

**Learning to sell sex(ism)?
An analysis of gender in the educational cultures
of advertising students in Ireland**

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Thesis submitted for the award of PhD

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my brother, Barry O’Driscoll, whose value in feminist work and belief in the merits of this doctoral project played no small role in motivating me to undertake and complete it. Thank you for your unwavering support, friendship and confidence in all that I do; it means everything to me. I won’t forget the years of shelter and food.

So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters; and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say.

Virginia Woolf
‘A Room of One’s Own’, 1929

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Learning to sell sex(ism)? An analysis of gender in the educational cultures of advertising students in Ireland

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Abstract

This PhD project is an empirical study of how gender operates in the educational cultures of advertising students in Ireland. The research is guided by Sean Nixon’s 2003 study into existing advertising cultures and discourses in advertising agencies that work to promote traditional gendered working practices and organisational cultures hostile to gender equality. As a point of departure, this thesis brings together theoretical feminist critiques of gendered advertising, postfeminist cultures and the impact of postfeminism on gendered imagery in advertising texts, with a consideration of the cultural production processes that create advertisements. In addition, the study also explores the under-researched sphere of advertising education, especially as it pertains to gender. In particular, student attitudes and understandings of gender as they relate to the social world and to representational ideologies, their perceptions of advertising work, as well as their opinions regarding desired roles in the industry are important considerations for this study. The potential need for greater academic engagement with gender issues at the level of advertising education and training forms the hypothesis for conducting this research. The data involves a mix of in-depth questionnaires, qualitative surveys, semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers, observational data, as well as a textual analysis of the components comprising advertising modules. A thematic analytic approach has been adopted for this study, which facilitates an exploration of the dominant gendered discourses exhibited by students and the degree to which those narratives are informed by lecturers and curricula on these advertising programmes.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Women's European Coalition against Media Sexism (WECAMS), a collaboration of three women's organisations across the UK, France and Italy specifically states its aim as combating media sexism in advertising. It works to draw attention to, and lobbies for change of advertising practice in the area of sex stereotyping, particularly against women and girls. It has engaged with the European Parliament and the European Advertising Standards Alliance in a bid to open up discussion on the possibilities for standardisation of guidelines aimed at tackling and preventing sexism and gender stereotyping in advertising. Rosalind Gill (2007) argues that '(s)tarting from the proposition that representations matter, feminist analyses of the media have been animated by the desire to understand how images and cultural constructions are connected to patterns of inequality, domination and oppression' (p.7). Utilising a distinctly second-wave feminist discourse, which in the 1970s sought to expand the struggle for equality from an exclusive focus on material concerns to the realm of the symbolic (Williamson, 1978; Goffman, 1979; Kilbourne, 1979), and with that develop an understanding of the interplay between culture, gender¹ and power, contemporary feminist campaigns have once more returned to debates on representational ideology.

Theorists have explained the emergence of advertising from a number of different perspectives. Since the Industrial Revolution ushered in a phenomenon of mass production, the manufacturing of products in large bulk needed to take place in a context where producers could be confident that demand would keep up with supply. As a result, advertising emerged as a strategy in order to allay the fears of producers. The role of the advertiser was, and is, to develop and implement strategies that predict and influence consumer behaviour. However, Lury and Warde (1997) posit the view that advertising exists more to assuage the anxieties of the producer of goods, rather than to nudge the consumer to make certain decisions. Advertisers do this through assertions that they have a unique insight into the consumer's psyche. The efficacy of advertising to predict and manipulate consumer behaviour and choice is a hotly debated topic. Perhaps it is more accurate to think of the advertisers function as 'a kind of modern witch doctor ... to calm the worried spirits of the producers of potentially unwanted commodities' (Lury and Warde, 1997: 96).

¹ From the outset, it should be noted the position of this doctoral project in relation to 'gender' is one of critique, and sits within a radical feminist interrogation of the concept. As such, where the concept of gender is used and referred to, it is not value-free; rather inherent in its use is a challenge to the concept. Radical feminism's theorisation of gender is further discussed below.

Notwithstanding the contested *raison d'être* of advertising, the fact remains that companies producing goods and services for commercial sale do turn to advertisers to promote their products. The advertising industry achieves this through a number of different functions, broadly split between executive and creative activities. The executive roles within the advertising industry fulfil such functions as the management of client portfolios by the account handler; the strategic planners who have responsibility for providing insight into the particular consumer markets; and the media planner who devises strategies concerning media and marketing. On the creative side, the department includes the art director, who creates and develops the vision, the images and the overall feel and tone of the advertising campaign; the adverts text is devised by the copywriter in conjunction with the art director; and their work is overseen by the creative director. Following consultation with clients, the executive side of the agency deliver a 'brief' to the creatives, which outlines the product or products to be advertised, the objectives of the campaign, the target audience, as well as, sometimes, broader requirements about the overall message and company ethos to be communicated by the campaign. While there are many different objectives, aims, and functions that come together in the design and dissemination of an advertising campaign, and indeed often competing visions and ideas between client and advertising agency, and sometimes disagreement between executive and creative practitioners about the direction of campaigns, the role of the creative department within the advertising process represents the sphere where there is most influence and control over the choices made in *how* to fulfil the brief (Soar, 2000). In other words, while allowing for the fact that the client is ultimately in the more powerful position of being able to reject a proposed advertising campaign as put forward by the agency, the creative retains the power of choosing certain images, ideologies, and discourses in planning and designing the campaign in the first place. For this reason, this research project affords the creative function within advertising practice dominant status in shaping advertising content. Furthermore, and more generally, it should be noted that although numerous factors are relevant to any analysis and study of advertising and the industry, this study, rather than focusing on how effective various strategies are in driving up sales for the clients of advertisers, is concerned with the ways in which, and the social implications of using gendered images, narratives and discourses as a selling strategy.

Such is the reach and influence of the advertising industry in contemporary society that it is positioned as one of the most controversial of media industries (Cook, 2000). It is argued (James et al., 1994) that no other industry has, throughout its existence, received such criticism.

Advertising is a particularly potent form of communication in multi-media, which goes beyond simply promoting and selling products. In addition to creating collective unease (Pollay, 1986; Cook, 2000; Lazar, 2006), it is thought also to manipulate already existing social anxieties (Jhally, 2011). Advertising compels all consumers, not just those to which a particular advert is targeted, to ‘read’ the ad and to accordingly position oneself within a socially sanctioned hierarchy (Baudrillard, 1998). In this way, advertising works to uphold a *status quo*. Moreover, the normative nature of advertising texts and ‘the fact that the consensus produced by advertising can then result in attachment to objects, acts of purchase and implicit conformity to the economic imperatives of consumption is certain, but it is not the essential point’ (Baudrillard, 1998: 166). In other words, its efficacy at increasing sales of a product is secondary to its efficacy at upholding established social relations.

Commonly, advertising is disparaged for its promotion of consumerism. In the 1940s, Horkheimer and Adorno of the Frankfurt School took issue with the ‘ideology of consumerism’ (Kelly, 2008). By playing on and manipulating our most deep-seated insecurities, by shining a light on our failings at not being ‘successful’ enough, or attractive enough, or wealthy enough, advertisers propose a solution through the consumption of goods and/or services (UNESCO report, 1980; Pollay, 1986). According to Pollay, Humanities and Social Science scholars’ position advertising and its negative consequences ‘as reinforcing materialism, cynicism, irrationality, selfishness, anxiety, social competitiveness, sexual preoccupation, powerlessness, and/or a loss of self-respect’ (1986: 18). Indeed, this 1980 UNESCO report charged the advertising industry with reinforcing sex role stereotypes² (Pollay, 1986). Almost thirty years later, the Council of the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2008) recognised the role that multi-media often play in perpetuating gender stereotypes, and consequently adopted Council Conclusions on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society. In September of the same year, the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2008) set out its position in relation to how marketing and advertising, through the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, can negatively impinge on progress towards greater gender equality, by passing a resolution attempting to counter that trend. Additionally, in 2010, the European Commission published a report outlining its official position on ‘Breaking gender stereotypes in Media’, noting that the Beijing Platform

² According to UNESCO, 2012, gender stereotypes relate to ‘socially constructed beliefs about men & women, often but not necessarily sexist and negative, which ignore complexity and serve to rule out exceptions and choices’ (p.54). These constructions will vary depending on cultural frame, but for the purposes of this study, the term refers to contemporary Western society.

for Action, which was drawn up at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, explicitly recognises that advertising's dissemination of images that depict gender stereotyping upholds gender inequalities.

In considering the intersection of gender and advertising, one must be cognisant that the current gender landscape is characterised by various disturbances and anxieties. This unease emerged as a result of a number of social upheavals. For instance, the real and perceived gains of both second-wave feminism and the LGBT rights and marriage equality movements, the acknowledgement that patriarchy can no longer be justified, the rendering visible of both a White and performative masculinity have all contributed to a push and pull within the gender order. Reactions to changes in the gender order have presented in various ways. In response to material social changes, such as male unemployment resulting from the neoliberal restructuring of the labour force (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005) and the 'feminization of the workplace', backlashes have occurred in the guise of men's rights movements and more recently MRA's (men's rights activists). Social and cultural manifestations to the disruption of established gender roles and relations include a gradual shift from the discourse and politics of feminism to the cultural rhetoric of postfeminism (Tasker and Negra, 2007), the associated emergence of Lad Culture with its attendant tropes of ironic sexism (Whelehan, 2000), the increased 'pornification' or sexualisation of society (Levy, 2006; Coy and Garner, 2010; 2012), seen as both a progressive and a regressive phenomenon, and a new cyber backlash in the form of overt misogyny in violent pornography and hacker and gaming culture (Nagle, 2015). All of these phenomena inform the contemporary gender and sexual zeitgeist.

Advertising also plays a central role in informing and shaping gendered ideas and beliefs. According to Hesmondhalgh (2007), although advertising differs to other cultural industries such as film, it is nonetheless 'centred on the creation of texts and require(s) the work of symbol creators' (p.13). Through advertising texts, society's dominant notions about gender are constantly rehearsed and reconstructed. The dominance of the cultural, rather than the political, in new gender formations and discourses (Tasker and Negra, 2007) is one of the reasons why it is so important to scrutinise advertising. Consumers and advertisers may not consciously understand pervasive gender ideologies in the way that gender theorists do but almost everybody recognises them, speaks their language and knows how to use them.

In academia, however, there is a notable dearth of studies that bring together elements of gender and the cultural production of advertising to examine the process of encoding gender in advertising texts. Furthermore, in considering the potential impact of gender sensitivity and awareness on the creation and production of advertising texts³ that resist rather than promote gender stereotypes, the intersection of education and professional practice is a critical juncture that has not been heretofore explored. Consequently, this thesis is an empirical study of how gender is constructed and understood in the educational cultures of advertising students in Ireland. It is guided by Nixon's (2003) study into advertising cultures, which was anchored in qualitative interviews with creative advertising practitioners. Nixon found an adherence to discourses that promote traditional gendered working practices and organisational cultures hostile to gender equality. Building on his research, this thesis likewise considers the cultural production processes that create advertising texts, along with the gendered experiences of those working and creating in that field. As a point of departure, however, this thesis takes an inter-disciplinary approach in contextually foregrounding feminist critiques of postfeminism and the impact of postfeminism on advertising imagery⁴. In addition, this study draws on marketing and advertising academic research to delve into the underexplored and under-researched sphere of advertising education and gender. Central to this research thesis is an exploration of student attitudes and understandings of gender as they relate to the social world and to representational ideologies, their perceptions of advertising work, as well as their opinions regarding desired roles in the industry. At its core also, this study is an investigation into the extent to which issues of gender are currently a consideration at the level of advertising education and training. Thus, the purpose of this research is to ascertain if gender is adequately considered in the educational context in its current formulation.

Being highly cognisant of one's reflexive and subjective position as a researcher and also acknowledging personal motivations to undertake this research predicated on the puzzle of why the advertising industry seems to persist in representing gender in stereotyped ways, why it continues to portray women and men performing separate, albeit complementary roles, and why advertising was and remains at the heart of a postfeminist polarisation of the sexes (Ging, 2009), this study expressly adopts a 'critical praxis-oriented' (Lazar, 2007: 146) approach. This means

³ Allowance, of course, needs to be made for outside influencing factors, such as the desired approach of the client company.

⁴ Rosalind Gill's (2007; 2008; 2009) work in this area forms the cornerstone in this thesis' consideration of postfeminist gendered imagery in contemporary advertising.

that no claims are made to absolute objectivity or neutrality. Rather, the position taken is one that is politically, socially and ethically invested in the research design and research questions in order to ‘critiqu(e) discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order’ (Lazar, 2007: 145). This is done with a view to adding to the canon of radical feminist academic thought that is concerned with challenging preconceptions about ‘natural’ gender roles, and the supposed inevitability of the polarisation of the sexes, which is to say that this doctoral project is expressly aligned to a radical feminist tradition. Although emerging as a strand of feminist philosophical thought during the time of second-wave feminism, references throughout this thesis to radical feminism do not refer to a historical movement but, rather, as a way to conceptualise ‘gender’ as fundamental to the continuation of the sex/gender system that operates under patriarchy, and which hierarchically values women and men in such ways that legitimate the subordination of women as a sex class to men as a sex class by virtue of assigning differential gender roles to males and females accordingly. The radical feminist-aligned objectives of this research to further add strain on the legitimacy of the concept of gender as operationalised under patriarchy ultimately aims at potentially sensitising advertising educators and students – and hence future practitioners – to sexist, stereotypical content, which has the potential to lead to a shift in the symbolic representation of women and men. A qualitative approach, which aims at ‘understanding something (or) gaining insight into what is going on and why’ (Maxwell, 2013: 28; cited in Bazeley, 2013: 7) has been adopted for this study as the most appropriate methodology. Indeed, given that the primary research participants comprise advertising students and lecturers, a qualitative research design is considered to be especially effective in answering research questions that are concerned with investigating and understanding how and why research participants construct certain understandings of their gendered social realities (Bazeley: 2013).

The following literature review chapters build a theoretical framework that is anchored on linking *representations* (i.e. the advertising text); *production*; and *education*. As the primary motivation of this research is a concern with the advertising text, Chapter 2 is concerned with contemporary as well as historic considerations of gendered imagery in advertising. It sets out the case for why advertising imagery remains problematic and deserves attention. However, unpacking the reasons as to why gender stereotyping is still prevalent in advertisements requires a focus on the (future) producers and creators of those adverts. Chapter 3 therefore expands on the theorisation of cultural, creative and advertising production, as well as the production practices and organisational cultures behind the creation of these advertising texts. While causal links between

a practitioner's personal views and her/his approach to the creation of advertising texts are not definitive⁵, this study likewise cannot infer a linear cause-effect regarding the impact of educational modules on students future professional decision-making. Nevertheless, Chapter 4 is premised on the assumption that the educational sphere does 'speak' to professional practice. As a result, this chapter considers students' pre-professional socialisation, and looks at research into advertising education and engagements with gender. Such considerations must also bear in mind that there are wider cultural and societal factors influencing students' gendered views that are not associated with formal teaching of gender issues, but which are outside the scope of this particular study.

The methodological approach applied in this study is outlined in Chapter 5. This offers an overview of the philosophical perspective that underpins the research questions. Additionally, an extensive breakdown of the coding process is provided in order to address issues of transparency and credibility in employing a thematic analytic strategy to the dataset. The findings are presented and discussed in Chapters 6 through 8. Chapter 6, which focuses on student attitudes to gender, in general, broadly found that student responses are skewed towards a gender essentialism discourse. Consequently, they tend to lack a framework for critiquing and interrogating assumptions regarding prescribed gender roles. Thus, in the absence of a strong understanding that normative gender expectations are culturally imposed, their ability to reject such ideas is impeded. Students also, for the most part, do not appear to be emotionally, as distinct from intellectually, invested in gender equality and feminist concerns despite exhibiting a strong understanding of feminism and its aims. Women are understood and discursively constructed as a set of problems to be fixed, whereas men are discussed in ways that position the male sex as the more 'unproblematic'. Accompanying those two threads is the elevation of the 'tomboy' as the desired alternative. Student attitudes in this chapter are notable in the sense that their head tells them one thing – which is to say that women are still subordinated and oppressed to men – but the heart seems to pull them in a different direction, that being identification with men and their attributes. This chapter on attitudes to gender offers a mostly coherent set of attitudes and opinions that, for the most part, displays a concern for women and girls. The educational role in these attitudes amounts to, at best, a relative silence on gender issues, and at worst a tacit promotion of an androcentric viewpoint.

⁵ Other influencing factors need to be considered: the client company, the commercial imperative that drives the industry, and pressurised work practices and deadlines that lead to 'easy' representations of gender.

The consistency and overarching concern for women and girls begins to breakdown in Chapter 7, relating to attitudes to gender in advertising texts, and contradictions start to creep in. While there is good intellectual ability to deconstruct gender ideology in advertising texts and the differential portrayals of women and men, it was not accompanied with a ‘felt’ concern for the impact on women’s lives of certain tropes present and prevalent in gendered advertising imagery; namely images of sexualisation and objectification, juxtaposed with depictions of domesticity. Rather, that ‘felt’ and emotional concern shifts towards men and boys. This concern for men and boys sits alongside contradictory assertions that advertising has become ‘post-gender’. In other words, when the ‘story’ of attitudes to gender, in a general sense, and its attendant concern for women is expanded beyond the theoretical to the applicable and relatable, in terms of thinking about the impact of gendered imagery on men and women’s lives, cracks in student attitudes start to emerge. This becomes manifest in iterations of misandry being an issue in contemporary advertising. What is consistent again here is that ‘knowledge’ of the sustained and continuing plight of women in patriarchal society does not translate into an emotionally-connected concern for the female sex. In terms of educational impact, it is clear that students are getting mixed and contradictory messages.

Likewise, the final findings chapter, Chapter 8, which is concerned with attitudes to gender in advertising practice, features again a kind of ‘lip service’ paid to gender equal views, but which is accompanied by lack of sympathy or empathy for women as the oppressed sex class. This thread is magnified to a greater degree than present in attitudes to gender, generally, and gender in advertising texts. Broadly, constraints inherent within the medium of advertising, coupled with demands of the client company, among other factors results in the impression that advertisers hands are tied, making it difficult to offer alternative representations of gender. This Catch-22 of advertising practice sits alongside widespread declarations that exercising a creative approach to advertising campaign design offers the primary way that advertisers can flex some agency and authority. However, creativity is sharply gendered and skewed towards a supposed male trait. Closely linked to creativity as a male attribute, is humour as a distinctly male skill. Thus, with both creativity and humour understood to be the cornerstones of successful and innovative advertising campaign design, this serves to squeeze women out of influential roles. Discussions concerning what students think about sexist adverts mostly offer up the view that this is ‘uncreative’ – a paradoxical viewpoint, given that creativity *is* sexist – but that where sexism is present in advertising, critics of such sexist content should ‘get over it’ or laugh it off. The

contradictions inherent in the chapter on attitudes to gender in advertising texts are somewhat resolved in this chapter in that gender equality ‘talk’ much more firmly remains at the level of the abstract, and any more genuine and felt concern for women and girls gets definitively dropped.

Finally, Chapter 9 closes this doctoral thesis and provides an overview of concluding thoughts, which bring together the main considerations alongside key findings from the study. Additionally, recommendations for a way forward are offered, which could be implemented by third-level advertising educators.

Chapter 2: Gender and Advertising – Texts

Introduction

It is not possible to address advertising educational cultures independent of the wider socio-cultural contexts in which students operate. Likewise, it is also impossible to consider gendered cultures in advertising practice and education without considering the advertising texts that this sector produces. Before examining the literature on the gendered production of advertising texts in Chapter 3 and advertising education in Chapter 4, it is crucial, therefore, to provide a clear overview of how advertising's representations of femininity and masculinity has been critiqued. From a variety of disciplines, scholars have utilised such diverse frameworks as content analysis and semiotics in order to investigate and understand media and advertising content, to trace patterns in representational tropes, and to interrogate the social impact of cultural adherence to specific gendered discourses. Furthermore, providing an overview of the gender-political present is contextually important in exploring why there has been a trajectory from feminism to postfeminism, as well as the origins and significance of associated cultural discourses such as Lad Culture and the revival of genetic determinism (Ging, 2009), especially as it relates to advertising.

Consequently, in order to trace the lineage of gender and advertising research and to sufficiently make the case for the continued relevance of feminist analyses of advertising, the chapter sets out, from the 1970s to the early 1990s, the historic work that both feminist media scholars and masculinity scholars have undertaken in the field of representational critique. The 1950s housewife, 1960s and '70s passive female object, and the 1980s 'new man' in advertising gave way in the mid-1990s to the subsequent birth of the postfeminist 'empowered' sexual 'subject' and the new 'Lad'. Thus, the second-half of this chapter provides an overview of the contemporary cultural context in which advertisers currently operate and future practitioners are being trained to operate. Specifically, it examines how media and gender scholars have conceptualised postfeminism in relation to media generally and to advertising, in particular. The chapter explores the relationship of postfeminism to 'Lad Culture', and illustrates through alcohol advertising how manifestations of this phenomenon have impacted gendered advertising discourses both in the UK and the US. The chapter concludes with an overview of how

postfeminism has played a significant role in reshaping gendered advertising tropes in relation to bodies and has resulted in a distinctly postfeminist aesthetic in advertising, as formulated by Rosalind Gill (2007; 2008; 2009a; 2009b).

Historic critiques of gender, representation and advertising

Second-wave feminism and advertising

Throughout advertising's long history⁶, it has been the subject of much cultural and social attention and critique, and especially since the middle of the 20th century. Driven by the post-WWII, US trend toward consumption, advertisers responded with a new strategy, which Sidney J. Levy (1959) called *symbols for sale*. Recognising that people were purchasing more than simply the goods themselves, Levy called on marketers and advertisers to pay attention to the symbolic as well as the practical value pertaining to products and services. He notes that, 'one of the most basic dimensions of symbolism is gender' (p.120), and that the sexual division of labour relating to the household provides an exemplary illustration of this at work. The symbolic realm of gender is invoked by the housewife in the choices she makes when shopping for her family. She 'considers what her husband's preferences are; what a growing boy should have; what is just right for a girl's delicate tastes' (p.121). In this traditional model of the family unit, women, mothers, and housewives were charged with the task of maintaining the private realm in order to enable their husbands and sons to retreat for a brief time from the public sphere to be cared for. For women, this duty entailed being the primary decision-makers with regards to household, domestic and grocery purchases, something not lost on advertisers (Meehan, 2012). In response to, among other concerns, aggressive advertising directed at housewives, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) sought to expose the 'problem that has no name'. Although much criticised for its focus on White, middle-class, suburban America, her work aimed to reveal the fact that the 'domestic dream' that women were being sold was a form of enslavement in the home. The 1950s and 1960s advertisements for domestic appliances were imbued with messages that simultaneously worked to professionalise housework, while also pointing to the freedom and time-saving aspects that could be enjoyed through the purchase of various products. On the one hand, such advertisements tied women to working in the home, by equating her identity to her

⁶ One of the earliest advertising agencies was established in Britain in 1800 (McFall, 2002).

role as housewife and mother. On the other hand, it gave her a glimpse of a freer existence if she bought the latest in technological home-care appliances. Friedan's dispelling of the myth of the *happy housewife*, so regularly portrayed in US advertising at that time, is credited with igniting the flame that sparked the beginning of the second-wave feminist movement. Where the first-wave of feminist activism during the 19th and early 20th centuries was mobilised around material concerns and issues of political and legal rights, the second-wave of the 1960s and 1970s was characterised by an increased focus on cultural issues, such as workplace sexism, insidious stereotyping, the representation of women in the media and in advertising, in particular.

Radical feminists of this period (Millett, 1970; Rubin, 1975) were concerned with concepts of masculinity and femininity, and its social construction. Significantly, it was claimed that biology was not destiny in relation to capacities and capabilities supposedly assigned to the sexes at birth. Thus, essentialist notions about 'natural' gender roles were firmly rejected. Radical feminists argued that the very concept of gender was in fact a product of a patriarchal society that benefitted from the distinct roles sanctioned for men and women, and that this 'sex/gender' system (Rubin, 1975) stressed a heteronormativity that was restrictive and reductive. Consequently, the turn to issues of representation of gender, of gender relations and roles, of masculinity and femininity in and through advertising and how this works to uphold patriarchal norms, became a particular focus of strong feminist critique. This focus on representational ideology produced a large body of work throughout the 1970s by scholars and academics concerned with media and advertising's portrayal of women and men. These works emanated from such diverse disciplines as psychoanalysis, linguistics, cultural studies, and communication studies. Judith Williamson (1978), Ervin Goffman (1979) and Jean Kilbourne (1979) set out to reveal trends that were apparent in advertisements of the 1970s.

Williamson's semiotic study of over one hundred advertising images delves into considerations of ideology and meaning, significations and representations, and seeks to offer ways to deconstruct advertisements. She exposes the visual cues evident in advertisements, which reduce the person shown in an advert from a human being to a symbol or concept – be that power, prestige, rebellion, for example, or vulnerability, narcissism, vanity. She surmises that domesticity, nature and animalism are all signifiers of femininity and, by extension, the woman. In instances where women are depicted in a manner superior to a man, a reversion to more

familiar signifiers of femininity is usually invoked⁷. Williamson also demonstrates the regularity of occurrences of themes of transformation, miracles and magic in much cosmetic advertising, arguing that this capitalises on female children's socialisation through fairytales in which the princess is magically transformed. She concludes that the drive for personal transformation necessarily leads to a '(p)erfectability (that) is only attainable through magical means' (1978: 146). Although Williamson's study did not deal with the functioning of advertising within specific social, cultural and political contexts, her work does remain hugely influential for close textual analyses of advertising images (Wells, 1992). These techniques of deconstructing and understanding advertisements have been widely employed by academics and students who are interested in critiquing the images that dominate the industry.

Kilbourne likewise drew attention to the advertising text itself, and came to prominence as a result of her 1979 film, *Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women*. In the documentary, she draws attention to the advertising field of special concern when examining culturally sanctioned modalities of masculinity and femininity. She focused primarily on beauty and image, on gender stereotypes and their effect on gender relations, and the emerging trend in the '70s of a conflation of sexual and violent imagery – a trend which continues unabated in contemporary adverts, particularly fashion advertising. While her academic work in the sphere of gender and advertising would have benefitted from more robust content analyses of the advertisements she uses to illustrate her points, her documentaries, which have included three updates since the original⁸, have proved to be immensely popular and influential, especially in the field of education and media literacy.

The prevalence of gender stereotypes in advertising was central also to Goffman's 1979 *Gender Advertisements*. He concerned himself with gender expressions, and depictions of gender behaviours in adverts. Through systematic content analyses, he showed that stark differences pertained to women and men in adverts. Women are much more often represented in a sensual manner, for instance through the sense of lightly, or carefully touching. In what Goffman calls, a 'hierarchy of functions', men were more frequently shown in positions of authority or expertise, through the activities in which they are engaged. This aspect of authority and superiority is also

⁷ Williamson gives the example of an aftershave advert (p.170-171), in which the woman beats her male opponent at chess. At this point he douses himself in the aftershave, and her short-lived victory is soon forgotten in a haze of lust for the man, thereby restoring the balance of power and domination.

⁸ These updates to the original were released in 1987, 1999, and 2010.

achieved through the positioning of bodies in advertising imagery. Women are much more often depicted lying down or looking up, while men will be shown standing over women and/or looking down on them. Almost 30 years later, a study of gender in Irish advertising found a similar trend (Ging and Flynn, 2008). Furthermore, on the use of the body in gendered advertising, the trend of women with their hands or fingers covering their lips or mouths, connoting silence and, arguably, a lack of value for what women have to say, is not one repeated in representations of men, nor is the tendency for women to be shown biting or sucking her finger, accompanied by a coy facial expression. Goffman's assessment of advertising's responsibility for the occurrence of these problematic tropes is that:

...advertisers do not create the ritualized expressions they employ; they seem to draw upon the same corpus of displays, the same ritual idiom, that is the resource of all of us who participate in social situations. If anything, advertisers conventionalize our conventions' (1979: 84).

This is a contention that squares precisely with Williamson's point that advertising does not create values *per se*, but rather translates between product and 'already-existing' values. In other words, advertisers reinforce, through advertising imagery, already established social and gender relations and practices. However, this assertion is later contradicted by scholars who would argue that advertising both reflects and creates gendered values and discourses (Lazar, 2006), a position that underpins this thesis.

Masculinity and advertising

The sustained 1970s critique of advertising and its problematic representations of gender, and women in particular, continued into the 1980s. During this period, there was a popular discourse of optimism that the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s, and '70s had sown the seeds of irreversible change, and there was much-hyped talk of the 'new man', especially in relation to his role as father. In 1987, Polly Toynebee wrote about the supposed enlightened qualities that the 'new man' possessed. These spanned emotional sensitivity and attention to detail, and a self-sacrificing ethos more commonly associated with women and mothers. However, Toynebee proposed a counter-narrative that aligned to the view that men's forays into the kitchen and the nursery had been wildly overstated. Similarly, a more accurate reality of a mostly unchanged domestic sphere was echoed two years later by Hochschild in her 1989 book *The Second Shift*:

Working Parents and the Revolution at Home. She uses the phrase ‘stalled revolution’ to describe the 1980s phenomenon that saw more and more women taking up their place in the labour market without a corresponding redress of the share of caring and domestic responsibilities in the home between women and men.

Despite the material reality, advertising imagery of the ‘new man’ cemented his position as a cultural figurehead of the zeitgeist of the time. Encapsulating perfectly this new version of masculinity was the 1987 Athena poster entitled ‘L’enfant’, which depicted an attractive, shirtless man lovingly cradling a baby. Emblematic too of the ‘new man’ was the 1985 Levi’s 501 ‘laundrette’ advert featuring Nick Kamen. The ad brought together two aspects most usually reserved for depictions of women in advertising; that is to say in the ‘domesticity’ shown by Kamen doing his own washing, and in the objectification of the male body, represented by the tantalizing ‘striptease’ offered by Kamen, and accompanied by the salacious and lustful glances of the women present in the laundrette. It should be noted that references to ‘objectification’ throughout the thesis are predicated on the definition and explication of the phenomenon as discussed and employed by Kilbourne (1999), Coy and Garner (2010), Goldman et al. (1991), and Gill (2009); in other words, an understanding of objectification that entails a fragmentation and consequent dehumanisation of an individual or groups of people, often manifesting in the presentation of parts of the body as ‘objects’, and as divorced from the subjectivity of whole, complex and full human beings, who can think and feel pleasure and pain, and who have agency and autonomy over their bodies as well as their interior and emotional lives. The term of objectification is used as short-hand for the more descriptive ‘sexual objectification’ which alludes to the particular type of objectification meted out, in particular, on women and their bodies. Sexual objectification in the media and in advertising imagery typically portrays women’s faces and bodies as fragments or pieces; such as an advert focusing solely on a woman’s legs, or lips, or breasts. Likewise, an advert that depicts women as inanimate in some respect, such as the aesthetic of fashion advertising to show women as slumped and immobile (often in the presence of a male who is ‘in control’) qualifies as objectification in this respect. However, there are of course instances where men and male bodies are objectified and/ or sexually objectified, as illustrated by the example of the Levi’s advert. In any case, as Nixon (1997) notes in his discussion of ‘regimes of masculinity’ concerning male advertising professionals, the ‘new man’ in advertising imagery and his displays of variant forms of masculinity is deeply wrapped up in the subjective masculine identities of advertising practitioners and creatives.

Whatever the etymology of the ‘new man’, the unrealised figure of the progressive nurturer and home-maker soon morphed into the narcissistic ‘metrosexual’. As David Beynon (2002) points out, of the two strands of new mannism that existed up until the 1990s – the new-man-as narcissist and the new-man-as-nurturer – only the former survived. In the early 1990s, the perceived emasculation and sexual objectification of the new man gave rise to a new set of images and discourses in the form of Lad Culture, which attempted, albeit often through strategies of self-mocking and defensive irony, to repackage modern masculinity through tropes of working class manhood and ironic sexism. Lad Culture unfolded, as will be discussed, as a response to the feminism of the 1970s, and the gains made by women in the public sphere throughout the 1980s, and marked a push against ‘new mannism’, the style magazines that the ‘metrosexual’ was reading, and the new social adherence to a political correctness.

In terms of scholarly work on masculinity and advertising, from the late 1980s and into the 1990s, before postfeminism and Lad Culture made their mark, the spotlight began to move away from an exclusive focus on problematic imagery of women, and turn towards constructions of masculinity, masculinity and culture, representations of men and masculinity in media and advertising, as well as issues of masculinity, hegemony and domination (Kimmel, 1987; Craig, 1992; Fejes, 1992; Sedgwick, 1995; Pfeil, 1995; Savran, 1998; Connell, 1987, 1990; Hanke, 1998). As Barthel (1992) points out, neither masculinity nor femininity are either mysterious, or assumed, unchanging givens. Both are bound up in practices of consumption, and have been differentially defined through advertising over time. As definitions of appropriate gender expressions and behaviours change, so too does advertising’s reflection of that. Referring to the specifics of the ‘man’s fashion suit’ advert, Barthel suggests that the exaggerated associations to power and wealth are in response to ‘the very real threat of women invading ... centers of power that makes social construction, and perpetual *re-construction* of masculinity so important’ (1992: 140). Barthel traces advertising’s social construction of masculinity from the ‘corporate game’ to ‘back to nature’ with its invocation of real, rugged manliness, as embodied in the Marlboro Man adverts. She also identifies themes of ‘masculine nostalgia’, which advertisements evoke through displays of boyhood fantasies of escape, adventure, and sporting success. In essence, this represents a world uncomplicated by the presence of women and girls. Concluding that the ‘meaning of masculinity is neither predetermined nor hidden from view... (that it) can be altered, shaped and molded’ (1992: 153), it is clear that advertising is one of the more influential ways that masculinity, and indeed femininity, are formed and constructed.

Contemporary gendered advertising

Postfeminist context

The binary nature of masculinity and femininity found in advertising texts has been retained since the onset of postfeminism⁹, and in fact has cemented a polarisation of the sexes narrative (Ging, 2009). While postfeminism is a slippery concept to define, it is clear that unlike feminism it is not a coherent political movement or a cohesive ideology (Tasker and Negra, 2007). Rather it can be understood as a periodising concept – the era after feminism – and/or as a dominant set of gender-political values. A number of key scholars have been to the fore in advancing feminist critiques of postfeminist culture, the most significant being Imelda Whelehan (2000), Ariel Levy (2006), Angela McRobbie (2007), Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (2007), and Rosalind Gill (2016, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Tasker and Negra (2007) note that the shift from feminism to postfeminism has marked a change in course from the political to the cultural, and that understanding postfeminism entails recognition that the domain of culture is now centre-stage in the struggle for gender equality, echoing radical feminist concerns of the 1970s. They contend that postfeminism is a ‘concept and a cultural phenomenon (which) repays close interrogation’ (p.6), because of its ubiquity across all media platforms. According to the authors, postfeminism is ‘a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the “pastness” of feminism’, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned, or celebrated’ (p. 1). Furthermore, the influence of postfeminism must be understood at a time when there is evidence of rolling back on women’s rights¹⁰.

In relation to the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, and the subsequent findings, this study defines, understands and employs the concept of postfeminism to the examination of advertising discourses (including texts, working practices, and gendered attitudes of practitioners and students) as an ‘analytical term’ (Gill, 2016) rather than positioning postfeminism as a particular point in time. Consequently, when referring to postfeminism and postfeminist cultures

⁹ The subsequent discussion of postfeminism and its associated features mostly refer to research carried out in the UK. However, Ireland can also be included within this cultural context and climate. Indeed, a number of Irish research studies have discussed postfeminism as related to Irish gendered discourses, culture, and advertising texts (Ging, 2009; Ging and Flynn, 2008).

¹⁰ This is something that, arguably, has gained even more momentum since the publication of Tasker and Negra’s book in 2007, as evidenced for example in the threat to reproductive rights currently playing out in the US.

throughout, the term encompasses a number of features that combine to construct this notion. These are further elaborated on in the following sections, but broadly it encapsulates eight key characteristics. In its earliest iteration, postfeminism emerged from what has been called the ‘backlash’; that is to say, cultural talking points that centred around accusatorially jabbing the finger at second-wave feminists for deluding women about the possibilities for and desirability of societal change. Postfeminism is also simultaneously characterised by a return to assumptions of natural differences between the sexes, or a supposedly tongue-in-cheek ‘war of the sexes’, as well as a fervent rejection of women as ‘victims’ alongside assumptions that equality has been achieved. In addition, such hallmarks of postfeminism, and postfeminist culture especially, involve the assertion that both commodification of feminist principles and self-objectification are empowering; both of which are heavily reliant on the dominant neoliberal capitalist economic, political and social climate, with its attendant individualisation of people’s experiences. Within a climate of self-sexual-objectification as empowering, lad culture emerged with its recourse to ironic sexism, and ironic humour in order to deflect its anti-feminist ethos. Finally, it is clear that, of all the features comprising postfeminism, it is the contradictory nature of it as a concept, and as an entanglement of evolving gender values, that remains a mainstay.

As indicated, a key cultural barrier to gender equality apparent in the postfeminist climate has been the backlash against feminism. It is widely acknowledged that the seeds of postfeminism were sown in the early 1990s, and were recognised and articulated by Susan Faludi in her seminal 1991 work, *Backlash*, which sought to unpack the kind of anti-feminist rhetoric that had been gaining traction in public discourse since the early 1980s. This rhetoric has been characterised by a disavowal of feminist principles, alongside a denial of the successes of the second-wave feminist movement of the 1970s, while simultaneously charging feminists with misleading women by telling them they could ‘have it all’. In discussions of the backlash, feminist commentators (see Whelehan, 2000) recognised that feminism was being held to account for duping women into thinking things either could or should change. Such public discourse did not appear to challenge the reasons they do not change; for instance, notably in men’s unwillingness to do their share of domestic and care work (McMahon, 1999). Indeed, even seeking to ‘have it all’ came at too high a price, and feminism was accused of causing undue, antagonistic tensions between the sexes. Popular and mainstream media, although not unique to the postfeminist period, often – whether consciously or unconsciously – sets out to discredit feminism, and discusses the figure of the feminist in unflattering terms. She has been discursively constructed in

the popular imagination as angry, humourless, man-hating, and ‘unattractive’, and as uncomfortable with her ‘innate’ femininity (Coy and Garner, 2010; Ging, 2009; Whelehan, 2000). Women did not want to be seen to align themselves with a movement that was so ridiculed and parodied, and which left them vulnerable to disdainful remarks from men.

Nevertheless, regardless of identification with or rejection of feminism, the undoubted gains of women in the fields of education and professional life mask the problematic reality that women are afforded such opportunities because it is ‘good for business’. Such advances for women are conditional and tolerated on the basis that they do not challenge the patriarchal structures that put them there. McRobbie refers to this as the ‘sexual contract’ and she notes that ‘the new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique, to count as a modern sophisticated girl’ (2004: 260). Similarly, her concept of ‘double entanglement’ refers to the tensions and contradictions inherent in the existence of prevailing conservative social norms with respect to gender roles, sexual relations, and to family, alongside discourses of supposed choice and individual freedoms in these spheres, particularly in relation to an assumed sexual freedom.

