



# murray hill institute

women transforming culture

Fall 2009 Newsletter  
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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

It has been a busy fall with the various lectures and other events we offered this semester. These activities always provide opportunities to communicate our mission to others and help them discover how to make a positive difference in their workplace. If you were not able to join us for any of our programs, you can get a brief synopsis in the "News" and "Recent Events" section of this *Newsletter*.

And next semester promises to be even more exciting! To mark our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we will sponsor an all-day conference on Saturday, April 24, at the Princeton Club in New York City. Our 2005 conference, ***Woman, Beauty and Image***, with Oscar de la Renta as our keynote speaker, was so successful that we want to re-visit the topic of fashion and examine its impact on women. For our 2010 conference, we have chosen the theme of ***Fashion, Media and the Consumer***. Speakers will include professionals from the fashion industry, the world of advertising, fashion writers and consumer representatives. Some of the questions the speakers will address are: the influence fashion has on culture; the responsibility of the fashion industry in creating fashions that reflect the dignity of the person; how the fashion industry views young people; and more. I hope you will join us for this informative and very exciting event. Mark your calendar now: April 24, 2010.

On behalf of everyone at Murray Hill Institute, I thank you for your continued support of our programs. We want to thank especially the women who worked so hard to make the benefit cruise such a success. They tirelessly *and* cheerfully make the event truly memorable for all.

Wishing you all a very Happy Thanksgiving and we look forward to seeing you at some future MHI event.

Kathleen McGarry  
President, Murray Hill Institute

## FEATURE ARTICLE

*Investigating Ad Imagery*  
*An interview with Paloma Díaz Soloaga*

*Paloma Díaz Soloaga is the Director of the Communication and Management of Fashion Specialty at Villanueva University in Madrid. She has done analytical studies of how women are portrayed in print ads, and how a woman's perception of her body image is influenced by her exposure to fashion magazines. Her work has been published in Observatorio, an online European research journal. Paloma is on the Planning Committee for Murray Hill Institute's forthcoming conference on Fashion, Media and the Consumer. She kindly agreed to an interview for our Newsletter when she was in New York for Fashion Week this September. Paloma was interviewed by Alice Trimmer of the Murray Hill Institute Board of Directors.*

**How did you become interested in doing research on advertising images?**  
After I finished my undergraduate degree I joined the staff of *Telva*, a Spanish fashion magazine, working with the design team and on interior decorating

articles. After five years, I began working on doctoral level courses at the university, studying branding and advertising research methodologies. After I finished my PHD, I did research on how brands adapt themselves to the internet and studied brands that were specially directed to young people.

I love fashion, but noticed that even though the images in advertising and fashion layouts are very attractive, women are usually portrayed as objects, not always in a sexual sense, but objectified, like pieces of furniture. To test this hypothesis, I collected, with the help of my students, advertisements from the three-year period 2002 to 2005 and analyzed the images of women. We used statistical tools to study 290 advertisements, containing a total of 342 characters. We only studied luxury brands. In addition to clothing, the ads featured perfume, cosmetics and beauty treatments, accessories, including jewelry and watches, and lingerie. We identified five main stereotypes of women portrayed in the ads, which we characterized as idealistic approach (modern woman), high consumer (sensual women), passive receptor (doll woman), hedonist transgressor (object women), traditional real (traditional women). We found that among the fashion images, the “real women” were among the least represented.

Several scholars assert that through the social comparison process, women—more than men—tend to compare themselves with the idealized images present in fashion ads and media content. This comparison depends on every woman’s self-image and self-esteem; some research studies demonstrate that women’s exposure to idealized images can influence moods and could increase depression. The way that women are portrayed in ads could have a negative effect on readers’ self-esteem, leading to eating disorders and depression. In other words, viewing these images can give you a bad evaluation of yourself. The environments in which the women appeared in the ads studied were nearly always unreal, so that they appeared

more as mannequins rather than as actual people.

**Isn’t the imagery in fashion ads heavily influenced by the current runway styles, with respect to hair, makeup, and overall appearance?**

The two have different goals: On the runway, the object is to show the clothing. The purpose of the ad, on the other hand, is not to sell the item featured in the ad, be it a handbag, perfume, or an outfit. The purpose of the ad is to sell the brand itself, so that the reader associates that brand with a universe of glamour and luxury and will be motivated to seek out that brand when they enter a store. The atmosphere in the store, of course, is usually much more conservative, as are the clothes.

**What kinds of follow-up studies are you currently doing on this topic?**

In the second part of our research, we are interviewing women of all ages in Spain, Italy, Mexico and the United States with a web-based questionnaire. When we show these women ads that portray women as dolls, or in very unnatural or bizarre attitudes, it is amazing how little they identify with these images, in fact they reject them, even though are they influenced by them.

