how strong a little girl is becoming or how nurturant a little boy is becoming, despite their readiness to note precisely these attributes in the "appropriate" sex." Thus, boys learn that they should be strong, and girls learn that they should be nurturant, but neither gender learns to associate "opposite" gender attributes to themselves.

For example, when people wear costumes, they might play the role of the costume they are in, acting in ways consistent with the character they are portraying. If a girl put on a princess costume, she might act delicately, performing a behavior prompted by the costume, and she might be rewarded with compliments of how pretty she looks and how sweet she is. However, if a boy put on the same princess dress, it is unlikely that he would be complimented at all, no matter how delicately or sweetly he acted. In this way, the girl would learn that she is supposed to be delicate and sweet, and the boy would not. This information would help both children develop a gender schema that endorses gender stereotypes.

Another theory for how gender is socialized is social cognitive theory (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Social cognitive theory explains that children learn gender stereotypes by observing models, particularly same-sex models that they identify with. Children are rewarded for the gendered behaviors they imitate, or are given positive feedback or instruction from others in their environment that encourages them to continue gendered behaviors. Through this process, children learn what behaviors and characteristics are

associated with being female and which are associated with being male, and this knowledge then influences their behavior in the future.

The types of models available in a society influence the characteristics that children learn to imitate (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Parents are obvious and impactful models for their children, but models can be fictional characters as well, such as characters in books and movies. One problem with the available models in U.S. children's books (Hamilton, 2006), TV shows (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004), and videogames (Dill & Thill, 2007), is that female characters are underrepresented by at least 2:1 in each category. In a study assessing gender bias in 200 top selling children's books, Hamilton (2006) found that there were more male characters overall, including more male title characters, main characters, and characters portrayed in pictures. Hamilton also found support for some gender stereotypical content, including that female characters were shown as being nurturing or caring for others more often than male characters, and that male characters were significantly more likely to show evidence of having an occupation outside of the home than female characters.

Aubrey and Harrison (2004) found that in children's TV shows, male characters also outnumbered female characters, and boys portrayed more stereotypical behavior than girls, such as answering questions, ordering people around, demonstrating ingenuity, and achieving goals. Research on video game content not only revealed that female characters were underrepresented by a factor of 4:1, but also that when women did appear, almost all were depicted in a sexualized manner (Dill & Thill, 2007). Murnen et al. (2015) found that in popular culture products (which included Halloween costumes), female characters were more likely to be depicted with feminine stereotyped cues such as having friendly

expressions and decorative or revealing clothing, while male characters were more likely to be depicted with masculine stereotyped cues such as functional clothing, body in motion, and having a weapon. All of these studies demonstrate the prevalence of stereotyped models in a wide range of sources.

Similar research in Spain on gender stereotypes in newspapers (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011), radio shows (López, 2001), and television commercials (Valls-Fernandez & Martinez-Vicente, 2007) demonstrated that women are underrepresented in Spanish media as well. In a content analysis of 4,060 articles and advertisements from 24 issues of a randomly selected, largely circulated Spanish Newspaper, Matud et al. (2011) found that men were more likely to be featured in articles, photographs, and advertisements, and to have photographs placed in attention grabbing parts of the newspaper than women. They also found that men were more likely to be soldiers, athletes, or businessmen than women. Another content analysis of the four largest radio stations in Spain demonstrated that women were the subject of radio news 15% of the time, compared to 85% of the time for men. Women spoke only 18% of the time, compared to men who spoke 82% of the time (López, 2001). In a content analysis of Spanish television commercials, Valls-Fernandez & Martinez-Vicente (2007) found that, while a nearly equal proportion of male and female characters appeared in commercials, men appeared as narrators of commercials 68.3% of the time, compared to 19.9% of the time for women. Altogether, these studies demonstrate that there is a gender bias in media where male characters are portrayed more often than female characters, and gender-stereotyped models occur frequently.

One way in which gender stereotypes are portrayed specifically is through the positioning of a model. Women are often portrayed in gendered body positions that convey messages of subordination, delicateness, or incompetence (Mager & Helgeson, 2011). In a content analysis of magazine portrayals of women and men in the U.S. over a 50-year time span, Mager & Helgeson (2011) found that women were more likely to be portrayed in positions of subordination which included poses like head and body cants, knee bends that demonstrate unreadiness to respond, and “body clowning” that portrays the model as childish or flippant. Women’s hands were also more likely to be posed in delicate caresses, self-touch, or in other decorative manners. These positions of subordination are in contrast with poses of strength and confidence, such as having an upright, erect posture and holding the head high. Men are significantly more likely to be posed in positions of superiority that convey strength and dominance (Mager & Helgeson, 2011).

In a study of gender stereotypes in dolls, actions figures, valentines, and Halloween costumes, Murnen et. al (2015) found evidence that these popular culture items portray gender stereotypes, including stereotypical body positions. Female models were more likely to be positioned in subordinated position, including having a curved spine, bent knee, and head cant than male models. Three quarters of the female models were positioned passively, while a similar percentage (61%) of the male models had body in motion. Another study examined dress-up clothes available to young girls in Brighton, London. Pollen (2011) found that the costumes targeted at and available for young girls included princesses, benevolent mythical creatures (e.g. fairies, mermaids, angels), traditionally female occupations (e.g. nurse, beautician), dancers, brides, Barbies, and

evil characters (e.g. evil witch, vampire). Only three of the 58 costumes in the study represented characters that were not intrinsically benevolent, cheerful, or otherwise consistent with traditional feminine stereotypes (Pollen, 2011). Both studies demonstrated that gender stereotypes are present in popular culture items, signifying another medium through which gender stereotypes are learned.