Indeed, postfeminist discourses of assumed sexual freedom and empowerment through self-objectification have been catalysts for the proliferation of sexual imagery that is a feature of an increasingly sexualised, postfeminist culture (Coy and Garner, 2010). Especially suggestive of such a culture is the graphic sexual and objectified representations of women’s and girls’ bodies, which often sees women infantilised and young girls adultified. There exists in this climate also a pornified¹¹ strand in popular cultural depictions of the female body, with strong iterations of empowerment through self-objectification. Gill (2008; 2009a; 2009b) redefines this as *self-subjectification* or *sexual-subjectification*; a phenomenon that could only occur in a climate that assumes equality between the sexes has been achieved (Coy and Garner, 2010). Self-objectification, or sexual-subjectification, entails permitting oneself to be represented in a sexualised, dehumanised, fragmented way. It is constructed as an empowering and therefore attractive expression of female sexuality and agency. Glamour modelling, an industry that exploded at a time when postfeminism was at its zenith, symbolises the culmination of this message. While many third- and fourth-wave feminists argue that critiques of women who

¹¹ The term ‘pornified’ in this context relates to what is commonly envisaged when thinking about or referring to contemporary depictions of sexual relations in most mainstream pornographic content.

commercialise their sexuality fail to acknowledge their pleasure and agency¹², second-wave-inspired feminists perceive the sexualisation of culture as an enabler, or as creating a ‘conducive context’ for violence against women and girls (VAWG). This approach ‘avoids positing direct causal links, yet situates sexualised popular culture within a structural analysis of power’ (Coy and Garner, 2012: 289). This means that the messages emanating from popular sexualised content such as images in advertising, which represent masculinity and male sexuality as dominant, aggressive, uncontrollable, and the converse of women’s sexuality as merely ancillary to men’s, contribute to setting up the conditions in society where men can see it as their entitlement to have access to women’s bodies. Through popular media and advertising, the message is repeatedly sent that girls and women are responsible for the sexual conduct of both sexes. This, as well as a tendency towards self-objectification, has implications in considering the possible links of sexualised imagery to VAWG:

Ads don’t directly cause violence, of course... the violent images contribute to the state of terror... Turning a human being into a thing, an object, is almost always the first step towards justifying violence against that person... This step is already taken with women. The violence, the abuse, is partly the chilling but logical result of the objectification (Kilbourne, 1999: 278).

Postfeminist rhetoric is seen to stunt the debate on sexualised imagery as a facilitator of violence. Coy and Garner recognise the challenge and difficulty of taking a nuanced approach, since to question the sexualisation of contemporary culture can be seen as ‘feeding a right-wing moralist agenda that could herald the prioritisation of abstinence’ (2012: 290). However, when considering the sexualisation of culture and the sexualised content of advertisements and its potential contribution to a ‘conducive context’, it can be argued that advertisers do not operate in a context-free environment, and therefore sexualised advertising content needs to be tackled, challenged, and questioned within that wider cultural context (Coy and Garner, 2012, 2010; Gill, 2008, 2009a; Levy, 2006; McRobbie, 2004, 2007).

In addition to that challenge, there is cultural reticence to talk about women as ‘victims’, as evidenced for example in the hugely popular ‘Women Against Feminism’ Tumblr that began in 2013, and which repeatedly reiterates the view from the mostly young women contributing to the site that they are against feminism because ‘I am not a victim’. Coupled with an emphasis on

¹² Indeed, there is increasingly debate on social media platforms concerning issues of ‘slut-shaming’ and sexual double standards for women and men.

empowerment and on the prerogative of women to enjoy their recently won independence, however tentative that may be, such commentators, bloggers and social media contributors on the status of women exhibit a distinct aversion to discussing women in such terms of being ‘victims’ for fear of defining women in stereotypically weak and passive terms. Despite the merit of such a position, Whelehan (2000), through her criticisms of the feminist stances of Katie Roiphe and Rene Denefeld, demonstrates how such a denial can be counter-productive, by muddying the waters with regard to sexual violence. Roiphe et al., according to Whelehan, tackle feminists of a previous generation for politicising sex too much, and for imposing overly rigid boundaries on what constitute equal sexual relations between men and women. However, as Whelehan (2000: 28-29) argues, this does an injustice to second-wave feminists, who were simultaneously attempting to demonstrate how the construction of female sexuality had been primarily focused on male gratification, while advancing more favourable and less constrained understandings of women’s sexual desire. Rather more surprising, the reluctance to see women as ‘victims’ of an unjust society has collided with a turn towards the construction of images in popular culture, and in advertising in particular, which are simultaneously underpinned by distinctly postfeminist and pre-feminist retro-sexist, sexualised and objectified aesthetics (McRobbie, 2004). Popular cultural artefacts, from television shows to advertisements, created in the context of the 1950s or 1970s, allow for and condone the representation of pre-feminist gender relations and gender roles by virtue of the fact that they are beyond claims of contemporary un-representativeness (Whelehan, 2000).

Given the complexity of how the contemporary cultural context creates and frames gender discourses, and the persistence of significant gender inequality, it is untenable to claim that postfeminism merely represents a harmless rejection or even misunderstanding of feminism. Rather, it is a phenomenon that demands careful feminist critique in the face of persisting universal and materialist women’s rights issues such as domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, gender-based violence in conflict, economic dependency, and the gender pay and pensions gap, as well as cultural visibility and voice afforded to women in the fields of media and entertainment. Although advertising continues to exhibit a strong postfeminist sensibility, responses to these issues have, in fact, been gathering more and more voices over the past five years or so, thanks to a resurgent feminist movement.

Lad Culture: alcohol advertising and contemporary masculinity

As a by-product of postfeminism, the phenomenon of ‘Lad Culture’ emerged in response to seismic shifts in attitudes that were concerned with questioning assumptions about male superiority and privilege, and traditional gender roles. The painful renegotiation or re-appropriation of masculinity that had to occur following changes in gender relations throughout the ‘70s, ‘80s and into the ‘90s, places the blame for that turmoil at the feet of the feminist movement (Whelehan, 2000). The disruption to traditionally prescribed modalities of masculinity caused by feminism culminated in the pervasion of a form of ironic sexism that is the founding characteristic of Lad Culture. Tied to discussions of ‘ironic sexism’ and sexism more generally, it is perhaps useful to indicate that, while postfeminism and ‘sexism’ can be understood as inextricably linked, the position taken in this thesis is one which understands postfeminism – as a combination of various, contradictory gender values that derails the work of feminism – as feeding into, and keeping alive a wider climate of pervasive sexism. As Gill (2011) argues, in defence of the continued usefulness of the term ‘sexism’, it needs to be utilised because of its ‘psychosocial’ conceptualisation that encompasses much more than gender stereotypes and problematic media and advertising depictions. Sexism, instead, can and should be understood as ‘a thoroughgoing ideology or discourse that is constitutive of common sense and of our most taken for granted ways of thinking, feeling, and being in the world’ (p. 66). Although, like ‘sexism’, postfeminism is also an analytical term or concept, it more accurately relates to a set of values, which – if no longer present – would call into question the relevance of the term, whereas ‘sexism’ relates to our more deeply engrained attitudes, and our unconscious and un-challenged beliefs about gender and gender roles, and sexual difference, which shift and change over time to be displaced by new biases and assumptions. Therefore, the distinction between postfeminism and sexism is one which positions postfeminism within a wider and more overarching framework of sexism. In relation to Lad Culture, while it emerged out of a postfeminist climate and entails one of the defining features of postfeminism, it simultaneously contributes to a more extensive sexist environment.

Whelehan’s analysis of Lad Culture describes the ‘gang mentality of this new/old masculinity’ (2000: 58-59) as saturated in humour and irony. The new ‘lad’ of Lad Culture, in contrast to the ‘new man’ of the 1980s, is immature, crude, irreverent, unapologetic, and only interested in beer, football, women and sex. The discourse surrounding the emergence of Lad Culture is

recognisable for its bantering, tongue-in-cheek tone. Indeed, it is only in the context of postfeminism that Lad Culture's ironic sexism could thrive, since it was premised upon the notion of equality already won as well as on the reversal of some of the core tenets of feminism, for example in its embrace of sexual objectification and conspicuous consumption as empowering (Ging, 2009). According to David Gauntlett (2002), Lad Culture in the UK emerged as a sort of jokey, ironic, self-aware dialogue with feminism but gradually lost its ironic edge as successive groups of young men became less and less familiar with this 'backstory', and a broadly postfeminist rhetoric took over. The publication of the 'Lads Mag', with *Loaded*¹³ being the first in a string of this genre, simultaneously targeted and was responsible for promoting the 'lad'. The exclusively young, White and heteronormative nature of the magazines came to be reflected more broadly across mainstream media in TV shows like *Men Behaving Badly*, which ran on British television right throughout the 1990s, from 1992-1998 (Whelehan, 2000). The characters and set-ups written into the show exemplify the juvenile, beer-swilling, sexist – yet well-meaning – fun-loving 'lad'. As Ging (2005) notes, 'those who take offence at Lad Culture's sexism are accused of being humourless or of not 'getting' its ironic intentions' (p.41). This defensive, or rather offensive, tactic has served to protect retro-sexist, ironic lad humour from criticism.

Humour, retro-sexism, and gender differences narratives are especially prevalent in contemporary beer adverts targeting men, and therefore offer a way to illustrate how Lad Culture and postfeminism has impacted on gendered discourses in advertising. These themes can be found in adverts for Miller Lite, Carlsberg, and WKD. Before the onset of postfeminism, however, beer advertising had been associated with more serious, traditional images of masculinity that lacked the self-conscious humorous tone of Lad Culture. In 'Beer Commercials: A Manual on Masculinity', Strate argues that beer adverts in the United States 'constitute a guide for becoming a man, a rule book for appropriate male behaviour' (1992: 78). The male images to which he alluded were straightforward macho and the selling pitch was literal, earnest, and lacking in irony. By contrast, British beer advertising had, by then, become more intertextual, polysemic and infused with irony. Over a decade later, a similar trend became evident in American beer advertising, in which Strate's blue-collar worker was replaced by the slacker or 'loser' (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005); American culture's equivalent of the Lad. A similar phenomenon was identified by Douglas Rushkoff in his 2001 PBS Documentary 'Merchants of Cool' as the

¹³ Founded and first published in 1994.

‘mook’. His documentary, which set out to expose marketing and advertising’s simultaneous creation and co-optation of youth culture, constructed the ‘mook’ as the young male who is preoccupied with crude and juvenile interests, in the vein of Jackass and the comedy stylings of Tom Green.

In Messner and Montez de Oca’s (2005) deconstruction of beer advertising aired during sports events, they too noted a marked departure from the earlier, more earnest representation of the hard-working man enjoying a beer after a day’s work. Instead, the ‘loser’ is typically shown kidding around with his mates, while drinking beer, acting juvenile, and making disingenuous approaches to beautiful women – disingenuous, since he is not really interested in forming a bond with a woman. Much like the ironic sexism apparent in British postfeminist Lad Culture, Messner and Montez de Oca identify the appearance of the ‘loser’ in beer adverts as a reaction to unsettling social and cultural shifts, relating not only to gender relations, but also to a change in work patterns, which resulted in traditional industrialised roles for men being made redundant because of technological advances. Once again, perceived threats to the stability of White, male privilege culminate in attempts to reformulate hegemonic masculinity in response to changing social and economic conditions. In this case, the demise of work as a reliable signifier of masculinity demands that new behaviours, identities or styles fill that void, hence Lad Culture’s preoccupation with gambling, pornography, gangster culture and the criminal underworld, all of which function to salvage and maintain a sense of male heterosexual power in the absence of work-related power and status (Ging 2007; 2012).

Also making a link between heteronormative masculinity and alcohol, through the medium of advertising imagery, Smith (2005) examines Jim Beam Bourbon advertising campaigns in the period 1999-2003, and notes that the ‘campaign reinforces traditional notions of masculinity while providing a contemporary image of ‘ordinary guys’’ (para. 1). In general, while alcohol, and liquor in particular, is most often targeted at men because they have tended to drink it in much larger quantities than women, it has also been one of the markers of a traditional masculinity. Referencing the historian George Chauncy, Smith notes that ‘heavy drinking was one way for working class men to perform manhood in the company of other men’ (2005, para. 24). The Jim Beam Bourbon *Real Friends: Real Bourbon* campaign sought to capitalise on the suggestion that liquor consumption was favourable for one’s masculine credentials. In layout and design, the series of adverts depict a photograph, which:

...harkens back to a bygone era: the days of old, when men were men, gender roles were clear, and masculinity was rarely challenged. Those were the glory days before the coming of the women's movement and political correctness. But, the ads suggest, maybe these days are not over, if you drink Jim Beam (Smith, 2005, para. 32).

Irony also plays an important role in the campaign. In answer to anxieties around masculinity, consumerism and the power of advertising to persuade, the use of irony is employed to let the target male viewer in on the joke: 'we (Jim Beam) know that you (male consumers) know what the game is. And we ... are going to wink at you indicating that we are in it together. It's cool, funny and okay to go along with this one' (Smith, 2005, para. 52). Yet, as much as there is an implicit recognition of the 'game' of advertising and its role in ascribing prescriptive versions of hegemonic masculinities, Smith argues that this type of campaign is no less culpable in upholding those same standards of sanctioned masculinity as other more obviously problematic adverts that, for instance, use images of men with unattainably sculpted bodies. The ads continue to equate masculinity with heavy drinking, disdain for and objectification of women, and physical aggression. Representational shifts, such as those identified by Strate (1992), Messner and Montez de Oca (2005), and Smith (2005), are evidence of patriarchy reformulating to meet the next turn, very often in a bid to recoup lost power (Carroll, 2011; Savran, 1998; Robert Hanke, 1998).

In general terms, masculinity has been constructed through advertising in terms that often only make sense as a counterpoint to femininity and women; whether that is through wealth, physical strength, rebelliousness or cultural capital. Indeed, hyper-masculinity, as antithetical to femininity, remains a mainstay in advertising. Vokey et al. (2013), through a content analysis of US male-targeted magazine advertising, sought to investigate the presence of hypermasculine tropes in adverts. Using Zaitchik and Mosher's (1993) understanding of hypermasculinity as characterised by 'toughness as emotional self-control, violence as manly, danger as exciting, and calloused attitudes to women and sex' (p. 562), they found it to be a recurring theme, present in the majority of adverts printed in male-targeted magazines. This widespread hypermasculine motif accounted for as high as 90% of the adverts appearing in certain magazines, and more often in those magazines with a younger readership of a lower socio-economic status. As the authors note, advertising's adherence to this strong narrative is not without consequence for both men and women, primarily in terms of its sanctioning and encouragement of risk-taking and aggressive behaviours. Broadly, academic literature concerning representations of contemporary

masculinity in advertising has tended to find evidence of a strong reaffirmation of men's superior status that is markedly counter to the social position of women (Gill, 2007, 2009a; Ging and Flynn, 2008; Hanke, 1998).

'Hello Boys': Sex, empowerment and gendered bodies of advertising

Rosalind Gill's work on contemporary advertising, postfeminism and sexualisation is fundamental to this thesis' understanding of the impact of postfeminist tropes on advertising imagery. It is taken for granted that sex sells, and 'for almost as long as it has existed (advertising) has used some sort of sexual sell, sometimes promising seductive capacities, sometimes more simply attracting our attention with sexual stimuli, even if irrelevant to the product' (Pollay, 1986: 28). However, in the 1990s, resulting from the emergence of postfeminism alongside feminist critiques of depictions of women as vapid, stereotypical sex objects, changes in advertising were becoming apparent. The sexual *agency* of women became the new way to represent female sexuality and the female body. This has meant that 'since 1994 there has been a marked shift in the manner that women's bodies are depicted sexually, in ways that emphasise pleasure, playfulness and empowerment rather than passivity or victimisation' (Gill, 2009b: 94). Gill points out that the increasing sexualisation of culture and a focus on sex generally constituted a means of release and relief after the sexual austerity imposed due to the AIDS epidemic. In addition, referring also to Goldman's early 1990s writing on the subject, Gill contends that changes in the strategy of advertisers in the 1990s were an answer to 'sign fatigue', to viewer scepticism, and also to the impact of feminism on lifestyles and attitudes' (2008: 39). The shift in advertising trends formed part of a reconstituting of the sexualised woman figure from passive terms into agentic, sexually voracious representations with feminist undercurrents of empowerment, liberation and independence. The objectification of women in advertisements, which had been challenged by feminists, shifted to a self-objectification, giving the objectified woman a voice which sought to 'reassure' women viewers that this was in fact not demeaning but empowering. Although the emboldened female figure of contemporary postfeminist advertisements, such as that evidenced in the 1994 Eva Herzigova Wonderbra advert titled 'Hello Boys', may seem favourable when compared with the sex-object representations of women of the decades from the 1950s through the '70s and '80s, this may not be so. Malson et al. (2011) call into question the merits of advertisers' reframing of female sexuality in active terms by focusing

on women's pleasure and sexual appetites. They note that 'depictions of women as active sexual subjects may be even more damaging than more traditional objectifying representations in that they seem to similarly exacerbate women's body dissatisfaction whilst also leading more strongly to self-objectification' (2011: 97). In this way, postfeminist advertising works to obscure gender inequalities, with Michelle Lazar also noting that '(u)nlike advertising in earlier periods, which depicted women in obviously demeaning and sexist ways and made feminist critique of patriarchal capitalism a relatively straightforward affair, critique of postfeminist advertising is less clear-cut' (2007: 160). This is because the postfeminist narrative of empowerment through self-objectification mitigates the charge that advertisers be held to account for sexualised and objectified imagery.

This concept of self-objectification, self-subjectification or sexual-subjectification, as previously discussed, is tightly intertwined with a consumerist narrative constructed around reinvention and communicated through the medium of advertising. Tasker and Negra note that 'the construction of women as both subjects and consumers, or perhaps as subjects only to the extent that we are able and willing to consume, is one of the contradictions at the core of postfeminist culture' (2007: 8). In a postfeminist society obsessed with retaining youthful beauty, the iteration of feminism as old-fashioned, passé, not relevant or current is useful, and within this climate consumerist pressures target women to conform to patriarchal standards of beauty through the purchase of cosmetics and products. These pressures are couched in discourses of 'choice' and 'freedom'. This phenomenon, referred to as 'power femininity' by Lazar (2006), is characterised by its implicit ideological contradictions, and by the contention that the specifically gendered purchase and consumption of beauty products, by women, marks an empowered and emboldened choice. Doing so unapologetically sets one on the side of those women who are comfortable with their femininity, and embrace it as a tool/weapon with which to get ahead of men, thereby pitting women against men in polarising, dichotomous and binary terms. For the most part, the language of empowerment adopted in the advertising of 'power femininity' remains at the level of the individual, with a telling absence of a collective call to action to push for meaningful empowerment for women. Feminist rhetoric, which includes such terms as 'power', 'empowerment', 'radical', 'change', and 'liberate' (Lazar, 2006), is used in postfeminist invocations of the power to be harnessed from indulgent beauty regimes that are supposedly all about self-gratification and not about patriarchal social validation.

This commodification of feminism was similarly and previously elaborated on by Goldman et al., who noted that '(t)o signify feminism ... advertisers assemble signs which connote independence, participation in the work force, individual freedom, and self-control' (1991: 337). Advertisers proudly wear such contradictions on their sleeve, and play up the incompatibility of feminist principles with beauty consumerism. Postfeminist messages about choice and freedom have resulted in a more general embrace of beauty industry pressures by young women and adherence to constraining and restricting standards of beauty, fashion and appearance (Tasker and Negra, 2007). However, for women who are attuned to these oppressive contradictions:

...opting out is not without social sanction. For women who refuse to be part of the consumer collective, they are positioned as socially inadequate and uninformed; as one ad reads: 'Only the envious say beauty is skin deep. Goes to show how little they know' (Lazar, 2006: 515).

The tactic here is one of pre-emptively tackling feminist arguments head-on, leaving no room for discussion; a kind-of *if you're not with us, you're against, and if you're against us, it's because you're jealous of us* argument.

Discussing women's bodies in postfeminist advertising, Gill identifies three predominant tropes. These are made up of the 'midriff', the 'vengeful woman' and the 'hot lesbian'. The term 'midriff', which was coined by advertisers and marketers themselves, refers to 'low hung hipster jeans, short cropped top or belly top, exposing a pierced navel... and... visible g-string' (Gill, 2009b: 98) and represents popular cultural understandings of young women and their sexual allure. Midriff advertising has developed as a way to keep up with the changing status of women in society. It was no longer deemed appropriate or acceptable to present women and their corresponding identity and usefulness in purely domestic and wifely terms. Postfeminism, and its focus on sexual autonomy and self-objectification, enabled advertisers to switch depictions of women, their bodies, their 'work' and function from a domestic setting to a sexualised self-subjectification. Gill notes that in contemporary midriff advertising, 'the body is ... the primary source of women's capital' (2008: 42), and further that 'currently there seems to have been a profound shift in the very definition of femininity such that it is defined as a bodily property rather than a social structural or psychological one' (Gill, 2009b: 100). This location of women's self-worth is construed as being empowering and, much like Goldman's concept of commodity feminism, is couched in terms such as 'freedom' and 'choice'. On the argument regarding

‘choice’ to consume products that enable women to become and reveal their *true selves*, Gill extrapolates that:

...(i)t cannot account for why the look that young women seek to achieve is so similar: if it were the outcome of everyone’s individual, idiosyncratic preferences, surely there would be greater diversity, rather than growing homogeneity organised around a slim, toned, hairless body (Gill, 2009b: 106).

The figure of the midriff is problematic on a number of fronts, most notably for its heteronormativity and thereby its ‘exclusions’. The midriff is not emblematic of the kind of sexually liberated woman, as conceived by second-wave feminists; one who rejects pressure to perform her sexuality in male-defined terms. Rather, she is not so much concerned with her sexuality as she is with being thought of as sexually appealing. The postfeminist angle here is that the midriff’s ‘success’ with regard to sexual attractiveness is more forcibly scrutinised by herself than by the historic male gaze.

The Vengeful Woman, on the other hand, offers ‘a novel way for advertisers to move away from representations of women as ‘dumb’ or ‘unintelligent’ to being constructed as powerful, feisty and in control’ (Gill, 2008: 46). This contributes to a postfeminist re-polarisation of the sexes, especially evidenced in the type of advert in which revenge is enacted by a woman on a man, as pay back for something or other. Gill makes the point that the ‘vengeful woman’ advert draws on tropes of autonomy and control through its exclusive representation of the revenge victim as an intimate partner, rather than, say, her boss. This serves to frame empowerment in narrow, sexualised terms, and not in broader terms that would require a wider understanding of gender equality, and the structural and cultural barriers that operate to prevent its achievement. The implications of depicting women in this way are such that it does not allow for complexity, compassion and compromise in gender relations. Instead, one gender must lose out for the other to gain. Furthermore, Gill argues, the social impact is that:

...(i)n revenge adverts, violence *is* given space, but here it is *female violence* against men. We must wonder what ideological work is effected by such adverts, which systematically erase male violence against women while implying that the reverse is common (Gill, 2008: 54; emphasis in original).

This echoes Whelehan’s (2000) point that postfeminist discourse sets up the conditions that make issues of male violence against women once again opaque.

Finally, Gill identifies the figure of the ‘Hot Lesbian’, which is commonplace in advertising. The emergence of the ‘hot lesbian’ in popular culture, media and advertising occurred through a recognition of the kind of urban kudos to be gained from depicting economically powerful, albeit marginalised, sexualities. It is significant, however, that ‘(w)ilst lesbian women rarely appear in mainstream adverts except in a highly sexualized manner, gay men are rarely portrayed kissing or even touching’ (Gill, 2009a: 152). While some recognition and visibility of the lesbian figure may be more desirable than total denial and invisibility, the ‘hot lesbian’ in advertising is problematic. She is characterised by her physical attractiveness, which closely conforms to social, patriarchal standards of beauty. When she is sexualised in advertising, the ‘hot lesbian’ is always conventionally beautiful, and therefore, as Gill has argued, non-threatening or rather inviting of the male gaze, conjuring up pornified representations of male-lesbian sexual encounters.

Concerning the representation of men’s bodies in contemporary postfeminist advertising, discussions abound of the now commonplace occurrence of semi-clad, Adonis-esque men in advertising campaigns; from their use in fashion ads on billboards, to aftershave images in high-end magazines (Gill, 2009a). These conversations often conclude with assertions that such displays offer definitive proof that the tables have turned, that women are just as ‘guilty’ of objectifying men’s bodies as vice versa, and that we are all now slaves to unrealistic beauty standards (Gill, 2009a). The famous Diet Coke adverts, where the man is the ‘object’ to be put on display for women’s visual and eroticized satisfaction and fantasy is often held up as *the* example to prove that men are just as objectified as women in advertising. However, when compared with the centuries long exertions of male power through, among other mechanisms, the male gaze, which denotes women’s value to men according to how attractive she is:

...no single instance of women looking at men could reverse that, nor, without this history, does it have the authentic, referential quality of examples of men looking at women ... (The) sexualized representation of the male body has not proved incommensurable with male dominance (Gill, 2009a: 147).

That is to say, Gill highlights that the historical impact of the male gaze on women cannot be deemed to have similar effects when the roles are reversed. She points out that depictions of the male body in advertising which, while objectified, still seek to assert male authority and represent the retention of men’s status as superior through the use of various artistic and photographic techniques.

The emergence and growth of a more visible gay culture has also influenced representations of male gendered bodies in advertising, which has contributed to facilitating the marketing of cosmetics and fashion to men, and the birth of the lucrative metrosexual. While men's magazines, such as *The Face* helped this enterprise by producing a new visual vocabulary for the representation of men's bodies' (Gill, 2009a: 144, reference to Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996), there are problematic representations of men concerned especially with race, as seen in the examples of how Black celebrities are used to promote products in favour of Black models. In addition, in order to not alienate heterosexual men as a target market, advertisers are careful to depict men's bodies in typical hegemonic masculine terms, as evidenced in displays of physicality, independence and aggressively heterosexual poses. However, through the use of models with a specific type of sexually ambiguous facial appearance, heteronormativity is not reinforced to the extent that it might alienate the homosexual man's gaze. Gill notes that:

...(m)en tend not to smile or pout, nor to deploy any of the bodily gestures or postures discussed by Goffman (1979) as indices of the 'ritualised subordination' of women in advertising, and nor are they depicted in mirror shots – so long a favoured mode for conveying women's narcissism (Gill, 2009a: 146).

Gill's reference here to Goffman is testament to the longevity of gendered representations in advertising texts that serve to reaffirm men's superior status to women.

As demonstrated, advertisers are much indebted to the simultaneously simplified yet contradictory manifestations of gender and gender relations that is so characteristic of postfeminism. Taking the last of Gill's ten characteristics¹⁴ of the postfeminist advert – *attempts to re-eroticize gender difference*, or in other words, a return to genetic determinism – this perhaps suits the needs of advertisers most. The 'repolarisation of gender identities is particularly evident in the dominance of an aggressive but allegedly ironic 'gender war' rhetoric, which pervades all aspects of media culture, from *advertising copy* to radio quizzes' (Ging, 2009: 53; emphasis added). Ging (2009) points to the importance of examining 'how the recent rise in consumerism is affecting the ways in which we mediate and talk about gender behaviours, identities and relationships' (p.52). From questionable scientific studies, to popular self-help psychology books, to light-hearted commentaries on the relations between women and men, Ging points out that the

¹⁴ The other nine characteristics include: appeasement of women's anger; use of more edgy/authentic looking models; shift from sex objects to desiring sexual subjects; focus on being and pleasing ourselves; articulation of feminism and femininity in adverts; eroticization of male bodies; development of queer chic; use of gender reversals in ads; and revenge themes.

growing trend in the past decade has been to rely on an appeal to biodeterministic and essentialist sentiments that position women and men as opposites, and as inevitably thinking, talking, and acting at cross-purposes. She also notes that it is an unapologetically heteronormative discourse, which assumes that women and men need one another to perform separate yet complementary roles, and is therefore both prescriptive and reductive.

The preceding discussions around the commodification of feminism, the discourses of individual consumer 'choice' leading to female empowerment, and the 'sexual contract' to which women must sign up if they are to be given space in the labour market, all take place within a distinctly neo-liberal context. The connection of advertising, consumption, and commercialisation with globalisation and neo-liberal economic policies entail implicit and unchallenged assumptions that 'freedom' equates to monetary affluence and to taking full advantage of the market economy. Contemporary depictions of individualised freedoms in advertisements are antithetical to prior understandings of what was meant by autonomy and independence (Chaudhuri, 2001). Indeed, concerning issues of gender equality, as Ging notes, 'freedom is understood less as the legacy of second-wave feminism and increasingly as something given to us by an open, liberal market' (2009: 53). Furthermore, the neoliberal drive toward increased privatisation of the media industry, and its consequent reliance on advertising revenue, has been a powerful factor in the gendered market-segmentation of media viewers and consumers. This dualistic approach to programming is increasingly obvious through the gendered TV choices available to us. In fact, argues Ging, 'free-market economies have conspired with a broadly post-feminist culture to support a distinctly neoliberal political agenda on gender which, beneath its liberal rhetoric, is both deeply regressive and potentially highly coercive' (Ging, 2009: 56). Postfeminism, as outlined, has been central to selling the idea that those reductive gendered constructions stand for individual empowerment and agency, achievable through consumption; a contention aided and abetted by advertisers.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out to review the literature on gender and advertising texts within the broader context of the key shifts that have occurred in the socio-cultural 'genderscape' since second-wave feminism. Central to that story has been the emergence of postfeminism and Lad Culture, which

continues to define popular cultural rhetoric, discourse and imagery, finding expression in contemporary advertising texts. Forming an important cornerstone to current writings on gender and advertising has been the critical research undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s on unpacking gendered codes in advertising. Using semiology, psychoanalysis and content analysis, theorists have exposed the differential statuses that apply to media's representations of women and men, and have shown how advertising imagery upholds gendered social norms that work to reinforce and reaffirm reductive and restrictive gender roles, behaviours and expectations. From the 1970s women's movement, to the 'new man', to Lad Culture and postfeminism, all these trends and resulting narratives feed into contemporary advertisements in complex and contradictory ways.

Any considerations of postfeminism, however, must acknowledge that such rhetoric has not gone unchecked. There is reason to be confident that a cultural, discursive shift is currently underway, which is centred around shining a light on postfeminism, and on advertising's representational treatment of women, and – to a lesser extent – men. As well as continued feminist media critique of advertising, there is currently a new wave of feminism and feminist activism. Cochrane (2013) believes that a socially and politically conscious feminist movement has commenced in the UK, and one which positions intersectional concerns front and centre. This fourth-wave, utilising online platforms, blogs, and social networks, tends to be single-issue focused. Such campaigns include the Everyday Sexism blog, where contributors document their experiences of sexism on a daily basis; the Representation Project in the U.S., drawing attention to the representational treatment of women and men by the media and advertising; or the No More Page 3 campaign, which is focused on putting pressure on the Sun newspaper to do away with featuring a topless young woman on page 3 of their daily newspaper. Tackling the existence of a sexualised media culture was one issue among many raised also in a 2012 UK report called 'Just the Women', which was drawn up in response to calls for submissions from the Leveson Inquiry into media ethics. The report found disturbing levels of sexualisation of girl victims of sexual abuse and of the sustained objectification and sexualisation of women in the British news media in general. The report called on the media industry to reflect much more carefully on its attitude to women. The fourth-wave of feminism is outward-looking in its social and political consciousness, and the media and advertising's representation of women and men, masculinity and femininity is once again firmly on the agenda.

Against the backdrop that advertising's representations of gender continue to be problematic, controversial and contested, the next chapter will focus on the literature on cultural, media, and advertising production. In other words, it will examine scholarship that is concerned with the encoding of gender in advertising texts.

Chapter 3: Gender and Advertising – Production

Introduction

Chapter 2 demonstrated the extensive body of academic work related to deconstructing gender imagery within advertising texts, and the prevalence of a cultural postfeminist discourse, particularly regarding *self-subjectification*, freedom and independence through consumption, and the return to genetic determinism referenced in advertisements. There is considerably less scholarship, however, on the processes which produce these texts and a limited body of work, confined mostly to psychology, on how they are understood. The issue of ‘meaning’ in media texts has garnered attention from the academic fields of sociology, psychology, and linguistics. Theories of communication have diverged at the point of whether communication is a *transmission of messages* or as the *production and exchange of meaning* (Fiske, 1990). In the former, the focus is on both the sender of the message and the notion of intention, whereas the latter model of communication is concerned with the receiver, or reader of the message, and on how the reader translates signs into meaning. Shannon and Weaver’s model, developed in 1949, took the ‘process’ approach to communication and the intent of the sender as the primary element of concern, as well as the issue of how successfully a message is communicated. They considered that ‘meaning is contained in the message: thus improving the encoding will increase the semantic accuracy’ (Fiske, 1990: 7). This approach privileges considerations of production as assigning meaning to the media text¹⁵, rather than on how it is received by the ‘decoder’, viewer or consumer.

Theories of communication have since moved away from this overly simplistic, linear model, which disproportionately assigns power to the producers, or ‘encoders’ of media texts to create meaning, and ignores the agency of the reader, or ‘decoder’ of a media text to create their own, at times subversive, meaning. Instead, ‘meaning’ is now mostly understood as a negotiated process between the ‘encoder’ and the ‘decoder’. Since the focus of this chapter is on gendered productions of advertising, the focus will be on research concerning the ‘encoder’, that is to say, on media producers generally and advertisers in particular. Although concerns about the gendered images emanating from the advertising industry, such as those motivating this doctoral project,

¹⁵ Where media texts – visual or otherwise – are ascribed meaning at three sites: production; the text itself; and reception (Rose, 2001).

are ultimately rooted in its social effects on audiences, research on the role of the consumer/viewer in decoding advertising messages is not within the scope of this study. Suffice to say however that research in this area can be broadly categorised as follows: psychology and cognitive behavioural studies tend to look at very short-term effects in artificial laboratory environments; advertising and marketing research is concerned with effectiveness and sales; and media and cultural studies scholars are concerned with the long-term ideological impact. Within this last field, there are opposing approaches, such as the ‘hypodermic needle’ or effects theory versus the active audience or self-knowing, postmodern playfulness (Holmes, 2005). Overall, it is reasonable to assume that the plethora and ubiquity of idealised images across all aspects of daily life¹⁶, especially in an era of digital niche marketing on social media platforms, impacts on how people feel about, understand and negotiate their gendered identities and gender relations.

Leaving reception studies aside, issues of *how* advertising texts are produced and *who* is creating them are ones that have likewise received comparatively little attention, and bear relevance for this thesis considering the focus on advertising students as future advertising practitioners and producers. Researching the people who make and create media products, cultural commodities, and advertising texts warrants attention because such organisations, agencies and individual producers are central to creating the kinds of texts and images that shape and represent symbolic and contemporary understandings of and engagement with concepts of gender, gender roles, and expected and culturally approved gender behaviours. Consequently, this chapter deals with prevailing theories around advertisers and cultural production, as well as with the encoding of gender in media and advertising texts, and the ‘process of adaptation’ and socialisation that advertising producers undergo. It will provide an overview of empirical research undertaken on advertising practitioners, with a focus on gendered cultural working practices and the organisational cultures of advertising agencies. Finally the chapter considers the role of the creative in the context of advertising work and bearing in mind the next generation of creators. The relevance to this research of examining these strands of academic literature is in considering the cross-over between education and practice, given that advertising lecturers are very often active practitioners themselves and bring their organisations, agencies and working ethos into the classroom, and especially when considering that students are the advertisers of the future.

¹⁶ The average person in the US is exposed to approximately 3,000 adverts on a daily basis (Gill, 2007; referencing Kilbourne, 2000).

Theorisation of advertising work

Advertisers as 'cultural intermediaries'

From the mid-1990s various authors emerged who sought to position academic critique of advertising beyond simply an examination of text and content, and instead to also account for *how* that content is produced and to investigate the working practices taking place behind the scenes. In conceptualising advertisers in contemporary society as 'cultural intermediaries', theoretical and academic discussions draw on the relationship between economic structures and the cultural sphere. Such writers conceive of the lines becoming ever more blurred between the two, which some explain through the concept of 'reflexive accumulation' or 'reflexive modernity' (Lash and Urry concept, 1994, and Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994:91; cited in Nixon, 2003). This idea refers to the motivation to consume being driven by increasingly informed and conscious choices, with the advertising industry at the heart of this idea of 'reflexive accumulation' because of its role in acting as cultural intermediaries by using culture as a selling point. This process entails embedding goods and services with cultural references, and therefore mining the cultural landscape for specific tropes and discourses with which to adhere in order to market and advertise certain brands and products. Consequently, this involved a strategy shift that resulted in the 'emotional selling point' (ESP), which is image and lifestyle-based with a focus on the consumer, overtake the 'unique selling point' (USP), with its focus on the product. Academic attention afforded to the emergence and centrality of the ESP and cultural texts to advertising production processes, as explored by Nixon (1996), and Mort (1996), suggested that the industry was somehow employing a new and novel approach. As such, these authors, who were employing a practice-based approach, sought to give due regard to what they considered was the increasing overlap between economy and culture. McFall (2002), however, posits that this misrepresents the contemporary advertising practitioner as somehow treading new ground by straddling the economic and cultural spheres. She questions the validity of claiming contemporary advertising practitioners as 'new' cultural intermediaries, where this term is understood as bridging supposed gaps between the economic and cultural spheres. She challenges this on two fronts. Firstly, she presents historical evidence dating back to 1800, which shows the earliest advertising practices to be bound up in the artistic worlds of art and literature, thereby showing already established links between the two spheres over the more than 200 year existence of the industry. Secondly, McFall sets out the terms that potentially leads to a rejection of the

term ‘intermediary’ altogether, such that she posits that culture necessarily already permeates everything; social, political and economic experiences. The treatment of modern advertising practitioners as somehow being distinct from their predecessors in their understanding and employment, or deployment, of cultural currency for the benefit of the industry fails to recognise the existing historical evidence; suggesting that this is not a new phenomenon. Therefore, she maintains, the role of the advertising practitioner could not be positioned as cultural intermediary, since culture is, and has been, omnipresent in everything.

The problematic position concerning the notion of cultural intermediary as lacking validity is circumvented by Keith Negus’ discussion of same. He believes that ‘(t)he central strength of the notion of cultural intermediaries is that it places an emphasis on those workers who come in-between creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)’ (2002: 503). In this sense, ‘intermediary’ is such that production is not simply a one-way process to consumption. It is cyclical and one informs the other in a mutually influencing way. The cultural intermediary is the vehicle for this exchange. Negus talks about the ‘reciprocal inter-relationship of what are often thought of as discrete ‘cultural’ and ‘economic’ practices’ (Negus, 2002: 504). He does, however, take issue with the narrow application of the term ‘cultural intermediary’ as including only those working in the industries commonly understood as ‘cultural’, such as advertising and the media. In his view, and echoing McFall, culture permeates society to a much greater extent than simply through the commonly understood techniques of those creative industries that are thought to trade in symbolic production. It must be considered that other professions and occupations also act as intermediaries for cultural exchange. He gives examples of trade unions, priests, and scientists (Negus, 2002), in addition to ‘the suits’ who may act as cultural intermediaries. These include senior managers, senior corporate executives, business analysts, and accountants. For instance, he notes, there is often longevity of the accountant in the creative, cultural firm, resulting in these individuals sometimes becoming highly influential actors.