This is possible because of the social comparison process that we all do to adjust our appearance and behavior with others, especially young people that are still maturing in their character and tend to look to others and to imitate celebrities and famous people.

**What is the long-term objective that you hope to achieve with the results of your research?**

We want to encourage fashion brands to seek new and creative ways to present their products, without using objectified images in their ads. It is possible to be original and surprising without a sexual orientation.

Advertising has to have a surprising call to the consumer because its mission is to create a sense of modernity, luxury or

exclusivity. But even though advertisers may not realize it, ads also have an “educational” mission as soon as their messages are distributed through the mass media and everybody can see them.

Many people are rightfully concerned about ethical production of goods—whether the supply chain is free from corruption regarding child labor or unfair laws and practices in underdeveloped countries in manufacturing fabrics and goods. But how are we advertising those goods? Are we treating the consumer as if she had no intelligence? Are we treating the consumer just as a number? We need to be respectful of the consumer just as we are throughout the supply chain. We need to counteract that mechanistic view of marketing with creative thinking. Just as we are respectful of animals and the environment, we need to be respectful of human beings, giving consideration to what we might call human ecology.

**What suggestions do you have for consumers in viewing ads? How can awareness of ad content make us more savvy as consumers of both media and product?**

Consumers need to be aware of how the marketers are conveying their messages and also to recognize their own power. They are the ones making decisions about what to buy. Do we want to spend our money on brands that do not portray women with honor and dignity? Just as consumers can band together to change unfair labor practices along the supply chain, they can do the same to protest portraying women as objects.

**What recommendations do you have for advertisers?**

My recommendation to advertisers, at the end of the day, would be to explore the power of creativity. The middle class—who are the real consumers of these brands—want to know the product much more than the “unreal” universe created by the brands. In my personal opinion brands have to tell stories that really appeal to the consumer and connect with their real lives.

## References

*Reports on related research can be found in the following studies.*

*Jung, J. Media Influence: Pre- and Postexposure of College Women to Media Images and the Effect of Mood and Body Image. Clothing and Textiles Research Journal. Vol 24. Oct. 2006.*

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*Martin, M. C. and Kennedy, P. F. Advertising and Social Comparison: Consequences for Female Preadolescents and Adolescents. Psychology and Marketing. Vol. 10. Nov/Dec 1993.*

*Richins, M. L. Social Comparison and the Idealized images of Advertising. Journal of Consumer Research. Vol. 18. Jun. 1991.*

*Rudell, F. Shopping With a Social Conscience: Consumer Attitudes Toward Sweatshop Labor. Clothing and Textiles Research Journal. Vol. 24, 2006.*

## WOMEN TRANSFORMING CULTURE: HOW THEY DO IT

*Courtesy: A Polite Gesture or Remark  
By Earlane M. Stanfield*

The other day I walked into a meeting and cheerily piped up “Good Morning”. I received little or no response. Everyone was already well into their workday, busily typing away in their BlackBerry devices, trying to stay on top of the emails and issues already being raised. I wasn’t offended about the lack of response, but as the meeting ended and we all went back to our offices I couldn’t help but think how much better we would all have felt about the rest of the day if we spent even just a few minutes recognizing the people around us.

Courtesy or polite behavior seems to have been misplaced in both work and personal encounters. People are not intentionally discourteous; we just have a

tendency to relate to people and situations in an impersonal manner. This can be seen not only in physical interactions, but also through emails and text messaging. Computers and the Internet do not care if someone is impersonal, but human beings do. We might not recognize it's missing, but we identify it when it's there.

Upon reflection, a "Good Morning" or "Thank You" or "Hello" can go a long way in both e-communication and physical interactions. So I started to make a commitment to ensure that I start indicating on a text or IM message that I have to go. Ensuring that the person on the other end knows that I am ending the conversation is important, just as I would on the phone. These are polite gestures or actions that may not seem to make a world of difference but bring a sense of closure to the interaction.

When sitting at a luncheon or a meeting, I try to resist the urge to check the Blackberry, or try to simply look at the person across the table. This enhances the moment, providing importance to it. This generosity of time and attention provides the need for individuals to feel whole, not just like microprocessors or analysts, but like individuals who deserve recognition.

I realize that I couldn't change my attitude all at once. I could just work on one thing each week or each month. Most of us know what is required to be courteous. Our parents and schooling have usually provided us with a basic set of manners that we know instinctively, but still needs to be applied. I am finding that these little changes I have made in my day-to-day interactions have brought me closer to my co-workers, managers and friends. I think I'll try to keep them for a while.