This study will focus solely on Halloween costumes as models of gender stereotypes. Since prior research on gender stereotypes has identified agentic roles for men and boys, I hypothesize that boys and men will be portrayed as active and will appear in positions of stability and strength more often than girls and women. This will be shown in the following ways:

- Activity Level: Poses of male models will be more likely to be in active or moving positions than female models.
- Hands: Male models will be more likely to have active hands than female models.
- Stance (legs from hips to ankles): Male models will be more likely to have an active stance and more likely to be in stable/grounded stances than female models.
- Feet: Male models will be more likely to have active or grounded/stable feet than female models.

The second hypothesis is that girls and women will be portrayed as passive and submissive and appear in positions of instability and display more often than boys and men. This will be shown in the following ways:

- Hands: Female models will be more likely to have decorative hands than male models.
- Stance: Female models will be more likely to have an off-balance, unstable, submissive, or displayed stance than male models.
- Spine: Female models will be more likely to have spines curved in submission or display than male models.
- Feet: Female will be more likely have off-balance, unstable, or displayed feet than male models.

Furthermore, I hypothesize that gender stereotypes will influence the type of role models will be likely to take on. Previous research has suggested that female models frequently take on roles of benevolent, mythical creatures (Pollen, 2011) and of princesses (Coyne et al., 2016). Therefore, I predict that women and girls will be more likely to be depicted in roles as royalty (e.g. princesses or queens) and mythical creatures (e.g. fairies and sprites) than boys and men. It has also been found that boys engage with superheroes at a higher level than girls (Coyne et al., 2014) so I predict that boys and men will be more likely to be depicted as heroes than women and girls. Counter authorities such as pirates, ninjas, and villains are another large category of Halloween costumes, and because these roles are action-oriented, I predict that men and boys will be more likely to be depicted as counter authorities than women and girls.

In line with hyper-masculine stereotypes of violence and aggression, I hypothesize that boys and men will be pictured having or using weapons more often than girls and women, and that models with more than one weapon will be more likely to be men or boys. Finally, I will conduct an exploratory comparison of Spanish Halloween

costumes to see whether U.S. patterns replicate to gender portrayals in Spanish Halloween costumes.

Method

Data from U.S. Halloween costume websites used in this thesis were collected during 2014 by research assistants (RAs) in Dr. Sherman's lab at Oregon State University. The method of data collection was originally described by Prickett (2016) for another thesis. Data from a Spanish Halloween costume store were collected in 2018 by new RAs. New codes were developed to analyze gender stereotypes in Halloween costumes for the current research, including activity level of the model, hand position, stability of stance, spine position, and foot position. Codes for weapons and function were included from Allemand (2016), but function was changed to "role" to better illustrate the identity prompted by a costume.

U.S. Halloween costumes were collected from the websites of four major U.S. Halloween costume retailers. The retailers chosen were Costume Express, Halloween Costumes, Chasing Fireflies, and Walmart. The first two were chosen because they offered a large quantity and variety of costumes for customers seeking specific costumes. Chasing Fireflies was selected because the pricier costumes sold on that site would target customers of higher socioeconomic standing, while Walmart was selected because it offered low cost options. Overall, these four sources offered a wide selection of costumes from websites where a large portion of the U.S. population would shop, allowing researchers to generate a representative sample. While some research has analyzed most popular Halloween costumes (Murnen et. al., 2015), a representative sample allows

researchers to generalize findings more widely and see how all types of Halloween costumes are portrayed.

Spanish Halloween costumes were collected from one major Spanish Halloween costume retailer, Party Fiesta. Party Fiesta was chosen because it had the most organized website of Spanish retailers, while also having wide spread physical locations across Spain. Although only one Spanish retailer was selected, it will be sufficient to make basic comparisons between how Halloween costumes are portrayed in the U.S. versus how Halloween costumes are portrayed in Spain.

Datasets

U.S. Halloween Costumes. From September to October 2014, RAs took screenshots of every costume on each of the four retail sites (14,460 screenshots) to make sure that every costume available at that time could be available for selection. Each website categorized the costumes into four distinct categories of age and gender (adult female, teenage male, etc.) so the researchers kept those categories for analysis.

Researchers took several steps to prevent search browsers from tracking the search history and then changing the search algorithms for Halloween costumes on a specific computer, since this could limit the availability of costumes shown. First, they used a new computer that did not have any previous search history. Google Chrome on this computer was not used for any other reason during the collection of screenshots. Second, they prevented websites from tracking data by using the “incognito mode” on Google Chrome. They also blocked data being received by the websites by setting the privacy settings to block third-party cookies and site data. However, Chasing Fireflies would not allow researchers to use these privacy settings on the website, so screenshots

from Chasing Fireflies were taken only after data collection from all other sites was complete.

After collecting a screenshot of each costume from each site, RAs ensured that each screenshot was correctly categorized. There were several criteria for moving a costume from one category to another. Pictures were moved if the text indicated the picture belonged in the other gender category (Miss Piggy, Mickey Mouse, etc.), if the text indicated that a model belonged in a different age group, if a model was obviously at a different mismatched in development (a costume in the child section listed as an “adult costume” being modeled by someone clearly older than a child), or if a screenshot depicted two or more models in a section other than the group/couples section.

Spanish Halloween Costumes. From January to February 2018, RAs took screenshots of each costume under the same age and gender categories of women, men, girls and boys on the Party Fiesta website. After collecting a screenshot of each costume on the site, two RAs checked to make sure that all costumes had been screenshotted, that no costumes were duplicated, and that all screenshots were in the correct category. Pictures from the Spanish data set were moved or excluded by the same rules as the U.S. data set.