In elucidating on the concept, Cronin (2004) offers a helpful understanding of the cultural intermediary as one who is central to a cultural shifting of society’s markers of ‘success’; that is, from judging people on the work they do, to how they choose to spend the proceeds of the work they do. Therefore, the cultural intermediaries who set the parameters for what those proceeds should be spent on are now in some sense society’s judges, or at least, establish the grading

system that the general public uses to mark one's peers and contemporaries. In a cyclical process, similar to that posited by Negus, Cronin notes from participants in her study that 'it became clear that in the process of producing advertising campaigns, practitioners draw on their own experience as viewers of advertisements and as consumers of products' (2004: 353). Furthermore and similarly, according to Nixon (2003) it is absolutely vital to examine and explore the subjective identities of advertising practitioners, because this informs, drives and influences creative decisions and advertising content. Nixon calls these *informal cultures*, which 'set limits upon and provide resources for the performance of the creative executive' (2003: 35). In other words, the use of industry techniques, such as market surveys, focus groups, and consumer research, may often come secondary to practitioners use of intuitive 'knowledge' and assumptions about consumers. This bears huge significance when considering practitioners 'beliefs' and attitudes about male and female consumers.

Regarding the term 'cultural intermediaries', Hesmondhalgh (2006) notes its confused and misunderstood uses by authors such as Negus and Nixon and believes that Bourdieu's application of this term was meant to refer to cultural commentators and critics, rather than practitioners. Nevertheless, an understanding of the advertising practitioner, and especially the creative, as straddling between art and money, production and consumption, culture and economy, as well as – per Nixon and Cronin – the ways in which their own subjective worldviews come to bear on their work and influence their creative decisions points to the absolute necessity of paying close attention to the people populating these spheres of cultural work. Consequently, the term cultural intermediary, despite various uses and definitions, is conceptually applied in this thesis as referring to the influence of cultural and creative workers (including advertisers) in shaping and forming consumer tastes and values. It also entails an understanding of advertising practitioners as both producer (of advertising content) and consumer (of advertising texts, as well as the products, and goods, and services being advertised). Crucially, 'cultural intermediary', as utilised in this research project, is inextricably tied to the phenomenon of 'informal cultures' as identified by Nixon (2003), and which relates to the fact that advertisers are heavily influenced by, and draw on their own subjective and gendered worldviews, the opinions and attitudes of their peers, and the gendered cultures operating in their agencies in order to guide creative decision-making pertaining to campaign design.

Immaterial labour

For scholars such as Lazzarato (1996), Hardt (1999), and McRobbie (2010) who have sought to pay attention to people working in the culture industries, they have conceptualised and theorised work undertaken in the creative, cultural industries, of which advertising is a part, in terms of the types of psychological and socialised labour that is entailed, be that immaterial labour, affective labour or gendered labour. This is of theoretical importance when attempting to take a position on the relative impact of advertising production and how we can understand those people working in the industry as uniquely belonging to a distinct sphere of creative work. Lazzarato writes that ‘immaterial labor involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work" — in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, *consumer norms*, and, more strategically, *public opinion*’ (Lazzarato, 1996: 133; emphases added). Whilst determining public opinion is not explicitly part of the remit of advertising work, this does not detract from its influence in shaping and establishing social, normative beliefs and judgements. In post-industrial economies, work such as advertising is multifaceted and includes the blurring of boundaries between work and play. Echoing discussions of advertisers as cultural intermediaries, Lazzarato positions immaterial labour as incorporating and coming in between the spheres of consumption and production. Furthermore, Lazzarato points to the specificity of advertising work, which creates and answers consumer needs, wants and desires, while also simultaneously producing something of monetary worth and creating consumer subjectivity:

(Advertising) gives form to and materializes needs, the imaginary, consumer tastes, and so forth, and these products in turn become powerful producers of needs, images, and tastes. The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor ... consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the "ideological" and cultural environment of the consumer (Lazzarato, 1996: 138).

In other words, in thinking about advertising production, an advert does not become obsolete and devoid of meaning once it has been consumed/viewed by the consumer/viewer; the effect and impact of advertising images and discourses resounds and resonates.

For Hardt (1999) also, the contemporary service economy is predicated on the deployment of immaterial labor, such that it does not produce anything tangible, but entails what he calls ‘affective labor’ as a significant component of that production process. This involves trading on

feelings and creating collective subjectivities in society. Hardt mentions advertising as an example of a service job, with its attendant characteristics of affect and communication, and refers to the ‘creation and manipulation of affects’ (p. 95) in a way that highlights that ‘production has become communicative, affective ... the division between economy and culture begins to break down. In the production and reproduction of affects, in those networks of culture and communication, collective subjectivities are produced and sociality is produced’ (Hardt, 1999: 96). This point again reiterates the societal influence of both advertisers as producers and the advertising texts they produce.

McRobbie, whose 2010 article deals with the theorisation of post-fordist, capitalist, neo-liberal forms of precarious¹⁷ work, challenges those *Operaismo* writers, including Hardt and Lazzarato, for not adequately accounting for gender. Her criticism of them stems from their emphasis on abstraction¹⁸, rather than a concern for digging down into the experiential elements of precarious work, which would involve a consideration for actual working practices, the long working-hours culture, and the attendant gender responses to this. Although she is not arguing that the issue of social class be ignored, she does ask: ‘can it have quite the fundamental analytical purchase writers like Hardt, Lazzarato, Negri and Virno claim? ... are these class antagonisms today such primary structuring mechanisms when labour comprises of subjects now much less engaged as ‘workers’?’ (McRobbie, 2010: 61). Workers, in other words, may be less wedded to the identity of ‘worker’ because of precarious working practices, and because of their self-conception as something else, which privileges gender identity over class, for instance. As such, McRobbie argues that conceptualising and contextualising gender within critiques of immaterial labour practices must be a mainstay of any such examinations. She takes Wissinger and others to task for putting forward ‘often de-politicised and enthusiastic account(s) of the contemporary meaning of affective and immaterial labour in the fashion and beauty industries, and more generally in the service sector’ (2010: 69) since such overly simplistic analyses do not account for how such labour works to create the kinds of people these industries need to self-manage, self-motivate, and self-sacrifice in terms of the long-working hours and personal and emotional commitment often required of such practices. Perhaps even more insidious than the pressure to be emotionally connected and invested in one’s labour in the creative sector, is the:

¹⁷ She identifies precarious work as often being those in the creative and cultural industries.

¹⁸ By ‘abstraction’, McRobbie means the abstract theorisations of class struggle and issues of work.

...veneer of equality on the basis of the sheer volume and presence of young women with good qualifications and with huge amounts of energy and drive ... (which) makes it difficult for questions about sexism or racism to be raised. Instead there is a privatisation of grievances or, as Scharff argues, young women begin to see sexism as simply another obstacle which, by sheer grit and determination, they must be able to overcome individually. Nothing, she claims, is more 'uncool' than appearing to be a feminist in these workplaces (McRobbie, 2010: 74).

This chimes with O'Brien (2014) who notes that contrary to the popular view that women choose to leave their work in media organisations to focus on motherhood and family-life, in fact the cards are stacked against their career longevity as a result of organisational cultures, working practices (e.g. long working hours), 'old boy' networks, and lack of proper recourse to complaints procedures and processes. As such, women have little choice but to drop out of the media industries. Although O'Brien's research focuses on Irish media organisations such as public service broadcasters and television production companies, it does resonate with research into the experiences of women in advertising agencies, particularly in creative departments and roles¹⁹.

Encoding gender in media texts and processes of socialisation

Having considered how advertising practitioners and production may be theorised and conceptualised, it is likewise important to examine how gender may be discursively embedded into media texts through various production practices and by advertising practitioners. Van Zoonen (1994) warns against oversimplified analyses that make generalised claims to media productions abiding, omnipresent 'sexist, capitalist and patriarchal content' (p.43). Furthermore, claims that media content would change – that it would improve, with respect to gendered representations, for instance – in correlation with greater numbers of women working in a more diverse range of roles, and in higher positions in media organisations, is likewise deemed too simplistic. Such a position is to be avoided on two-fronts; in that it does not account for organisational culture and working practices, and that it leads to essentialist assumptions that women would bring *something different* to those practices. Rather, media production is characterised by 'complexities and tensions' (van Zoonen, 1994: 43), which should be given due consideration. Referring to her 1989 study of Dutch female journalists, and, as Windels and

¹⁹ See Nixon, 2003; Gregory, 2009; Windels, 2011.

Mallia (2015) echo 26 years on, it is critically important to examine issues of ‘professional socialization’ and ‘shared set(s) of professional values’. For instance, van Zoonen found that, despite the existence of feminist-oriented modules in journalism education in the 1980s, the wider ‘message that students were given was (that) feminism – even moderately defined – and professional journalism were at odds with each other and this message was reinforced by the experience during internship’ (1994: 57). For the most part, female journalists tended to shed their feminist values when transitioning to their professional lives. As van Zoonen notes, therefore, ‘(a)lready at the level of education ... the process of adjusting to professional norms tends to reaffirm a conservative status quo’ (1994: 57). Louise North’s (2010, 2015) research into the need and subsequent establishment of gender units in journalism educational modules sounds a somewhat more optimistic tone²⁰.

Nevertheless, processes that facilitate the encoding of gender in media texts remain a mystified phenomenon. Mica Nava (1997) takes issue with how scholars of advertising have critiqued the industry via an unjustifiably concentrated focus on textual analyses of advertising texts. Semiotic and textual analyses do not account for how the adverts have been produced or, likewise, how they are received. Goldman’s 1992 *Reading Ads Socially*, Nava argues, ignores these dual questions of production and reception, to its detriment. She admonishes Goldman for overstretching in his analyses and for the conclusions he proffers; inferences, Nava claims, he seems to have already reached prior to his reading of the adverts in question. She also criticises Goldman for only turning to issues of production as an ‘afterthought’. Where he does consider the aspect of production, she notes, it is merely to reflect on the conditions of production pertaining to the goods themselves, rather than an examination of how the advertising text itself is produced.

Although few in number, the studies of production processes that have been carried out have tended to focus on journalistic practices, and where feminist media scholars have investigated concerns of media production, they have been inclined to focus on the participation and subjective experiences of individual women working in media organisations. These authors have not accurately accounted for, argues van Zoonen, ‘personal, organizational and commercial’ (1994: 46) factors, such as prevailing social discourses, professional codes of conduct, or the chain of command one’s decisions – creative or otherwise – must pass through, resulting in the

²⁰ North’s work in this sphere is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 - Gender and Advertising Education.

reality that the opportunity for individual creative autonomy is fairly minimal. In other words, there are micro- / meso- / and macro-determinants shaping the nature of media content.

At the level of micro-/individual producers of media texts, and as mentioned, feminist media work on production has converged on accounts of women's experience in the field. This work has crucially shined a spotlight on a number of important issues; such as the dearth of women in specific types of roles in media organisations²¹, as well as cultural factors that prove immensely challenging for women media professionals. These factors reflect wider societal attitudes to women, and especially to women working in, heretofore, male dominated fields²². A further challenge women have traditionally had to face in media work is sexist treatment by their male colleagues; sometimes strikingly overt, but often couched in more engrained and endemic displays of gender bias and discrimination. Such considerations, however, do not account for the point at which gender converges with organisational components, which is crucial to understanding media production, since a 'process of adaptation' occurs that is 'brought about not by repressive force but by a subtle process of rewards and punishment' (van Zoonen, 1994: 56). Windels and Mallia (2015), however, do seek to account for how gender impacts on professional progression in advertising creative departments. They cite work (e.g. Acker, 1990) that demonstrates that entrenched and sustained working practices have historically and traditionally been those that valorise typically masculine traits at the expense of feminine ones. These practices are perpetuated through 'informal networks' and an organisational culture that privileges hypermasculine styles of behaviour and communication. Adherence to these forms of behaviour is facilitated through, what Windels and Mallia refer to as, 'organisational learning' – a kind of socialisation – that focuses on situated learning; itself concerned with how learning is influenced by 'collective social actions in a community of practice' (p. 3). The linkage of situated learning and gender is a connection that, they claim, has never before been undertaken academically.

²¹ See EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) 2013 report *Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations*, which gives an EU overview of the hierarchical and sectoral segregation of women's participation in media organisations. For instance, the study found that women account for less than one-third of all top level decision-making positions in surveyed media organisations across the EU member states.

²² However, there are some exceptions, such as the interesting cases of previous Soviet-bloc Eastern European countries. Because of the censorship imposed on the media, journalism and other media professions did not enjoy the prestige that they did in the West. Therefore, women are present in media organisations in much larger numbers than their Western European counterparts.

Processes of professional socialisation are likewise explored by Hackley (2000). In his research, he investigates how the advertising agency workforce, comprising various functions, discursively performs agency discourse. However, there is no mention of gender, class, race, or sexuality in his observation of the agency staff all being of a particular 'type'. Although he notes that all the creatives he interviewed were male, he does not mention gender again, nor allude to its significance in his findings when discussing how advertising practitioners, creative or otherwise, negotiate and construct their subjectivity. Hackley's own language belies a gendered interaction with one of his interviewees. He does not specify her role, but refers to her as a 'waif'; as 'putty in (his) ethnographic hands'; as 'fresh-faced earnestness... (and)... gushing' (2000: 240). Despite the connotations implicit in this highly gendered language, it is interesting to note that Hackley finds that a sort of socialisation into the agency structures and ethos evolves over time. The more junior members of staff discursively adhere more overtly to 'official' agency policy and ways of working. This is something the practitioners tend to shed the longer they work for the organisation, although never totally and completely. That is to say, employees were expected and did exhibit loyalty to the 'corporate way', which was 'a discursive precondition for success in the agency' (Hackley, 2000: 242). Significantly, '(w)hat resulted was a kind of discursive silence in which dissent, rebellion and non-instrumental interests were whitewashed from the public discourse of the agency' (Hackley, 2000: 244). Although Hackley finds this revealing about what it says for agency harmony and stability, it is perhaps even more revealing about what it says for the potential space open to advertising workers to challenge gendered work practices and/or gendered discourses within advertising campaign design.

Gendered cultural production in advertising work

Providing insights into gendered advertising working practices and cultures, and gendered identities and approaches to creative work Nixon (2003), Gregory (2009), Cronin (2004), Alvesson (1998), Nixon and Crewe (2004), and Windels and Mallia (2015), among others, have greatly advanced understanding in this sphere. In particular, their scholarly work identifies explicitly and implicitly hypermasculine working practices that thrive in the organisational cultures present in advertising agencies. Consequently, these authors offer an interesting perspective on the gendered identities of practitioners working, producing and creating

advertisements in the industry. More specifically, considering the role of the creative²³ in advertising production and how and why there are gendered understandings and assumptions about creative work is paramount since the creative is the most influential practitioner in shaping advertising campaigns (Soar, 2000) in terms of making gendered ideological decisions.

(Hyper)masculine working practices

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2015), in exploring the issue of cultural production and sex-role segregation, identify a particular challenge for women in media and cultural work. This relates, they argue, to how stereotypes have led to, and reaffirm assumptions about the natural capacities of women and men as they pertain to cultural work. They refer to the feminisation of certain occupations, and mention this phenomenon as occurring in advertising, and yet they point out that this ‘rarely refers to a predominantly male occupation becoming predominantly female. Instead it tends to denote an increase in the concentration of women within that occupation’ (p. 24). Such assumptions can belie the gains made by women or men in certain segregated industries and/or roles. The impact of certain roles in cultural work tending towards an either/or between women and men is such that ‘work segregation by sex both draws upon, and in turn contributes to, social ‘stereotypes’ which limit women and men’s freedom and recognition – reinforcing the problem of gendered occupational segregation’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015: 25). They highlight the dearth of academic inquiry into sex-segregation in the cultural industries, mentioning Nixon’s 2003 study on the gendered subjectivities of advertising practitioners as an exception, and suggest that both in training and in practice, cultural work and role differentiation within the cultural sphere needs to be constructed as gender neutral.

However, the reality of working in the advertising industry has been found to be highly and aggressively gendered, and one skewed towards masculine norms and a masculine ethos. This shapes and influences practices and decisions made in advertising work (Windels and Lee, 2012), which is significant for the fact that:

...(i)n an industry such as advertising, where half the workforce is female and many products advertised are aimed at female consumers, women are still unable to alter

²³ Creatives in the advertising industry occupy three positions: copywriter, art director, and creative director.

the prevailing ethos or the types of advertisements created. This illustrates just how powerful and resistant to change male cultures are (Gregory, 2009: 338).

Alongside attitudes and essentialist assumptions of advertising work, the unique working practices that operate in the advertising industry have proved worthy of careful examination and critique. Creative industries, such as advertising may be viewed as progressive, modern, exciting, fast-paced, and adapting to changes in society, especially when compared with the more formalised, 'stuffy', perceived conservative nature of other industries, such as banking and finance. However, the reality is much less so, and in fact, 'old productivist ideas of work persist within the so-called 'creative economy'' (Nixon and Crewe, 2004: 132). This, coupled with an imposed informality, leads to untypical work practices that seem to not only tolerate but promote hypermasculine behaviours. Boisterous interactions, showing-off, and mockery spill over into sexist banter with female, as well as male, colleagues. Throughout Nixon's 2003 UK study with advertising practitioners, it was noted that 'practices that would have been seen as unprofessional in other occupations were condoned within this area of creative employment' (Nixon and Crewe, 2004: 134-135). Consistent with Nixon's study that the seeming non-conformity of the work undertaken in the advertising industry, as displayed through casual dress, untypical work practices and behaviours, Cronin's research also finds that this actually masks the very traditional patriarchal structures, gendered work practices, and entrenched attitudes regarding gender, class, and race prevalent in the advertising field. She recalls that:

...(o)ne female Senior Creative commented that all the advertising agencies she had worked in had been very conservative in their employment practices, reproducing a white, heterosexual, male organisation: *I think we're really insular ... I think we're xenophobic, I think we're homophobic. There are twenty-two teams in this Creative department and there are 4 women. It's a boys' club. (Senior Creative 1) (Cronin, 2004: 353).*

Allowances made for degrading, sexist and inappropriate behaviours because of the nature of the work are perhaps due to the supposed need for uncensored self-expression with regard to creativity. This means that *any* form of self-expression is beyond reproach, and 'rules' – for instance conventional rules relating to gender relations and political correctness – are seen as stifling. The upshot of this contributes to a difficult working environment for women. Furthermore, the encroachment of women into those work spaces, especially those who challenge certain behaviours is often met with resentment for seeking to overturn the status quo. Distinctly gendered ideas of work, labour roles and identity abound, and because of the looser, more

informal structures of creative industries, male workers often seek to reassert gendered hierarchies by way of compensation (Nixon and Crewe, 2004). Alvesson (1998) posits a similar point and proposes that it might be useful to have women in the office in more junior roles because it reaffirms men's superior status to be surrounded by subordinate women. In other words, the production of symbolic labour is problematic for men, given that it is not tangible, 'manly' work, such as working with one's hands. Therefore, the presence of women in lower-ranking roles acts as an antidote to men's anxiety about their involvement in advertising work.

Nixon found evidence of displays of 'macho' behaviour at such events as social gatherings, and industry awards shows. For example, he found male employees were often involved in damage to venue properties, heavy drinking, drug-taking or 'hot-legging', which entails 'urinating down the leg of a colleague if you caught them 'chatting up a girl'' (Nixon and Crewe, 2004: 139). Gregory, echoing this, euphemistically refers to the homosociability prevalent in the advertising industry as the 'locker room'. She charges this reality with maintaining and reinforcing entrenched gendered relations in the workforce, which negatively impact on women and discriminate in favour of men. The locker room mentality accounts for extremely low levels of representation of women at managerial and decision-making level, and as such, career progression is an issue for women in the industry (Gregory, 2009). Male homosociability is constructed as:

...formal and informal communication, socializing and socialization, such as male networking, male bonding and joking. It may include teasing each other sexually and the sexualization of female colleagues. Male homosociability is both planned and spontaneous and occurs in official and unofficial meetings, in hallways, at lunch and in toilets at work (Gregory, 2009: 131).

This type of hegemonic masculinity, present in the advertising industry, is firmly embedded within the organisational cultures of individual agencies. Perhaps more important, according to Gregory, than the presence of men who fit the mould – that is who conform to the narrow, reductive and restrictive characteristics of hegemonic masculinity – are the much larger numbers of men who may not fit the profile, but who desire to, and who continuously attempt to make the grade. This thereby maintains the hegemonic, privileged nature of a particular form of masculinity, or way of being/doing male/man within advertising work. The significance of this, then, lies in the fact that, if the advertising industry tends towards the hypermasculine, then women are automatically excluded from even trying to reach the mark, and therefore have less

scope to make an influential impact. Locker room culture, as explored by Gregory, freezes women colleagues out. Men use the locker room ‘facilities’, which include frank, open discussions with other men, as a way to gain self-validation as well as validation from their peers. This results in affirmation with respect to their gendered subjective identities also. Furthermore, locker room culture manifests in masculinised displays of physicality, much like those in evidence among Nixon’s research participants. These include men defining and claiming space through utilisation of bodily strength, such as playing sports, bravado regarding the use of alcohol and drugs, virility pertaining to sexuality and sexual relations with women, and sporting activities as both social and professional events. In these instances, the consequences for women practitioners shift from overt harassment to subtly being squeezed out of promotional opportunities (Gregory, 2009).

Certainly, Alvesson (1998) found in his study of a Swedish advertising agency a clear gendered division of labour, with women accounting for all employees in supporting, less prestigious roles, and men predominantly taking on creative and leadership roles. Alvesson likens the office dynamics to a traditional marriage, with the men taking on the active, bread-winning role such that they are out and about, travelling, chasing down new clients, and closing deals, and the women are charged with taking care of things back at the office, a proxy for the home, through the support functions they undertake. It is noteworthy that the profile of women working in, overwhelmingly, assistant roles is young and good-looking, leading not only to sex-typing of certain occupations and tasks, but also to a clustering of a certain type of attractive young woman in these roles. Concerning the profile of the types of women working in the industry, Alvesson posits that if there is a bunching of attractive women in the advertising industry it may have as much to do with the fact that conventionally beautiful women put themselves forward to work in the sphere because of its associations with glamour, as with discriminatory recruitment practices. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that it is mostly men who, in their role as agency directors, act as gatekeepers in terms of recruiting new staff. Although leadership is notably dominated by men, with women in more menial tasks, one cannot conclude, Alvesson warns, that a patriarchal culture exists; the reality tending to be more nuanced (Alvesson, 1998). In an Irish context, perhaps it is not so subtle, with arguably a kind of sedimented patriarchal culture in

existence. The biggest disparity remains the issue of senior management²⁴, with the creative department²⁵ coming after that.

Gender and the advertising creative

Creative advertising roles remain heavily male-dominated, not just in Ireland but worldwide (Grow and Deng, 2015); a situation especially worthy of consideration given that these roles occupy ideologically strategic positions in the industry. Although an extensive review of the vast literature concerned with defining creativity will not be proffered here, seeing as the more relevant areas of interest for this research relate to the gendered division of labour, and gendered occupational cultures, some discussion of the creative process, and especially as it relates to gendered considerations is provided, given that persistent normative understandings of creative suitability to advertising work does impact on the gendered division of labour. Examining how practitioners perceive of the creative process is also relevant since such understandings have an influence on how they construct their own subjective, gendered identities. Furthermore, even while acknowledging the influential nature of other roles and functions within advertising work, as well as the control client companies have over the direction of campaign briefs, the creative role retains the capacity to shape and drive the approach, tone and content of specific ad campaigns. For this reason, the creative function is given analytic priority over other industry roles.

Soar's (2000) empirical research, which investigates ideology and meaning in advertising, focuses on how advertising creatives perceive the process of creativity. Although, he does not consider the gendering of that process, his work is useful because he draws on cultural production theories that take seriously the creative as a central player:

...the ad creative invents a story where none existed before. *This is why the creative is possibly the most important actor, ideologically speaking, in the production of ads.* Offering up concepts as if by magic, the ad creative's work is then reified through the routines of the agency around him (Soar, 2000: 421; emphasis added).

Soar rejects a purely Barthesian understanding of advertising work on the justification that by denying any agency or sphere of influence to the advertising practitioner, it becomes impossible

²⁴ IAPI census 2015 shows a gender breakdown of surveyed ad agencies at CEO level of 18% women.

²⁵ IAPI census 2015 shows that women make up 26% of the creative roles in the industry.

to both trace and allow for how advertisers and their work practices have evolved over time. For the purposes of this thesis, Soar's position in this respect permits a consideration of how advertisers attitudes can shape the content of advertisements, and therefore it opens up the potential for practitioners to change predominant advertising tropes. Indeed, Soar posits that we can think of advertisements as 'the contrived and somewhat reflective communications of an obscure elite' (Soar, 2000: 423-424), such that 'creatives draw on their experience as consumers at least as much as any acumen they accumulate through their lives on the job' (Soar, 2000: 427). Furthermore, they not only rely on their own tastes and interests to govern their creative decisions concerning ad production, but crucially seek the advice, opinion and approval of colleagues. This testifies to the impact that a dearth of female creative colleagues to consult with can have on advertising campaign design and conceptualisation.

Schweizer's research on creativity culminates in her developing the Novelty Generation Model (NGM). In the NGM, both internal and external factors influence the creative process. This fits with occupational cultural perceptions of supposedly conducive environments to creativity, as per Nixon's findings in this regard. Schweizer identifies a number of '(p)ersonality traits that are widely accepted as supporting creativity... for instance, judgemental autonomy, self-confidence, risk-taking, non-conformity, independence and a *critical attitude towards norms*' (2006: 165; emphasis added). This is consistent with perceptions that advertising practitioners should be rebellious and anti-establishment. However, on the issue of rebelliousness, and despite perceptions to the contrary, O'Boyle (2011) attests to the 'culturally conservative nature of most advertising' (p.69). One of O'Boyle's research participants²⁶ observes: '*I think ad agencies ... are intensely conservative organisations. We preach liberality, we preach dynamism and we behave the opposite way*' (p.69). However, O'Boyle cautions that, where gender stereotyping is concerned, this does not tend to point to 'ideological endorsement but rather pragmatism and expediency' (p.68). That is to say, that in turning around creative advertising work to tight deadlines, that which is easily recognisable – especially as it pertains to gender – makes the creative process quicker and easier. Nevertheless, even if advertising cultures are more conservative than one would expect, Windels et al. (2010) note that the perception that female creatives tend to be risk-averse, in comparison to their male colleagues, is a contention not borne out in reality. A study of creative directors carried out by Hartmann (1988) 'found no perceived gender differences with regard to creative abilities or *ease of creative stimulation*' (Windels et al.,

²⁶ This person is identified as a senior practitioner.

2010: 16; emphasis added). Examining aspects such as the need of risk-taking and non-conformity in creative endeavour, Schweizer talks about ‘openness’ on one end of the scale, and ‘non-openness’ on the other. Openness is characterised by intellectuality and non-conforming traits, while non-openness does not exhibit a respect for dimensionality, and favoured instead ‘sex-role stereotyped behaviour’ and conservative norms. Openness was considered to be central to the creative type of person, and if possessed, therefore, could be assumed to result in resistance to perpetuation of gender stereotypical images and messages in advertising texts.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker assert that ‘(a)ssociations of various modes of masculinity with creativity ... serve to marginalise women from the more prestigious creative roles’ (2015: 34). Nixon similarly identifies the ways in which the occupational cultures of various agencies in fact perpetuate gendered hierarchies. Rather than cultivating unique environments and creative outputs, as creative directors believe, agency discourses construct the subjective identities of creatives in aggressively gendered terms in very similar ways. This is manifest in the ways they buy into concepts of individualisation, difference and rebellion, which are supposedly male traits. This aggressive genderisation of the creative type can be traced back to a time when art and culture were – and perhaps remains – the sole preserve of men, with women excluded from those realms for so long (Nixon, 2003). The association of all things fecund with women, meant automatic exclusion from the pursuit of higher and more sophisticated understandings and critiques of the world. ‘(T)he social responsibility of mothering cut against the form of ‘passionate discontent’ necessary to drive creativity’ (Nixon, 2003: 100). In terms of creatives in the advertising industry, there are two leading figures: the ‘artist’ creative as the difficult, temperamental and unstable type, or the sophisticated, stylish and discerning art-appreciator. The figure of the woman creative is a disjointed one, and so she is rarely alluded to. When she is represented, it is often with typically masculine characteristics (Nixon, 2003). Prescriptive norms of gender expression were seen to be at odds with expectations of ‘creativity’, as explained by Windels and Lee (2012) in their study of women creatives: ‘gender scripts created a role conflict between a woman’s role as a creative, which included aggression, and her role as a woman, which did not’ (p. 510), leading to a feeling that establishing themselves as ‘women’ creatives, rather than simply ‘creatives’ entails an additional pressure of having to represent one’s entire gender and act accordingly in respect to social expectations.

Challenging industry practitioners about the underrepresentation of women in creative roles is often met, Nixon (2003) has observed, with defensive remarks to the effect that there were, and remain, very few women applying for creative roles. This certainly was historically the case in the UK, as evidenced in figures from training courses directly geared for those roles. However, the equal representation of women and men in other more general advertising courses suggests that more women should have, but have not, taken the creative route; begging inquiry and explanation. Nixon notes that '(d)espite their formal commitment to recruit more women, the creative directors I interviewed were also complicit in reinforcing the link between masculinity and creative jobs' (2003: 104). Attributes that are supposed to make a good creative include egotism, childishness, and juvenility; 'to be unreasonable, irreverent and awkward, appeared, on first inspection, to have little to do with masculinity' (2003: 105). However, these things were in fact associated with young men, and since the presence of women was deemed to compromise the childish state of the (understood to be male-) creative, she is seen as damaging and diluting those expressions. One executive creative director of an ad agency theorises that:

Maybe it's all to do with the absolute individualism that is required and that is less a trait of women than of men. It seems to me that the male species is able to focus on one thing and not care about anything else and that's what you want (Nixon, 2003: 106).

The same executive creative director goes on: '*I think the creative department is like a club, it's like a place you come to have a good time. It's a place you come to relax, to talk about the things you would like to talk about*' (Nixon, 2003: 109). Nixon expands on this idea of the creative department as a club. To become a 'member' of a club automatically entails excluding others. If it is a 'safe' and open environment to bond with other similar people then gender is the biggest divider and results in exclusion on the basis of sex.

Masculinist work practices, as well as gendered assumptions of creative competence, impact on how women's creative work is appraised. Windels and Mallia (2015) note that it is expected for women advertising creatives to go above and beyond the creative standards that apply to their male colleagues. They quote from one interviewee, a female creative director:

If you don't somehow prove yourself with a big project with amazing creative (work) right off the bat and get put on the A team, you're on the B team. Once you're categorized on the B team, it's really hard to get into play. [...] I think it starts off as

an uneven playing field to begin with. You are usually put in the B category because you're a woman, to begin with (p.23).

Creativity, in addition to being connected to personal traits and capabilities, is socially constructed through encouragement, support, positive judgments, and favourable environments (Schweizer, 2006). Windels and Lee (2012) position creativity within a 'systems perspective', rather than an exclusive focus on the individual. This understanding of creativity comprises three elements: "a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p.6)' (p. 505). Certainly the third of these elements impacts on broader understandings of gender and creative ability or competence. Windels and Lee (2012) note that '(w)hen judging creativity, ideas suggested by women are less likely to be accepted and implemented than those suggested by men' (p.506). This bears out in the fact that creative roles in the advertising industry remain male-dominated.

Grow and Deng's 2015 study surveys, globally, the proportion of women in creative roles at horizontal level (art director and copywriter) and those at higher, vertical level creative roles (creative director) in order to paint a picture of proportional representation. The authors also explore if various cultural dimensions and values play a part in women's advancing or not in those positions across countries. They find very low levels internationally at both horizontal and vertical levels, which do not reach proportional representation (i.e. 35%), and find masculinist norms and values may be a factor contributing to this paucity. Mallia (2008), investigating similar concerns, notes that there has been a fairly even split between women and men graduating advertising, with more women graduates in recent years, although creative training courses demonstrate an inverse trend with greater numbers of males graduating. Consequently, the question is asked: why are women not represented at top levels of the creative ladder, which is to say in positions such as creative director, art director, and copywriter. In attempting to explain the discrepancy, Mallia leads with the assumption that the extent to which women's creative work is valued impacts on and is an indicator of career progression. She therefore explores one indicator of acceptance of women's creative work, namely industry recognition of 'best' TV ads. Her study surveys the 'best' TV ads over an 11-year period, as selected by the magazine *Adweek*, with 'best' meaning that the ad 'provides a clear message in engaging, memorable executions and felt most right for the brands and products that they advertised (Parpis, 2005a, p.21)' (Mallia, 2008: 8). Of a total of almost 1,200 creatives represented in that period, women accounted for only

28.65% of those creatives given recognition for outstanding work, and clustered in advertisements for health and beauty products. When broken down by ad type and style, women creatives were massively underrepresented in alcohol and humorous ads, with humorous adverts most commonly given the award of ‘best’ TV ad. Notably, ‘(m)any have observed a “young male” sensibility exhibited in much award-winning creative work, evidenced by slapstick or mean-spirited comedy and frequently, violence’ (Mallia, 2008: 12). Alvesson quotes from a male advertising worker who similarly echoes an understanding of the importance of a specifically gendered humour to advertising work:

If you are to work in advertising you have to have a great sense of humour. You can't let things get to you ... It is a greater problem for women as they are more sensitive than men and often more insecure (Alvesson: 1998: 983).

Likewise, as Gregory (2009) has found, the banner of humour and ‘tongue-in-cheek’ is often used by advertisers as a get-out-of-jail-free card. She argues that, ‘(i)n advertising, those who create advertisements argue that a ‘masculine’ sense of humour, which sometimes includes the sexualization of women and the use of gender stereotypes, is necessary to create successful advertisements’ (Gregory, 2009: 328). This echoes both Ging (2009) and Whelehan’s (2000) explication of postfeminism and Lad Culture’s simultaneous adherence to irony and laddish humour coupled with social censure for those who take offence at the joke. Windels and Mallia (2015) likewise note that humour proves to be contentious for female creatives in advertising agencies. From their qualitative interviews with women in creative advertising roles, they found that ‘it was expected that men would continue to develop advertising that was funny, while women would develop a style that was more ‘touchy feely or lofty’’ (p. 20). Such assumptions around creative production, humour and gender, firmly exhibit postfeminist narratives associated with a return to genetic determinism and its consequent implication concerning ‘natural’ abilities of the sexes. As such, advertising – in terms of content, practice, and the prevailing attitudes of creatives – offers an especially relevant medium through which to interrogate the concept of postfeminism, and its contribution to a pervasive sexism. Feminists invested in fighting against sexist and reductive imagistic representations of women, and indeed striving for inclusion of women in visual culture, such as the campaign to include Jane Austen on the ten-pound English sterling bank note, have often faced the most harsh and vicious adverse reaction in the form of threats of violence and rape (Gill, 2016) from those who implicitly understand the power of the image, and of what is at stake in shifting symbolic displays of the sexes, and their associated

roles. Consequently, the space of advertising, and its position as a medium that trades so extensively in representational ideologies represents a key site for exploring the continued impact and influence of postfeminism on gender discourses, and how it works to incorporate and smother newly emerging feminisms.

The gendered sphere of advertising production and its internalisation of postfeminist iterations of naturalised gender differences is revealed in the tendency to reinforce biological determinist notions about women's unsuitability for creative work, the controversial remarks of British advertising executive, Neil French at a conference in 2005 attest to this type of attitude: '*women don't make it to the top because they don't deserve to ... they wimp out and go suckle something*' (cited in Mallia, 2008: 5). Mallia notes that, because of the uproar and backlash against French's comments, attention is now being paid to the issue of women creatives in advertising. However, despite industry debates on the issue, she identifies a significant research gap in '(a)cademic literature (which) is essentially void on the issue of gender bias in creative employment, though there is some exploration of advertising employment in general' (Mallia, 2008: 6). One reason broadly posited to explain why women leave the industry relates to work practices and the valorisation of typical masculine styles of working on creative campaigns. In a comment, telling for its exasperated tone, Mallia quotes Tess Alps, chairman of PHD media in London: '*Men create the standards by which ads are judged and then go around handing out awards to each other*' (Mallia, 2008: 12). This chagrin is echoed by Mallia in her assertion that exposing such prejudice is absolutely paramount, especially with regard to future practitioners:

Why does it matter? It profoundly impacts advertising education. Students need to know. They need to make an informed decision about embarking on a career where the potential for making it to the top is 80% less if they're female. Should we bother to teach women creative work?' (Mallia, 2008: 13).

Considerations of advertising education, in general, and advertising training, creativity and gender in particular are explored in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Advertising work, and more broadly creative labour, has been theorised in various ways, in terms of considering advertisers as taste-makers, as shaping both culture and consumer subjectivities

and as reifying already established social gendered relations. Practitioners and creatives, in particular, undergo a process of adaptation and socialisation into advertising agencies and working practices. They have been found to draw on informal cultures and subjective experiences in their creative work around designing advertising campaigns. Empirical studies have discovered advertising creative departments to be homosocial environments, often hostile to women. Furthermore, the concept of creativity and creative endeavour is very often understood in gendered terms and is reserved for a male sensibility and expertise. Although this study does not focus on the professional environment, such issues bear huge relevance for advertising education and training. It is crucial to consider the extent to which the educational environment mirrors the industry, and to explore if and how it may replicate those cultures found by Nixon (2003), Gregory (2009), et al.

Chapter 4: Gender and Advertising – Education

Introduction

At the pioneering front of research that tackles issues of advertising education and gender is one scholarly investigation by Windels et al. (2010) that asks questions of gendered understandings among advertising students pertaining to creative roles in the industry. Before examining this study into gender, creativity and the classroom, it is imperative to take a broader look at advertising research, which points to the dearth of academic investigation into the area of advertising education, in general, and gender and advertising education specifically, as well as disagreement about the need to engage with stereotyping and ethical concerns at all at an educational level (Khang et al., 2015; Banning and Schweitzer, 2007; Drumwright and Murphy, 2004, 2009; James et al., 1994). In considering ethics in conjunction with advertising practice, there are two spheres in which ethical questions play out; the professional sphere (in terms of adherence to legal codes governing advertising content), and the realm of the personal (referring to wider, social understandings of ethical and moral considerations). In the first instance, professional codes of standards set out guidelines or manuals – usually self-regulated by the industry – to which advertisers should abide in order to comply. However, without a wider commitment by advertising practitioners to contemplate ethical dilemmas raised by advertising practice, a reliance on a ‘what is legal is moral’ (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004) foundation to govern decision-making culminates in practices that do not account for a plethora of such concerns raised by the work of advertising. Indeed, the Code of Standards as laid down by the ASAI (Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland) does not refer to the specifically ethical challenges of advertising practice. While the rules call on advertisers to ‘respect the dignity of all persons... (and) respect the principle of the equality of men and women’ (ASAI, 2016), the code more expressly and consistently references the imperative to not cause ‘offence’ rather than an appeal to what is socially, morally, and ethically desirable. As such, where this study discusses issues of an ‘ethical’ nature, it refers to a broader concept that accounts for ‘what ought to be done, not just with what legally must be done’ (Cunningham, 1999: 500; cited in Drumwright and Murphy, 2004: 7). In other words, references to ethics, and particularly to the ethical stances of this study’s research participants, encompass discourses about the social effects of advertising and its content. Furthermore, this doctoral project considers ethical issues and advertising

practice in the context of placing an onus on media organisations, and advertisers in particular, to ‘intervene in positive ways to solve ... social problems identified’ (O’Neill, 2011: 331), and to more consciously adopt a socially responsible position with regard to the design of advertising campaigns.