*Earlane M. Stanfield is a Senior Vice President and Manager, Equity Asset Management Administration, at Neuberger Berman, LLC.*

Do you have an experience you would like to share about changing the culture in

your workplace? Email us at [info@murrayhillinstitute.org](mailto:info@murrayhillinstitute.org)

## NEWS, RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### NEWS

#### **Murray Hill Institute Annual Benefit**

Murray Hill Institute's eighth annual fundraiser took place on Sunday, October 18, 2009. Over 175 guests enjoyed a lunchtime tour aboard a Spirit Cruise Ship on the Hudson River. As the ship pulled away from the dock, we joined the Spirit entertainers in a festive Bon Voyage toast. While we dined, we were entertained with a fascinating narrated tour of Manhattan's breathtaking skyline which was easily seen from the ship's huge panoramic windows. The cruise kicked into high gear when the Spirit DJ played Top-40 hits as we showed off our latest moves on the dance floor. The day got off to a windy and rainy start, but as the weather cleared, many of the guests headed topside to the large outdoor patio deck as they caught a breath of fresh air and an amazing view. The event raised over \$10,000 for the benefit of Murray Hill Institute programs. Our sincere thanks to all the guests for their support, and especially to the Benefit Planning Committee, who worked hard for many months to make this event a success.

#### **Morgan Stanley Foundation Grant**

We are most grateful to the Morgan Stanley Foundation for a very generous grant of \$3,200. Marisu Rodriguez, a project manager in information technology at Morgan Stanley and a valued volunteer for MHI, sponsored this grant for us through Morgan Stanley's Volunteer Incentive Program. The grant funds will be used for expenses associated with our ongoing lecture series and the Murray Hill Institute Mentoring Program.

## RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Culture and Core Beliefs Series**

On October 7 Maggie Jackson, author of *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age* (Prometheus Books,

2008) gave a compelling talk on the themes of her book. Maggie spoke about the threat to attention posed by the current use of the Internet and related technology. While not denying the great benefits of these advances, she pointed out how the loss of focus owing to constant interruption can eat away at our effectiveness as thinkers, compromise the quality of our work, and perhaps most importantly, erode our ability to relate well to the people around us. The topic clearly struck a chord with the audience, who peppered Maggie with many questions and observations regarding the effect of information technology on parent-child, employee-workgroup, and other interactions. Maggie can be contacted through her website [www.maggie-jackson.com](http://www.maggie-jackson.com).

**Save the Date:** William Baker, author of *Leading with Kindness*, will speak on his book on Wednesday, February 10, 2010, as part of the Culture and Core Beliefs Series. Further details will be posted on the MHI website soon.

#### **Evenings of Conversation for Young Professional Women**

On September 30, the Evenings of Conversations got off to a great start with Karen Wagner's talk on a topic that is of special relevance in this era of employment uncertainty: "Managing your Manager." Karen, who is a Vice President at Soci t  Generale, offered her audience a wealth of easy-to-follow advice and perceptive tips on how to determine your manager's communication and working style, and how to align your priorities and goals with those of your manager.

On October 21, Claire Gaudiani, Adjunct Professor at New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, spoke on "Social Entrepreneurship in America: Women's Work Since 1780." Claire defined social entrepreneurship as value creation and pattern-breaking approaches to problem-solving in society. She gave a fascinating account of how women, in the years following the War for Independence, banded together to pool talents and resources to implement

various humanitarian projects. These initiatives eventually led to the formation of the Woman's Exchange movement, which provided women with an opportunity to sell home-made goods on a consignment basis. The Women's Exchange and similar movements were the forerunners of microfinance as we know it today. Claire concluded by mentioning the contributions of remarkable women such as Esther Reed and Abigail Adams.

**Coming in November:** Lisa Gigliotti, Vice President and Chief Trademark Counsel for L'Oreal USA, will present the next Evening of Conversation, Her topic will be *Managing Your Career While Maintaining Work-Life Balance*, on Wednesday, November 18, 7:30 pm.

**Coming in December:** The Young Professional women will hold their annual Christmas musicale and celebration on Friday, December 11, at 7:30 pm. The evening will include vocal and instrumental music, caroling, and refreshments.

#### **SAVE THE DATE: SPRING CONFERENCE APRIL 24, 2010**

Murray Hill Institute's inaugural conference, which took place in the fall of 2000, had as its theme "Women Transforming Culture," a phrase that was subsequently adopted as the tagline to describe our mission. To mark its 10th anniversary year, MHI will present a day-long conference on Saturday, April 24, 2010 on "Fashion, Media, and the Consumer." The event will be held in the Princeton Club, 15 West 43rd Street, in New York City. The aim of the conference is to promote dialogue between fashion professionals, fashion media, and the consumer to gain insights into the driving forces behind the fashion industry, and its influence on women. Please save the date: more details will be posted on our website soon.