Exclusions. The rules for exclusion were kept the same across U.S. and Spanish datasets. Baby costumes were excluded because it is difficult to determine the gender of a baby by looking at a picture. A baby costume had to meet two of three criteria in order to be excluded: use of a “bunting costume,” a prototypical “baby face,” or the model was portrayed in a sitting position. Other types of costumes were excluded if they fell under any of the following categories: costume was listed as a shirt, a kit that did not show a

model's entire body, accessory, or pajamas, the picture quality was too poor to code (a glow-in-the dark costume where the lighting was too dark to apply coding scheme, the picture was censored or not available, or the model was not fully depicted in the frame of the photo), the costume was outside of the coding scheme criteria (such as a two-headed horse costume, a reversible costume depicted in both fashions, etc.), or duplicate pictures of the costume existed. If there was doubt about whether a picture should be moved or excluded, a vote was taken by the lab group for a majority rule. In all, twenty-five costumes were excluded from the U.S. dataset. Costumes from the Spanish dataset that did not meet criteria were excluded at the time of collection.

Random Samples

One RA excluded and moved all pictures, and a different RA double-checked their work for both the U.S. and Spanish data set. After this was complete, each picture in both full datasets was numbered. In total, the U.S. data collection yielded 7,732 costume advertisements from Halloween Costumes, 713 costume advertisements from Chasing Fireflies, 3,073 costume advertisements from Costume express, and 2,942 costume advertisements from Walmart. The Spanish data collection yielded 1,364 from Party Fiesta.

The U.S. sample size was created by taking 25% of each category on Chasing Fireflies and 8% of each category besides the adult category because it had nearly twice the number of costumes as the other categories. The final sample included 179 Chasing Fireflies advertisements, 433 Halloween Costumes advertisements, 161 Walmart advertisements, and 187 Costume Express advertisements for a total of 981 costumes. The Spanish sample size was created by taking 25 pictures from each age and gender

category (total=101). (One group image picturing two male models was selected for a total of 101). Researchers used a random number generator to select the pictures to be coded.

Coding Procedure

The U.S. pictures were originally coded by four RAs, two of whom did not know the hypothesis of the study. In 2017-2018, 6 additional codes were added to the codebook and a new team of RA's recoded all pictures for those codes. This team originally had three members, but one had to drop the project after coding only a few pictures. The Spanish pictures were coded by the two 2018 RAs. All coders were trained on the coding manual, and reliability tests were conducted before official coding began in order to ensure that all RAs were coding the same way. Reliability was re-tested for the new codes after the RA left the lab to ensure the remaining coders were still reliable. Krippendorff's alpha (K-alpha) was used to test reliability. K-alpha uses a range from 0.000 to 1.000 to statistically test for the amount of agreement between coders, with 0.000 describing complete disagreement, and 1.000 describing complete agreement. Compared to other types of reliability calculations, k-alpha is a very conservative set of computations (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). All RAs coded thirty costumes separately. A k-alpha of .67 was suggested by Krippendorff as a cut off for determining interrater reliability, though a k-alpha of .8 or higher is preferred. After RAs coded the reliability picture set, they discussed any scores with a k-alpha of .6-.8 until complete agreement was reached. If a code had a k-alpha below .6, researchers discussed the codes and coded another set of 10 costumes to re-test reliability, or decided the code was too unreliable to be used.

Coding

General/Demographic Information. The general and demographic information consisted of basic information such as the costume ID number, source name (Costume Express, Walmart, Halloween Costumes, and Chasing Fireflies), number of models pictured, size, perceived age, cost, category, role, and date the model was coded for the U.S. data. Information collected for Party Fiesta was the same with the exclusion of costume role. Researchers also coded gender, but if gender cues (hair, eyes, shoes) were missing and the text did not indicate a specific gender (cowboy, Miss Piggy, etc.), then models were coded as unknown/ambiguous. Eighty-three costumes were coded as unknown/ambiguous and excluded from the analysis of the U.S. data set. The retailer website classification of model gender was followed for the Spanish data set.

Codes of interest.

Activity Level (0-1). Models were coded as either active or passive based on the overall posture and position of the model. Passive images demonstrated no evidence of motion or being in an obviously posed position that conveyed passivity. Active models demonstrated gross motor activity or motion (walking, wind in the hair, etc.), or non-passive, energetic poses (superhero pose). Activity final k-alpha = .99.

Hand (0-2). The hands of models were coded as being neutral (0), active (1), or decorative (2). Neutral hands were relaxed or conveyed no discernable message. Active hands were engaged in realistic movement, fistful or otherwise showing muscle activation, and included gestures specific to a character (dancer snapping fingers, soldier saluting) or using a prop in a realistic and engaged manner. Decorative hands were hands held parallel to the floor, curved in an unnatural “C,” posed to show off elements of the

costume (holding out a skirt or cape), or holding a prop in an unrealistic or impossible way (holding a sword upside down, holding a wine glass in a manner un conducive for drinking, etc.). Hands that were not visible were coded as missing. Hand final k-alpha = .98.

Stance (0-2). The stance of model was coded for stability. A 0 represented a tall, grounded stance that demonstrated stability or strength. A knee bent in realistic action such as walking, running or kicking was coded as 1. Models whose bodies were off balance or displayed were coded as 2. If a model's knees or lower body could not be seen, stance was coded as missing. Stance final k-alpha = .93.

Spine Position (0-1). Models were coded for spine positions that conveyed messages of strength and stability or weakness and submission. Models with straight, grounded spines or spines curved in goofiness or realistic movement were coded as 0. Models with spines that were curved in submission, off balance, twisted to be displayed, or otherwise displayed in a submissive way were coded as 1. Spine final k-alpha = .95.