Following a look at whether creativity is constructed in the classroom as male, the chapter details the turn to diversity issues in advertising education. ‘Diversity’ in advertising imagery and texts is framed by several scholars as dually important from a strategic point of view in raising the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, as well as more wider-ranging assertions that introducing far more diverse representations of peoples into adverts is morally right and good. Additionally, given the paucity of research into the issue of gender and the advertising classroom²⁷, this thesis turns to Oakham’s investigation into the socialisation of new journalism recruits (2006) to consider the influence of education and training on future practitioners in the fields of communication generally – considering advertising, in particular. Finally and crucially this research thesis looks to the Australian scholar Louise North’s work (2010; 2015) on gender and journalism education to envisage the impact that specific modules on gender issues can have on students preparing for a career in mass communication; again applying the example to the sphere of advertising.

Contemporary research in advertising education

Taking a fifty-plus year period and a total of 496 articles on international advertising research, scholars Khang et al. (2015) examined the literature in international advertising for emergent and dominant research themes and topics. They found, throughout that period, a very low level of focus in this research field on education in advertising, with only 1 article among 16 leading journals in a 50-year period, which appeared during the years 1995-2004, relating to education in advertising. They also discovered little focus on societal issues, particularly ethics, where there was only 1 article during the period 1995-2004 and 1 article throughout the years 2005-2014. Likewise, stereotyping – a major factor in the consideration of advertising and its imagery – was vastly underrepresented in international advertising research, with only 1 article during the period 1963-1974; 3 articles during 1985-1994; 10 articles from 1995-2004; and 5 articles during the

²⁷ Windels et al. (2010) are the exception.

years 2005-2014. International advertising research is closely bound up with international advertising practice, which itself is driven by an increasingly globalized set of advertising practices; in other words, international advertising research has sought to address issues surrounding the ever-increasing globalization of advertising, marketing, and business. International advertising research is relevant in the sense that it identifies patterns – and likewise changes of patterns – in international advertising practice. Therefore, given that research agendas have not been found to be paying attention to social and ethical issues across international advertising practices, it suggests also that these concerns are not a consideration in these spheres of practice.

Specific to the US, authors Banning and Schweitzer (2007) surveyed 185 advertising educators, recording their attitudes to issues such as ‘theory or practice’, the importance of internships, and whether advertising should ideally be taught in business schools or as part of journalism and mass communication (JMC) courses. The authors identify research gaps and a general lack of research in advertising education since the 1970s and 1980s, with, they believe, a much needed emphasis on further research in the area. They note that ‘(a)lthough the debate over advertising education seems to have cooled in recent years, it continues in journalism and public relations education’ (p. 11), which is noteworthy since they cite work²⁸ that discovers a pendulum swing away from advertising courses in business schools to increased inclusion in journalism departments. However, there was ‘no strong agreement as to a single best source for an advertising education’ (Banning and Schweitzer, 2007: 17); that is to say whether advertising should be part of the JMC courses, or business or liberal arts schools.

Drumwright and Murphy’s (2004) research study, which involved in-depth interviews with advertising practitioners, looks at ethical considerations among advertising practitioners. Although it does not specifically refer to advertisers’ engagement with considerations of representing gender roles and norms in particular ways, the study does hold relevance for this doctoral project in terms of what it reveals around advertisers likelihood to even acknowledge issues of an ethical dimension. In positioning the research, the authors note that ‘we know little about how advertising practitioners react to ethical issues when they arise’ (2004: 7). The findings of the study suggest that, ethically speaking, participants fell into one of three categories, exhibiting the following characteristics: moral myopia; moral muteness; or moral imagination.

²⁸ Ross, B.I., Osborne, A.C., & Richards, J.I. (2006). *Advertising education: Yesterday, today and tomorrow*. Lubbock, TX: Advertising Education Publications.

Moral myopia is recognisable by a sort of blindness to moral considerations, which ‘affects an individual’s perception of an ethical dilemma’ (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004: 11). Consequently, the authors note, it proves especially challenging for these types of practitioners to make ethical decisions. The authors identify six categories of moral myopia, which represent how practitioners justify and understand their disregard for ethical implications of advertising and their actions. These include the supposition that *consumers are smart* and would easily recognise and disregard problematic advertising content. Drumwright and Murphy point out that it is an unusual position to take seeing as advertising is supposed to be adept at convincing consumers to buy into the message of the advertisement. Secondly, those practitioners with moral myopia displayed a tendency to *pass the buck*, in which responsibility is displaced to society, such that the advertiser is merely mirroring social relations that already exist, whether problematic or not. Responsibility is also shifted to the client company that commissioned the campaign. There was also the defence that *what is legal is moral*, and therefore anything within the remit of legislation and codes of practice was acceptable. Participants of the study also invoked the *first amendment* article, which iterates their right to free speech and raises issues of censorship and freedom of creative expression. Drumwright and Murphy also identify the phenomenon of *going native* and the *ostrich syndrome*, which involve respectively wholesale adherence to the client company brand ethos, without regard or room for ethical considerations, and also sticking one’s head in the sand and effectively ignoring obvious moral issues.

Moral muteness, on the other hand, is characterised by the recognition of ethical issues. However, despite such acknowledgment, the individual remains silent on them. There are four categories of moral muteness. *Compartmentalization* involves the ability to effectively leave one’s conscience at the office door when going to work and picking it up again when one leaves the office. It is aided by the enjoyable aspects of the work. Indeed, ‘(c)reativity was viewed by our informants as a chief virtue’ (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004: 14). Then there was the sentiment that *the client is always right* and the advertising practitioner could not, and would not challenge the client company on its desired direction. Additionally, practitioners exhibiting moral muteness believe that *ethics is bad for business*. For example, ‘(o)ne particularly strong disincentive was that ethics was viewed as a conservative constraint, a sentence to blandness in advertising messages’ (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004: 15). Finally, there was the fear of opening up *Pandora’s Box* if one began to let moral and ethical considerations take its place in work practices and decisions.

The third and final category of advertising practitioner showed a moral imagination. These are referred to as ‘seeing, talking’ advertising practitioners. They appreciate ethical concerns and make nuanced decisions and choices guided by these concerns. Taking into account all three categories of advertising practitioner and their relationship to ethics, it was found that organisational culture, above all else, played a key role in relation to which of the categories people fell into. Drumwright and Murphy’s recognition that the findings of their study hold profound implications for educators therefore has relevance to this doctoral project. They believe that ‘educators should expose and sensitize students to ethical questions and dilemmas that they are likely to encounter as practitioners’ (2004: 21). In addition, ‘(t)o combat moral muteness and moral myopia, students must also understand the issues of organizational culture and climate that encourage ethical behaviour’ (2004: 21). It is also incumbent on educators to empower students to challenge advertising practices, and should take place in the beginning phases of an advertising students training.

Tuncay Zayer and Coleman’s 2014 study on ethics and ‘advertising professionals’ perceptions of the impact of gender portrayals on men and women’ (p. 1) is similarly innovative in bringing together the two research components of gender and advertising practice. They note that much academic critique of advertising sets out to expose its social impact, while not accounting for ethical concerns at the individual level of the advertising practitioner. They acknowledge that ‘professionals perceptions²⁹ occur within the context of broader institutional forces and are based largely on assumptions professionals hold about gender and vulnerability in society’ (p. 1), generally. Using Drumwright and Murphy’s studies as templates – particularly as they related to explorations of practitioners and ethics – their research participants were asked to comment on the extent to which they felt men and women were differentially affected by gender portrayals in advertising. Mirroring the three categories identified by Drumwright and Murphy (2004), the authors uncovered four such categories from the analysis of their data. Firstly, there were *silent professionals*, which lines up with Drumwright and Murphy’s category ‘moral myopia’, characterised by a moral blindness. Then there were those who fell into the *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* category. ‘These informants clearly not only draw from discourses of gender and vulnerability in society but they also rely on the taken-for-granted notions of gender prevalent in their institutions’ (p. 5). Tuncay Zayer and Coleman argue that, although it is

²⁹ Perceptions of how vulnerable or impervious men and women were to representations of gender in advertising imagery.

somewhat desirable that advertisers would demonstrate recognition of feminist-related concerns about portrayals of women in advertising, these practitioners were thought to be buying into a discourse that posits women as susceptible to social pressures, while men are not. The third identified category refers to those professionals who *Talk the Talk* and who ‘demonstrate awareness that advertising images may negatively affect both male and female audiences’ (2004: 6). However, similar to ‘moral muteness’, they do not follow their convictions, citing organisational, career-progression or client company constraints on what they can or cannot / will or will not do. Finally, those who *Walk the Walk* align with Drumwright and Murphy’s conception of having a ‘moral imagination’. These practitioners ‘expressed a moral responsibility in making ethical advertising choices’ (p. 7). Once again, organisational cultures and working practices is thought to dictate practitioner categorisation, as are personal views held with respect to confused understandings of gender, sexuality and sex. The authors expand on this: ‘we find in our study that some ad professionals adhere to institutional norms and shared understandings in their agencies that promote hegemonic masculine discourses, particularly as regulation with regard to gender portrayals in advertising is lacking’ (p. 8). In addition, ‘(h)istorical discourses of vulnerability based on demographic characteristics have not only dichotomized gender and positioned women as particularly vulnerable (Coleman 2012) but also reinforced conceptualizations of men as immune and women as susceptible to the influence of advertising’ (p. 9). On a more positive note, however, their findings did reveal that some advertising practitioners were mindful of their role in potentially perpetuating unhelpful gendered imagery.

As an update to their 2004 study, and of relevance for this research project in terms of the willingness, or lack thereof, that Drumwright and Murphy found in the educational field of advertising as well as the industry³⁰, the authors extended their scope in 2009 to include industry-wide and academic perspectives on advertising ethics. In positioning the research, they note that ‘(w)hile advertising ethics has been recognized for some time as a mainstream topic (Hyman, Tansley, and Clark 1994), research is thin and inconclusive in many important areas’ (2009: 85). However, they point to the fact that there are difficulties in getting advertising practitioners to buy into advertising research that relates to its ethical concerns, perhaps because of an anti-intellectual bias. A quote from their study by an industry leader is telling:

³⁰ This refers to a general consideration of ethical concerns, which arguably incorporates also more specific debates about the portrayal of women and men, and gender relations in advertisements.

Most academic opinions about and observations about the real world of business are irrelevant. I think that having academics give recommendations on how to conduct business in the real world is a waste of time. . . . I think there is a big disconnect between how the academic world sees the world and how the world really is (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009: 99).

In terms of how advertising academics position ethics on their courses, it ranged from important to perfunctory. The dilemma for educators is such that, *'(o)ur responsibility is to teach students that they do have a choice in how to communicate with people'* (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009: 92). Yet, *'(b)ecause we're churning out professionals to be effective in this business, we don't want to be, in a sense, planting tremendous doubts about the efficacy about what we're doing'* (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009: 93). Furthermore, there is a challenge in encouraging students to apply critical skills without *'turn(ing) out people who will only take on idealistic clients'* (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009: 93). In addition, it was recognised that there is a problematic conflation of law and ethics in undergraduate modules, and furthermore that, with limited resources and time, the focus is often on practice-oriented modules rather than exploring the theoretical implications of advertising, such as ethics. Therefore, ideally, a *'systematic approach to incorporating ethics into the curriculum would be expected to involve more than part of one course'* (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009: 93). It was concluded that, as per their 2004 study, organisational culture was the key to *'mitigating the barriers to ethical decision-making and encouraging ethical sensitivity'* (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009: 99).

Expanding on the theme of understandings of ethics in the professional and educational sphere, a 1994 study by James et al. explored practitioner and student perspectives. They found that *'there were significant differences between students and practitioners'* in relation to perceptions of ethics. *'When compared with students, practitioners are significantly less likely to agree that [a]dvertising agencies' practices, for the most part are based on high professional standards'* (James et al., 1994: 79). The authors conclude that students place a greater emphasis on the validity of ethics to advertising work. However, they tentatively suggest that following the transition from student into professional life, that working practices and the reality of working at an advertising agency curbs students more idealised regard for ethics. The challenge to respond in ethically-informed ways to advertising work has resulted in the establishment of advertising standards and codes. These codes usually comprise a rule-book of sorts, devised by industry representatives, and to which advertisers adhere, on a self-regulated, voluntary basis. This response has proved divisive, with some arguing that *'such codes may not improve the*

professionalism and practice of advertising ... (while) (s)upporters, on the other hand, contend that the rationale for such codes is to help the industry distinguish what precisely is wrong from what is right' (James et al., 1994: 72). Whatever one's position on that point, James et al. contend that through conscious engagement with regard to ethical considerations, practitioners can pre-empt challenges and act appropriately. Furthermore, they maintain that 'to help prepare advertising practitioners to act in socially responsible ways, educators should stress ethics in the classroom' (1994: 80), a point echoed by Drumwright and Murphy a decade later.

Gendered constructions and instructions of creativity in advertising education

Whether the 'creative boys' club begins in the classroom was the question put by Windels et al. in their 2010 study of 91 advertising students in a US university. Proportionally, this comprised 47 women and 44 men, in a context where, nationally, 64.9% of students undertaking journalism and mass communication programmes – in which advertising is positioned – are women. They set out to find out if 'students have already developed gendered expectations about the creative department while still in college and to understand whether it affects their decision-making' (2010: 17). Their survey consisted of two elements: firstly, students were asked to respond to the question of whether they perceived creative positions to be male-dominated or not, and secondly to select, out of three candidates³¹, from a detailed CV who they deemed most competent to fulfil a role as a creative director. The researchers hypothesised that the male candidate would be selected more often than the female, with alternating justifications that either education was more important to suitability to the role, or that experience was more pertinent. On the first question, 80.2% of students correctly believed that creative positions in the industry are male-dominated, with slightly more men exhibiting that response than women, and likewise more creative students than non-creative students holding that view. However, in response to the second question concerning competence for the role as creative director, students' understandings of the actual dominance of men in these roles in the industry did not impact their selection choice. That is to say, there was no discernible gender divide concerning the selected candidate, with most students seeming 'to prefer the more educated candidate to the more experienced candidate' (p. 21). In

³¹ Of the three candidates, two were men (one was deemed unqualified, while the other was deemed qualified, alternately in terms of education and then in terms of experience); one was a woman (she was deemed qualified, alternately in terms of education and then in terms of experience).

their discussion of the findings, the authors credit the educators with probable equal treatment of male and female students, resulting in their knowledge that creative positions are skewed in favour of men not impacting on their understanding of creative competence. They tentatively conclude that it appears the ‘creative boys club’ does not begin in the educational setting. However, they add a note of caution; being that theirs was a small scale study of one university, and that the results could be indicative of a particularly egalitarian approach within that advertising programme.

Bringing together gender with creative styles, Keller et al.’s 2007 research focuses on the correlation of student’s alignment to particular gender role orientations with their creative self-perception, based on four distinct types as formulated under the Bem Sex-Role Inventory: feminine, masculine, psychological androgyny and undifferentiated. Noting that there is very little research linking creative styles with gender and gender roles, the authors suggest that any disparity between women and men in their approach to creative work and creative tasks should be examined through a lens that is cognisant of the socially constructed nature of gender, and the social expectations that pertain to men and masculinity, and to women and femininity. In the findings of their study, Keller et al. found that students who displayed psychologically androgynous traits on the BSRI were more likely to regard themselves in ways that indicated a creative dynamism. While the authors were only examining students’ *self-perception* of creative styles, there is evidence to suggest, they say, that psychologically androgynous people who exhibit a high presence of both sets of traits that are typically regarded as male *and* female, draw on a greater depth and breadth of creative problem-solving than non-androgynous people. Some of the benefits of a psychological androgyny mentioned include ‘cognitive flexibility, adaptability’ (p. 278) and ‘are less bound by gender-based stereotypes and expectations’ (p. 275), meaning such individuals have a greater catalogue of behaviour, emotional and intellectual responses available with which to respond to creative work. Keller et al. urge educators to be mindful and appreciative of the correlation between creative styles and gender role orientation, and, further, to encourage and support the fluidity of sex-based expectations for its positive impact on creativity. In a somewhat similar vein, although not accounting for gender, Mattern et al.’s 2013 study deals with teaching creativity to students in the most effective ways possible, and testing whether encouragement and positive feedback impacts on students’ creative output. The authors point out the centrality of creativity to advertising work and that ‘(a)dvertising professionals who are perceived as creative in the workplace are rewarded by extra attention,

status, opportunity and responsibility (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003)' (p.13). However, and crucially, the parameters of what constitutes 'creative' endeavour is ultimately not within the remit of the advertising professional, but rather one's clients and creative directors. In a study of 519 communication studies students, the authors employed the 'expectancy-value theory', which is concerned with assumptions surrounding one's ability and the confidence that goes hand-in-hand with that. Lack of recognition and a devaluing of one's creative work at both a professional level as well as in the classroom can be detrimental (Grow and Deng, 2015; Windels and Lee, 2012; Windels, 2011), and has shown to be especially so for women creatives (Windels and Mallia, 2015; Mallia, 2008). Within the microcosm of the classroom setting, the teacher acts as surrogate client and/ or creative director and assesses whether students' creative styles and abilities are good enough. This can come to represent a deeply influential experience on students' later approaches to creative work in the advertising field. Mattern et al. cite research from the 1960s through the 1990s that exposes the fact that educators are generally not encouraging toward students with a creative bent. Indeed when taken with Keller et. al's work on creative styles and gender roles, this reticence to foster creativity in students can be explained by the fact that such students will tend towards 'being free-spirited, impulsive and nonconformist' (Mattern et al., 2013: 13). This suggests that gender-non-conforming students are thereby approached as more challenging to teach by educators.

The turn to diversity in advertising education

The autumn issue of the Journal of Advertising Education (JAE) in 2003 was devoted entirely to the issue of diversity in advertising, including articles dealing with the need for urgency in paying attention to the diversity of consumers, as well as how to teach diversity to advertising students. In Chambers' article, his references to diversity refer to race and ethnicity and do not mention gender. He notes that:

...scholars are estimating that the next generations of American children will be the most racially and ethnically diverse in history. And though our advertising majors may not reflect that growing diversity, it is our responsibility to broach the issue in our curricula (Chambers, 2003: 12).

The argument is predicated on the basis that future practitioners need to have a handle on how to appeal to and represent such population shifts. Chambers discusses the use of film resources in

the classroom to aid debate on racism in advertising imagery, as well utilising academic texts (theoretical, qualitative and legislative), and assignments to explore the issues. This teaching strategy, he maintains, leads to increased engagement from students. He also notes that cultural studies texts of a theoretical nature were unexpectedly very popular and liked by the students. Similarly, Cooper talks about the importance of harnessing knowledge of diverse groups so as to better understand them and therefore more effectively target them. This can be done, she suggests, through classroom assignments, which ‘presents an opportunity to enhance the development of our students. They are encouraged to think about advertising’s relationship to our society in different ways’ (2003: 19). Cooper’s article only really refers to race, and the racial and ethnic make-up of contemporary US society. It seems overly reductive in terms of the characteristics of those racial categories, while it is also unclear as to why Cooper includes ‘gender’ in the title to this short article since she does not refer to gender anywhere, and, in addition, she is specifically talking about targeting *minority* groups.

In a short rallying call for action to advertising educators about the merits of including diversity issues on their programmes and in their modules, Rios attempts to convince lecturers that it is achievable and do-able, and that there are lots of resources available to be able to expand courses to talk about ethnicity, race, and gender. While she recognises the reticence and resentment of some advertising lecturers to deal with the issue of diversity stems from the perception that it can be used as a stick with which to beat universities for not being diverse enough, she seeks to counter that reluctance by noting that:

...(s)ome may say that it is not our place as educators, or as educators in higher education to confront issues of race/ethnicity, gender, or social class in our classrooms ... But what better candidates than ... accomplished teachers ... [W]e can apply our skills now to deal with racism, sexism and a variety of other “isms” that blight our social landscape (Rios, 2003: 15).

This is a somewhat bizarre comment since if it is not the role of education, teachers and lecturers to ask questions of power, privilege and oppression, then whose job is it? Similar to Rios, Golombisky’s short essay is an appeal to advertising educators to take seriously the need to fully, explicitly and implicitly incorporate issues of diversity into their curricula and modules in order that the ‘advertising industry reflect[s] a complete picture of the society it emerges from and represents’ (2003: 21). This could be achieved by avoiding creating content that is loaded with stereotyped messages. Golombisky advocates that incorporating diversity to further hone a

concept of advertising excellence must involve consultation with diversity and minority groups and professional organisations. She suggests engagement with Advertising Women on New York, although she does not expand on whether women should be viewed or considered a ‘diverse’ group. For educators, they must be mindful of their own baggage and worldviews before turning to students and challenging them on theirs. Again, echoing Rios and Golombisky in this issue of JAE, Slater throws down the gauntlet for advertising educators regarding the necessity of teaching diversity in a kind of pay-attention-or-perish type of appeal. ‘Diversity should be integral in all we teach – in and out of the classroom’ (2003: 10). Writing in a later edition of JAE, Fullerton et al. (2008) note that past studies show more favourable attitudes to advertising among advertising students than other students, in general. The most positive attitudes to advertising are reserved for its economic benefits and regulatory aspects. However, with neutral student responses to ethical and social concerns, the authors argue that educators could and indeed should pay closer attention to these aspects of advertising education.

Introducing gender modules

Although researching in the area of journalistic practices and journalism education, Oakham (2006) and North’s (2010; 2015) work raises interesting issues regarding the socialisation of ‘trainees’ or students, as well as educational reluctance to centre gender within instructional courses or modules. In the absence of literature that deals specifically with advertising education and the issue of gender, and also considering the fact that many advertising courses are positioned within JMC (journalism and mass communication) schools³², thereby meaning that students of advertising and students of journalism may share modules, this thesis draws on both authors, and allows parallels to be drawn between advertising education and journalism education.

Oakham (2006) examines the socialisation of new/trainee journalists and the role of the trainer in that process. Changes in journalism, particularly concerning journalistic practices and pressures, has seen a shift in the self-perception of one’s role, now straddling a position between doing something important and meaningful alongside understanding journalism work as producing a ‘commodity’. In a more diluted sense, there are perhaps parallels here with advertising students.

³² However, this is not the case in Ireland, where the BA course and MSc course in advertising in Dublin taken as case studies for this research are both positioned within the business discipline.

Indeed, with regard to the belief that journalism is a vocation and therefore difficult to ‘teach’, thereby echoing discourses of the innateness of ‘creativity’ and creative skills needed for advertising work, Oakham notes that ‘trainers make the distinction between what they can teach and what they cannot teach. The "it" factor often becomes the difference’ (2006: 191). In this way, the issue of instruction and training a new generation of journalists is an ideologically-loaded one that is mirrored with advertising educators. For starters, educators, trainers, and lecturers ‘play a key role in the socialisation of the new entrant’ (Oakham, 2006: 183) and yet ‘trainers appear to be unclear whether their role is to perpetuate existing norms and practices or to be the implementers of change and innovation’ (Oakham, 2006: 184). In a revealing quote by one trainer that Oakham interviewed, the participant comments on the ‘traditional approach’ to journalism training, which is more aligned with the innate view of journalistic practice: *‘This tradition could be said to be sexist, patriarchal and anti-intellectual. Then there is what I call the credential approach ... It is underpinned by notions of incremental skill-building’* (Oakham, 2006: 191). This trainer admits that *‘Yes, we are trying to create journalists in our own image’* (Oakham, 2006: 191). As such, Oakham notes that *‘(i)t is hard to reconcile the often-stated importance of initiative and autonomy with a system still heavily reliant on the passing on of knowledge from the "masters" to the "apprentices”’* (Oakham, 2006: 193). The relevance of such tension to this research thesis is in terms of encouraging students and new-starters in the advertising industry to be creative and innovative and to challenge industry norms, but which may be accompanied with a corresponding push-back from agency or client, or both.

Researching the prevalence, or lack thereof, of gender considerations in journalism education, North (2010) assesses the presence or absence of gender components in journalism education, modules and courses. Surveying online course outlines for 30 Australian universities that offer degrees in journalism, North searched through the programme handbooks and the module components, and found that there was little to no occurrence of ‘gender’, ‘women’ or ‘feminism’ in module descriptors, leading one to assume that the issue of gender is not present in any meaningful or substantial way in any educational training for future journalists. She positions this absence of gender as a concern as ‘unique’, and one which ‘does not appear to fit with the beliefs, values, knowledges and experiences of journalism educators in Australia’ (North, 2010: 104). It is furthermore inexcusable and incomprehensible, North believes, when one considers the fact

that women make up at least half of journalism graduates globally³³. As such, to omit gender as a central issue of concern – whether that is a consideration for gendered practices of journalism work, gendered work cultures, and/ or the gendered content being produced by journalists – is to do a disservice to journalism students. North posits some theories to explain this reticence to foreground gender in journalism training and suggests that such a fact may be due to a number of factors; namely, a lack of interest in gender issues among academic staff, an absence of competence to tackle and teach courses and modules that deal with gender and women in journalism, an unwillingness to rock the boat and do what has not been done before, and also the perceived negative repercussions, perhaps professionally among one’s academic peers, of raising the issue, thus echoing – North suggests – wider societal reactions against feminist concerns. Yet, to neglect gender is no longer an option, and for North ‘a more significant call must be made to hire academic staff qualified to teach gender and diversity issues’ (2010: 112). As a result, and in order to practice what she was preaching, North set up the first gender unit within a journalism course in 2011. She notes the reluctance, initially, from staff to introduce a gender unit because of the perceived lack of relevance of gender as a matter of concern. However, it materialised that the modules the unit offered were highly well attended and very well received by students, with indications that discussions regarding gender, which students had not previously been exposed to or tuned into in any meaningful or reflexive way, had made a big impact on them and left them feeling better ‘informed and empowered’ (North, 2015: 182) to integrate considerations of gender into future journalistic work. This influence and impact is hugely significant when one considers that:

...(t)he gendering of journalists as occupational subjects takes place well before journalists enter a newsroom and begin to produce content. Indeed, it has been argued that this gendering process is exacerbated by journalism education—or more specifically the absence of gender education—of student journalists (North, 2015: 174-175).

The significance of shaping future journalists attitudes and worldviews with regard to gender is even greater since ‘the occupation of journalism has widespread and potent ramifications because the news media plays a key role in reinforcing norms and values to society’ (2015: 175). In addition, for women entering and working in the field of journalism, there is a general lack of

³³ Women represent the majority of journalism students in Australia, as per Pearson (2009), and according to Gallagher (1995), they make up at least half of the student population of mass communication and journalism courses worldwide (both studies cited in North, 2010: 104-105).

transparency as to how women are progressing in the industry, the positions they hold and status they enjoy. Consequently, it is imperative, North believes, that educators raise the issue of women working in newsrooms and the unique gender challenges faced so that they may be ‘much better prepared and able to challenge inequity or at least be aware that it is a structural problem rather than an individual failing’ (2015: 177). This squares precisely with Mallia (2008), who appeals to advertising educators to be open with students about the bias in favour of male creatives working in the industry. Sounding a positive, but cautious note, North notes that ‘(g)radual change can take place in news organizations if its workers are more informed’ (2015: 182). However, as North intimates, the biggest barrier to shaping more gender-sensitive and gender-aware students remains the relative paucity of academics with the requisite enthusiasm, knowledge and motivation to provide a critique and challenge to the status quo.

Conclusion

The relative lack of academic research in the field of advertising education, and especially as it relates to issues of gender has meant that this chapter has also drawn on journalism scholarship to explore the potential positives that accompany greater engagement with gender at an educational level. The gendered experiences and identities of students and lecturers is rarely, if ever, a consideration in the classroom but perhaps bears heavily on approaches to teaching and evaluation, and to understandings and constructions of creative work, in particular.

This chapter draws to a close a review of three theoretical and conceptual concerns that are central to this research thesis: advertising texts (i.e. representations of gender); advertising production (i.e. gendered working cultures and practices in advertising work); and advertising education (i.e. gendered constructions and instruction of advertising education). These three apparently distinct spheres each inform the other in mutually influencing ways, such that gendered images emanating from the industry are created and produced in working cultures that have been seen to be antagonistic to gender awareness and sensitivity. Likewise, practitioners working in the field rely on already existing gendered tropes in popular culture generally, and advertisements in particular, to offer a steer for how to encode gender in their advertising campaigns. It is suggested that, as a result, gendered practices in the field become entrenched and incoming practitioners go through a period of adaptation or a ‘process of socialisation’, during

which they are indoctrinated into these ways. It is in the realm of education that there is perhaps most scope to challenge gender stereotyping. However, as has been seen there is relatively little known about this potential.

As intimated, central to this doctoral project are research questions that seek to investigate if there is a need for specific gender modules during the course of advertising education. Consequently, of central importance is an examination of how students of advertising view issues of gender, generally, and what are their attitudes to representations of gender in advertising, especially those of a postfeminist bent. In addition, an important follow-on research question concerns the extent to which representations of and discourses on gender are currently a consideration during the course of advertising training. Having provided an overview of the main body of academic literature relevant to this research topic, and having theoretically, contextually and conceptually foregrounded some key concerns, the following chapter will proceed to outline the research methodology of this doctoral project.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to offer an overview of the methodological, empirical and philosophical considerations and decisions that form the basis of this PhD project. First and foremost, it is made clear upon which tradition of feminist thought the research is predicated. From this perspective and framed within a certain understanding of the contemporary gender climate, the principle research questions of the study are detailed. The research design is also outlined, noting the appropriateness of the strategy adopted as well as the challenges posed. A summary of all of the data sources collected for the study is presented and a description of the analytical strategy that was employed in order to interpret and make sense of the data. A comprehensive account of the process of coding and analysing the data is delivered in order to transparently lay out the steps and decisions made throughout the various phases of analysis that ultimately lead to the results and findings presented in the subsequent chapters. Finally, the aspects that are considered to be limitations inherent in the study are proffered.

Ontology and Epistemology

Driven from a radical feminist³⁴ viewpoint concerned with the socially constructed nature of gender, and its inculcation through a process of socialisation and cultural expectations (Rubin, 1975), this study is situated within a constructionist perspective, such that ‘meaning and experience are (understood to be) socially produced and reproduced’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 85). Furthermore, constructivism ‘seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 85; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002), and likewise understands knowledge to be discursively produced (Bazeley, 2013: 23). Lazar maintains that ‘social constructionist approaches emphasize the on-going, iterative, active accomplishment of gender ... in and through discourse’ (2007: 150). However, as Lazar points out, in comparing the ‘doing gender’ as opposed to ‘gender-as-

³⁴ This PhD candidate is very much aware of the controversies surrounding radical feminist stances in relation to trans people and trans rights, and in no way condones such views. However, it is believed that the core tenets of radical feminist philosophy are not mutually exclusive with support and respect for trans peoples.

performance’ perspectives, there are limitations within the ‘gender-as-performance’ approach since this suggests an overemphasis on the capacity for individuals to enact and produce competing and alternative gender categories, without due regard for material reality or how gender ideology is operationalised in patriarchal society. Consequently, this study works within a social constructionist paradigm which is more firmly situated within a ‘doing gender’ approach since this remains in line with a radical feminist viewpoint that ‘assert(s) that doing gender in interactions means creating hierarchical differences between groups of people’ (Lazar, 2007: 150). Since any feminist evaluation of gender discrimination must expose the relationship of the concept of gender to power (Tasker and Negra, 2007; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Lazar, 2007), radical feminism’s conceptualisation of gender retains a concern for the structural nature of gender ideology. Moreover, such a theorisation of gender and its relationship to power, which aims at the dismantlement of patriarchy in order to end the subjugated status of women, means that a radical feminist constructivist ontological and epistemological approach is the most appropriate for this research study.

This doctoral project is contextually positioned within a feminist critique of postfeminism since ‘part of the significance of postfeminist culture lies in its pervasive presence not just in film, television, and popular literature but in *advertising*, magazines, music, and political discourse’ (Tasker and Negra, 2007: 11; emphasis added). The research seeks to discover if there is a need for specific modules in advertising education which address the ideological, political and ethical significance and impact of representing gender in particular ways. Therefore, this question necessitated that the project address how advertising students – considering that they are the next generation of advertising practitioners – understand and engage with issues of gender, in general, as well as questions of representing gender in advertisements, particularly as it pertains to postfeminism. This primary research consideration is predicated on Nixon’s (2003) contention that the ‘informal cultures’ and subjective gendered identities and experiences of advertising practitioners, and advertising creatives especially, are crucial in how they approach advertising production and practice. Furthermore, examining the educational cultures in which advertising students in this study are embedded necessitated asking questions about the prevalence or indeed absence among students of postfeminist, masculinist, or androcentrist discourses that may be hostile to gender equality. Such considerations call to mind findings revealed and issues raised by Gregory (2009), Cronin (2004), Nixon (2003; 2004), and Alvesson (1998) about advertising practice and its attendant homosocial environments.

In addition, the degree to which lecturers engage with and understand pertinent issues of gender and advertising needed to be addressed, as did an examination of course modules and components for the presence or absence of gender issues within the curricula. As such, these questions required that a qualitative methodological approach to the research be adopted, in order to seek to understand how students and lecturers negotiate their gendered subjectivity and to reveal the degree to which they are aware of gender representations in advertisements. Qualitative research 'involves an interpretive ... approach to the world ... (and) attempt(s) to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003: 5). The research was designed to collect predominantly qualitatively data, which would be analysed through a qualitative analytical strategic frame in order to seek to make broader claims that stretch wider than 'simply telling a story' (Bazeley, 2013: 4). As a result, the study was developed to be qualitative in nature.

Research questions and data sources

With the primary research consideration in mind – considering if there is a need for specific gender modules during the course of advertising education – the research is concerned with psychosocial factors in relation to gender, and therefore set out to explore general attitudes to gender norms among advertising students and compare these with more specific responses to gendered images and discourses within advertising texts.

The study is therefore guided by the following principle research questions: -

- How do students of advertising understand gender and related issues?
- What are student attitudes to representations of gender in advertising texts?
- How do key lecturers frame gender issues within advertising education?
- To what extent are representations of and discourses on gender currently a consideration during the course of advertising training?

The research strategy devised for this study was premised upon conducting interviews with students and lecturers. However, because 'interviewing alone lacks the density and texture that come from incorporating observational data and/ or use of documents' (Padgett, 2004: 10), the research design also included a far broader sampling of students' gendered attitudes through the

completion of a qualitative questionnaire. In addition, an examination of course modules was vital to establishing the institutional presence of gender at curricula level. This tripartite strategy of in-depth interview, qualitative questionnaire, and textual investigation of module descriptors was deemed appropriate to answering the research questions. Moreover, in particular with respect to using questionnaires and interviews, this was ‘aimed at encouraging participants to make explicit their own understanding of their habitus and social milieu’ (Oakham, 2006: 186), and therefore afforded students an opportunity to discuss and reflect on issues they had perhaps not had before.

Having established the presence of seven third-level courses in the advertising and/ or marketing and/ or PR discipline in an Irish context, it was felt that courses specifically focusing predominantly on advertising at degree level and higher would represent the sites chosen for the study. This meant approaching two higher education institutions (both Institutes of Technology³⁵); one that offers an undergraduate Honours Bachelor Degree of Arts (BA) in Advertising and Marketing Communication, and one that offers a postgraduate Master of Science (MSc) in Advertising. The chosen institutions and their courses constitute a significant representative nationwide sample of advertising studies being undertaken by students at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

It was recognised that a major consideration for the success of this research study would involve the level of access provided to students by ‘gatekeepers’ at both universities. A meeting was set-up with advertising course directors at both institutions, during which time a background and overview of the doctoral project was outlined. Both ‘gatekeepers’ expressed a keen interest in the research, and endorsed its merits and value, and thereby proved to be very helpful in facilitating access to students. Following those meetings with both the program leader of the only undergraduate course specifically dedicated to advertising (and marketing communications) in Ireland and the program co-ordinator at the country’s major MSc in Advertising, their willingness to allow access to the institutions and the students enabled the various phases of data collection to begin.

³⁵ Institutes of Technology are university-level education institutions. Established in Ireland in the 1960s, they were initially established in order to offer students qualifications at National Diploma level, however, they have since expanded to offer programmes at Honours Bachelor’s degree level (Level 8), Postgraduate Master’s level (level 9) and Doctorate level (level 10).

Incorporating aspects of Bazeley’s illustrative table, intended to show a holistic approach to research design (2013: 58-59), below is a detailed breakdown of the type of data source collected for this study, the data collection tool or strategy used, the specific research question or questions it was intended to answer³⁶, and the stage at which the data was collected.

Data Source	Data Collection tool / strategy	Research question or questions the data source is intended to answer	Volume / numbers collected	Stage at which the data was collected
Student: Undergraduate (1st to 4th year) Postgraduate (MSc)	Qualitative questionnaire: Devising the questionnaire involved an initial ‘brainstorming’ of key questions. Attempts were made to avoid both leading questions and a logical order that might predispose respondents to answering in an expected manner. Several questions were asked in a variety of ways in order to prompt a more ‘true’ answer and/or expose any contradictions.	How students view issues of gender, feminism, and gender equality. Attitudes to representations of gender in advertising. If they have learnt about gender in their modules. Perceptions of the advertising industry.	<i>n</i> = 107 questionnaire respondents³⁷: 97 Undergraduate questionnaire respondents ³⁸ ; 10 Postgraduate questionnaire ³⁹	Stage one of data collection phase
Student:	Qualitative, semi-	Attitudes to issues	<i>n</i> = 12 student	Stage two of data

³⁶ Not all questions devised around data sources relate directly to the principle research questions. Rather, some were speculative and intended to push the boundaries and possibilities of what the research questions could/would answer.

³⁷ This is broken down into 55 male questionnaire respondents, and 52 female questionnaire respondents.

³⁸ 97 Undergraduate respondent breakdown = 36 first-years; 12 second-years; 25 third-years; 24 fourth-years.

³⁹ 10 Postgraduate respondent breakdown = 9 MSc students, and one student on a postgraduate course which is run collaboratively between an Institute of Technology and the representative body for advertising practitioners in Ireland (IAPI). Henceforth, this student will be included in any discussion of postgraduate students, along with MSc students, without further differentiation noted.