Feet Position (0-2). Feet positions of models were also coded for stability. Models with grounded feet that faced the same direction or conveyed a message of strength and stability were coded as 0. Models with feet ready for action, one foot off the ground in realistic movement, or in a goofy manner that conveyed a message of playing around were coded as 1. Models that were off balance in a way that conveyed weakness, instability, or submissiveness were coded as 2. Feet final k-alpha = .72.

Weapon. Models were coded for how many weapons they were depicted with in the picture. Weapons were defined as objects whose function is to inflict some kind of threat or harm. Models were first coded yes or no for whether there were weapons in the

picture or not, and then coded as a numerical count of how many weapons were present if yes. Weapon final $k\text{-alpha} = 1.0$.

Role. The role of the costume was previously coded for a wide array of categories. For the purposes of this study, we focused on 4: heroes, mythical creatures, counter authorities, and royalty. Heroes included any character whose role was to rescue or save others, protect people, or fight in the name of justice or goodness (e.g. Superman, Super Mario, Wonder Woman, Star Wars fighter pilot, etc.). Mythical creatures included any character of mythic origin (e.g. fairies, mermaids, cyclops, etc.). Counter authorities included characters that would typically break laws, oppose justice or goodness, hurt others, and mercenaries (e.g. pirates, evil sorceresses, movie villains, bounty hunters, etc.). Royalty included kings, queens, princes, princesses, and other noble positions such as duchesses or counts. Role final $k\text{-alpha} = .95$.

Results

The purpose of this study is to examine a) whether gender stereotypes are present in U.S. Halloween costumes and b) whether these results replicate cross culturally to Spanish costumes. We tested the hypothesis that images with male models would be more likely than images with female models to be coded as having active hands, straight spine, active pose, stable stance, and more weapons. We tested the hypothesis that images of female models would be more likely images of male models to be coded as having decorative hands, a curved spine, and an unstable or displayed stance and feet. Chi-square analyses were conducted to test gender differences for each code.

U.S. dataset

Table 1 contains descriptive data for model body positions, Table 2 contains descriptive data for weapon possession of the models, and Table 3 contains descriptive data for the costume role.

Activity. We tested for gender differences in overall model activity. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in activity level, $\chi^2(2, 989) = 103.80$, $p = .000$. Overall, most models were positioned in a passive pose. However, of a total of 257 models coded as active, fewer than 30% were female models, and only 15% of all female models were active. In contrast, there was little differentiation between the number of male models that were coded as active and passive, and male models were three times as likely as female models to be active.

Hands. We tested for gender differences in hand position of the models. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in hand position, $\chi^2(6, 990) = 183.11$, $p = .000$. Of the 209 models with decorative hands, 86% were female models. There was no difference in the likelihood that female models hands would be neutral, active, or decorative, but over half of the male models were coded as having active hands, and few male models had decorative hands.

Stance. We tested for gender differences in the strength and stability of the models' stance. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of models whose stances were off-balance or positioned to display, $\chi^2(6, 990) = 350.40$, $p = .000$. Of the 337 models with an off-balance or display stance, 311 were female models. Female models were twice as likely to have an off-balance or displayed stance

than a grounded or stable stance. Seventy-four percent of male models were positioned in a grounded or stable stance. Male models were three times more likely to have a grounded, stable stance than female models, while female models were almost ten times more likely than male models to have an off-balance or displayed stance.

Spine. We tested for gender differences in spine position of the models. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of spines curved in display or submission, $\chi^2(6, 990) = 127.02, p = .000$. Overall, most models had straight spines. Male models had straight spines 99% of the time. All but two of the 138 models with spines curved in submission were female. A quarter of all female models had spines curved in submission or display.

Feet. We tested for gender differences in the stability and centeredness of the models' feet. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of models whose feet were off-balance, conveyed weakness, instability, or submissiveness, $\chi^2(6, 990) = 308.52, p = .000$. Of the 292 models with unstable feet, 272 were female models. Female models were almost twice as likely to have off-balanced or displayed feet than grounded and stable feet. Most male models had grounded or stable feet (78%), and almost none had off-balance or displayed feet (4%). Male models were more than twice as likely to have grounded and stable feet than female models, and female models were more than 12 times as likely to have off-balance, displayed feet as male models.

Weapon. We tested for gender differences in the frequency with which models were possessed at least one weapon. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of having a weapon, $\chi^2(2, 995) = 42.35, p = .000$. Although most models were not depicted with a weapon, the models that did have weapons were more

than twice as likely to be male models. Twenty percent of male models were depicted with at least one weapon, compared to 6% of female models.

Role. We tested for gender differences in the costume role (e.g. hero, royalty, mystical creature, or counter authority). Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of the role portrayed by female models and male models, $\chi^2(6, 324) = 85.32, p = .000$. In the hero category, 63% of the heroes were male models, compared to 37% who were female models. Male models were twice as likely to portray heroes as female models. In mystical creatures, female models made up 79% of all models, compared to 21% for male models. Male models were mythical creatures 7% of the time, compared to 20% of female models. There was little differentiation in the counter authority category, with 58% of counter authorities portrayed by male models, and 42% portrayed by female models. However, male models were twice as likely to be counter authorities as female models. For royalty, 93% were female models, and 7% were male models. Female models portrayed royalty 37% of the time, compared to 4% of male models. Male models were as likely to be heroes as female models were likely to be royalty.

Spanish dataset

Table 4 contains descriptive data for model body positions, Table 5 contains descriptive data for weapon possession of the models, and Table 6 contains descriptive data for the costume role.

Activity. We tested for gender differences in overall model activity. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of overall activity level,

$\chi^2(1, 101) = 7.82, p = .005$. Out of a total of 29 models coded as active, only 8 were female models. Female models were more than five times more likely to be passive as active. There was little difference between the number of male models coded active and passive, but male models were more than twice as likely as female models to be active.

Hands. We tested for gender differences in hand position of the models. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of decorative hands, $\chi^2(3, 101) = 25.46, p = .000$. Of the 16 models positioned with decorative hands, all were female models. There was no difference in the likelihood that female models hands would be neutral, active, or decorative, but the majority of male models had active hands (69%) and no male models had decorative hands.

Stance. We tested for gender differences in the strength and stability of the models' stance. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of models' whose stances were off-balance or positioned to display, $\chi^2(3, 101) = 50.52, p = .000$. Of the 37 models with unstable stances, 35 were female models. Female models were three times more likely to have off-balance or displayed stance than a grounded, stable stance. Nearly all male models had either grounded or active stances, with only 4% having an unstable stance. Female models were over 17 times as likely to be off-balance or displayed than male models.

Spine. We tested for gender differences in spine position of the models. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of spines curved in weakness or submission, $\chi^2(1, 101) = 19.97, p = .000$. While the majority of all models had straight spines, all 15 of the models with spines conveying messages of weakness were female. Of the female models, 30% had a curved spine.

Feet. We tested for gender differences in the stability and centeredness of the models' feet. Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of model feet conveying weakness, instability, or submissiveness, $\chi^2(3, 101) = 34.73, p = .000$. Of the 35 models with unstable feet, 31 were female. Female models were more than twice as likely to have off-balance or displayed feet than grounded, stable feet. Female models were also almost eight times as likely as male models to have off-balance or displayed feet. Ninety-one percent of all male models had stable, grounded feet or active feet.

Weapon. We tested for gender differences in the frequency with which models possessed at least one weapon. Results did not indicate a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of having a weapon, $\chi^2(1, 101) = 1.84, p = .175$. However, results were in the expected direction, with twice as many male models having weapons as female models.

Role. We tested for gender differences in the costume role (e.g. hero, royalty, mystical creature, or counter authority). Results indicated a significant effect of gender of the model in frequency of the costume role portrayed by female models and male models $\chi^2(3, 33) = 17.09, p = .001$. All 11 of the costumes coded as heroes were worn by male models. Hero costumes made up over half of all costumes portrayed by males. No male models portrayed mythical creatures, while 25% of female models did. Thirty-eight percent of male models were counter authorities, compared to 25% of female models. Within the counter authority category, 73% of the costumes were portrayed by male models. Female models portrayed royalty 50% of the time, and portrayed 75% of the costumes in the royalty category.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to assess whether gender stereotypes are present in U.S. Halloween costumes, and to conduct an exploratory comparison of Spanish Halloween costumes. The findings of the present study show that gender stereotypes are present and frequent in the display of Halloween costumes, and that this is true for both U.S. and Spanish costumes. Analysis of the Spanish costume set revealed that the results of this study replicated cross-culturally, and that gender stereotypes of each dataset parallel each other very closely. All findings were statistically significant, except gender differences in possessing weapons in the Spanish dataset. These results support my hypotheses that gender stereotypes are presented in Halloween costumes, and are consistent with Murnen et. al (2015) who found that gender stereotypes are present in a range of popular culture items.

Positioning of Models

The results showed that men and boys were significantly more active overall, and had more active hands, stances, and feet than women and girls. Women and girls were conversely significantly more likely to be passive overall, to be posed in positions where their stance and feet were off-balance, displayed, or submissive, and to have spines curved in submission or display than men and boys. Women and girls were significantly more likely to have decorative hands that conformed to appearance expectations for female models.

Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro (2016) found stereotypes have persisted over time, despite positive social change. One explanation for why stereotypes have persisted over the last three decades is that there are still many models in society that convey

stereotypical messages. This study demonstrates the extent to which Halloween costumes models are portrayed stereotypically. Eighty-five percent of all female models in this study were posed in passive positions, and they were twice as likely to have a stance and feet that were off-balance, displayed, or otherwise conveyed submission than to be grounded. Even costumes of heroes and counter authorities shown with female models were often portrayed in this manner; these images are in stark contrast to the male models, who were three times more likely to be positioned with grounded feet that conveyed a message of stability, strength and power. As you can see in Figure 1, both female models have off-balance stances and feet, curved spines, and their bodies convey childish and submissive messages. The male models, on the other hand, are grounded in their stances and feet and their bodies convey a message of strength and power.

Many of the stereotypical traits Bem (1974) identified in the 1970's appear in these modern images. The female models look cheerful or sassy, childlike, and gentle, even when they are holding weapons and portraying powerful characters. The male models look assertive, athletic, dominant, and as if they are willing to take a stand, all of which are stereotypical male traits. This difference in presentation between male and female models is typical of all categories of costumes. These pictures clearly parallel the traits in Bem's (1974) study that are considered desirable for women and for men and have been found to persist over time (Holt & Ellis, 1998; Auster & Ohm, 2000) With models that clearly and frequently conform to gendered expectations, it may not be surprising that gender stereotypes are durable (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro 2016; López-Sáez, Morales & Lisbona, 2008).