Data Source	Data Collection tool / strategy	Research question or questions the data source is intended to answer	Volume / numbers collected	Stage at which the data was collected
<p>Undergraduate (1st to 4th year)</p> <p>Postgraduate (MSc)</p>	<p>structured interviews:</p> <p>Following preliminary analysis of the student questionnaires, a draft interview topic guide was drawn up.</p> <p>Visual aids were used to facilitate discussion during the one-one-one interview; especially such adverts that, for example, exemplified the presence of a postfeminist bent (e.g. Carlsberg advert 'The Crate Escape').</p>	<p>of gender, stereotyping, sexualisation.</p> <p>Attitudes to the advertising industry's portrayal of gender, women, men, masculinity and femininity.</p> <p>Perceptions of working in an advertising agency (e.g. room to be ethically/ gender sensitive?).</p> <p>Discussion of gender issues in course modules.</p> <p>Interest in the creative aspects (e.g. gendered understanding of what it means to be 'creative'?).</p>	<p>interviews⁴⁰:</p> <p>9 Undergraduate interviewees⁴¹;</p> <p>3 Postgraduate interviewees⁴²</p>	<p>collection phase; once the following had been completed:</p> <p>Questionnaires transcribed;</p> <p>Preliminary analysis completed;</p> <p>Contact made with participant volunteers and interviews were set-up.</p> <p>On average, interviews lasted for about an hour. A digital recorder was used to record the interviews, with prior permission.</p>
<p>Industry players⁴³</p>	<p>Qualitative, semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Gender gap in the industry (horizontal and vertical).</p> <p>Women-only</p>	<p>n = 5 interviews</p> <p>These include:</p> <p><i>4 advertising practitioners:</i> Art Director;</p>	<p>Stage two of data collection phase.</p> <p>This occurred simultaneous with conducting student</p>

⁴⁰ This is broken down into 5 female student interviewees, and 7 male student interviewees. An overview of interviewee profiles can be found in Appendix A.

⁴¹ One of these interviewees was a fourth-year student, who was interviewed twice – before work experience placement and after.

⁴² Two of these interviewees were interviewed twice – before work experience placement and after.

⁴³ While the focus of the research was always concerned with the educational sphere, interviews were conducted with several industry players in case they may be enlightening to research questions as well as wider considerations.

Data Source	Data Collection tool / strategy	Research question or questions the data source is intended to answer	Volume / numbers collected	Stage at which the data was collected
		<p>awards.</p> <p>Experiences of working in the industry and designing advertising campaigns.</p> <p>Insights into organisational culture and the creative process.</p> <p>Attitudes to advertising's portrayal of gender.</p>	<p>Strategic Planner; Copywriter; Digital Creative</p> <p><i>CEO of IAPI</i> (Institute of Advertising Practitioners of Ireland)</p>	interviews
<p>End of year student showcases:</p> <p>Undergraduate 4th year students</p> <p>Postgraduate MSc project pitches</p>	<p>Observational note-taking component</p> <p>Involved attending student project pitches and project showcases</p>	<p>Design of advertising campaign 'in action' (bearing in mind references to gender/ gender roles/ gender stereotyping);</p> <p>Team 'roles' taken on by women and men in the class (especially as it related to gendered assumptions of creative competence).</p>	<p>2 showcases:</p> <p>Undergraduate final year 'showcase' (8 teams given a brief to follow and design a campaign for an organisational client);</p> <p>Postgraduate end-of-year 'pitch' (class divided into two teams, each given a client and a brief around which to design a campaign).</p>	<p>Stage three of data collection</p> <p>Collecting this data had to happen at the end of the academic year</p>
<p>Undergraduate lectures: gender class 'in action'⁴⁴</p>	<p>Observational note-taking, non-participatory component;</p>	<p>Interactions between students and lecturer when discussing gender issues.</p>	<p>n = 3 lectures attended</p>	<p>Stage four of data collection</p> <p>Collecting this data occurred in</p>

⁴⁴A request to sit-in on MSc lectures was denied.

Data Source	Data Collection tool / strategy	Research question or questions the data source is intended to answer	Volume / numbers collected	Stage at which the data was collected
	<p>Involved attending 3 lectures of the 1st year BA module, Analysing Media.</p> <p>This module deals with the issue of gender in three lectures, and is significant in being the only ‘official’ inclusion of gender throughout the course of the 4-year BA.</p>	<p>How lecturer devises the class content, and chooses to frame the issue of gender.</p> <p>How the lecturer incorporates gender into an interrogation of advertising content / imagery.</p>		Semester 1 of the academic year
Student Undergraduate (1st year)⁴⁵	<p>Qualitative short-survey:</p> <p>This survey was devised by the lecturer of the Analysing Media module and distributed to the class at the beginning of the first of three classes dedicated to looking at and discussing gender.</p>	<p>Although this survey was devised by the lecturer, and therefore not part of the initial research design, the lecturer provided access to respondents’ answers, which proved illuminating in terms of students’ understandings of:</p> <p>Gender Feminism Femininity</p>	<i>n</i> = 57 survey respondents	<p>Stage four of data collection</p> <p>This occurred while attending the ‘gender’ lectures of the Analysing Media module in Semester 1 of the academic year.</p>
Lecturers: From the Undergraduate course	<p>Qualitative, semi-structured interviews:</p> <p>Topic guide was developed on the</p>	<p>Route into the advertising education field.</p> <p>Opinions on advertising’s</p>	<p><i>n</i> = 2 lecturers⁴⁶</p> <p>Lecturer and program leader of the undergraduate degree course.</p>	<p>Stage five of data collection</p> <p>These interviews had to happen after observational</p>

⁴⁵This first-year undergraduate group are not the same cohort as the first-year group who filled in the questionnaire, as this survey was completed in the next academic year.

⁴⁶ Despite best efforts to get more interviews with advertising lecturers and/ or academics, only two such volunteers were secured.

Data Source	Data Collection tool / strategy	Research question or questions the data source is intended to answer	Volume / numbers collected	Stage at which the data was collected
	basis of their position/ role with the institution.	<p>portrayal of gender, and the issue of gender stereotyping.</p> <p>Responsibility as an educator to let students know about gender issues and biases in terms of working in the industry?</p> <p>Gender issues sufficiently covered in the course modules and attitudes to introducing gender modules.</p> <p>Perceptions of students' gendered attitudes.</p>	Service lecturer to undergraduate course and lecturer on the Analysing Media module	component of attending the gender classes, as this comprised an important element of the interview with that lecturer
<p>Course components:</p> <p>Undergraduate (BA)</p> <p>Postgraduate (MSc)</p>	<p>Textual analysis of course modules</p> <p>Gathered using online module descriptors.</p> <p>Note: these are only available for undergraduate BA degree course.</p> <p>Only a more general course content overview is provided for the MSc course.</p>	Presence of key terms such as 'gender'; 'women'; 'men'; 'masculinity'; 'femininity'; 'feminism'; 'stereotyping' in module descriptions.	<p>Total = 47 modules</p> <p>(offered at Undergraduate level)</p>	<p>Stage six of data collection</p> <p>However, this phase of data collection could happen at any stage, since collection simply involved downloading module descriptor PDFs from the institution website.</p>

Table 5.1: Data sources overview

Throughout the data collection phase, the quality and usefulness of data was continuously scrutinised against the purpose of the study and the principle research questions driving the research. The volume of data collected was large but justified on the basis that each source represents an integral element to answering those questions. However, bearing the amount of qualitative data in mind, a thematic analytical approach has been adopted because it is deemed to be the most feasible and manageable analytic tool for doing a robust analysis of all of the data. This analytic strategy is facilitated through the use of NVivo as a database, storage, coding and analytic tool⁴⁷. Nevertheless, some unanticipated events resulted in limitations to the research strategy, particularly an inability to secure a larger number of interview volunteers among advertising lecturers. Despite the low number of academic interviewees, the two lecturer interviews that were conducted are significant in representing two important players within the Undergraduate degree course: i.e. one being the program leader and principle architect of the nascent BA course, and the other lecturer representing the one module provided within the degree course that offers alternative narratives to advertising's normative discourses.

Ethics and data management

It is acknowledged that being sincere and upfront about the research intentions garners greater co-operation from subjects. However, the researcher needs to balance this with not influencing participant responses. This becomes a challenge if the topics to be explored concern issues that are sensitive, controversial and potentially could reflect negatively on participants. As Ramazanoglu and Holland note, '(e)ven if you conscientiously offer information, you cannot be sure of what people think they are consenting to' (2002: 157). In addition, Babbie contends that often 'research subjects are asked to reveal deviant behavior, attitudes they feel are unpopular, or personal characteristics that may seem demeaning ... (r)evealing such information usually makes subjects feel at least uncomfortable' (2008: 68). As a means to mitigate that concern, it was stressed that the interviews were being conducted on an anonymous and confidential basis and that students should feel free to express fully their thoughts, opinions and worldviews, especially as they relate to their understandings of gender.

⁴⁷ This is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

The Research Ethics Committee at DCU approved the research proposal and methodology on the basis that the project was deemed a 'low risk social research project'. Although not an 'at-risk' or vulnerable group and proceeding on the basis that there were minimal perceived risks to personal or other safety connected with this research study, the implicit ethical implications of this research project were fully acknowledged and appreciated. Potential risks concerned the possibility of raising matters of a personal and private nature related to the topic area. This researcher was mindful of the sensitive nature of discussing issues of gender and sexual identities, and the emotional feelings that may result. A frank and open discussion on issues concerning gender identities, gender roles and norms formed the cornerstone of the research project and it was understood that these exchanges may prove to be emotive for participants. When conducting the interviews, the need to bear in mind that students would be contemplating such aspects of social life as values, beliefs, behaviours, and experiences was foremost since it was thought this might perhaps raise issues of a personal and sensitive nature relating to identity and sexuality. This researcher was committed to remaining respectful and appreciative of their contributions. Engaged sensitivity was accorded the interview participants, and it was explained that their participation in the research project is entirely voluntary and that they could decline to answer any questions if they wished. Furthermore, it was stressed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point in the process. Such stipulations were outlined in the Informed Consent Form and the Plain Language Statement, which interviewees were required to read and sign before proceeding with the interview. It was incorporated into the interviewing strategy that if participants appeared to become agitated, defensive or upset, it was proposed to steer the conversation in another direction in order to not further distress them. Such a scenario did not, in fact, materialise. The consent of the questionnaire and survey respondents was tacit in students' completion of questionnaire and survey within class time, during which their lecturers were present in the room and it was made clear that their responses were to be used for a PhD research project. Likewise, consent to use data gathered during attendance at the 'gender and media' classes of the Analysing Media module was implicit in the acceptance by the lecturer to the request to sit-in on those lectures.

As each data source was collected, it was typed up and/ or transcribed. Both questionnaire data and survey data was transcribed into MS Excel spreadsheets, capturing also key case information – year of study, sex, age – alongside respondent answers to each question. For the interview participants, a digital recorder was used to record the interviews, with prior permission. Each

interview session was transcribed following completion. There are a number of advantages to recording and transcribing interviews, such that it ‘corrects the natural limitations of our memories ... (allows for a) more thorough examination of what people say ... (and) it permits repeated examinations of the interviewees’ answers ... (and) opens up the data to public scrutiny by other researchers’ (Gordan, n.d.: 321). Furthermore, manually typing up interview data has the advantage of increasing familiarity with the data, and enables close reading and tentative coding in thematic categories in the initial phases of analysis. Since the analytical strategy used for this doctoral project was a thematic analysis, a ‘verbatim’ report of the interview was provided, rather than the far more detailed transcription methods required within a, for example, discourse analysis, which seeks to capture the finest nuances of language and conversation, such as lengths of pauses. ‘(T)hematic analysis, even constructionist thematic analysis, does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as conversation, discourse or even narrative analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 88). Observational notes written down during end of year showcases and during the non-participatory lecture attendance components were typed into MS Word documents, with any accompanying and relevant images pasted into the Word page. The entire data corpus⁴⁸ was uploaded onto NVivo, in order firstly to keep all data items in one manageable location, and secondly from which location it was possible to build a workable database that would facilitate coding and analysis to be centralised and streamlined.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of the data, storage was a key consideration. In line with international recommendations for researchers, safe and secure retention of the data will be provided for up to 5 years following completion of this doctoral research project. The safe storage of data was guaranteed through a commitment to leave a minimal paper trail of documents that may identify research participants. In order to ensure the confidentiality of each participant, they were allocated a pseudonym at the outset of the study. Only this researcher had access to the document that gave full details of which pseudonym was allocated to which participant. This master list was saved on an external hard drive, and not in the NVivo database along with interview transcripts. Data was stored on a secure cloud storage service provider. Access through this type of storage is password protected and can only be obtained through logging-in through the service provider’s website or from the researcher’s own password-protected PC.

⁴⁸ ‘Data corpus’ refers to all the data that was collected, as per the terminology employed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The interview process – student interviewees

Liz Stanley posits that ‘researchers should know from the inside whatever they research, in the sense of making clear the specificities of their intellectual engagement’ (Stanley, 1996: 47). On this basis, it is suggested that by not claiming to be an independent observer as regards meanings, understandings and social constructions of femininity, masculinity, gender and gender relations, this researcher was strategically positioned to undertake such exploratory inquiries into interviewees conceptualisations and understandings of their gendered social reality. This personal closeness and emotional investment in the subject matter under discussion enabled the researcher to relate more convincingly to the research participants, and thus tease out, during the interview, the most relevant, pertinent, and pressing concerns, discourses and issues. From this standpoint the researcher was interested in exploring how advertising students construct their own gendered subjectivities and how this relates and impacts on their perception of how gender is represented in advertisements. These questions necessitated that some form of qualitative research be conducted in order to understand how students negotiated their engagement with socially constructed and culturally-specific gender discourses. It was felt that the face-to-face qualitative interview would most favourably facilitate an inquiry of this nature. Adopting Avi Shankar’s concept of introspection as used in qualitative interviews in the field of popular music consumption research, ‘introspection’ involves ‘the examination of one’s own mental and emotional processes’ (Shankar, 2000: 112). Furthermore, through guided or interactive:

...(i)ntrospection, the researcher encourages the participant to look inward for answers to questions posed that are of a contemplative nature. This method proves to be much more successful when the interviewer and interviewee are ‘in the midst of a similar life experience’ (Wallendorf, Melanie & Brucks, Merrie, 1993: 341) (Shankar, 2000: 27-28).

While sharing students’ life experiences is a claim that could not be made for this project, since this researcher was considerably older than the majority of the student interviewees – a power differential that was respectfully considered – a claim is made with regard to the ‘insider’ role of this researcher in terms of having an insight into the subject matter being discussed. This facilitates an ability to more accurately relate to, and therefore, interpret the findings, since ‘meaningful interpretations of human experience only come from those persons who have thoroughly immersed themselves in the phenomenon they wish to interpret and understand’

(Denzin, 1989: 25-26). Therefore, a closeness and internalisation on the part of the researcher, both intellectual and emotional, of the concept of gender only added to the success of the interview exchanges.

Analytic strategy – Thematic Analysis

This research study adopts a methodologically and analytically robust thematic analysis; as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006), and as strengthened by the criticism and suggestions for improvement by Bazeley (2009; 2013). According to Babbie, ‘(a)lthough qualitative research is sometimes undertaken for purely descriptive purposes’, mostly it involves the ‘search for explanatory patterns’ (2008: 416). The pitfall of passing off detailed descriptive writing as analysis is something that Bazeley points to in her critique of thematic analysis. She stresses the need to go beyond simply describing themes, and instead to conceptually explore and outline the significance of patterns and themes. With this benchmark in mind, thematic analysis is therefore deemed suitable to interpret the data, and explore the patterns and themes of this study, as well as identify the presence and adherence to certain discourses. Thematic analysis provides a way to carry out a ‘constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 81). Thematic analysis allows discourses to be identified through dominant themes along with an intuitive and interpretive understanding and knowledge of the data. As a second-tier, broad-brush analytic ‘add-on’, the philosophical underpinnings of ‘feminist critical discourse analysis’ (FCDA), as outlined and discussed by Lazar (2007), are applied at the latest stages of analytic interpretation in order to enable a broader discussion of prevailing gender discourses and their context, and the relationship of gender ideology to power. In particular, FCDA explicitly focuses on the gendered social order, seeking to highlight problematic issues of power and gender, and is therefore deemed a useful analytic consideration since it helps to explore the ways discourse acts as a vehicle through which gender prejudice and discrimination may play out. In other words, this research study utilises the objectives and theoretical foundations of FCDA, where FCDA represents more the overarching lens, rather than the analytic strategy. Therefore, although not adhering to a FCDA in the analytical process, instead this doctoral project will ‘borrow’ from its philosophical tenets, retaining thematic analysis as the predominant analytic tool.

After having completed two full-day training courses on the applications and usefulness of the computer software programme, NVivo, the decision was made to incorporate the software package into the research design of this project. In the context of those workshops, it was made explicitly clear that NVivo more accurately represents a tool for transparency and efficiency when working with qualitative data, and should not be understood as a substitute for the analytic work that the researcher must undertake. Although becoming proficient in the use of the software and securing a firm understanding in the applications of various functions of the software was time-consuming, and great care had to be taken in ‘building’ the database in order to ensure any qualitative work undertaken from the outset was properly recorded and easily accessed, there are many advantages to using NVivo for qualitative analysis. The strength of NVivo lies in the existence of an audit trail of decisions made and directions taken in terms of the coding and analysis. This lends the entire process robustness and rigorousness that protects against more overt issues of personal researcher bias, without claiming an absolute objectivity that this researcher does not believe exists. Bazeley praises such software for allowing an ‘attention to detail and constant review, to create an unusual degree of ‘closeness’ to data. At the same time, coded segments can always be viewed within a larger context’ (2013: 18). Furthermore, the process of documenting the logical and consistent development of each phase of coding and analysis, along with embedded observational comments and interpretive findings afforded by the NVivo database stresses transparency and gives the data analysis and subsequent findings and results strength of credibility.

The coding process

Combining the steps of **Phase 1** of thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke in what they refer to as ‘immersion’ and familiarisation with the data, with Bazeley’s advice to ‘read, reflect, play and explore’ (2013: 101) at first contact with data sources, the preliminary analysis phase involved reading through the entire data corpus, in order to holistically and contextually record initial, tentative observations and reactions to features and patterns in the data. This is a crucial component of the analytical strategy, since it is considered important to identify patterns and themes across the entire body of data collected for the study, as well as more focused

concentrated analysis on the dataset⁴⁹. In order to aid creative analytic thinking in developing an initial set of ‘starter’⁵⁰ codes, extensive notes were taken and memos made during this phase. This meant drawing up a summary of each data item⁵¹; whether interview transcript, observational lecture notes, or collated answers to each questionnaire question. The summary entailed the main points being raised and covered, and consisted of marking revealing or interesting or surprising quotes, as well as recording novel or unanticipated issues. This note-taking phase also pushed the thinking in a more abstract, theoretical direction, as opposed to a purely inductive or descriptive overview. As such, in addition to data-driven observations and notes, extracts of data were highlighted as of interest and relevance bearing research questions and theoretical considerations in mind. Endeavouring to provide a ‘rich description of the data set’ rather than a more ‘detailed account’ of specific features of each of the data items, the process of coding and analysis is concerned with both theoretically considered, latent themes that are derived from the research questions and literature – i.e. a priori codes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) – as well as inductive, data-driven considerations that are both semantic and latent by nature. ‘(T)hematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the *underlying* assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84). Phase 1 was completed with a short synopsis of overall impressions gleaned from each of the eight individual data sources, along with generating a set of 49 initial starter codes, where ‘coding’ should be understood as a process of inductive reasoning. These starter codes were at times descriptive, at other times more abstract, meaning both latent and semantic coding categories were brought into the second phase of the analysis.

It was decided at the completion of Phase 1 that the following data items would not be included in the ‘dataset’, and should be considered as ‘satellite’ data items. Consequently, the coding framework was not applied to:

⁴⁹ ‘Data set’, as per Braun and Clarke (2006) refers to ‘all the data from the data corpus that are being used for a particular analysis’ (p.79). For this study, the data set consists of the questionnaire, survey and student interview data, since these data items represent the principle sources for interrogating the aims and objectives of the research.

⁵⁰ Bazeley talks about playing with concepts and categories within the data to create ‘a starter set of codes’ (2013: 120). For the purposes of this PhD study, Phase 1 of the thematic analysis combines Braun and Clarke’s steps of marking down initial ideas and observations with Bazeley’s outline of developing a list of starter codes.

⁵¹ ‘Data item’ refers to ‘each individual piece of data collected’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79).

- Lecturer interviews ($n = 2$): Since topics covered differed from the student questionnaire, survey and interview, a ‘stand-alone’ thematic analytic discussion is provided for these two data items, focusing on pertinent issues
- Observational components:
 - Gender classes ($n = 3$): a ‘stand-alone’ analytic discussion is provided for these data items, focusing on pertinent issues
 - Student, end-of-year showcases ($n = 2$): a ‘stand-alone’ analytic discussion is provided for these data items, focusing on pertinent issues
- Course modules: a textual analysis is provided
- Practitioner interviews ($n = 4$) and interview with Tania Banotti, CEO of Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland: Since these interviews were supplemental to the study, a more cursory analysis is provided, indicated by reference to key, relevant quotes

This means that the coding framework has been applied to the study’s ‘dataset’, which are the most important data items collected in this study, namely:

- Student questionnaire responses ($n = 107$)
- Student survey responses ($n = 57$)
- Student interviews ($n = 12$)

Additionally, a secondary, quantitative analysis was carried out on the questionnaire and survey data. Both the questionnaire and the survey⁵² were designed to include either exclusively or mostly open-ended questions, in order to elicit rich and reflective answers. Consequently, as well as the study’s coding framework being applied to the questionnaire and survey data, an additional statistical analysis was carried out on the open-ended questions in order to ascertain the percentages and gender splits of respondents answering in specific ways. This involved categorising similar answers to each question under various category headings devised for each specific question. Criteria for inclusion of a participant’s answer among other ‘similar’ answers were based on the presence and use of words and phrases and expressions that were alike. Coding for open-ended questions, which produces quantitative and qualitative results, is largely predicated on the researcher’s interpretation concerning respondent’s understanding of the question and subsequent answer. Therefore, absolutist claims about the veracity of these findings

⁵² As indicated previously, the survey was devised by the lecturer on the Analysing Media module for advertising undergraduates and disseminated at the beginning of the first of three classes on ‘gender and the media’.

cannot be made. However, this secondary part of the analytic framework does offer insights into student's attitudes to gender and advertising, the prevalence and/ or absence of certain viewpoints, and furthermore broadly highlights differential gendered views between female and male students. That is to say, for a question such as 'Should adverts that are controversial and/or receive a lot of complaints from the public be banned?', analysis revealed a significant gender divide with higher rates of female students answering 'yes' than male students. Students were given the opportunity to expand on their answer to this question in the comments box, and these were further analysed and grouped together under similar types of answers, such as those who answered 'no' because of a perceived public good in allowing 'shock' advertising to be broadcast. In addition, it should be noted that not every question on the questionnaire was coded or analysed, or had NVivo queries run on them to find out key statistical information. For example, questions asking students to indicate their favourite or least favourite advertising campaigns were not coded or analysed since they were primarily conceived of for the questionnaire as tools to aid their thinking, and the answers were not hugely illuminating or relevant. Furthermore, on reflection, some questions were not well conceived and elicited answers that were not especially pertinent to the study or broadly repeated similar answers proffered on another question, and therefore were not further analysed. For instance, a question asking if the TV show *Mad Men* was a factor in choosing to study advertising elicited mostly 'no' answers, and another question asking students to respond to whether they believed advertisers have other responsibilities besides selling products offered up similar answers to a question about the socially influential nature of advertising. In addition, other questionnaire questions more suitably acted as 'case' classifications, such as the sex of the respondent, their year of study and their age, and were therefore not analysed or coded within either the developed coding framework or the secondary statistical analysis carried out.

The function of coding qualitative data is primarily two-fold, as per Bazeley. It enables data to be 'labelled' so that a label or code is 'used both to *represent* and to *access* that passage along with other data that are the same or similar' (2013: 125-126). Beginning the second phase of thematic analysis, which is concerned with developing and applying the coding framework, Braun and Clarke's advice was followed. In particular, they suggest approaching this phase by initially coding extensively and generously, while consciously not decontextualising the data, and being sure to code segments of data that represent anomalies within or go against the broader narrative of the study. It is suggested also that data extracts may well fit into more than one coding

category and should be coded accordingly. Mason (2002) advises that codes, or ‘indexing categories’, can be literal such that they reference certain topics, or the use of particular words; codes can be interpretive and involve the researcher’s implicit understanding about the kinds of values being articulated; or reflexive, that is to say more overt, subjective categorisation of data, based on for example one’s observational field notes. Somewhat similarly, Bazeley makes a distinction between ‘descriptive’, ‘topical’, or ‘analytical’ codes that are applied to data to ‘serve many purposes’ (2013: 126-127). In addition to being a tool for cut-and-pasting and organising research material, coding also serves an analytic function to ‘facilitate asking questions’ and to ‘attend to the detail of the data’ (Bazeley, 2013: 126-127).

The use of NVivo facilitated efficient development, application and review of codes as the process progressed through each of the data items in the dataset, to which the coding framework was being applied. This involved simply adding new ‘nodes’ (i.e. codes) into a list in the database, as appropriate and as new ideas for coding categories emerged. In addition to naming the particular node, a detailed description was appended to each specific node, which offered an explanation of what the node represents and what features one can expect to be present within each segment of data coded under that specific node. The software also facilitated easy deletion or amendment of node names and/ or descriptions. NVivo enabled data segments or ‘extracts’ to be tagged under one or more nodes and quick retrieval of the original referenced source was possible, permitting ease of re-contextualisation when considering the coded extract. Throughout the various phases, continued use was made of the ‘link-to-memo’ and ‘link-to-annotation’ functions⁵³ in order to record pertinent questions and observations as they arose or to mark ideas for further comparative analysis, for instance. The advantage of undertaking this process in NVivo is that any memos and annotations made against data extracts get pulled into all the locations at which that data item is held within the database. Considering that the predominant objective for the thematic analysis is in identifying and discussing patterns and themes across the dataset, rather than within each individual data item, the coding framework was developed and applied across the questionnaire, survey and student interview data.

As indicated, during Phase 1 an initial starter list of 49 codes was created. **Phase 2** involved reviewing and refining this list, and this stage concluded with 36 coding categories. The reasons for refinement included recognition that some codes devised during Phase 1 were too value-laden

⁵³ Annotations were employed to make notes against specific text, while memos are more appropriate for larger segments of text.

and appeared to be too leading and attempting to pre-empt findings for subsequent analysis. For example, a code had initially been labelled 'Incompetence in deconstructing gender ideology' because of a sense that this ability was lacking among the student participants. However, this code was subsequently expanded and broadened in Phase 2 to be called 'Deconstructing gender ideology', which allowed for inclusion of instances where participants demonstrated an adeptness at adequately and accurately 'reading' gender in ads, or otherwise; and/ or instances where participants expressed and took a critical stance against restrictive and reductive gender depictions in advertising. By so doing, it enabled for a broader code description and ultimately lead to it transpiring that students were far more capable of applying critical skills when pushed to deconstruct various gendered tropes in advertising imagery than had been previously thought. Other codes devised at Phase 1 stage were deleted altogether, proving not to be prevalent or present in any significant way; for instance a code labelled 'Disconnect between academia and professional practice' was deleted. This code was to relate to instances where participants suggest that academic research which is critical of the advertising industry or at least that highlights the issue of gender stereotyping is at odds with, or not in conversation with what is really happening in the industry. This narrative was not found to any significant extent among research participants. In addition, a few codes were taken out of the coding framework and instead were labelled as 'tentative themes', such was the intuitive impression at this stage that these categories were significant and may, after further analysis, come to represent key or core 'themes'. These included 'Being 'beautiful' matters; only the definition changes'; 'Educational instruction perpetuates falsehoods'; and 'Male experience as aspirational and relatable', among others. The coding framework developed during Phase 2 and applied to the dataset included 36 codes. Further details of this framework can be found in the appendices, labelled Appendix G. Detailed within this table is the code name; the code description; the number of references, or distinct data segments coded under that code; and the number of sources referenced within each code category.

Phase 3 began by systematically reading through and reviewing all 36 Phase 2 codes, code descriptions and coded segments. During this exercise, further notes and observations were recorded, decisions were made to not carry forward certain codes that proved to not be significant or representative enough, and data segments that could be considered to be 'outliers' or that contradicted the dominant narrative of the particular code were marked and highlighted. Furthermore, several codes were merged and grouped together, resulting in 24 codes remaining.

At the end of this exercise, the codes were sorted into potential, candidate themes. A list of 13 candidate themes was brought forward into Phase 4. Using Bazeley's proposed model to push analytical thinking further than descriptive reporting, Phases 4 and 5 of thematic analysis used this framework to review potential themes, and finally to define and name themes.

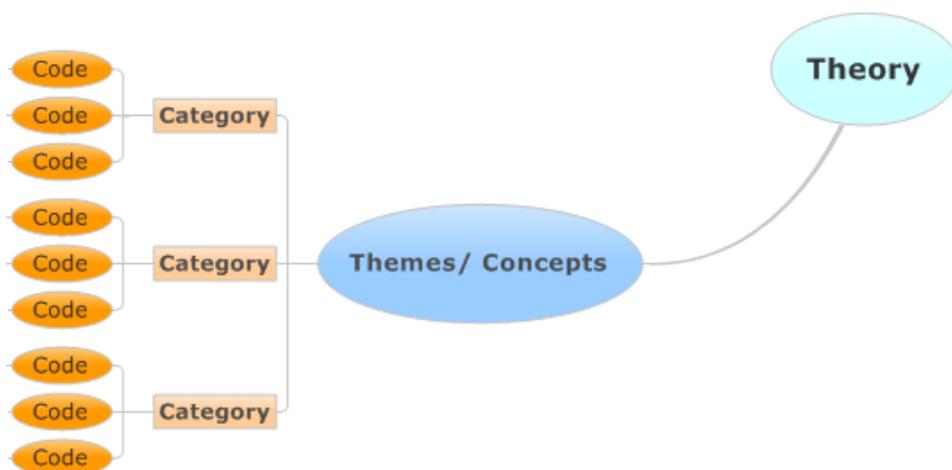


Figure 5.1: Reproduction of Bazeley's 'codes-to-theory' model for qualitative inquiry' (2013: 192)

Consequently, **Phase 4** involved assigning codes into one of four categories: attitudes to gender, in general; attitudes to gender as represented in advertising texts; attitudes to (gender in) advertising practice, ethics, and/ or creativity; and those codes relating to education or the educational context. Once this exercise was completed, codes within each category were reviewed, connections and comparisons were made and this phase culminated in the refinement of 14 themes and a sense of how they fitted into one of the 4 categories. Further refinement was carried out within **Phase 5** of this process. This involved analytical thinking exercises that aimed to identify patterns, similarities and differences across the 14 themes assigned to one of the four categories. The process of identifying and developing salient themes is premised on the understanding that a 'theme... connote(s) the fundamental concepts we are trying to describe' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 87). Ryan and Bernard advise the researcher to keep in mind latent, theory-driven subject matter that one is already exploring, while also paying attention to repetitive ideas and concepts that occur throughout the dataset, and the presence and prevalence of counter-discourses and contradictory cases. Likewise, as Saldaña notes, 'a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization and analytic reflection' (Saldaña, 2009: 13). As a result of

reviewing the candidate themes and coded data segments, during this exercise three overarching themes⁵⁴ were found to be salient within the ‘picture’ of the entire dataset that broadly correlated to the three categories of: attitudes to gender; attitudes to gender in advertising texts; and attitudes to gender in advertising practice. The three themes and three categories enabled a coherent and efficient organisation of the findings into three distinct chapters. However, it should be noted that there is, of course, some overlap between the three categorisations. At this juncture, it was decided that the data segments coded under ‘education/ educational context’ would be best served by being incorporated into the end of each of the three findings chapters. In this way, it allowed for an examination of how the educational ‘response’ to certain issues facilitate, endorse, or challenge various gender discourses, attitudes and assumptions held by students.

During Phase 5 also, sub-themes were assigned to one of the three ‘master’ themes, depending on the degree to which it best fit and was most relevant. This process entailed contextualising certain core concepts. For instance, in identifying that a sub-theme of *women and girls as the problematic and burdensome sex* fit into a wider thematic pattern of discussions of the *elusive ‘cool’ girl*, the concept of ‘*beauty*’ was found to be central to that discussion. This notion of being beautiful could be contextually and discursively positioned within iterations of the *tyranny of perfection*. Such a process was carried out throughout Phase 5, and resulted in – as stated – three ‘master’ themes, each containing up to three and four sub-themes. These are fully explained and explored in the findings and discussion chapters. **Phase 6** of Braun and Clarke’s guide to conducting thematic analysis is concerned with ‘producing the report’. They suggest that this phase is primarily concerned with ‘tell(ing) the complicated story of your data’ (2006: 93). The results of the work completed during this phase are found in the three subsequent chapters.

Once the themes and thematic concepts were fully developed and fleshed out in the findings chapters, the final step involved thinking about how those salient patterns and phenomena were significant at a more macro-level. Lazar’s work on feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) was especially helpful in this regard, since FCDA’s interrogation of gender ideology is motivated by the need to ‘demystify the interrelationships of gender, power and ideology’ (2007: 144). Indeed, the goal to bring about fundamental social change, requires that the ‘social status quo is contested in favour of a feminist humanist vision of a just society, in which gender does not predetermine or mediate our relationships with others, or our sense of who we are or might

⁵⁴ These include ‘chicks who can hang’; ‘what about the men?; and ‘creatively thinking, men are funnier’, as per findings chapters 6, 7, and 8.

become' (2007: 145). This enabled an interpretation of the findings that was borne out of picking apart certain discourses that highlight the power dynamics at play, and which operate to maintain an established gender order, as characterised by oppression, subordination and domination, and injustice. Lazar refers to this process as both 'analytical activism' and 'praxis-oriented research'. For the purposes of this doctoral project, an examination of the gendered attitudes of future advertising practitioners, with a view to revealing if/ any gender prejudices exist, thereby aims to add to the body of academic and activist work that is concerned with pressuring for changes in professional and educational conduct and more widely for a change of cultural attitudes pertaining to women and men and relations between the sexes.

Limitations of the study

When advertisers or advertising students choose to use gender as a unique or an emotional selling point, it is helpful to be given an insight into their own, often unexamined views on these issues, so that one might be in a better position to unpack the gendered content of adverts. That said, it should be noted that there are limitations implicit in this research, and in making more general conclusions, because 'any one person's experience will be limited, partial and socially located, and so cannot be taken as general knowledge of how social phenomena are organized as social relations' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 152). Indeed, it cannot be assumed that their perspectives on gender will always automatically influence the content of advertisements they are creating, or how they are read or interpreted by the public. Notwithstanding the limitations in making that link, highlighting potential inherent biases among the next cohort of advertising practitioners helps strengthen the case for promoting greater gender awareness among academics, course directors and professionals in this sphere. It offers an opportunity to document attitudes, to ensure that, from an ethical, social justice and egalitarian viewpoint the advertising sector reflects on how to reduce its rehashing of gender stereotypes, thereby hopefully affecting gender relations in society more generally. The European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in 2010 contended that 'in order to ensure a long term impact, gender equality should be a compulsory module for training in university studies of journalism and communication' (European Commission, 2010, p.13). This study extends that sentiment to advertising and marketing courses.

Contemplating the nature of advertising and its relationship to consumer capitalism also poses a challenge and represents a tension within this study that pervades its aims, objectives, findings and conclusions. For instance, specifically considering representations of women in advertising texts, advertisers have been found to respond to feminist concerns by co-opting feminist values to suit their own aims. Referred to as ‘commodity feminism’ by Goldman et al. (1991) and ‘power femininity’ by Lazar (2006), such a strategy is testament to the challenge of engaging advertisers and clients in an un-cynical concern for the social implications of the adverts produced and circulated by them. This issue, coupled with a consideration of what is a more ‘real’ or accurate depiction of the sexes and its associated risk of falling into the trap of essentialism entailed in such an assertion, begs the question of where this research converges with a feminist politics. The justification for this project lies in having hard data about student perceptions of gender in order to make the case, if required, for issues of ‘gender’ being taught or incorporated adequately. This could have a transformative impact on the students studying and training for a career in advertising, and by extension, allowing for mitigating factors, the industry. The upshot is that it is desirable to sensitise advertisers to sexist, stereotypical content, which could lead to a shift in the symbolic representation of women and men, and thereby feed into discourses about our gendered roles. The focus is on ‘mobilising’ advertisers to pay attention to gender; it is not on the ‘readers’ of advertisements to be more critical and discerning. In thinking about how this PhD feeds into the feminist political agenda, this research aims to add to the canon of radical feminist academic thought that is concerned with challenging preconceptions about ‘natural’ gender roles, and the supposed inevitability of the polarisation of the sexes.

In terms of claims of universality, due to the fact that this is an Irish case study, such claims in relation to advertising education cannot be made, since it cannot be inferred that Irish advertising students are typical of others across Europe and beyond. Such a claim would run the danger of a universalising notion of gender, as opposed to a culturally and nationally specific understanding of gender that has evolved in Ireland over time. Furthermore, as this study is expressly interested in exploring if postfeminism, understood as a culturally and contextually post-1990s gender discourse, continues to shape students attitudes to issues related to gender, it explicitly rejects a static notion of gender. However, it is believed that in other countries where conditions of an Irish postfeminist cultural climate are mirrored, then perhaps similar phenomena and attitudes as found in this study could be expected to be present.

A further limitation of this study is that it is beyond its scope to apply an intersectional approach in terms of fully incorporating and exploring issues of social class, age, ethnicity, disability and other social categories of privilege and oppression. While this was not feasible within the present research project, which instead was designed with an express focus solely on considerations of gender, it is acknowledged that an intersectional approach to the research would have been desirable in terms of more fully exploring how gendered attitudes cut across and differ when compared to students' age and socio-economic backgrounds. However, as argued by Eckert (1989: cited in Lazar, 2007) an explicit emphasis on gender in social research can perhaps be justified on the basis that, although class and race are indeed sites of discrimination, gender oppression involves systems of domination and subordination at such close quarters in people's daily lives – assuming the majority of people are in heterosexual couplings/pairings – that it is vital to treat it separately.

Finally, while every attempt was made to avoid leading questions on the questionnaire and during the interviews, this remains a concern. Indeed, the 'Hawthorne effect'⁵⁵ may well be present in some questionnaire and interview data. However, in order to mitigate this concern, steps were taken to identify interview responses that appeared to be given subsequent to questions by this researcher that may have prompted certain responses. Consequently, such exchanges were not included in coded and analysed data segments.