For both sets of models in Figure 1, the Darth Vader costumes were coded as counter authorities, and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Raphael costumes were coded as heroes. On the surface, they belong in the same category. However, the presentation of the models conveys such different messages, that it seems difficult to equate “Darth Vader Tutu Girls Costume” with the “Kids Star Wars Darth Vader Costume” listed in the boys section. The presentation of these models seems to work against Hyde’s (2005) gender similarity hypothesis that women and men are similar on most traits. Instead, these pictures suggest that women and men are so different that they cannot be heroes or villains in the same way, and such differences are not limited to heroes and villains. In almost every category of costume, gender stereotypes create a wide gap that emphasizes differences between women and men. Zell et. al (2016) showed that perceptions of large gender differences promote higher endorsement of sexism. Portraying male and female models in extremely gendered ways may contribute to perceptions of large gender differences, which could, in turn, contribute to sexist consequences in society (Brant, 2011).

Zell et. al also found that perceptions of gender differences are malleable. Future research should investigate whether the contrast of stereotypically posed models effects perceptions of gender differences. For example, does presenting Superman and Supergirl in a similar manner promote perceptions that men and women are more similar, or does presenting an off-balance, submissive Supergirl next to a strong, stable or actively posed Superman promote perceptions that women and men are more different?

Costume Role

In terms of role, I specifically looked at costumes that endorsed stereotypical behavior. Compared to images of men and boys, images of women and girls were nine times more likely to portray royalty and three times more likely to portray mythical creatures, both of which emphasize being looked at, rather than acting. Compared to women and girls, boys and men were twice as likely to portray heroes and counter authorities, whose function is action oriented.

Heroes. As hypothesized, male models were more likely to be depicted as heroes. Male models accounted for 67% of all heroes in this study, as shown in Table 7, and male models were more than twice as likely to depict heroes as were female models (see Tables 2 and 5). Male heroes were often depicted in action, or in the iconic “superman pose,” conveying their readiness to save the day. Female models only portrayed 33% of the heroes in this study, but even when female models *did* portray a hero, it was almost never in the same ready-to-rescue way as male models, as shown in Figure 2. Most female heroes portrayed some combination of cuteness or sexiness along with an unstable stance, feet and spine (and for adults, seemingly always in four-inch stilettos). An implicit message in these Halloween costumes was that men and women cannot be heroes in the same way. When male models are posed as heroes, male stereotypes prescribe that they look strong, active, ready to act, or at least stable; they have to convey the message that they are capable of being a hero (agentic). When female models are posed as heroes, female stereotypes prescribe that they look cute and friendly or sexy and sassy; looking like they are ready to rescue someone is not a concern (communal).

Smiling sweetly or curving sexily in high-heeled stilettos, most female heroes did not look like they could save themselves, let alone save the day.

Mythical creatures. As hypothesized, women and girls were more likely to represent mythical creatures than men and boys. This category was created to capture the fairies, sprites and mermaid types of costumes that prior research has indicated contain gendered stereotypes (Pollen, 2011). Of the mythical creatures in this study, 80% were portrayed by women and girls, and the types of mythical creatures they depicted were typically stereotype-consistent, benevolent beings including angels, fairies, and mermaids. These results are in the same direction as Pollen (2011) who found that 58% percent of the available dress up clothes studied could be classified as mythical creatures including fairies, mermaids, angels and witches. Pollen argues that the types of costumes targeted at girls offers “a narrow range of branded fantasy narratives” that emphasize appearance and limit girls’ imagination of what they can be (Pollen, 2011, p. 176). The few mythical creatures portrayed by male models in the present data were stereotypically more aggressive or dangerous creatures, such as the cyclops and gargoyle shown in Figure 3.

Counter authorities. The hypothesis that men and boys would be depicted as counter authorities more often than women and girls was partially supported. Male models were twice as likely to portray counter authorities as female models. However, there was less difference than expected within the category of counter authorities, with male models accounting for 60% of all counter authorities and female models accounting for 40%. However, similar to the differences in heroes, the depiction of female models and male models coded as counter authorities sometimes showed very different types of

counter authorities, with poses showing passivity and unstable positions in female models and poses conveying aggressiveness and action orientation in male models, as you can see in Figure 4. Interestingly, women and girls were overall, more likely to be counter authorities than mythical creatures or heroes. Pirates and evil queens were the most popular female counter authorities, with pirate costumes accounting for 35% of the category, and evil queens accounting for another 18%.

Royalty. As hypothesized, women and girls portrayed royalty at much higher rates than men and boys. In fact, female models accounted for 91% of the royalty costumes in this study. The dresses tended to obscure the feet and stance of models in this category, but princesses and queens were typically depicted in stereotypical passive positions and with decorative hands. The role of royalty, particularly princesses, is rooted in feminine stereotypes of passivity and incompetence. The role of a princess is not to *do* anything but to appear; to be looked at, admired, and ultimately to be saved by a man; we all know how the typically fairy tale goes. Research has shown that there may be gendered consequences for imitating the role of a princess though. Coyne et al. (2016) studied kids' engagement with Disney Princess media and products in relation to gender-stereotyped behavior. They found that girls engaged with Disney Princesses more than boys, and that the girls' engagement was stable across a one-year time span. More importantly, Coyne et al. (2016) found that engaging with Disney Princesses correlated with concurrent female stereotyped behavior in girls and boys, *and* increased female stereotyped behavior one year later. It is not a stretch then to imagine that wearing princess dresses could invoke similar gender-typed behavior, and that dressing up as a princess could influence behavior in the long term. As cited in Coyne et al. (2016),

Dinella (2013) found that grown women who identified with the persona of “princess” were less likely to persist in challenging tasks, less likely to be interested in working, and more likely to pay attention to superficial qualities. Though stereotypical female behavior is not inherently wrong or bad, engagement in female stereotyped roles, such as that of royalty, may limit girls’ interest in exploring new opportunities (Coyne et al., 2016).

Weapons

The data also supported the hypothesis that men and boys would be more likely than girls and women to be portrayed with weapons; in the U.S. dataset, male models were more than twice as likely to be depicted with weapons as female models. In the Spanish dataset, the difference between male and female models did not reach statistical significance. This is likely due to the small sample size. However, the proportion of male models possessing weapons was consistent across populations, and in both dataset male models were twice as likely as female models to possess weapons. I found that only 20% percent of male models were depicted with weapons, in contrast with the 51% of male models Murnen et. al (2015) found in a spread of popular culture items, and the 42% Dill & Thill (2007) found in male video game characters. It is possible that weapons are more likely to be sold separately from Halloween costumes, and this may account for the fewer number of male models with weapons found in this study.

Summary

Overall, I found that women and girls more often portrayed costumes with stereotypically feminine roles, while men and boys more often portrayed costumes with stereotypically masculine roles. This divide was most obvious in the categories of heroes and royalty, where female models were as likely to be royalty as male models were likely

to be heroes. There are several implications of this finding. Halloween costumes provide gendered information about what it looks like to be feminine and what it looks like to be masculine, without providing much counter-stereotypical information that could broaden a child's perspective of what they are capable of being. When picking out Halloween costumes or costumes for play, girls and women might be guided towards royalty and similar benevolent and passive costumes just by availability since there are so many more costumes that fall in that category. Likewise, for boys and men, the predominance of active or aggressive costumes may influence them to be heroes or counter authorities when they dress up, whether it is for Halloween or for play. For girls and women, Halloween costumes seem to be a part of socialization that teach adherence to feminine stereotypes by portraying female models in female-typed body positions and feminine stereotyped roles, or by undermining counter-stereotyped roles by presenting female models in stereotypical ways (i.e., friendly, cheerful, sassy, or sexy). This conveys the message that no matter what girls dress up as, they are prescribed to behave or appear in stereotypical ways, and such limitations might have lasting effects on how girls behave in the future (Coyne et al., 2016; Pollen, 2011). Boys and men seem to experience Halloween costumes in a similar stereotype-reinforcing manner, as there were almost no costumes that portrayed men or boys counter-stereotypically. If anything, images of male models were more consistent with messages of hyper-masculinity, showing male models with weapons more often. This prescription for strength, athleticism, toughness, and sometimes violence in male models is also limiting for boys and men.

According to social cognitive theory (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), children learn gender stereotypes by observing and imitating models. A girl dressed as princesses might

be more likely to emulate princess-like behaviors, and thereby engage in female-stereotyped behavior, just as boys in hero costumes might be influenced to behave in heroic, male-stereotyped ways. For kids, dressing up is not limited to a Halloween activity, and engaging with stereotypical roles, at least those of princess and superhero, is correlated with increased stereotypical behaviors over time (Coyne et al., 2014; Coyne et al., 2016). Instead of promoting creative role-play and the possibility of being anything, the gendered nature of Halloween costumes may actually reinforce gender-typed behavior.

Critics of gender schema theory and social cognitive theory might argue that children are presented as learning gender too passively in these theories; as if they only receive information and absorb it. Children always have agency though, and even though Halloween costumes are marketed to kids in a way that reinforces gender stereotypes, children have the agency to deconstruct these particular presentations of gender and reconstruct them in different ways.

It is also important to note that gender is not the only important social category, and that stereotypes function in the same manner for many identities other than gender. Prescriptive and descriptive roles for people can be based on race, economic status, sexuality, body type, etc. People experience power and privilege on different axis that intersect in different ways. This concept is known as intersectionality. In terms of gender, men generally have more power and privilege than women, but a white, middle class white woman would likely have more power and privilege than a man of color with a low socioeconomic status, and women of color experience discrimination in a different way than men of color or white women (Crenshaw, 2015). I chose to focus on gender in order

to limit the scope of this study for the sake of time and feasibility, but other components of identity are equally important. Demographics other than gender were not coded for this study so I cannot draw any further conclusions, but I would like to note that the vast majority of models for Halloween costumes in this study, for both the U.S. and Spain dataset, were white and had “normally” thin body types.

There were a few limitations to the present study. All of the U.S. data were collected in 2014, so the costumes analyzed in this study were not the most recent costumes on the market. For the Spanish dataset, the sample size was much smaller, and the weapons category was coded by only one coder.

This study also had several strengths. The large sample size of costumes in the U.S. dataset was a representative sample of Halloween costumes, having been randomly selected from a total pool of 14,460 costumes. Even though the Spanish dataset was relatively small, the results from the U.S. dataset replicated surprisingly well, supporting that gender stereotypes are frequent in Halloween costumes.

Conclusion. Our findings show just how ingrained stereotypes are in Halloween costume culture, providing evidence for another source where gendered messages are conveyed in both U.S. and Spanish culture, in addition to U.S. television shows (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004), video games (Dill & Thill, 2007), and children’s books (Hamilton, 2006), along with Spanish newspapers (Matud, Rodriguez & Espinosa, 2011), radio shows (López, 2001) and television commercials (Valls-Fernandez & Martinez-Vicente, 2007). There is nothing inherently wrong with a girl dressing up as a princess or a boy dressing up as a pirate, but costumes become an issue when they prescribe gendered behavior and ways of thinking that limit people’s abilities to explore new identities,

behaviors, and possibilities. If a girl feels her only options are related to passive roles, if a boy feels his only options include aggression and constant action, then costumes are limiting. In addition, since our results show that costumes perpetuate the idea that male and female domains or activities are extremely different from each other, Halloween costumes reinforce gender polarization; such reinforcement leads to sexist cognitions (Zell et al., 2016).