Conclusion

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, involving a variety of data items and analytical strategies. The data collected for this study is primarily qualitative, and a thematic analytical approach was employed in order to interpret the data. A number of challenges were faced and overcome during the course of the doctoral project. For instance, despite sustained effort to recruit additional advertising lecturers into the study, only two lecturer interviews were carried out. Nevertheless, it is held that the principle research objectives and aims have been adequately met and questions were able to be answered on the basis of the data sources that were secured. Furthermore, this study marks an unprecedented foray into a cross-disciplinary examination of advertising education, feminist media research, and gender as it pertains to

⁵⁵ The Hawthorne effect refers to a phenomenon in which respondents answer or behave in such ways that indicate they are trying to provide the 'right' answer to questions being asked.

advertising students. Banning and Schweitzer (2007) note that since the 1980s, scant attention has been paid to advertising education in terms of academic research. Mallia (2008) similarly points to the relative silence in the research sphere on the issue of gender and the industry bias towards male advertising creatives for example, while Windels and Mallia (2015) flag the dearth of academic investigation and interrogation on gender and ‘situated learning’ in advertising contexts as of particular concern.

Being primarily concerned with the proliferation of postfeminist-driven gendered images emanating from the advertising industry in the last two decades, and underlined with the assumption that the gendered identities of advertisers is brought to bear on decisions made around advertising campaign design and how to represent women and men, this study explored gendered attitudes of advertising students. Given the theoretical and culturally-contextual focus on postfeminism, this study asked, among other questions, if, and to what extent, postfeminism retains an influence on those worldviews and opinions.

The following chapters, which entail a presentation, discussion and analysis of the results of this study, are broken down into three considerations: attitudes to gender, in general; attitudes to gender in advertising texts; and attitudes to gender in advertising practice. Across all three platforms, the role that the educational context plays in fostering or challenging such attitudes and discourses is considered at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 6: Attitudes to Gender – chicks who can hang⁵⁶

Introduction

In exploring whether and the degree to which characteristics of postfeminism retain influence on constructions and understandings of gender, and relationships between the sexes, it is worth reiterating why such an examination matters. It is important because both the polarisation of the sexes narrative, and the very narrow markers of success that had come to characterise postfeminist discussions regarding gender equality need to be contested (Tasker and Negra, 2007). The postfeminist discourse is perhaps most dangerous for the simultaneous, albeit counter-intuitive contentions that men and women are fundamentally different, and that the fight for equality has been won, leading to complacency and acceptance of the current status of women in contemporary society. It is incumbent upon those attuned to equality between the sexes and women's rights to interrogate the cultural aspects of society that work against achieving a true valuing and respect of both women and men. Cultural manifestations of gender inequality are, at the same time, more difficult to recognise, articulate, challenge and over-turn. Bearing this contention in mind, this chapter seeks to deconstruct and understand student attitudes to gender, gender roles, feminism and their position as to whether gender equality has been achieved, in addition to exploring the ways in which they talk about women and men and relations between the sexes. It is suggested that, in the almost ten years since Tasker and Negra's influential work on understanding the cultural postfeminist gendered climate that had taken hold, feminism has re-emerged as a cultural, social and political talking point. Feminist voices are growing louder, and are intent on drawing attention to gender inequality, culturally and otherwise. Nevertheless, the increased awareness of feminism and gender equality issues has not been seen, for the most part, to translate among the participants of this doctoral study into a 'felt' and convincing concern for women and girls as facing continued oppression. This chapter outlines how salient attitudes to women and men work to construct a gender discourse that is androcentric and thereby, in the main, unsympathetic and lacking in empathy for women.

⁵⁶ This is a reference to a sketch by the comedian, Amy Schumer, on her TV show 'Inside Amy Schumer'. The sketch features four men expounding the virtues of 'chicks who can hang with the guys'. She is typified as '*a chick who's, like, super-hot but then, like, loves Xbox, and pizza*': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOIELxK83pw>

Gender, gender roles, attributes and behaviours

It is imperative to ascertain whether and if students tend towards a belief in naturalised differences between women and men, or if they are critical of reductive assumptions of supposed distinct male and female traits and characteristics, since to (mis-)understand gender as innate and biological is to uphold the ‘sex/gender system’. As conceptualised by Rubin (1975), the sex/gender system operates in the service of patriarchy in how it arranges society according to biological functioning and reproductive capacities. It thereby defines separate genders and attendant gender roles accordingly, which are imposed through a process of socialisation and cultural expectations. The implications of the sex/gender system are felt in cases where women and men transgress those gender boundaries and are accordingly sanctioned – socially, and otherwise. While this patriarchal system is reductive to both men and women’s freedoms to live full and diverse emotional, creative and intellectual lives, arguably women’s confinement for so long to the domestic sphere and the lack of value afforded to women’s voices and even physical presence in public spaces continues to disadvantage women more than men within the confines of gender roles. Consequently, as a starting point, it was deemed absolutely central to this project to explore student understandings of such issues, since their opinions would come to bear on attitudes to more specific issues concerning representations of gender in advertisements, as discussed in the next chapter.

Gender essentialism

Students were asked the following on the questionnaire:

Please tick. Do you think ...? A. men and women exhibit naturally different characteristics because of their biological make-up. B. gender differences are learned. Explain / further comments

	Male respondents	Female respondents
Natural differences due to biological make-up	46%	36%
Gender differences are learned	24%	27%

Both nature and nurture	25%	29%
Did not answer the question/ left blank	5%	8%

Table 6.1: Questionnaire question – naturalised or learned differences between the sexes

For the most part, those who answer that differences between women and men are ‘natural’ did not respond further on the question; only 21% of female respondents and 32% of male respondents who answer in that vein expanded on their answer. In one such answer, a 19-year old 1st year female student added that ‘*Even male and female animals act differently, it’s not something society teaches*’, while a 22-year old 3rd year male student responded that ‘*I think men and women are naturally different, testosterone levels etc. Look at a group of men hanging out compared to women hanging out*’. Somewhat similarly, a 22-year old 3rd year female student said that ‘*men and women are different and always will be, but should still be treated the same*’.

On the contrary, 93% of female respondents and 54% of male respondents who answer that gender differences are learned did expand on their answers and sought to explain their understanding and elaborate on why they took that position. Many of these answers were insightful and well-considered:

Little girls are bought dolls and boys are bought cars. We learn how to behave, what is “socially acceptable” (Female student, 2nd year, age 18)

No one is born misogynistic (Male student, 1st year, age 18)

Thoughtful answers were provided also by those students who sought to explain how both nature and nurture play a role:

Both, naturally we are different but you don’t see many males wearing dresses and make up due to how many people see what it is to be a man (Male student, 4th year, age 22)

Looking at some of those sex-disaggregated percentages – that more male students than female students believe differences between the sexes are biologically determined (46% : 36%), and that far more female students than male students clarified *why* they thought gender is socially imposed (93% : 54%) – both of these discrepancies are significant and could be explained by the fact that women have had to internalise and reflect more on gender and its socialisation and

attendant expectations and roles. Men, arguably, have not been so confined by their gender and are, far more so than women, considered the ‘universal’ human being, or as being genderless.

While less than half of questionnaire respondents subscribe to the view that differences between the sexes are natural and biological, the survey⁵⁷ revealed a considerably higher percentage demonstrating an understanding of gender that is aligned to a biological conceptualisation. This may have been due to the age of the respondents, since survey participants were first-year students in the first semester of their degree course, and were yet to undertake a three-week ‘gender and the media’ series of lectures, or indeed the open phrasing of the question may have prompted such responses.

Survey response – Question: What does the term gender mean to you?

	All students (both male and female)
Biological understanding*	65%
Social constructionist understanding**	28%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	7%

Table 6.2: Survey question – understanding ‘gender’

* This category includes answers that broadly align to an essentialist understanding of gender, and reference such words/ terms as ‘male’; ‘female’; ‘sex’; ‘sexuality’; ‘sexual orientation’; ‘reproductive/ genital parts’

**This category includes answers that are more nuanced and make some reference to gender as concerned with socialisation, or as a ‘cultural construction’; and/ or make an attempt to explain gender as ‘identity’, or as allowing one to ‘identify’ a certain way

While there were lots of references to ‘sex’; ‘male’; ‘female’; ‘sexual orientation’; and reproductive parts, there were only a few nuanced and more accurate⁵⁸ understandings of gender as referring to cultural constructions; or as being associated with biological sex but also as distinct from it. There was one ambiguous, but potentially quite brilliant and insightful answer provided by one student, who said: *Gender doesn't mean anything*. Nevertheless, the survey results indicate that the majority of students do not have a grasp on the difference between biological sex and gender.

Across the 12 student interviews, it was possible to probe deeper into student attitudes to gender, in general. While there is a strong awareness of the different societal expectations pertaining to

⁵⁷ As indicated in the methodology chapter, the survey was devised by the lecturer on the first-year undergraduate ‘Analysing Media’ module. The 57 completed surveys were offered for use in this study. It was not possible to disaggregate the data into male/female responses.

⁵⁸ ‘Accurate’ refers here to a framing and understanding of ‘gender’ within a radical feminist tradition.

women and men in terms of roles and behaviours, as well as iterations of the differential spheres of gendered recreational interests, there are variations regarding whether and the degree to which students question those essentialist assumptions. Students sometimes outright refute those assumptions, and provide examples to contradict that narrative, or they align themselves with a naturalised gender differences discourse and exhibit essentialist beliefs. However, such delineations were not always clear cut, and more often than not there was evidence of contradictory opinions held by students, revealed by simultaneously expressing sentiments which reject essentialised differences between the sexes while also buying into long-established and embedded notions of appropriate masculinity and femininity. There was similarly little, to no, critical awareness of the implications for meaningful and genuine equality between the sexes of assumptions that position women and men as fundamentally different.

Fiona⁵⁹ quite clearly was coming from a biological determinist or essentialist perspective regarding men and women and natural difference. There were numerous examples of this during the interview exchange that broadly fit into traditional gender role notions of women's aptitude for the domestic realm and for childcare, with men positioned as adept at manual tasks and having heightened sexual appetites. In discussing her hypothetical future husband/ partner, their children and allocation of certain tasks, she said: *Well like naturally enough if I had kids I would want to stay at home with them.* Because she seems to feel neither anguished nor find the idea of strictly defined gender roles worrisome or problematic, she was able to express, with certainty, how and why men and women are naturally different. This surety was grounded in her belief that equality has been achieved for women in Irish society: *we're just so equal here.*

Demonstrating less clear-cut gender essentialist sentiments, Paul expresses the view that he has not had to think about gender in any specific sense because of having a feminist, 'bread-winning' mother and 'chilled out' father. Consequently, he says, he did not grow up with traditional, restrictive versions of what it is to be a man, or likewise what is appropriate for women. As a result, he explains how he is indiscriminately friends with both women and men, based on interests and not on expectations or experience regarding their gender. He does not subscribe to a view of the genders fulfilling certain roles, and does not believe they are very different, or that certain stereotypes are true or accurate. For instance, he disputes the notion that women are more organised than men, or that men are physically stronger than women. However, immediately

⁵⁹ See Appendix A for an overview of all interviewees (students and otherwise) who participated in this study.

following that exchange, he contradicts his ‘gender-blind’ viewpoint when talking about making decisions concerned with designing and planning an advertising campaign:

I suppose I am saying like I don't really think biased but I guess I do like whenever I am thinking of something it always has to a very beautiful woman or something... I think actually truthfully I would find it weird if I saw a woman opening a door for a man or something like that, I would think that was a bit out of the ordinary.

In the main, the interviews reveal that students understood gender roles and expectations to be socially imposed and thereby reductive. However, when the conversations turned from the abstract, intellectual level to the specific and personal, contradictions started to emerge. In other words, when speaking about experience with friends, their girlfriends, and their boyfriends, they mostly subscribe to the view that men and women have different interests and there was a natural degree of segregation between them. More specifically, there was evidence of a clear sex/gender differences discourse that culminates in a ‘different-but-equal’ narrative, which is cultivated around a sense of men and women ‘complementing’ each other:

He just hangs around with the lads and I give him that space. And like saying that, I'd go shopping with the girls and he wouldn't necessarily tag along but like yeah, I suppose there are different spheres but you can kind of compromise as well – Colette

Male and female attributes

Drilling down further into attitudes to gender, an inventory was taken of the kinds of traits, attributes and characteristics students assign to men and women. Although students were asked to identify ‘stereo(typical)’ characteristics, it is suggested that the degree of similarity, consistency and high frequency of certain key words and terms associated with male persons, and a separate set of similar terms for females points to widespread and long-standing established associations pertaining to the sexes, regardless of whether they can be considered to be typical or stereotypical. That is to say, that in a society in which true equality between the sexes has been achieved the following question would not make sense, or at least would not elicit such dichotomously differentiated male-female answers.

Questionnaire response – Question: What key words describe (stereo)typical male characteristics?

The 5 most commonly used words are:

Male respondents	Female respondents
Strong	Strong
Tall	Big
Macho	Handsome
Muscular	Masculine
Dominant	Tall

Table 6.3: Questionnaire question – stereotypical male characteristics

Outside of physical traits, direct references to personality characteristics were coded for whether they could be considered broadly 'positive' or 'negative'⁶⁰. While this required a judgement call, it was a useful exercise and highlighted the following. Where negative words were used to describe stereotypical male traits, both women and men most frequently made reference to characteristics connected to a cold, individualistic emotional suppression, such as words like 'emotionless'; 'selfish'; 'arrogant'; 'insensitive'; and 'egotistical'. Where positive words were used to describe stereotypical male traits, both women and men used words that made reference to an active assertiveness, such as 'independent'; 'authoritative'; 'leaders'; 'brave'; 'active'; 'funny'; and 'confident'. Such positive words tend to refer to traits that are self-empowering or are connected with asserting dominance or power-over others.

Questionnaire response – Question: What key words describe (stereo)typical female characteristics?

The 5 most commonly used words are:

Male respondents	Female respondents
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⁶⁰ Some characteristics were coded as 'neutral' (i.e. if it was ambiguous, or could be interpreted as either good or bad). Those traits were not included for further consideration.

Big (i.e. 'boobs'; 'bum/ass'; eyes; hair)	Skinny
Caring	Emotional
Kind	Beautiful
Emotional	Pretty
Hair (i.e. blonde; big; straight)	Gentle

Table 6.4: Questionnaire question – stereotypical female characteristics

Again, apart from physical traits, direct references to personality characteristics were coded for whether they could be considered broadly 'positive' or 'negative. Where negative words were used to describe stereotypical female traits, both women and men most frequently made reference to characteristics connected to emotional, physical and intellectual weakness, such as words like 'passive'; 'self-conscious'; 'dependent'; 'fragile'; 'weak'; and 'irrational'. Where positive words were used to describe stereotypical female traits, both women and men used words that made reference to an emotional generosity and warmth, such as 'caring'; 'kind'; 'loving'; and 'thoughtful'. Interestingly, the male answers offered a far broader range, scope and frequency of positive words connected with women and typical female traits, with words such as 'fun', 'playful' and 'smart' not present in the female answers. Overall, however, where positive words are used they tend to be references to characteristics that benefit others, with little reference to self-empowering traits such as intelligence, intellect and creativity. The majority of answers to these two questions align broadly to the traditional realms of caring, that is to say the domestic and private sphere, reserved for women alongside traits of fragility and vulnerability, with men more often associated with the public realm in terms of iterations of leadership and courage, with attendant characteristics of strength. This speaks to the longevity of patriarchal-imposed distinct private-public roles for women and men.

Talking to Gareth, it was clear that he took an anthropological and sociological approach to understanding people, men and women, and social groups in general, and how they interact and interconnect. In terms of explaining divisions in society, he posits that social groups of people stick to what they know and what they can relate to; meaning that women of a certain age will spend more time with each other, and men of a similar age will be more likely to make connections with each other, this being a natural inclination. However, aside from an awareness

of the impact of socialisation, he positions women's reproductive capacities as fundamental to the female lived experience, to the degree that, he believes, makes the idea of a gender neutral world impossible. He expresses the view that, for women, the drive towards motherhood trumps all other experiences in life. Furthermore, he believes that, while gender stereotypes are based on some truths, they are continuously breaking down and changing over time. However, he thinks stereotypes perform a social function in enabling people to make some sense of the world since it is so complex and ever changing. This is an interesting perspective, and perhaps explains – at least from this student’s point of view – the difficulty in eradicating stereotypes associated with women and men.

Understanding of Feminism

While attitudes to feminism were less central to the study’s considerations, it was important to garner a sense of this among students, particularly in establishing if the latest upsurge of feminist activism has made an impact on student attitudes.

Questionnaire response – Question: What does the term ‘feminism’ mean for you?

	Male	Female
Understood*	58%	86%
Antagonistic**	18%	2%
Contradictory***	9%	4%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	15%	8%

Table 6.5: Questionnaire question – understanding of feminism

**The category of 'understood' means that answers exhibit a broadly accurate, articulate understanding of the core tenet of feminism being about equality and the struggle/ fight to bring about equality for women*

*** The category of 'antagonistic' means that answers demonstrate an antagonistic or negative view of feminists/ feminism*

**** The category of 'contradictory' covers answers that express an understanding of the core tenet of feminism being about equality, but that qualify that understanding with a contradictory statement*

The majority of both male and female respondents demonstrated an accurate understanding of feminism, although a significantly higher proportion of female answers than male responses were

unambiguous. Antagonistic and contradictory answers by male respondents include such sentiments as: feminists take things too seriously/ like to complain; that equality is already achieved; feminism is 'bullshit'; feminism is too aggressive; feminism elevates women above men; and that feminists' want too much, and are guilty of double standards. Only one female respondent answered in a way that was antagonistic towards feminism, believing that feminists take things too seriously. The two women that demonstrated contradictory opinions about feminism suggest that feminists take things too seriously; and that feminism elevates women above men. While broadly students took a position on feminism that showed an understanding of it being concerned with the struggle or fight to bring about equality for women, socially, politically and economically, the greater numbers of men than women who make qualifying or hostile statements is significant, and serves to undermine the legitimacy of feminist concerns.

A slightly more favourable response in support of feminism is seen in the survey responses:

Survey response – Question: What is a feminist? Understanding of feminism

	All students (both male and female)
Understood*	88%
Antagonistic**	7%
Contradictory***	3%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	2%

Table 6.6: Survey question – understanding of feminism

**The category of 'understood' means that answers exhibit a broadly accurate, articulate understanding of the core tenet of feminism being about equality and the struggle/ fight to bring about equality for women*

*** The category of 'antagonistic' means that answers demonstrate an antagonistic or negative view of feminists/ feminism*

**** The category of 'contradictory' covers answers that express an understanding of the core tenet of feminism being about equality, but that qualify that understanding with a contradictory statement*

While very few in number, answers in the vein of antagonistic include: feminists patronise women; feminism elevates women above men; feminists like to complain; and equality has already been achieved. The contradictory position suggests that feminism elevates women above men; and that feminists are extremists. There is a strong understanding and articulation of feminism as fighting for and the promotion of equality between women and men.

Questionnaire response – Question: Do you think feminism is still relevant in today’s society?

	Male respondents	Female respondents
Yes	75%	86%
No	14%	6%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	11%	8%

Table 6.7: Questionnaire question – relevance of feminism

While the majority of respondents confirm the continued relevance of feminism, there were varying justifications for this. Just over half of male respondents who agree that feminism is still relevant expanded on their answer and offered further insight. The most common reasons for answering in this vein came with a caveat: that feminists were alienating people and/ or detracting from the issues; or answers made reference to the need to address certain issues; and that things were improving but are not quite there. Those who did not believe feminism remains relevant were a relatively low figure. There is a degree of confusion that contemporary feminism is about insulting men, about going too far, of wanting women to be seen as better than men, or of being too controversial or hypocritical. For those that deny its continued relevance, there is not a lot of expansion on their position. Two of those respondents made reference to the hypocrisy of feminists as their reason for its irrelevance, while one answer posited that *‘Celebrities posing naked etc. have devalued the cause’*.

The vast majority of female respondents believe that feminism remains relevant, and 20 of these 45 respondents expand on their answer and offer further insight. They include references to the prevalence and visibility of cultural feminists such as Beyoncé, or Emma Watson, and the dominance of feminist discussions and conversations. They raise these examples to demonstrate that it is now okay to be feminist and to proclaim one's feminism. However, there was little indication of reflection on why they think feminism remains relevant in terms of issues to be addressed. That is to say that the focus was on feminism as a 'label' or identity, rather than as an issue-based political and social movement. However, several answers did turn the focus to such concerns as pay gaps, or women presented as objects in advertising and the media, or that feminism remains more pertinent elsewhere/ outside Western world.

Survey response – Question: Are you a feminist?

	All students (both male and female)
Yes	49%
No	33%
‘Not feminist, but...’*	9%
Do not know	5%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	4%

Table 6.8: Survey question – identification with feminism

*‘not feminist but...’ relates to answers where participants respond broadly that while they support the principle of equality between the sexes, they would not support or identify as ‘feminist’

There is a fairly even split between respondents who answer ‘yes’ / ‘no’ / and a variation of ‘kind of’ to whether they are feminist or not. Those that answer ‘yes’ mostly do not elaborate. The ‘no’ respondents justify their answer in terms of being put off by the radical or militant elements or perceptions of feminism, or prefer to identify as an ‘egalitarian’, with answers such as, *No, these days feminists are more ‘anti-male’ than ‘pro-equality’*, typifying this response. It is an interesting breakdown of yes/no self-identified feminists given that the majority (i.e. 88%) of survey respondents showed they accurately understood the core tenet of feminism being about equality between women and men. Therefore, this points to some cultural hang-ups about identifying as feminist, as well as disconnect between recognising that feminism promotes equality without a corresponding personal imperative or need to support that tenet.

In the interviews, feminism explicitly as a topic of consideration was not discussed, but where it was raised or where impressions were gleaned, contradictory positions were taken up by interviewees often resulting in them fitting into one of two categories: the ‘unfeminist feminist’; and the ‘uninformed non-feminist’. For example, Damien expressed the following opinion that positions him within the category of the ‘uninformed non-feminist’:

Like, I wouldn’t be of the opinion of like ‘well, we should get more women in Parliament’, or ‘we should have more women in the workplace’, because first of all I

don't see it as an issue and I think that it's their choice whether you want to go into it or not, so I dunno, I'm not fighting anyone's corner cos I don't really see a problem.

Gender equality

How and whether their attitudes to gender, gender roles and feminism fit with their view as to whether gender equality has been achieved was examined.

Questionnaire response – Question: Do you think equality between men and women has been achieved in Western society?

	Male respondents	Female respondents
Yes	29%	33%
No	64%	57%
Yes and No/ ambivalent	5%	6%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	2%	4%

Table 6.9: Questionnaire question – perception of gender equality

Across both male and female answers, which are broadly comparative, the majority of both sexes respond that equality has not been achieved. Answers justify this by pointing to the wage gap and issues of employment, or they raise the continued objectification of women. Other answers make reference to structural barriers to equality (for example, maternity leave policies), and attitudinal issues (for instance, that women are considered inferior to men). Only a few students referenced rape or rape culture⁶¹, with – very surprisingly – no explicit reference to levels of violence against women. On-the-fence answers tend to say that here has been massive progress, that equality has been mostly achieved but that there is a little way to go, or some tweaking still needed. Those that say 'yes' to this question make reference to the changing roles of women in society; assertions that women have the same opportunities as men with a few illustrative examples used

⁶¹ Rape culture refers to a social and cultural climate in which the rape and sexual assault of women is tolerated, normalised, denied, or facilitated as a result of attitudes held about women's supposed culpability in their subjection to gender-based sexual violence. Such a culture is certainly aided by prevailing discourses and understandings of men's sexuality, sexual appetites and subsequent actions as aggressively beyond their control, and women's sexual conduct and actions as accountable for both sexes.

to back up their points that society and employment operates on a meritocratic basis and therefore gender is no longer of relevance.

It is significant that the proportion of men and women who do not believe that gender equality has been achieved is considerably lower than the figures indicating that feminism remains relevant. One would expect these percentages to align and to be broadly similar. That is to say, that while three-quarters of male respondents and over 80% of women answered that feminism remains relevant, these figures were notably lower among those who do not believe that equality between the sexes has been achieved. If students subscribe to the continued need for feminism, they do not appear to be making the link as to why. Again, this indicates an emotional and intellectual disconnect with what feminist campaigns are trying to achieve.

In the interview exchanges, students demonstrated that they are mostly operating under the illusion that gender equality has been achieved. Common narratives include that things are improving or getting there, that it is changing, or that it is a generational issue, meaning that for younger generations' issues of sexism are not a problem. There was also the assertion that other countries and cultures remain problematic, accompanied by a distinct lack of concern for the status of women in Irish society. There was only really one outlier, Des, who expresses a belief that equality between the sexes remains a long way off.

I guess it's like we're so over that kind of stage you know ...I think at this stage we all kind of blend, like our generation blend – Della

like obviously our generation it's different like we've grown up in a different way to our parents or whatever but I guess yeah maybe like with our generation kind of it will completely change or whatever – Cat

The preceding investigation into attitudes to gender, gender roles and attributes, which is mostly predicated on questionnaire and survey data, indicates that students lack a clear understanding of the concept of gender and how it is socially constructed and operationalised in the patriarchal Irish society in which they have grown up. Consequently they do not possess adequate intellectual and emotional tools to interrogate more deeply embedded assumptions surrounding social expectations, and what constitutes real and true equality between the sexes. This absence of a framework to categorically reject reductive gender notions is not without its implications. Indeed, from a radical feminist perspective, in striving for equality and an end to women's

oppression, the feminist movement must seek to strive towards a complete dismantlement of the concept of gender, and its associated restrictive and reductive gender roles. Therefore, given that a significant cohort of students express views and opinions that align themselves to a naturalised gender differences discourse and by so doing serve to reinforce gender and gender roles as something innate and biological, such worldviews and beliefs represent a backslide away from achieving an elevation of women and an equality with men.

It is important to consider at this juncture Judith Butler, whose gender theorisations since the 1990s have become massively influential. Butler (1990) took issue with how gender had, up to that point, been conceptualised. She notes that ‘the presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise rejected by it’ (Butler, 1990: 6). However, this objection does not adequately account for *why* two genders have been socially constructed within a patriarchal system, and has, for the most part, stuck. Neither does it give due regard to how the two genders of man-masculine and woman-feminine are positioned in hierarchical relation to one another, with one enjoying superior status to the other. In a non-patriarchal society, there would not be more ‘genders’, there would be none since any such expression of what we understand to be masculine or feminine behaviours would not have the same function in upholding patriarchal norms. Furthermore, Butler contends that understanding gender to be socially constructed is to give too much credit to social processes; in a sense, shifting from biological determinism to cultural determinism. However, the counter-argument to this lies in the view that Butler allows for too much agency on behalf of ‘subjects’ to resist gender norms. While of course there is subversion and rejection of gender expectations, the longevity of patriarchy is testament to the effectiveness of the sex/gender binary hierarchical system ‘imposed’ on and subscribed to by the majority of women and men. Understanding the ‘function’ of gender and its nature in service of patriarchy is paramount in order to enable a rejection of gender roles and stereotypes; something the students surveyed demonstrated they were not particularly adept at. Rather their tendency to hold gender essentialist views merits very careful consideration. Therefore, the question is posed: why do students – although not all – take up a gender essentialist view? Arguably it is because, as Whelehan suggests (2000), it is not known what the world would look like if a gender revolution was successfully staged, and patriarchy and male dominance was overthrown. Therefore, it is much more comfortable to fall back on biodeterminist and essentialist arguments about ‘the way things should be’ and how men and women are naturally different. Indeed, asserting that students

analytic inability to interrogate the concept of gender and that their skewing towards a natural gender difference narrative both actively work against the struggle to end women's oppression is compounded by the finding that, although students demonstrate mostly favourable attitudes to feminism, a significant proportion of approximately one-third of all 107 questionnaire respondents express the view that gender equality has been achieved in Western society. As hooks (1984) has argued, the 'feminist movement to end sexist oppression actively engages participants in revolutionary struggle. Struggle is rarely safe or pleasurable' (p. 28). As a consequence, it is understandable that most people not only shy away from such a movement but deny the aims which are its foundation.

Bourdieu (2001) theorises the mass denial of masculine domination over women somewhat differently. He refers to the fact that people are implicated in their own subordination because of a seemingly blind acceptance of the natural order of things. He calls this the *paradox of doxa* and identifies masculine domination 'as the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I call symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims' (p. 1). Gender essentialist beliefs have the effect of leading people to believe that things are as they should be. Writing more than thirty years earlier, Millett posits that women's subordination to the dominant position of men was explicable in terms of 'acceptance of a value system which is not biological' (Millett, 1970: 37). At a time when feminist academics and writers, among other disciplines, were seeking answers as to the true meaning of 'gender' and an understanding of whether and what were the genuine and innate differences between men and women, Millett acknowledged that definitive answers to such questions might never be reached. Nevertheless, as she astutely points out, '(w)hatever the 'real' differences between the sexes may be, we are not likely to know them until the sexes are treated differently, that is alike. And this is very far from being the case at present' (Millett, 1970: 39). While the gap representing the differential ways that the sexes were treated in Millett's time has narrowed, it has not closed altogether, and therefore, those answers remain elusive. The true extent of sex-based difference remains difficult to grasp also because of the continued operation of patriarchy, which Millett conceptualised as being harder to eradicate than the class system because of its assumed naturalness.

Women and Girls as the problematic and burdensome sex: *'he jokes about all the girls who get dolled up to go to the match'*

Emerging from conversations about women and men was a strong sense that women represent a set of problems to be fixed, that their experience of being in the world is not easy or joyful, but rather is burdensome. The converse of this is a sense that the male experience is aspirational and relatable. In other words, students tend to talk about femininity and masculinity in ways that privilege the male experience and denigrate traditionally associated female traits and interests.

In an exchange with Damien, he expresses horror at the idea of a remake of Ghostbusters with an all-female cast:

I was just showing my outrage really like I just had visions of them turning Ghostbusters into some sort of a chick flick or rom-com. I was like "no you can't do that" like ... if I'm going to see a film with an all-female cast it's just I would expect a certain genre of film that I'm not necessarily into you know, so romantic comedy or something like that. It's just that was the immediate thing that struck me is like "no this is going to turn into some bloody love story" or something like that.

This comment is indicative of a marginalisation of women from the 'universal' or the mainstream, such that a remake of a family-favourite classic like Ghostbusters could not be successfully pulled off through the presence of four women reprising those much-loved roles. Indeed the issue of appropriate femininity was further discussed by Damien, who talked about 'aggressiveness' and assertiveness not being attractive or acceptable on women. He recounts working on designing an advertising campaign, which was premised on developing an idea for a ready-meal for two. He and his male classmate devised a campaign that would show a finicky male partner criticising the way his girlfriend makes his cup of tea, and the advert goes on to show the male protagonist being critical of the artwork of one of his young students in class, and other such scenarios. The advert was conceived to culminate in the girlfriend serving him his dinner in the evening. Fully expecting her partner to find fault, she is waiting for the complaint, but he merely shrugs and asks 'what?'; this represents the height of compliment. Damien expresses surprise that the art director of the agency at which he was interning thought that the advert, as it had been conceived, might cause offence. In his defence, Damien explains that: *For the ad to work, someone has to give someone their dinner. Man or woman it doesn't matter, I just thought the male came off (better) as the difficult, nasty person rather than the woman...*

He went on to say that his ‘*intent wasn’t to be sexist*’. But he qualifies that by saying:

...an audience could really, really hate a woman that’s really nasty... I just think men can get away with it a bit better. I suppose ... Mary Lou MacDonald⁶² – I just don’t like that woman. To me she just comes off really rigid and nasty but she’s no different than any other lads, it’s just I would see her being that little bit more unbearable, and I don’t know, it might be the fact that she’s a woman and I just don’t see woman in that bossy kind-of, always giving out ...She always seems to be trying a lot harder than the lads do ... my reaction to her is different, and it probably is my outlook on what I probably feel women’s roles should be in society and it’s obviously not right, but I just don’t really see women having that nasty streak in them. And when I do see it, it just kind of turns me off them.

This points to the double-standard pertaining to appropriate male and female behaviours, with a female politician far more scrutinised and harshly judged than her male colleagues for similar behaviours. When pushed on this, Damien explains that he thinks of women as ‘motherly figures’ and therefore does not like to see characteristics displayed by women that do not conform to those notions. Despite awareness that this is maybe unfair, Damien sticks to this view point. Kevin also clearly exhibits internalisation of a gender differences discourse, and a sense of not being able to relate to women or women's experiences. He constructed women as foreign and separate entities to that with which he is familiar. The only way to 'know' women and the female market is through market research, he attests. Kevin differentiates women as high-maintenance and appearance-oriented and also positions girls as being ‘a bit more of a pain’ to be out socialising with.

The survey results expanded on this sense of women tied to inherent pressures or constraints on them:

Survey response – Question: What kinds of expectations of women, are there, typically, in our culture?

	All students (both male and female)
Reference to domesticity/ care-giving/ marriage/ motherhood/ working mothers	46%

⁶² Mary Lou MacDonald is an elected Irish politician and the Vice-President of the Sinn Féin party.

Reference to physical appearance/ looking 'beautiful', beauty standards	14%
Refer to both domestic and appearance	10%
Other/ variety of answers	25%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	5%

Table 6.10: Survey question – societal expectations of women

While the phrasing of the question may have been somewhat loaded, it is nevertheless revealing that cultural expectations referenced in the responses mostly cluster around motherhood and domesticity. One quote exemplifies the typical response: *‘Women are seen as sex objects or mothers. The expectations of women are to be sexy or be a mother’*. Coming from such young adults, this is extremely significant and attests the longevity of associations of women with either being saintly and motherly, or sexual and ‘sexy’ for male gratification thereby denying women complex and multi-dimensional existences.

While the concept of domesticity is analysed in detail in the next chapter, the issue of women as domestic and emotional labourers came up in several interview exchanges. This concerns the view that assumes women to be better at the social and emotional side of work or otherwise. Emotional energy for women was expended in a number of ways, including the onus on women to embrace or fit an ideal of femininity, deciding to reject that ideal altogether, or in alternately negotiating and navigating the terms of that idealised version of femininity. In addition, opinions were expressed that position women as gatekeepers of order and of not letting men and boys get out of hand, such that men and boys have a tendency to a boisterous, fun-loving and irresponsible side:

I think generally women are, women do seem to be better at that like I mean I don't know I think they can hide when they're in a bad mood or something like that, men can't really do that – Paul

In primary school ... the girls would have a problem with something being thrown around the classroom, they would automatically see the danger of it whereas the only thing that would be going through one of the guys heads being of that age is ‘he hit me, I'm going to throw the ball back at him’, and also it seems to maintain that idea from going from a mixed school in primary to all lads school in secondary school that seemed to just keep us in a sort of arrested development – Nick

Beauty and the tyranny of perfection

In terms of physical appearance, the concept of 'beauty' – both prompted and unprompted – appeared repeatedly in exchanges with student interview participants. Whether curvy or skinny, unrealistic and unachievable, or realistic and attainable, it remains crucially important for women to believe themselves to be beautiful and to be perceived as such. Certainly, there is growing awareness of the unattainability of normative beauty standards. However, this has led to the sense that such pressures are no longer so problematic, with the burden shifted onto women to be impervious to oppressive social expectations given that they are now 'armed' with the knowledge of the 'falsity' of representations of femininity and beauty. Therefore, within this discourse of beauty, there is a shift towards self-surveillance, and women negotiating their way - on an individualistic basis - through the quagmire of severely restrictive notions of appropriate female appearance and conforming to standards of physical attractiveness. Interestingly, several of the young women interviewed came out in defence of 'skinny'. They express resentment that the pressure to be curvy now seems to have eclipsed the pressure to be skinny. Whatever the ideal of the day, social pressure to be beautiful prevails and is acknowledged by almost all 12 interviewees. However, it is notable that several of the male interviewees lacked awareness of how their own views add to that social pressure. For instance, Paul recounts his experience of seeing his girlfriend constantly struggle with accepting her physical appearance and recognises that cruel comments and jibes by men and boys about how women look add to that. Having acknowledged that, however, he admits that the default woman he designs an advertisement around has to be beautiful. Kevin, meanwhile, expresses distaste at women wearing too much makeup, thereby unconsciously adding to social expectations that often set women up to fail, such that there is a pressure on women to be beautiful and attractive, but if there are visible signs of her working to achieve that, they are pilloried for it. 'Beauty', for the most part, remains a primarily female concern. Students express an understanding that men have avoided this because of differential male-female media portrayals and social standards and expectations⁶³. There was also a sense that men lack the vanity that goes hand-in-hand with a preoccupation with physical appearance:

⁶³ However, there are some exceptions to this, which manifest in a concern for men and their body image. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Most of them (i.e. women) would be a lot more conscious of their hair shampoo, like what does it do for them, does it make it shiny does it make it soft, whereas most guys they just say a €2 bottle of Tesco shampoo or something will do me fine as long as it cleans my hair – Kevin

In a lengthy exchange on the issues of the female body, image and beauty, Fiona understands 'beautiful' to be something that women can 'transform' into through consumption of various products and undertaking certain practices such as making physical changes to one's appearance by using make-up or dyeing ones hair. Although she talks about women benefitting from more '*realistic goals of what women should look like*', she makes the distinction that if women are fat or unattractive they should not be told that they are beautiful. Since this would require too great a suspension of disbelief, such women should be encouraged to 'believe' they are beautiful:

If I was doing the Dove (advertising campaign) I would have said like 'believe you're beautiful' not like 'you are beautiful' because people are going to be like "no I'm not", but if you say 'believe' it's something like it would be like "maybe I am", like it would give you kind of hope or belief inside that maybe you are.

This leaves the work of having to feel attractive as a fat and/or 'unattractive' woman squarely on the individual woman rather than a reconfiguring of what, as a society, we might think is attractive about women. By contrast, she notes that '*I think when a man is good looking he is genuinely good looking and women do look... like, most women are gorgeous without make up but women's beauty is artificial beauty*'. Echoing this somewhat, Gillian identifies an apparent tension inherent in the presence of 'real' and regular-looking women featuring more prominently in advertising and the media. This reality, she posits, does not satisfy the aspirational aspect that women require and want in the appearance of supermodels used to advertise products. In other words, women do not want to be regular or 'real', they want to aim to look like a supermodel.

This perception of the centrality of issues of beauty to women's lives is played out in a wider context that is tied to a tyranny of perfection. This relates to how women have internalised ideas that they need to be and to look perfect. This narrative of 'perfection' occurred in general exchanges that touch on the societal pressure on women to look or to be a certain way. The social pressure for women to look perfect has an impact on their innate confidence in abilities that are not connected to their appearance. While there were some comments that social pressure to look a certain way is affecting men, for the most part that is not the consensus. Della identifies a shift in desired body type from skinny to curvy and laments that naturally skinny women are being

accused of starving themselves. She expresses frustration at not being able to win at the game, and that the goalposts of what constitute the perfect female body keep shifting. She suggests that *'I think women really struggle with their looks in that way 'cos it's always kind of... they're basing themselves on a photo-shopped person and I think that really sucks'*. She does not, however, include herself in that struggle. Likewise, Cat thinks that she escaped such social pressure to look attractive and be appearance-oriented for a bit longer than slightly younger women and teenagers. While she admits to enjoying clothes and make-up, she would not subscribe to the view that 'beauty' equals 'empowerment' and notes that *'I feel like there's other ways of being empowering'*. Advertising, as well as popular cultural media figures such as Kim Kardashian add to the notion, Cat believes, that women's value is in their attractiveness.