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Table 1

U.S. Body Position by Gender

	Male Model	Female Model	Total
	N= 392 (42%)	N= 545 (58%)	N= 937 (100%)
Activity			
Passive	56%	85%	73%
Active	44%	15%	27%
Hands			
Neutral	32%	35%	34%
Active	52%	29%	38%
Decorative	7%	33%	22%
Unkown	9%	3%	6%
Stance			
Grounded, Stable	74%	26%	46%
Active or Goofy	18%	9%	12%
Off-balance, dislpayed	6%	57%	36%
Unkown	2%	8%	6%
Spine			
Straight	99%	74%	85%
Curved	<1%	25%	15%
Unkown	<1%	<1%	<1%

Feet

Grounded, Stable	78%	29%	50%
Active or Goofy	14%	8%	10%
Off-balance, displayed	4%	51%	31%
Unkown	4%	12%	9%

Note: We tested for differences in the gender of the model by activity: $\chi^2 (2, 989) =$

103.80, $p = .000$, hand position $\chi^2 (6, 990) = 183.11$, $p = .000$, stance $\chi^2 (6, 990) =$

350.40, $p = .000$, spine $\chi^2 (6, 990) = 127.02$, $p = .000$, and feet $\chi^2 (6, 990) = 308.52$, $p =$

.000.

Table 2

U.S. Weapons by Gender

	Male Models	Female Models	Total
	N= 394 (42%)	N= 547 (58%)	N= 941 (100%)
Weapon			
No weapon	80%	94%	88%
Weapon	20%	6%	12%

Note: We tested for differences in the gender of models with weapons: $\chi^2 (2, 995) =$

42.35, $p = .000$

Table 3

U.S. Costume Role By Gender

	Male Models	Female Models	Total
	N= 139 (43%)	N= 185 (57%)	N= 324 (100%)
Role			
Hero	48%	21%	33%
Mythical Creature	7%	20%	15%
Counter Authority	41%	22%	30%
Royalty	4%	37%	23%

Note: We tested for differences in the gender of the model by role: $\chi^2 (6, 324) = 85.32, p = .000$.

Data shown here are for the number of male and female models shown in one of these four roles, not the full sample.

Table 4

Spanish Body Position by Gender

	Male Model	Female Model	Total
	N= 51 (50.5%)	N= 50 (49.5%)	N= 101 (100%)
Activity			
Passive	59%	84%	71%
Active	41%	16%	29%
Hands			
Neutral	29%	38%	34%
Active	69%	30%	50%
Decorative	0%	32%	16%
Unkown	2%	0%	1%
Stance			
Grounded, Stable	67%	22%	45%
Active or Goofy	27%	4%	16%
Off-balance, displayed	4%	70%	37%
Unkown	2%	4%	3%
Spine			
Straight	100%	70%	85%
Curved	0%	30%	15%
Unkown	69%	28%	49%

Feet

Grounded, Stable	22%	6%	14%
Active or Goofy	8%	62%	35%
Off-balance, displayed	2%	4%	3%
Unkown	51 (50.5%)	50 (49.5%)	101

Note: We tested for differences in the gender of the model by activity: $\chi^2 (1, 101) = 7.82, p = .005$, hand position $\chi^2 (3, 101) = 25.46, p = .000$, stance $\chi^2 (3, 101) = 50.52, p = .000$, spine $\chi^2 (1, 101) = 19.97, p = .000$, and feet $\chi^2 (3, 101) = 34.73, p = .000$.

Table 5

Spanish Weapons by Gender

	Male Models	Female Models	Total
	51 (50.5%)	50 (49.5%)	101
Weapon			
No weapon	80%	90%	85%
Weapon	20%	10%	15%

Note: We tested for differences in the gender of models with weapons: $\chi^2(1, 101) = 1.84$,

$p = .175$.

Table 6

Spanish Costume Role By Gender

	Male Models	Female Models	Total
	N= 21 (64%)	N = 12 (36%)	N = 33 (100%)
Role			
Hero	52%	0%	33%
Mythical Creature	0%	25%	9%
Counter Authority	38%	25%	33%
Royalty	10%	50%	24%

Note: We tested for differences in the gender of the model by role: $\chi^2(3, 33) = 17.09, p = .001$.

Data shown here are for the number of male and female models shown in one of these four roles, not the full sample.

Table 7

Costume Role Totals by Country and Gender

Male Models			
Role	US	Spain	Total
Hero	63% (67/106)	100% (11/11)	67% (78/117)
Mythical Creature	21% (10/47)	0% (0/3)	20% (10/50)
Counter Authority	58% (57/98)	73% (8/11)	60% (65/109)
Royalty	7% (5/73)	25% (2/8)	9% (7/81)

Female Models			
Role	US	Spain	Total
Hero	37% (39/106)	0% (0/11)	33% (39/117)
Mythical Creature	79% (37/47)	100% (3/3)	80% (40/50)
Counter Authority	42% (41/98)	27% (3/11)	40% (44/109)
Royalty	93% (68/73)	75% (6/8)	91% (74/81)

Total (male and female)			
Role	US	Spain	Total
Hero	11% (106/990)	11% (11/101)	11% 117/1091
Mythical Creature	5% (47/990)	3% (3/101)	5% 50/1091
Counter Authority	10% (98/990)	11% (11/101)	10% (109/1091)
Royalty	7% (73/990)	8% (8/101)	7% (81/1091)



Figure 1 Body Position of Female and Male Counter Authority and Hero



Figure 2 Costume Role for Female and Male Heroes



Figure 3 Costume Role for Female and Male Mythical Creatures



Figure 3 Costume Role for Female and Male Counter Authorities