Feelings of (dis)empowerment

Sharply connected to the concept of beauty and to the notion of the tyranny of having to be and look perfect, issues pertaining to feelings of empowerment, and indeed disempowerment emerged. Disempowerment for women was expressed in ways that appeared to manifest through self-objectification; sexual expectations and sexual harassment; oppressive beauty regimes (expressed as being annoying and oppressive); and a lack of confidence, in college and in work environments/ contexts. Empowerment for women, on the other hand, was available through having more 'achievable' beauty standards. For example, several of the female interviewees express the potential for empowerment as a sort of 'negotiated' exercise or process, through buying into beauty pressures just enough to feel good and conform, but not too much for it to feel oppressive. In addition, they clearly gain confidence through their academic achievements, as evidenced in expressions of enthusiasm for the course and enjoyment with various aspects connected to advertising work, such as the creativity it allows. It is noteworthy that none of the young women explicitly expressed feeling personally disempowered. However, in a long exchange with Colette about her experience of being groped in a nightclub, issues of disempowerment and lack of control were clearly surfacing:

I was wearing like a reasonable length dress, it was mid-thigh and I was just walking up to the bar and some fella who was just sitting there, he randomly slapped me on my ass as I was walking by, and like I didn't... like, nothing I did suggested that that's what I wanted or that's what I was interested in or that made me feel good

about myself which it didn't, I was actually quite annoyed... And I don't know, it's unwelcome at times, especially unwelcome because I have a boyfriend, so I wouldn't have any interest like that and I'm kind of thinking, 'What have I done to kind of show that I'm interested?' and in a lot of cases it's nothing.

Colette went on to make the correlation between that incident and such issues as shaming women for their sexuality, the prevalence of rape culture, and expectations for women to be available and beautiful, while simultaneously being mocked for being vain. She feels distinctly frustrated with a discourse that sets women up to fail; they're damned if they do and damned if they don't. She spoke of double standards between what is acceptable for young men and women, and how this leads to her feeling backed into a corner with very little recourse to exercise personal agency:

I actually got really annoyed about something I saw on Facebook last night. A few guys in the class actually 'liked' it. It was a picture and it was all girls sitting in a room getting ready, putting on make-up and whatever and the caption was, 'Let's spend extra long getting ready for the men we're going to ignore this evening.' And they 'liked' that. Obviously I'm not going to fall out with them over it. But it did annoy me, that's it's saying they (i.e. the girls) get ready and just because they look nice they have to give the men loads of attention and if they don't it's like you're a bit mean or something.

This exchange with Colette demonstrates that she has given a great deal of thought to this issue. She recognises the unfairness of such expectations on women to be readily available for men, both in a sexual capacity and in terms of men expecting women's time and attention. However, apart from this conversation, the female students interviewed did not personally identify with feeling, in any sense, disempowered.

Damien spoke at length about his thoughts and experiences with prostitution in Dublin, and the disempowerment women face through sexual violence and sex work. He explains how he had changed his perspective after coming into contact with some organisations that work with prostituted women. Before this he felt clearly that, while trafficked women could be considered victims, women in prostitution were there through their own fault. However, after exposure to people who work with and support women to leave prostitution, he now believes otherwise and is sympathetic to all prostituted women. The use of prostitutes was regarded in his circles of friends as a very casual occurrence, accompanied by jokes about how the friends in question 'can afford it'. While he says that he has not and would not use prostitutes because he is in a committed relationship and that it is a bit 'impersonal', he recounts visiting a brothel with a friend a number

of years ago and watching his friend pick a woman from the line-up and go upstairs with her. The conversation afterwards, he explains, was a fascination with the different ethnicities and body shapes on offer and what sex would be like with the women. He expresses dismay that, in trying to educate his friends, he has found them resistant to changing their views, especially his best friend. Significantly, he reveals that this particular friend of his that has regularly used prostitutes holds very entrenched views about traditional gender roles:

He says he wants the traditional woman, you know. He wants to have kids, and she stays at home, and it's just like 'you're not gonna get that these days', it's hard to find you know, things are changing, and he's like 'that's kind of what I want'. He is of the, I suppose, old-fashioned kind of mind; he wants to be the one working.

However, Damien says that this is not necessarily representative of his experience of heterosexual, committed couples and he sees a lot of sharing of care responsibilities and of 'strong' women and stay-at-home dads, but admits that if he had children staying at home with the kids would not be the life for him. As such, Damien both simultaneously recognises the ways in which women can be, and indeed are disempowered through prostitution and a social pressure to sacrifice their career and working lives to stay at home and care for children, but seems unwilling to be part of a solution to overturn that reality.

There was little, to no expressions of male disempowerment, except in an exchange with Bernard about misandry in advertising texts and the resulting emasculation that he believes results from that⁶⁴. Rather, iterations of male empowerment was expressed through their ability to flex creative muscles; through developing a professional expertise; and the sense of insight and knowledge garnered from the undergraduate and postgraduate training environment.

'I am different'

Running alongside an ability by the young women interviewed to identify areas of potential disempowerment for women, without a corresponding association of those feelings personally was a narrative of 'I am different'. This was not present in the male student interview exchanges. This involved women expressing themselves in ways that differentiated and distanced themselves from other young women. Consequently a sense of solidarity with other women remained largely

⁶⁴ The issue of misandry is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

absent. It is suggested that this individualised experience manifests from an internalisation of a neoliberal self-empowerment discourse. Perhaps also a lack of female representations that chime with their own opinions and experiences represents another reason for this distancing.

Della, who came across as very driven and motivated, recounts how she was drawn to the high-pressure, the deadlines and the large work-load involved in working in the advertising industry. She admits to being ambitious to reach a high, managerial level, and is very aware of women not being in dominant positions in the industry. She sees herself as a corrective to that, and expresses frustration at fellow female classmates who lack confidence to progress:

Some girls they're just like, "Oh no I couldn't do that, I can't do that, that's just not ... that's too much" and stuff. And like it makes me want to scream and go "Yes you can!"

Meanwhile, Colette, somewhat contradictory to her earlier frustration around women receiving unfair social sanction depending on what they wear and how they chose to behave, is critical of young women who wear revealing clothing:

When I'm on a night out, and I see like, I don't know, a girl with a tiny dress on, and I actually turn round to my friends and say, 'If I ever come out in a dress that short, just kill me'.

She also endorses her boyfriend's making fun of women that dress up when attending football games:

He jokes about all the girls who get dolled up to go to the match sort of thing, and then there's a pub they all go to afterwards and like 'the session mots⁶⁵ are here, dolled up to the nines'.

This distancing tactic employed by some of the young women interviewed works to inadvertently reinforce notions of women as high maintenance and as a burden, and work against a value for women and their full and diverse lived experiences. Women's collusion in their own oppression has been explored by Bourdieu (2001), as previously discussed in this chapter. In addition, McRobbie's (2007) concept of the 'sexual contract' is also useful in examining this theme. By this, she is referring to the conditional advancement of women, and is based on the understanding

⁶⁵ 'Mot' is a Dublin slang word for girls or women, while 'session' in this context refers to a night out of heavy drinking.

that women are compelled to fit uncomplainingly into the existing structures, rather than seek any fundamental changes to the established gender order. It is used to quell the upheaval caused by feminist demands and campaigns. As a consequence of the 'sexual contract', women's visibility is tolerated, but it is sharply mitigated through codes and conventions of appropriate dress, beauty standards and use of voice. Appearance especially needs to be carefully negotiated by women in environments where they are taught not to antagonise, or threaten, the position of men. This negotiation becomes manifest in a 'postfeminist masquerade', which incorporates a hyper-feminine style of dressing, expressly and consciously invoked so as not to stray over into the gender realm of masculine dressing. In addition, it is a style often adopted by successful and powerful heterosexual women in order to remain attractive to men, since ambition and power are deemed to be turn-offs in women, as referenced in the many on-screen examples of demanding, difficult women who destroy men's confidence and emasculate them through their superior intellectual, economic and professional prowess. While this 'hyperfemininity' was not in evidence with the female students of this study, the extent to which physical attractiveness remains integral to her worth and social value and capital is without question.

The 'sexual contract' and the conditionality of women's equality are firmly embedded within an individualisation of women's experiences. Meritocratic practices are assumed to be in operation, which denies inequalities and injustices predicated on biases, prohibitive maternity leave policies, gender pay gaps, and sex-role segregation in the labour force, for example. This results in the presumption that women, and indeed men, who find themselves socially or economically disadvantaged only have themselves to blame for not taking full advantage of the opportunities open to them. This kind of discourse divests those oppressed, marginalised and subjugated groups in our society of the chance to recognise and call to account the structural injustices that work against them. Indeed both neoliberalism and the after-effects of 1990s New Feminism could be held to account for this individualisation, such as in evidence among the female student participants of this study.

The 'New Feminism' to emerge in the 1990s, alongside the third-wave of feminism – which itself was characterised by a focus on issues of race, representation, and queer theory – is often viewed as particularly problematic for its tendency to overstate the gains made by feminists for women in contemporary, especially Western, society. Indeed, New Feminism went hand-in-hand with the 1990s postfeminist trend of rejecting the notion of women as victims. This may explain why

female students simultaneously distance themselves from other women and from feelings of disempowerment. However, this vehement rejection of the victimised woman was never fully proffered with a corresponding recognition that women are often made victims and vulnerable by patriarchal factors in society, since such elements are presumed to no longer exist. Rather, somewhat counter-intuitively, it is coupled with the resurrection of postfeminist-driven offensive and sexist humour.

In addition, New Feminism has been critiqued for its propensity to remain at the level of the individual woman. Its appeal was that women could achieve self-empowerment through making certain choices, such as how one chooses to conduct one's personal and romantic relationships, spend one's money, or opting to remain long-term single and childless (Whelehan, 2000). In other words, New Feminism has been critiqued for its lack of collective consciousness. If women are focused solely on their own subjective experiences and situations, it did not leave the feminist movement in a healthy position in terms of its ability to pose a serious challenge to patriarchal structures and institutions. This individualised conceptualisation of empowerment is something in evidence among female participants of this study.

As well as New Feminism and an influential postfeminist culture, a wider context of neoliberalism has served, over the preceding twenty years or so, to make it more difficult for women's continued oppression to be framed in a coherent and collective sense. This is because '(t)he neoliberal view of the individual is as a self-governing, independent entity, engaging endlessly in self-examination and improvement' (Moran and Lee, 2013: 374). Personal enhancement is achieved through increased consumer consumption, and thereby dispenses the need for an examination of how structural and systemic factors work to disempower people along gender, class and racial lines.

Despite the disheartening picture painted in this analysis, in the past number of years a new strain of feminism has been emerging. This is now widely recognised as the fourth-wave of feminism, and is being conducted mainly through online feminist activism. This strand of feminism differs from New Feminism in its outward-looking social and political consciousness. There are indications, in this doctoral project, and as evidenced by the upsurge of feminist activism that postfeminism may be loosening its grip. Nevertheless, although commenting 16 years ago, Whelehan (2000) makes a compelling point about equality between the sexes that is worth reiterating. She warned that attempts to make gains for women in the spheres of education and

the professional world of work, and indeed victories won, can only be effective to a limited degree in redressing the subjugated status of women in society. If they are not accompanied by a more favourable repositioning of gender constructions, and more so, an abandoning of reductive gender norms, it is debatable how much progress is being made.

The Tomboy: *'men are always willing to give it a go, you know. And with a tomboy... they're always willing to give it a go'*

Reductive gender norms apparent among study participants that construct women and girls as the problematic sex conversely serve to laud the 'tomboy' as the apparent ideal. This trope of the 'tomboy' was only explicitly raised by two male students, Damien and Nick, but it is given life and has the space to emerge because of an individualised 'I am different' discourse among the women and girls, which sees the young women interviewed, with the exception of Fiona, distance themselves from other women and specifically from 'girly' girls. The tomboy narrative also stems for a more prominent gendered discourse of men as easy and low-maintenance:

I mean I buy the nearest shampoo I can get, you know, whereas other members of my family ... go to considerable time or considerable expense to get a specific shampoo –
Bernard

Talking about hearing anecdotal stories about working in nightclubs, Nick says:

The women's bathrooms are a lot worse than any male ones, that's just something I've heard from people working in the industry. All of them will tell you the same things, 'cos women are the ones doing up their makeup and things like that in the bathroom whereas men just go to the bathroom and walk out. In nightclubs, that's why there are no queues for the men's bathrooms.

While arguably, that reality might be largely true, it does suggest that whereas with women a trip to the bathroom is arduous, and involves doing themselves up – reinforcing notions of women as vain and high maintenance – men on the other hand just go to the toilet and leave, with no fuss. Nick goes on to say that having lived with girls, he has not noticed any major differentiation, with some of the girls very 'easy-going' and some of the guys very 'uptight'. However, even this comment reveals that he would expect the reverse to be mostly true. He expresses a belief that differences between women and men manifest more depending on personality type rather than gender, but he does concede that there are distinct spheres of recreational interests between the

sexes. In relation to going to an all-boys school, Nick paints a picture of an environment characterised by freedom and rebelliousness and banter and fun, and being able to say well-meaning but vulgar things without fear of offending. However, in discussing what might have been different if he had attended a mixed-sex high school, he describes girls as more sensible, responsible and mature, and thus positions them as something akin to killjoys. He predicts, for instance, that throwing a football around in class would not happen in a mixed-sex class. The impact of going to all-boys secondary school, he believes, was to keep them in a state of 'arrested development' which would have been avoided if girls were present. That is to say girls are understood to be a calming and 'civilising' influence.

Gender differences between boys and girls, Nick thinks, are due to both nature and nurture, and how kids are socialised to not associate with inappropriate things/ hobbies. However, Nick connects this mostly to social sanction on boys not associating with feminine things, thereby picking up on a denigration of things commonly associated with girls. He says, of himself and his experience growing up: *'I was allowed to try an awful lot of things I shouldn't have been able to try'*; meaning hobbies more commonly taken up by girls. He kept his involvement in these activities quiet from his school friends because of an already heightened awareness as a child of appropriate masculine interests. Such reluctance reinforces again a sense that 'girly' things were not cool. While he suggests that girls might be teased for being into 'manly' stuff like judo, and karate, and might be called 'tomboy', he says that does not really have negative connotations. In a very revealing comment, he notes that, in calling a girl a 'tomboy':

...it depends on how it's said as opposed to the actual term and where it's coming from, like if it's coming from a group of girls calling you a tomboy it's.... or if it's close friends in school calling you a tomboy that could be bad but if it comes from, like my close friend referring to his little sister as a tomboy, that's just 'she has interests similar to ours, good on her'.

There is an assumption here that other girls would be derogatory and mean about a girl considered a 'tomboy', but if the term comes from boys it is a sort of nod of approval and a validation of her and what she likes to do.

Damien very expressly, in talking about gender differences, denigrates attributes and interests mostly commonly associated with girls and femininity. He admits to thinking that men and women have different interests; something he sees in his group of friends. The guys are into UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) and the women interested in *'having a glass of wine, talking*

about kittens'. While he is certainly being a bit flippant, he demonstrates that he is also well aware of how women and girls are socialised into roles and into having certain interests and preoccupations. For instance, he mentions that repeatedly telling little girls they are pretty when small results in the need for validation on those terms persisting into women's adulthood, and he suggests that this leads to *'how non-tomboys are developed really, you know*'. In a discussion around appropriate toys for boys and girls, Damien reveals that although he would consider it okay and fine for a boy to play with dolls and a pram, that the boy is far more likely to be teased as a 'sissy' or as 'gay' than a girl who is a tomboy, because tomboys are seen as 'strong'. In an exchange where he talks about women being prone to moaning, and of not trying things, he says: *'Men are always willing to give it a go, you know. And that's with a tomboy, they're always willing to give it a go, sort of thing*'. He also points to shyness and lack of confidence on the part of women and girls that he clearly finds frustrating:

I do strength and conditioning classes in the morning on Tuesday's and Thursday's and, it's just, you see when new girls come in, it's just kind of eh, it's always a rigmarole, whereas new lads come in, they get straight in, they'll do the exercises, whether they can do it or not, they'll get tired, they'll stop, they'll have a break but girls... (puts on a whining voice) 'I can't do iiiittttt', and they complain a lot more and I think, kind of, the tomboy, and the strength thing is just seen more as getting on with things, you know.

Damien values and valorises masculine traits more, but when pushed he does articulate well aspects of social expectations that might result in a lack of confidence or assertiveness in women and girls. For instance he recognises that boys are encouraged far more than girls. However, this 'knowledge' does not really seem to translate into sympathy or understanding for women and girls. The point seems to be to get them to be more like men and that would be good for everyone. Crucially, though, that position does not square, for example, with his wish for his girlfriend to stay at home with their hypothetical children.

Similarly, Nick talks in ways that suggest women can learn from men's example and that they need to be more like men. In an exchange about encouraging and convincing two female housemates to join him and male friends on a ski holiday he suggests that because the young women thought of themselves as 'fragile' and that those activities were not for them, they had not given it a go. He intimates that what was needed was for the girls to be taken in hand by benevolent male friends and initiated into the ways of taking on a 'cool' pastime. As such, girls are not cool on their own terms, but only on male-defined terms. While this is somewhat

patronising and condescending, it is interesting to note that he is perhaps right in his assertion that without the example of other young women undertaking adventurous activities in as large numbers as young men, that there does persist a sense of such things as not being for them.

The trope of the ‘tomboy’ or Cool Girl is a longstanding one. In a BuzzFeed article on the subject, Peterson lays out its history through an exploration of Hollywood Cool Girls from the actress Clara Bow who came to prominence in the 1920s through to Jennifer Lawrence in the contemporary period. Peterson deconstructs the appeal of Lawrence and the sentiment that she’s ‘just like us’, but comes to the conclusion that:

...no, she’s not like us. She’s like a perfect character out of a book. Specifically, a book by Gillian Flynn called *Gone Girl* ... in which a main character describes a very particular yet familiar archetype: “*Men always say that as the defining compliment, don’t they? She’s a cool girl. Being the Cool Girl means I am a hot, brilliant, funny woman who adores football, poker, dirty jokes, and burping... Cool Girls are above all hot. Hot and understanding. Cool Girls never get angry; they only smile in a chagrined, loving manner and let their men do whatever they want*” (Peterson, 2014).

Calling to mind McRobbie’s concept of the ‘sexual contract’ and the tacit pressure on women to remain silent on issues that might bother or upset them in order to maintain the veneer of modern equality between the sexes, Peterson likewise points to the implicit understanding that the Cool Girl, or the tomboy, never gives out or scolds or moans about her lot in life. She is ‘fun... never nag(s), or stay(s) home watching rom-coms; she never complain(s) or (is) scared or shy’ (Peterson, 2014). Both Damien and Nick reference very obviously this dichotomy between the girls who are girly, scared and therefore a drag, and those who are tomboys, fun and therefore more amenable to them. While clearly it is desirable for women and girls to both be, and be considered adventurous and fun, the motif of the tomboy-cool-girl is based on a problematic foundation. The function of this arrangement, which confers on the ‘cool girl/tomboy’ the burden of not agitating, as explored in the BuzzFeed article, developed out of a need to curb the disquietude that results from a shake-up of established gender relations. In other words, the emergence at different points throughout the 20th century of various manifestations of the Cool Girl served to soften the nervousness of people worried that women ‘once emancipated, would become ... castrating bitches’ (Peterson, 2014). Again, this is much the same purpose that McRobbie explains is behind the ‘sexual contract’, in that the ‘advancement’ of women was predicated on the condition that no further drastic rearrangements be made to the patriarchal gender order. Therefore, the tomboy-cool-girl-type reaffirms rather than threatens masculinity. It

is okay for her to be outspoken and feisty, but if her outspokenness is about feminist change and challenge to male dominance, she becomes something else; she is aggressive and extremist and shrill and unattractive. It is a delicate balancing act, since ‘to be ‘cool’ is to tread a fine line between something different, something almost masculine, but never anything *too* masculine, or assertive, or independent’ (Peterson, 2014). As such, the visibility and voices of women are tolerated and cheered as long as they are not really championing a take-down of patriarchy.

Furthermore, not only does the tomboy-type not pose a threat to or challenge men’s status, she makes it easy for men to like her by maintaining an attractive appearance and not making demands. Above all, as Peterson tells us, the Cool Girl is beautiful. Crucially, however, she does not care if she is beautiful, which is what makes her so appealing and therefore ‘beautiful’. This very clearly butts against the ‘beauty’ narrative that is so apparent among interview participants in this study, but also echoes the sentiments that women cannot win. If they try to look beautiful they are labelled self-conscious and vain. But, if they eschew such standards, they are picked on and ridiculed, as confirmed by Paul in his admission that men and boys can be ‘*pretty harsh towards girls who they consider ugly and stuff like that*’.

Educational context

It is not obvious that the educational gendered cultures in which these students are embedded feed the themes and strands discussed heretofore in this chapter. Rather it is more likely that these discourses are internalised by students through wider social and mediated gendered interactions. However, the gender essentialist and somewhat androcentric thread is not adequately challenged in the educational setting, which therefore amounts to tacit endorsement for it.

With 92% of questionnaire respondents indicating that they have learnt about gender in their modules, this implies that they are conscious of having had discussions based around the subject throughout the course of their studies. At undergraduate, B.A. level there are 47 modules offered over the course of the four-year degree course. In order to ascertain the extent to which ‘gender’ and other associated concepts are formally and specifically embedded into the design of the course, searches were conducted for the following keywords across all 47 module descriptors and outlines: *gender; women; men; represent** (i.e. *representation/s*); *femini** (i.e. *femininity*,

feminist, feminism etc.); masculin (i.e. masculinity, masculine etc.); stereotyp* (i.e. stereotypes, stereotyping etc.); sex* (i.e. sexist, sexism, sexualisation etc.); and ethic* (i.e. ethics, ethical etc.).*

This investigation revealed that there were no references to *men; femini*; masculin*; stereotyp*; or sex** present in the online detailed module descriptors. There were three references to 'gender'; in the reading list of both the Behavioural Studies, and Culture and Identity modules, and also in the description of the Individual Buyer Behaviour module, which deals with self-concept, gender and body image. There was one reference to 'women' and one reference to 'representation'. This was present in Introduction to Advertising and covers, among other issues, representations of women in advertising. There were six references to 'ethic*' across six different modules, ranging from general ethical considerations concerned with children and vulnerable groups, to mostly ethical issues in connection with research and advertising practice. In addition to the keyword search, an in-depth reading was conducted on all 47 module descriptors. This revealed that there were other modules of interest that may touch upon issues pertinent to this research study. These included the 1st year Analysing Media⁶⁶ module, which has no specific mention of gender in the description, but includes Judith Williamson's seminal feminist text, *Decoding Advertisements*, on the reading list. In addition, a search of Media Communications revealed no keywords, but represents a critical module concerned with theoretical approaches to understanding media and power, and its role and impact on contemporary society.

On the whole, there does appear to be a good effort made at undergraduate level to deliver to students critical, sociologically and theoretically-based modules throughout the course of the 4-years that aim to offer a counter-narrative to the less critical and more practical modules offered on advertising and marketing strategies and practices. However, there is very little specific mention of gender and no references to stereotyping. While needing to be mindful of areas of interest and experience by lecturers and the possibility that a concern with issues related to gender are not accounted within those spheres of expertise, the lack of inclusion of gender could, and arguably should, be formalised and made explicit in the module designs and descriptions. Such recommendations are further discussed in the closing chapter of this thesis.

At Masters level, only a very general course overview is provided online, with no module descriptors on either the creative or the executive streams. Some theoretical modules are covered in the first semester on consumer behaviour, advertising research, and marketing

⁶⁶ This module is discussed in the following section in this chapter.

communications. Beyond that, modules are mostly practical and practice-based. There is no indication or mention of a focus on critical thinking, ethical issues or gender or diversity outlined in the course content.

Analysing Media Module – 'Gender and media' lectures:

As part of the 1st year module on Analysing Media⁶⁷, there were 3 classes delivered specifically looking at issues of gender and the media. This was the first time that more than a cursory examination of such material was offered for students. In previous years, the lecturer, Helen, indicated that typically she would have offered a 3-hour session on the topic. An invitation was extended by Helen to sit in on those classes. This component of the data collection was very valuable in terms of bearing witness to the sole offering by this degree course specifically dealing with issues of gender, the media and advertising. The observations garnered from attendance at these lectures facilitated a report on the content covered as well as observing interactions between and among students and the lecturer.

At the first of the 3 gender classes attended, the students were playful, rowdy and boisterous. The content of this lecture covered issues such as the socially constructed nature of gender and of masculinity and femininity, as well as the importance of scrutinising media representations. Helen encouraged the class to think about how gender has been conceptualised in the media, what kinds of images denote and signify gender and/ or biological sex, and to consider how women were 'systematically annihilated' by the media, through a lack of visibility and a trivialising of women. The content also covered issues of gazing and power-dynamics. Throughout class time, Helen allowed for an open exchange and dialogue, and she regularly asked for reactions and comments from the class. However, some interesting and insightful comments from students fell on deaf ears and did not get picked up on and teased out. Likewise some very problematic views did not get adequately challenged or rebutted. For example, opinions and comments that strayed into discourses of shaming women who are sexually active and victim-blaming for women who are sexually assaulted did not get challenged, as witnessed when students reacted in various ways to the below image of a woman in a short skirt.

⁶⁷ See data sources table (Table 5.1) in the Methodology chapter.



Figure 6.1: Social judgement of women depending on skirt length (Source http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/18/rosea-lake-vancouver-judgments-skirt-length-photo_n_2504950.html)

Responses to this image ranged from a female student saying ‘*if a girl wears that, she can’t expect men not to look at her*’. Another female student asks ‘*why shouldn’t she wear that?*’, while a male classmate suggests ‘*she’s not someone you’d bring home to your mother*’. Conflating the lecturer’s discussion of social judgement and sexual double-standards with assumptions of the inevitability of sexual harassment and assault if dressed in a short skirt, a young man in the class posits the view that girls as well as men think that a girl in a ‘*belly top ... (is) asking for it*’. This notion of ‘asking for it’ quite clearly veers into victim-blaming territory, however this student was not asked or challenged to explain or expand on what he meant, representing a missed opportunity. Likewise, a girl in the class who perhaps proffers the most complex and considered reaction to the image and suggests that ‘*it’s not men or women [who attach these labels to women], it’s society and the media*’ is not picked up on or teased out by Helen and her comment goes unexplored.

There was also a quite hostile exchange in the class following a screening of the trailer for the 2010 Jean Kilbourne documentary *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising’s Image of women*. In reaction

to the clip, a male student reacts in a somewhat defensive manner. While he allows that Kilbourne 'has a point', he takes issue with feminists claiming that media and advertising images can cause violence against women. He makes reference to current conversations happening around the issue of rape on US university campuses, and says that the link between imagery and violence has been repeatedly proven to be untrue. Moreover, he says that men are more often victims of violence than women. A female student then chimes in to say that she had seen a video of a woman who had formerly been a feminist but had stopped being so because she became aware of the lack of support for male victims of violence. At which point, another male student makes a comment on the prevalence of male rape in prison, seeming to bring up this example to prove that violence and sexual assault is more an issue for men than women. Helen thus asks if there is any connection between violent acts and advertising images, with the most vocal students reaching consensus with a definitive 'no'. The conversation ends there.

Coy and Garner (2012), as previously discussed in this thesis, draw contextual links between sexualised culture, of which advertising imagery contributes massively (Gill, 2007; 2008; 2009a; 2009b), and violence against women and girls, in creating what they term a 'conducive context'. If the message is repeatedly sent that girls and women are responsible for the sexual conduct of both sexes, this bears with it an assumption of women and girls as emotional and moral labourers for both women and men, echoing the discussion with Nick about girls being more mature and responsible, and keeping boys in check. Both sexes are taught, within this context, that girls must be sexually available in order to be considered sexually attractive, yet paradoxically are derided for being sexually active. Accompanying the double-standard, there is often victim-blaming in instances of sexual assault and rape; a narrative that emerged in this class discussion.

Such an exchange as witnessed in this class demonstrates, at a minimum, a fundamental misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the problem of violence against men, and the lack of understanding or recognition of the prevalence of violence against women. It also indicates an unawareness of how sexualised imagery in advertising and the conflation of sexual and violent tropes in adverts can feed wider discourses of women as sexual objects. The potent consequence of objectification, as Kilbourne (1979; 1999) has pointed out, is that violence is more readily enacted on another human being who has been consistently objectified and thereby dehumanised. However, such misconceptions and misunderstandings go unchallenged by the lecturer.

At the second of the 3 gender classes attended, the students are quieter, with not as much interaction between students and lecturer. As a result, there were not as many observations made regarding student reactions and comments. During this lecture, there was more focus on deconstructing advertising imagery and how cropping and issues of the 'gaze' raise issues of objectification, empowerment, and disempowerment. As the lecture progressed, and Helen begins to turn to issues of violence, she almost immediately gets interrupted by a male student who quite defiantly asks if she is going to talk about violence against men, or is it all '*rape culture and shit*'. This exchange prompts a female student to ask '*aren't men also cropped in advertising?*' Some students demonstrate a defensiveness to too much attention being paid to women, whether that is in discussions of violence against women, or depictions of women, and also appear to be conscious of a supposed misandry⁶⁸. As a result of this interruption, other classmates echo and express a concern for men. When Helen does turn to the male body and issues of eroticization and objectification, she uses a 1970s ad for the 'Love Rug', an advert for carpet, and suggests that we find it humorous because his pose is '*not very masculine*'.



Figure 6.2: 1970s advert for the furry Love Rug

Arguably, she should have qualified this remark, since it seems to suggest that gender digression is laughable and that a man being 'feminine' or effeminate is demeaning; the implication being that traits associated with women are inherently inferior.

⁶⁸ This trend is further discussed in Chapter 7.

At the third and final of the 3 gender classes attended, again the students were far quieter than the first week and there was not a great deal of interaction between lecturer and students, or comments from them. This is the strongest lecture in terms of taking a theoretically and socially-contextualised critical look at gendered imagery in adverts, and the social impact of such. Helen touches on the de-politicisation of feminism and critiques notions of self-objectification as empowering. She also calls attention to an established trend of media downplaying women's success by disproportionately making reference to their home and domestic life. There is also an insightful overview of hegemonic masculine body types offered.

Overall, impressions gleaned from attendance at these 'gender in media' classes are that, while it is positive and helpful to give the students a platform to express their opinions, improvements could be made to the module. For instance, students should be pushed more to justify worldviews and challenged to draw the link between their opinions about gender and what it means for men and women's lived realities, while all the time talking about systems of power that operate in service of women's oppression. At the risk of being prescriptive, there is not enough pressure put on students to take and articulate critical standpoints against norms and hegemonic standards. However, this is perhaps due to a lack of preparation; something conceded by Helen in an interview with her.

Indeed, in interviewing this lecturer after delivery of the three lectures, she expressed surprise, shock and intimidation at the level of hostility that greeted the material she was delivering, especially from the men in the class. However, it was obviously a topic that stayed in their minds because a few of the men approached her later on an individual basis to discuss further, and with some questions and queries. She explains the hostility as possibly being grounded in an entitled male privilege, and also an intellectual laziness and reluctance to have their worldviews and assumptions challenged. This, she feels, may be partly explicable due to their young ages. It could also be due, in part, to defensiveness that the subject matter of the lectures appeared to denigrate an industry that they have chosen to study and work in and that they are drawn to and excited about. Helen notes that, in her experience, young people will often react in initially defensive ways to new ways of thinking, but that ultimately they just need a little time to internalise different perspectives and then often tend to be more open to alternative views. She admits that she was somewhat unprepared for the backlash against what she was presenting in the class, and did not readily have statistics and figures to hand that adequately addressed the

challenges, and fallacies, raised by the students. She has not presented such an in-depth number of classes specifically on the topic of gender and media before but says that she would be keen to do so again and to iron out the issues for next time.

Helen thinks those few lectures probably did make a difference to some students in terms of sensitising them to gender issues. She also says it can be hard for the girls in the class to speak up because the boys are quite vocal and dominant, and notes that *'if I were a girl in that class, it takes a lot of balls to speak up in an environment like that and many of them don't want to'*. Chemaly (2014; para 5) has argued that *'teachers still unconsciously, routinely engage in practices that inhibit girls' and encourage boys' speech'*. This is underlined by an assumption that girls are naturally more quiet and well-behaved, and, again, that part of their function in a mixed-sex environment is to set a good example for boys in classroom-settings; a contention backed up by Nick. It is encouraging that Helen is aware of the quietness of girls as an undesirable trend, and does try to call on the young women to contribute when she has a sense of who will not be intimidated by being called on in class.

More generally, Helen's involvement with the undergraduate course is strictly on a 'service' lecturer basis, with no other involvement or influence in shaping the content delivered on the course, except for the Analysing Media module that she offers in first year. This specific module is expressly and consciously offered as a counter-/critical look at advertising, and significantly has the backing of the Head of the Department, and the program leader. Encouragingly, both believe it is important to offer that alternative, which is that it takes an ideologically-based critical looking at the media and advertising imagery. Helen frames her module as such: *'I would see it as a corrective to messages that they might be getting elsewhere in the program or well... corrective is overstating but in some way they get a different perspective'*. She declines to take a position on whether there needs to be more emphasis on offering a greater number of similar modules throughout the course. However, concerning the possibility of introducing, in a much more formalised way, gender modules that would address important gender issues and would continue throughout the 4 year course, she agrees that it would be beneficial, but that it should take an intersectional approach and should also focus on race, sexual orientation, and disability. She observes that the more theoretical modules and lectures do try to cover these issues but *'it can be randomised or hit and miss in terms of how it appears'*. In other words, such discussions tend to emerge randomly, but she says:

...it would be great to have it more formal. I think however that it would... you would very quickly be met with the 'well, you know, do we really need to', or 'sure it's all okay anyway', and 'sure there's enough content in there already that covers that' - those kind of arguments will surface very quickly.

In so saying, she predicts reluctance from other academic staff. Interestingly, she also teaches on a Creative Digital Media (CDM) course, and notes that a concern for covering and critiquing ideological issues is much more firmly embedded at the core of those modules than in the advertising course. When asked to posit a theory for why that is she suggests that it is because CDM is within the Humanities discipline, whereas advertising falls in the Business sphere. As Banning and Schweitzer have pointed out, in the US, 'advertising programs in journalism schools continue to increase while declining in business schools' (2007: 12). As indicated by Helen, if Media and Humanities discipline are more inclined toward offering critical courses and modules than the Business discipline, then this trend bodes well in the US advertising education context, and could result in positive changes in the long term in that industry.

In addition to Helen, an interview was also conducted with another lecturer on the undergraduate, B.A. course. As well as lecturing, Therese is also the programme leader, and a principle architect of the degree course. Further details on what was discussed in terms of her views on gender stereotypes in advertising, and insights into gendered advertising practice are offered in Chapters 7 and 8. Of relevance for this chapter were her views and opinions on gender, more generally. While Therese was unclear on the extent to which, and in which modules gender issues might be touched on, she feels that the current level at which gender is discussed and talked about is probably appropriate. She maintains that the degree of attention given to gender issues is commensurate with a low-level, shaking off any residual sexist views that students may harbour coming into 1st year, which is when they are still immature and perhaps in a mixed-sex educational environment for the first time. Therese explains that she would call students to task for inappropriate opinions, or how they express their views. Male students, in particular, she says often exhibit a kind of 'bravado', and Therese believes that any problematic views held by students are a hangover from their adolescence, which can be simply shed with age and maturity. Implied by this exchange is that she does not give due regard to the insidiousness or systematic sexism that prevails in a patriarchal Irish society. Therese exhibits some degree of gender blindness, a faith in meritocracy, and is of the view that her gender has never been a barrier to her: *'I don't feel I've ever come across problems because of my gender in what I do so I don't*

maybe make a big thing of it'. However, she appears to hold slightly essentialist notions about male and female characteristics. For instance, when commenting on the current gender balance of students taking the module, where previously it had been dominated by women, she says that this changed the dynamic: *'I think when you have so many women together it got kind of very fraught at times, hysterical. I think sometimes males can diffuse the situation a little bit'*. This correlates with student views of women as burdensome and men as easy-going and low-maintenance.

Despite expressing gender-blind views, Therese does say that she is very open to considering the need for a more formalised response or approach to integrating issues of gender and diversity into the modules. This openness is very promising, and offers a lot of scope within which to challenge various gendered discourses that are reinforced throughout the degree course. One area that could, and indeed should be tackled – given the attitudes and confused understanding of students to issues of gender – is that related to gender essentialism. Hearn and Hein (2015), whose research is focused on marketing and consumer research (MCR), are critical of the depoliticisation of any references to gender theory within the body of MCR. They note that:

...examples of gender essentialisation based on ... biology emerged in studies of hormonal differences linked to consumer behaviour... Despite widespread critique of this work, including the conflation of sex and gender, or the reduction of gender based on biology, psychology or fixed identity... its persistence and high academic ranking highlights that marketing scholars continue to be particularly interested in understanding fundamental differences between men and women and perhaps tacitly assume that these differences define gender (Hearn and Hein, 2015: 5).

The authors are also critical of marketing research that consistently ignores the operation of gendered systems of power. Such research agendas and priorities undoubtedly impact, influence and come to bear on advertising education. As such, Therese's receptivity to introducing gender concerns in a more coherent and cohesive manner offers hope for change.

Conclusion

Treading the line between trying to avoid essentialising women and men while also pointing to instances where traits and characteristics traditionally and normatively associated with women and girls are denigrated is difficult. Another tension to acknowledge is the obligation within this study to draw attention to, and discuss with students, the issues still faced by women and girls

without perpetuating a sense of the female sex as a bundle of problems to address. While admitting to not always being able to avoid sliding into discussions that reinforce rather than refute differences between the sexes, or being able to untangle where the direction of the conversations set by this researcher starts and students' own constructions and understandings of gender begins, the painstaking coding and analysis process has nevertheless enabled an accurate picture to emerge in connection with student attitudes to gender.

This chapter has dealt with a multitude of simultaneously contradictory and competing discourses and narratives that sit (un)comfortably side-by-side. For instance there is at one and the same time an acknowledgement of how socialisation works to silence and ignore women and girls, while also denying that the issue of equality between the sexes is one that still needs to be addressed. There is widespread recognition of social forces that disproportionately lead to women internalising restrictive and reductive pressures to look and act in a certain manner, while actively adding to such issues by virtue of buying into notions of appropriate and desirable versions of femininity: versions that can be often one-dimensional and contradictory. Generally speaking, student attitudes across questionnaire, survey and interview data align with a gender different-but-equal discourse. Such a narrative most commonly associates women with notions of domesticity and caring, and as emotional labourer's responsible for both sexes. Women and girls are also discursively constructed as self-conscious, high-maintenance, lacking in confidence, and not funny or adventurous. Instead they are seen to be anguished over beauty and body-image issues; as evidenced in a belief that women simultaneously need more realistic standards but also 'want' to aspire to supermodel looks. This image of the 'problematic' girl-woman does not extend to the 'tomboy', since she is seen to emulate men. Men on the other hand are understood to be cool, easy-going, adventurous, low-maintenance and are associated with strength and confidence. This carefreeness on the part of male students is maintained until they are asked to think about women and girls and female oppression, at which point there is resistance to translate the 'knowledge' of the continued subordination of women and girls into sympathy and empathy, or at its more extreme, there is a refuting that the gender hierarchy still exists.

Although an account of the differential attitudes to issues of gender between male and female students has been provided in this chapter, particular attention was paid to the opinions of the men interviewed. This is because, firstly, and for the most part, their attitudes manifested as a more consistent discourse, and secondly, the male students are far more likely than their female

classmates to go on to take up creative roles in the industry, and therefore will hold more influence in driving advertising campaigns. The young women's opinions, on the other hand, proved to be more varied, disparate, silenced, or complicit with male opinions. Reasons proffered for this include such concepts as Bourdieu's *paradox of doxa* and collusion in one's own oppression, as well as McRobbie's 'sexual contract' and the individualised, neoliberal context that currently operates.

Chapter 7: Attitudes to gender in advertising texts – what about the men?

Introduction

During interviews with students, two dichotomous tropes commonly found in advertising imagery pertaining to women was raised and discussed; namely, sexualisation and domesticity. It was considered important to get a handle on how students interpreted such imagery and whether they accepted or rejected depictions of women as sex object or housewife/ homemaker, and the reasons and justifications underlying their attitudes, since women have far more frequently been reduced to these roles than men in advertising. It was broadly found that most students found the sexualisation and sexual objectification of women in advertising problematic, at some level. However, there was some confusion and misunderstanding about what constitutes sexual objectification. Furthermore, such abstract, hypothetical or theoretical concerns for reductive depictions of women as sex objects appeared to fall away when the discussion moved onto issues of what could or should be done to address this⁶⁹. Equating women with the domestic realm in advertising proved to be far less contentious for students. Indeed, none of the students interviewed expressed a concern with this ubiquitous trend in advertising. Rather, it was explained and justified on a number of fronts, which is covered in Chapter 8 in the section on ‘constraints of the medium’. It is noteworthy that, aside from discussions of women in advertising imagery occupying extreme ends of a spectrum as either ‘*sex objects or mothers*’ – to echo one student answer when asked to declare what are the cultural expectations of women in society – exchanges specifically connected to gender and advertising turned towards a concern for how men are being portrayed in adverts. This marks a departure from the findings in the preceding chapter, which, when talking about men, in a general sense, lacked much or any sense of anguish or concern. However, when honing in on critiques and examinations of gendered advertising trends, this concern for men and boys becomes present and subsequently tended to result in exchanges with students in which they pronounce wider issues connected to social pressures on men and boys as areas of concern. Siding with the male position, for the most part, was also found to be the case, particularly among female students, when analysing reactions and interpretations to the Carlsberg advert ‘The Crate Escape’; details of which are outlined towards the end of this chapter.

⁶⁹ This aspect of the findings is covered in Chapter 8 in the section on ethics.

Sexualisation of women: *'like the female one is just way more voyeuristic'*

On the questionnaire, students were asked to think about if, whether and how advertising might affect women and girls, and their view of themselves. There was no specific mention, in the phrasing of the question, to beauty or body-image pressures, or sexualisation and objectification.

Questionnaire response – Question: A lot of people claim that advertising damages young girls' and women's self-esteem. What do you think about that?

	Male	Female
Agree <i>References to 'beauty'; and/ or 'body image'; and/or physical appearance; and/ or to 'unrealistic'* beauty standards</i>	71% 74%	82% 74%
Disagree	7%	8%
Depends**	11%	8%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	11%	2%

Table 7.1: Questionnaire question – advertising, and women and girls' self-esteem

* includes references to the use of Photoshop and/ or air-brushing

** 'depends' relates to answers where participants did not respond broadly 'agree' or 'disagree' and instead referred to contextual, circumstantial and determining factors concerning the question being asked

Overall there is an understanding that advertising might damage the self-esteem of women and girls. Although the question does not reference 'beauty' or 'body image' or women's bodies, almost all respondents interpret the question this way, thereby implicitly tying a woman's self-esteem to how she looks. There is extensive critical awareness of 'unrealistic' beauty standards, and of women as victims to that social pressure. However, there is no evidence of any questioning of why beauty should be a marker at all tied to women's confidence. In other words, student responses put forward the view that if women had more achievable and attainable beauty goals such as promoted in the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, which is offered repeatedly as an example, it would be much better for women and girls, rather than critiquing why that should be a goal at all. No respondent makes a connection between advertising imagery and women and

girls' self-esteem in terms of rarely being shown in positions of authority or expertise, although one respondent does make a connection with how women are not treated as equals in wider society and that this is reflected in advertising. A small number of respondents suggest that if there are such issues, advertising is not responsible, or further that things have improved to the degree that it is no longer a concern.

Questionnaire response – Question: Traditionally, feminists have been concerned with the objectification of women's bodies in advertising. Do you think this is still an issue? Explain / further comments

	Male	Female
Yes	80%	90%
No	18%	8%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	2%	2%

Table 7.2: Questionnaire question – advertising, and objectification of women

While expanded answers were too numerous and diverse to code or categorise systematically, an attempt was made to choose what appeared as the most common and similar type of justification for answering in a particular way. Overall the majority of answers are 'yes'; with responses backing the view that objectification of women is a persistent and prevalent trend in advertising and results in negative social implications. Common reasons for answering in this vein also allude to the 'un-representativeness' and 'unrealistic' nature of such images, thereby implying a misunderstanding of 'objectification' in confusing it with images of 'beautiful' women. Other confused notions about what is meant by 'objectification' interpret such feminist concerns as amounting to sex-negativity or body shaming. As discussed previously, objectification should be understood as the sexual objectification of a person/persons that involves presenting them in decontextualised and dehumanised ways that deny them complexity, subjectivity, and multi-dimensionality. The term 'sex-negativity' meanwhile refers to feminist positions taken in respect of sexual activity. In the popular lexicon of feminist debate, sex-negativity stands in contrast to sex-positivity, with the former a term applied to feminists who seek to position sexual behaviour and sexual activities, especially between heterosexual sexual partners within a wider understanding of patriarchal power relations, and the latter referring to those feminists who

maintain that sexual tastes and preferences practiced between consenting people should not be within the remit of feminist concerns. Consequently, the finding outlined above suggests that some students are conflating feminist concerns of the continued prevalence of the objectification of women with the popular contention that feminist concerns about sex and presentations of the female body unhelpfully fuel a culture that shames women for their sexual preferences and for displaying their bodies. Somewhat similarly, some nuanced answers suggest that although women may continue to be objectified, this is potentially empowering – *‘If a woman or man have worked hard to achieve a certain body and don't mind showing it off...’*. Some 'yes' answers take a resigned tone, such that respondents believe objectification of women to be inevitable, and that men are also objectified in advertising. Additionally, those respondents answering ‘no’, although few in number, make reference to advertising having improved to the degree that objectification is no longer an issue. Although the phrasing of the question may have been somewhat loaded and/ or leading, one would have expected that the inclusion of the word ‘feminist’ in the question may have elicited some push-back responses. However, given that over 80% of both male and female responses agree that sexualisation and objectification of women in advertising remains an issue, this speaks to students’ awareness of the trend.

Questionnaire response – Question: Do you think men’s bodies are objectified and eroticized in contemporary adverts in the same way as women’s?

	Male	Female
Yes	84%	52%
No	13%	46%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code or left blank	3%	2%

Table 7.3: Questionnaire question – advertising, and objectification of men

It is significant that only 3 out of 46 male respondents who answer ‘yes’ to this question sought to offer further insight. These answers include the following: *‘Yes. But men being men, there is more of a deal about seeing a woman with little/no clothes on’*; *‘Yes. However, they are not objectified as consistently’*; and *‘Yes. But not nearly as often or with the same repercussions’*. None of the male respondents who answer that male bodies are not objectified or eroticized in adverts in the same way as women’s expand on their answer. Somewhat similarly, only one

female respondent answering 'yes' expands on her answer. She offers the following justification: '*Diet Coke gardener ad*'. And only two out of 24 women who do not believe that men are objectified in advertising in the same way as women offer something further, namely: '*Not in the same way... But still*'; and '*not as often*'.

There is a large gender gap when comparing answers to this question, with a much greater proportion of male respondents believing that men are objectified in advertising in similar ways to women. However, with little expansion on their answers, it is suggested that this points to a lack of conviction, for the most part, in answering in this manner. Indeed, during interviews students proved to be more capable than had been anticipated in identifying differential gendered signifiers in advertising imagery. Much in line with Gill's (2009a; 2009b) research in this area, some students were quick to underscore how various visual cues in the adverts that were being discussed work to position men as sexually, or otherwise, dominant and women as vulnerable and submissive.

Mostly the students demonstrate, during the interview, adeptness at deconstructing and unpacking gendered imagery and ideology in advertisements, meaning that they could adequately and accurately 'read' gender in ads. Of those students who were able to identify concepts of power, dominance, and subordination, not all took a critical stance against restrictive and reductive gender depictions in advertising. In reading the below two Nivea adverts for women and men, several students were especially good to identify aspects of voyeurism, and the Male Gaze in the women's adverts versus notions of functionality, authority and power in Nivea ads for men.



Figure 7.1: Nivea advert for women



Figure 7.2: Nivea advert for men

Colette very astutely and correctly identifies how something like a shower product is advertised differently to men and women, with women shown using the product in a 'sensual' way. The impact of the 'gaze' on her is such that the viewer holds power over her. She touches on how objectification and sexualisation 'reduces' women, in terms that it represents a reduction to

something less than she might otherwise be. She offers a very articulate and nuanced discussion of the drive and pressure for women to self-sexual-objectification, while being very clear that women should not be shamed for showing their bodies or capitalising on their sexuality. However, she expresses disappointment that there are not more diverse representations of women in popular culture. In deconstructing the women's Nivea advert she notes that: '*she's not looking, you're doing the looking and you're doing the appraising*'. Conversely the man being portrayed is more in control, and as if '*it's kind of like he has the upper hand because he's laughing at some joke that you don't know about*'. She offers an interesting analytic deconstruction on why the shower pose of the woman would not work for men:

I think it would be nearly too submissive or something that we're like... I don't know, I can't even phrase it ... it wouldn't work as well, I don't think men would respond to it as well as they would with the other one. I think it would be if he was to take that pose, it would be kind of submissive and a bit more like weaker or something.

She suggests that the reason men are rarely, if ever, depicted in advertising as sensually lathering up is because it reflects wider societal attitudes and expectations for women and men, with the submissiveness of women '*not even noticed because it's so normalised, I think*'.

Also comparing the male-female Nivea shower ads, Cat uses the term 'voyeuristic' for the woman and 'functional' for the man. She adds that the woman showering is '*indulgent*', and '*gratuitous*'. The prevalence of sexual tropes in advertising has meant, according to her, an internalisation that goes unchecked because it is so common and ubiquitous. However, echoing Gill (2008), she did point out that she does not agree that men are objectified to the same degree as women, and even in cases where they are that:

...it's not like there's not the same history of it and you can't kind of claim like... you know women there is a history, there is still a need for feminism and it's all this kind of precedent of women being show in a certain way or represented in a certain way that it is still offensive.

However, directly related to the Nivea adverts, she simultaneously holds a contradictory view in not finding it troubling, problematic or offensive that the same product uses starkly different imagery to depict women and men engaging with it because '*product categories necessitate that you have to advertise them differently*'. However, she does say that far more ads should be focused on being entertaining in ways that are not sexist.

More generally, Della is very critical of common tropes in fashion ads and brands which depict women as so often semi-clothed and lying on top of or clinging to a man in a needy manner. She talked about being tired and bored with seeing the same objectified tropes in adverts, but demonstrates that she does not have an understanding of how such a prolonged perpetuation could lead to women internalising social pressures to look a certain way. For instance, she expresses exasperation with other young women who are offended and shocked at the unrealistic body sizes of a Topshop mannequin or a Barbie doll, and suggests that it is women in competition with each other that drives this pointless preoccupation more than anything else. Yet, simultaneously, fashion advertising was held to task by Della for setting trends that pressure women to have certain body types:

In ads themselves I have noticed that there is a big difference, like the guys... are always kind of like this really cool kind of person. Whereas girls kind of look like a sex object basically.

Bernard also was able to deconstruct the below Gucci advert in relation to its commentary on wider social gendered relations:



Figure 7.3: Gucci advert

He interprets the woman in the ad as looking ‘*scared, alarmed*’, and that although the male is ‘*more exposed... he is the dominant partner. She’s seeking refuge from him in the Wild West or what appears to be the Wild West. She’s a defenceless individual*’. Bernard points out that he learned to pick up on the visual clues that offer such a reading of this ad from class discussions about the dominant role of men in advertising imagery.

The concept of Mulvey's 'Male Gaze' was something several students raised, unprompted, during discussions of how men and women are differentially depicted in advertising imagery. They grasp well the notion of the gaze as disempowering for women. In Mulvey's highly influential 1975 essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', she employed a psychoanalytic assessment of the contradictory centrality of phallogentrism and the image of the woman to narrative film. She suggests that '(i)n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has involved implicit collusion with active/male and passive/female tropes (Mulvey, 1992: 27). She coined the term 'the male gaze' to connote the phenomenon of men looking at women, and women watching themselves being looked at. In Freudian terms, because the image of the woman signifies castration for the male, she must be represented in passive, that is to say non-threatening, terms. Although Mulvey's articulation of the male gaze is somewhat fatalistic, since it ascribes a problematic voyeurism to all viewers, regardless of whether they are women or men (Rose, 2001), her examination of a gendered visibility is both echoed in other work undertaken in respect to gender and representation (Berger, 1972), and influential for scholars drawing on her dyadic concepts of images of passive women and active men:

Men *act* and women *appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves ... Thus she turns herself into an object (Berger, 1972; cited in Pollock, 2007: 21).

Berger's assessment of visual culture and of the sustained prevalence of male-active and female-passive motifs is echoed by the student participants of this study over 40 years later in their readings of contemporary advertisements. Through from Goffman (1979), Williamson (1978) to Kilbourne (1999) and Gill (2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), this speaks to the longevity of such established notions about femininity and masculinity.

Discussing issues related to the sexualisation and objectification of women and men's bodies reveal that the female student responses are slightly more nuanced and tend to appreciate the complexity of a shaming/ rape-culture more than the men interviewed. There was a sense, among both male and female students, that they know what they should say, but do not really internalise those concerns. Sexualisation and objectification appear not to be issues of significance for men; either as victims themselves, or in a concern for women and girls. Women's bodies and selves were understood to be objectified and commodified through imagery (for example, through

advertising); and through the activities of culturally powerful figures (for example the practices of Miley Cyrus and Kim Kardashian).

The skill of deconstructing and reading sexual trends and tropes in advertising was not present in all students. When Kevin was asked if he thought that there was a trend of objectifying women in adverts, he replied:

‘Not at the moment no. I think there’s only two ads that spring to mind, as I said the Hunky Dorys and the Club Orange ads, the rest of the ads even tailored towards men they’re not really as gender orientated or anything like that. So, just Lynx, Club Orange and Hunky Dorys’.

This comment indicates that Kevin does not see the obvious because of its ubiquity. Yet, despite his blindness to the sexual objectification of women in advertising, in another discussion he talks about the appeal of certain types of adverts targeting men, and notes that: *‘like, once a guy sees an ad with a macho guy and a girl on his arm and all the money in the world like things like that, it does appeal to him, it definitely does’.* By so saying, he tacitly endorses the objectification of women, who – in this exchange – is represented as an object on the arm of the ‘macho guy’, a possession or prize he has acquired, like wealth. Paul also struggles with identifying instances of sexual objectification, and added that this is maybe because he does not get offended very easily, thus reducing feminist concerns of this nature to an issue of political correctness.

The sexualisation of culture, in which objectification of women’s bodies in advertising texts is a part, grew out of a contemporary postfeminist gendered landscape. In the past decade or more it has become increasingly prevalent and pronounced, as well as scrutinised and critiqued. Postfeminist discourses of empowerment through self-objectification, individual choice, a repolarisation of the sexes and of a consumerist narrative constructed around reinvention have provided the catalyst for the proliferation of sexual imagery that is a feature of a sexualised culture (Gill, 2008; Coy and Garner, 2010). Sexualisation involves ‘the extraordinary proliferation of discourses about sex and sexuality across all media forms ... as well the increasingly frequent erotic presentation of girls’, women’s and (to a lesser extent) men’s bodies in public spaces’ (Gill, 2007; cited in Coy and Garner, 2012: 287). There is, Coy and Garner recognise, a ‘recurrent theme of empowerment through the approving male gaze’ (2010: 661). This is closely correlated to social pressure for women to be beautiful and sexually attractive to men, with sexual attractiveness understood to mean sexual availability. While conforming to

those pressures is constructed as empowering, Coy and Garner make the crucial distinction between genuine empowerment and agency and the capacity to reject normative associations of femininity and female sexuality, against ‘choices’ made within a context in which those pressures are normalised and considered inevitable and which bolster the commodification and assimilation of female sexuality into male-defined terms.

Postfeminist narratives of sexualisation and objectification as ‘empowering’, accompanied by positioning feminism as a lifestyle choice, not surprisingly has bred a ‘socio-cultural climate where some young women perceive that a positive self-identity can be built on reclaiming the sexualized portrayals that modern feminism has sought to challenge’ (Coy and Garner, 2010: 658). Similarly, since young people are usually loath to be seen as out of touch or passé, there is therefore much widespread conformity to postfeminist representations of women as sexualised objects. Especially constrained to conform are those women working in the cultural and media industries, says McRobbie, since they are supposed to be adept at keeping their finger on the pulse. To take an example, McRobbie notes that ‘(a)s a mark of a post-feminist identity young women journalists refuse to condemn the enormous growth of lap dancing clubs despite the opportunities available for them to do so across the media’ (2004: 259). The findings among participants of this study indicate that the discourse discussed above connected to self-sexual-objectification as empowering was not one that was present among the young women interviewed. Nevertheless, while not actively embracing this sexualised discourse, they do tacitly endorse it, to some degree, given the extent to which they seem capable of shrugging off objectified and sexualised portrayals of women in ads when asked what can be done to counter this trend.

Domesticity of women: *‘I presume that’s still true that women are doing the whatever’*

While students, for the most part, show competence in identifying problematic sexual tropes in advertising, they also express opinions that aligned to the view that advertising is now ‘post-gender’, meaning that some interviewees believe advertising no longer pays attention to gender in any significant or meaningful way. Despite being critical of how the advertising industry portrays women as ‘sex objects’, Della believes Irish advertising to mostly portray a gender equal relationship between women and men, with neither taking centre stage. She notes that Irish

advertising tends to focus more on both sexes socialising and having fun together. When asked if advertising has become more or less sexualised in recent years, she answers definitively that she does not think advertising has become more sexualised. However, she may be interpreting 'sexualised' as meaning more gendered or with more obvious gender roles in advertising:

I don't think it's become more sexualised, I think going back to 1960s and 1970s ads were very much so genderised. Like, the female was the one at home doing the cleaning.

Nevertheless, although she misunderstands the question concerning the proliferation of sexualised images of women and girls in contemporary culture, this comment belies a belief that advertising is 'post-gender', and cannot be charged with assigning reductive gender roles to women and men in advertisements. This was echoed by both Fiona and Kevin, who express similar views of advertising as no longer gendered in any significant or meaningful sense:

I wouldn't think it would be a very big feature in Ireland's advertising because we're just so equal here. I know the pay scales aren't but in regards to perceptions, men and women are equal – Fiona

There is one that comes to mind with SMA⁷⁰, the whole Irish mothers; 'we've seen you, we've gotten to know you over the years', and it's just images and clips of I'd say new mothers just with their babies and getting splashed with food or in the supermarket. That'd be the only one that comes to mind that looks like it's toward a specific gender role. – Kevin

The idea that advertising is post-gender was closely related to lack of acknowledgement that there are defined gender roles evident in adverts, with Kevin's comment indicating a belief that women are no longer confined to the housewife and caring role in advertising campaigns. However, that being said, there was simultaneously also a wide recognition of the 'housewife' or the 'busy working mom' trope in ads, albeit with some suggestion that this is changing, with men also shown in domestic product adverts. Accompanied by this recognition is a distinct lack of a sense of unfairness on the part of the students concerned with unequal burden-sharing of domestic and care responsibilities between women and men, with the exception of Des, who feels this role is undervalued and should not be assumed to be reserved automatically for women.

⁷⁰ SMA is a brand of baby milk.

Fiona, for instance, holds contradictory and confused views about what constitutes equality. In the big, that is to say abstract, picture she understands and subscribes to feminist views, although she does distance herself from 'extreme' feminists. However, in her everyday or imagined future reality, she expresses views that indicate that she would not expect or demand equal burden-sharing with a male partner. The reason for this is because of her assumption that women are naturally better at those tasks. She fails to understand or recognise how the onus on women to take on the responsibility of the majority of household work upholds inequalities between the sexes. In terms of advertising domestic products, the shift from the stay-at-home housewife to the 'busy working mom' is praised by Fiona as progress:

Back then it was the woman in the house during the day you know at 1 o'clock, the time when women would be at work now and she's cleaning the house and then he comes home and she's like 'oh blah blah you're home' but now it's the woman rushing out to work or how to get things done fast so you can get to work or pick up the kids. The mam is actually busy during the day now, not that it's the woman's role to stay at home, like there has been a big change.

She also added that she sometimes sees 'men actually doing chores in the ads', although she demonstrates that she is well aware that women are the primary target market for domestic products, since 'you wouldn't see an ad for Harpic or Cillit Bang on Sky Sports News'.

Colette notes that, although adverts for breakfast cereal, for example, would tend to show a mother preparing breakfast for her child while the father goes out to work, there is progression away from those depictions. She talks about an advert for Birds Eye in which there is a male character making dinner for his girlfriend; something that would have been considered highly unusual in advertising in the 1950s. Della, meanwhile, talks about Fairy Liquid and the fact that they released an advert featuring a man washing the dishes. She raises this example as proof that the trend of domestic products targeting women has changed, and that 'to some extent they're trying to get everyone'. Revealingly, however, she admits that in a class project that involved marketing and advertising a bleach product, although they initially wanted to target both sexes, they did end up predominantly targeting women.

An assumption of gender equality achieved, and gender stereotyping as no longer prevalent was expressed by Kevin: 'I don't see too many ads that say a woman is the mother and therefore she stays at home and does all the shopping and them stereotypical roles', and yet directly following that comment he indicates that a washing up liquid advert would inevitably be targeted at

women/housewives/mothers since that is the first target market that would spring to mind. He interprets the kind of advert that shows the man as incompetent at housework, or as purposely trying to be bad so he does not have to do such chores again, as humorous. However, where he does find it problematic is because it depicts men as lazy, rather than recognising why such depictions of male incompetence in the home might be problematic in terms of the social impact for continuing to burden women with the responsibility for domestic and care work:

I think they'd [i.e. women watching such an ad] just find it humorous, thinking 'yeah, yeah, yous are all lazy and now we have an ad about yous'. I think they'd take it with a bit of humour and finally it shows what men are really like doing the washing and now 'we've caught yiz rapid'.⁷¹

Interestingly, in widening the potential target market for a washing up liquid ad, he talks about the single dad, or stay-at-home dads, but does not think about or include the working dad; unlike the implied working mother, who remains the primary target.

In terms of the ubiquity of advertisements for household products, Cat's position is that these ads are so forgettable, but that - she assumes - for the most part, they tend to show women using the products. She suggests that this is probably the case because women, in reality, predominantly do undertake the work of domestic chores in the home, and that if men were shown in such ads it would be less credible or believable. If given a brief for a domestic product, she says it is far more likely to put a woman in the ad using it rather than a man, because of a number of reasons: firstly, society and the fact that it is simply just true that more women do the cleaning and do the shopping for cleaning products; secondly, advertising precedence means that adverts have always associated domestic products with women and so it is less risky to stick to that; and thirdly, domestic products represent a boring brief, so the inclination is to do what is quick and easy.

Expressing a similar view, although more regretful that it is the case, Nick says that adverts for household products such as washing up liquid remain primarily targeted to 'housewives' because market research most likely reveals that women still do the majority of housework. While he admits that this is probably sexist, he explains that advertisers are caught in a Catch-22 situation. However, he makes allowance for the fact that maybe the market research is shoddy or flawed and works to uphold an assumption that may no longer be true. Arguably, this might be the case, because Nick talks about 'housewives' and 'wives' but does not account for households in which

⁷¹ 'Caught yiz rapid' is a slang term for being caught doing something wrong.

both male and female partners are working. In discussing adverts that show the 'busy working mom', he does point out that it might be progressive in a sense because it alludes to the woman working outside the home but he concludes that it is ultimately unhelpful in showing women taking on the responsibility of the domestic tasks. He laments this as a continued trend since it limits women in terms of associating them to the traditional sphere of cooking and cleaning, and it is limiting to men such that it '*perpetrates the negative connotation that men don't clean at all*'. In his experience, women do tend to do the cleaning because they have a lower 'tolerance' for the state of the homes they want to live in. Whether this is an intentional device by men, given that they can assume women will cave in and do the cleaning, was not made clear by Nick. However, having indicated that girls are quicker to tidy and clean, he did suggest that living in a mixed-sex student house, they all try to be fair and divide up communal cleaning tasks.

Bernard demonstrates, through the use of one example, how men are shown as incompetent fathers/partners/husbands in the home in adverts. Although when pressed, he acknowledges the significance of the fact that men are only shown in advertising as idiots in the home and not the workplace: '*Some advertisers seem to be playing again on the stereotype that ... [men do] not do much at home*'. He recognises the impact that advertising narratives can have on the lived realities and experiences of male-female relations in the home: '*the advertising industry is feeding on the stereotype and the stereotype is growing from the advertising industry*'. Although he demonstrates that he is aware of the double-shift that disproportionately affects women, he does not give the impression that he considers this as unjust:

Now, a lot of females work ... outside the family home. They also have to juggle the domestic responsibilities as well, childcare issues, family home so they're doing two jobs at the same time, at least two jobs at the same time.

Yet, having identified that reality for women, he goes on to say that '*there's a stereotype out there maybe that the man isn't pulling his weight for the want of a better expression*'. This notion of men not pulling their weight as a stereotype is not compatible with the idea that women actually do bear an unequal share of domestic and care responsibility. In other words, the language here is important; either it is a stereotype and therefore is inaccurate, or it is a reflection of reality and therefore contributes to women having to do 'two jobs at the same time'. He cancels out one position by inference to the other.

Much like Cat, Gillian does not show much emotional or intellectual investment in the imagery/representation side of advertising, especially in terms of domestic products. While acknowledging that probably it is not great for adverts to mostly show women using household products, she is fairly unfazed and simply says, of supposed changes in gender roles in the home: *'I think society's definitely moving away from that and advertising kind of needs to catch up a bit with that maybe'*. Given that she does not subscribe to a naturalised gender difference point of view and believes that, beyond physiological and physical strength, sex/gender is not a marker for differential capacities and abilities, her lack of investment in the impact of advertising imagery is remarkable.

Again, like Nick, and demonstrating a slightly more in-depth critique than the female students of associations of women and domesticity, Damien refers to class discussions on the problem of the continued representation of women doing most of the domestic work in the home in ads, and notes that the class tended to counter this trend with assertions of change predicated on one example: the Barry Scott, Cillit Bang adverts. However, he correctly asserts that this does not represent a change since the Cillit Bang adverts, in fact, do not show him cleaning a kitchen, and according to Damien, the ad is stereotypically 'male' in being about strength and power and hardcore cleaning. He comes up with a couple of examples of ads and campaigns that target women and men based on stereotypical assumptions about gender roles, with man as the protector and woman as the carer and nurturer. He admits to being a bit blind and ignorant of such things until they are pointed out in class, but he does give a good account in terms of demonstrating an awareness of the problematic and prevalent depictions of women in the domestic setting in advertising. However, despite an intellectual appreciation for these concerns, they do not appear to extend to his personal life and he notes, as previously reported in Chapter 6, that he would have no interest in being a stay-at-home dad. In addition, his response to his friend that *'wants the traditional woman'* is that *'you're not gonna get that these days', it's hard to find you know, things are changing'* sounds a resigned tone. That is to say that since women have sought to take that option off the table, men have to move with it, rather than a sense that equal burden-sharing is the fair and right thing to do.

Across various different discussions Des represents the outlier position in terms of attitudes to gender, in a general sense, and to advertising imagery. Echoing Cat and Nick, Des suggests that a Catch 22 situation is at play here in terms of the fact that cooking and cleaning products are

targeted to women because they do those tasks. He also contends that because advertising reflects that, this works to reinforce those roles. However, Des expresses a value in the role of housewife and stay-at-home mothers, a sentiment he extends to teachers also, as doing something socially valuable and not easy, and deplors that these roles are undervalued, denigrated and downplayed by society. He suggests that, if it made sense for him and his future (hypothetical) family, he would willingly be a stay-at-home dad, and would never automatically expect his wife/ the mother to give up her job:

Like if the situation ever came along where I had kids and I was on an average job and my wife was on a really good job and the decision was there for me to stay at home and raise the kids, I would have no problem doing that if it was beneficial to all of us.

Nevertheless, despite Des' gender equal views, the fact remains that women are far more likely to be portrayed in domestic roles in advertising. In a study⁷² carried out in 2008, commissioned by the-then Equality Authority, Ging and Flynn found that 'compared with men, women are still overrepresented as homemakers (in advertising) and underrepresented in public and professional life' (2008: 5). This study comprised a sample of almost 800 adverts across various Irish media platforms, such as newspaper, magazine, billboards, television, and radio in order to capture the extent to which and the ways in which women, specifically, are stereotyped in advertising in the Irish media. On the whole, the authors note, adverts are seen as using vastly different imagery and tactics to market and advertise very similar products to both sexes. This is something that was clearly in evidence in discussions with students regarding the Nivea shower product ads. Advertisers differentially target women and men by playing on long-established and stereotypical notions of innate characteristics and capacities. For instance, within the sample there was a strikingly clear gender divide in terms of equating men with activity and women with passivity. This was achieved through such devices as the use of voice-overs, visual depictions of speaking and silence, and body positions. The sexes, much like Gill has asserted (2008), are also sexualised and/ or objectified in different ways; often through iterations of 'the gaze' and who is looking, or through facial expressions; be they serious, serene or flirtatious, with the authors finding that men are only shown in a flirtatious manner in just 2.1% of the sample compared with 15.5% of women. On the whole, women were found to be objectified more often than men in the

⁷² This report has remained, to date, unpublished. Following the resignation in 2008 of the Chief Executive of the Equality Authority in protest at extensive budget cuts, The Equality Authority went on to be subsumed into the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

sample set of adverts in the study. In addition, where tropes of infantilisation were present, male characters and bodies that were infantilised invoke notions of immaturity, whereas when women are infantilised there is a sexualised element not present in depictions of men.

Significantly, in the sample of adverts analysed that relate specifically to a cleaning product, it is almost exclusively women shown using it. The one exception to this is an advert for the brand Bounty and its paper towels range. The ‘Carry on Cleaning’ campaign for Bounty centres around two male characters in drag representing stereotypical, dowdy and competitive housewives who delight in the efficiency of the product. Thus, although the authors do not say so, this advert does not in fact represent an exception since the depiction of men in drag serves to tangentially locate women within the role as homemaker and cleaner. Additionally, there were ‘no adverts in the television sample which showed men doing routine household chores (cleaning, ironing, washing up)’ (Ging and Flynn, 2008: 44). Furthermore, as well as visual and physical presence within a domestic setting, when female voiceovers are used in adverts⁷³, they are most often used in connection to home and care-work.

In adverts that are located in the home, men make up a significant proportion of those individuals present (40%). However, despite the near equal presence of men and women in domestic settings in adverts, the sexes are either shown engaged in different activities, or when men and women are portrayed doing the same activity, such as cooking, even this is differentially represented. For example, the study found that, whereas men prepare food for themselves, women are not shown as cooking exclusively for their own consumption, but rather in all situations analysed women were seen to be cooking for others. This positions cooking as a ‘self-empowering’ skill for men; where for women, it is in service of others. Thus, this echoes findings in this doctoral study concerned with students’ reflections on (stereo)typical traits of women and men. Analysis of those responses showed that positive traits connected to women benefit other people, whereas for men, the positive traits relate to self-affirmation and empowerment.

Aside from undertaking similar activities in the home, such as cooking, there was a distinct gender divide in terms of ‘caring’ as opposed to ‘playing’ with children: ‘5.9% of the women in the sample were depicted as caring for children as compared with 0.7% of men ... 3.1% of men in the sample were depicted in play with children compared with 1.7% of women’ (Ging and Flynn, 2008: 38/ 42). Furthermore, no advert in which both men and women were present

⁷³ 61% of adverts in the sample use a male voiceover, compared to only 36% which had female voiceovers.

showed the male character undertaking routine domestic tasks while the woman plays with the children; unlike the reverse in which a man is shown kidding around with his children while the mother-wife-partner character is shown cleaning up or preparing food. This pervading trope of fun and humour when men are present in adverts is something Gareth was adamant was central, and an inevitability to advertising campaign design⁷⁴. Indeed, when men are shown doing domestic tasks, Ging and Flynn posit that resorting to a comic set-up works to ‘defeminise’ what is assumed to be women’s work. This echoes a wider trend of:

...young men hanging out in urban spaces, playing pranks on one another, being loud and carefree and generally having a laugh. Women, by contrast, were rarely seen to occupy public space in this way and were rarely portrayed as playing pranks, refusing to be serious or ‘breaking the rules’ (Ging and Flynn, 2008: 39).

The notion of men being fun and easy and taking up a visual and physical place in the world, with women confined to more serious, restrictive and mundane settings and tasks chime with the findings of Chapter 6 in terms of constructing women and their experiences as burdensome and men’s as free of those chains. However, in discussing the prevalence of women in domestic settings with, particularly the female students, an awareness of how constraining those assumptions are was completely absent.

Indeed, the implications for gender equality of returning to gender essentialist thinking of women’s natural and inevitable place in the home are compellingly iterated in the following exchange during the interview with Fiona who, in elaborating on advertising’s portrayal of women and domestic chores, said:

I think it’s nothing to do with advertising. Like I wouldn’t trust my Dad to go do the full week’s shopping ... It’s just one of those gender role things; the woman does the shopping, and the man fixes the doors... Naturally enough, if I had kids I would want to stay at home with them... I wouldn’t trust a man to go into a shop and pick up the right things.

Sentiments such as this, coming from a young woman born in the mid-1990s at the height of postfeminism, are indicative of how utterly premature was the optimism of those surveying the gains made by second-wave feminism. The 1980s briefly marked a period of social discourse caught up with the ‘new man’ of the era, who was supposed to encapsulate sensitivity, an aptitude for domesticity, and a much increased involvement in fatherhood and caring. However,

⁷⁴ The concept of humour is discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

rather than the 1960s and '70s sowing the seeds of irreversible change, the more accurate reality of a mostly unchanged domestic sphere is echoed by invoking Hochschild's 1989 phrase 'the stalled revolution' to refer to women's double-shift. The unequal burden of domestic and care work placed on women remains a central issue for feminists in contemporary campaigns.

A 2011 OECD study highlights why, aside from issues of fairness and equality between the sexes, it matters that we have an accurate picture of who does the bulk of unpaid work in the home: 'Since women traditionally do much of the unpaid work, so neglecting to include it underestimates women's contribution to the economy' (Miranda, 2011: 6). The author found that in none of the 26 OECD countries surveyed, which includes Ireland, was there parity between the sexes in terms of unpaid work in the home.

Tasks that have traditionally been thought of as "women's work" (e.g. cooking and cleaning) continue to be primarily performed by women. In the countries surveyed, 82% of women prepare meals on an average day, while only 44% of men do. Also the average time spent by women on cooking is four times the time spent by men (Miranda, 2011: 25).

Women, on average, were undertaking an additional two and a half hours work at home than men, per day.

Given that Irish advertising appears to reflect the reality of Irish women's lives as disproportionately burdened by domestic and childcare work, it is notable that there is not a greater pushback or resentment in evidence among the female students interviewed for this doctoral study. Pat O'Connor's work on the changing state and status of Irish women, although published almost 18 years ago, remains helpful in contextualising and explaining the reticence of students to reject associations of women with the home. O'Connor notes that '(i)n Ireland, the social subordination of women was seen, until very recently, as 'natural', 'inevitable', 'what women want'. It was reflected in women's allocation to the family arena, where their position was given rhetorical validation' (1998: 245). In fact, women's position in the home was enshrined in the 1937 Irish Constitution, which states that:

The State recognises that that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved... The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home (as cited in Irish Times, January 2, 2016).

Although this does not prevent women from working outside the home, it symbolically serves to connect women primarily to her life as mother and care-giver, and has led to the fact that ‘women have been encouraged to exclude themselves from the public arena for ‘the sake of the family’ although their educational levels have traditionally been higher than those of their male counterparts’ (O’Connor, 1998: 245). There have been significant feminist advances in Irish society since O’Connor wrote those words, not least in terms of the passing of the same-sex marriage equality referendum, as well as increasing debate and conversation around abortion, women’s visibility and representation in the Irish media, and in Irish politics. Yet, Irish public discourse continues to simultaneously ignore the contribution that many men do, in fact, make to family-life in the home and to disproportionately connect women to those roles, thereby maintaining the domestic sphere as a woman’s space.

Martin (2000) is also enlightening in exploring why Irish society retains a strong attachment to women as carers, and therefore homemakers. In an interesting examination of how abortion discourse in Ireland is subsumed within mythical associations of Irish women to nation and nationalism – the ‘Mother Ireland’ motif, in other words – Martin points out that ‘(t)he memetic links between women and the nation in contemporary Ireland have generally been structured around the Virgin Mary’ (p. 69). This perhaps simultaneously explains female students rejection (for themselves, at least) of sexualised imagery, without the same ‘concern’ for equating women with the domestic sphere, such that sexualisation is psycho-socially understood to be ‘bad’ in an Irish context, while domesticity is considered natural and good. That is to say, the absence of a sense of unfairness of the domestic burden indicates an ideological complicity with a ‘women’s place is in the home’ narrative. Furthermore, although students exhibit a critical awareness and express unease with advertising’s overly sexualised representations of women, yet fail to find the prevalence of women in domestic settings problematic, this demonstrates a lack of understanding of how this impacts on gender relations. In addition, perhaps students see little wrong with equating women to the private, domestic sphere because of their own personal experience of stay-at-home mothers, or working mothers that undertook the bulk of the housework.

Turn towards men and boys: ‘*There seems to be a reverse stereotype of (men) depicted as bumbling idiots*’

As already indicated, in discussions of gender representations in advertising texts, a concern for men and boys emerges. This thread comes via two narratives: that one sex must lose for the other to win, and a sense of resignation for the way things are in connection to women in advertising. The understanding that for an ad to appeal to one sex, whether humorous or otherwise, it necessarily entails trampling and ridiculing or manipulating and fooling the other very firmly relies on a War of the Sexes narrative that re-emerged with postfeminism, and which in turn is predicated on assumptions about gender and essentialism, and 'naturalised' gender difference. It also echoes Gill's identification of the 'vengeful woman' trope in postfeminist advertising imagery:

To get women on board you kind of have to demoralise the man which isn't good for the man, like I think it would just be for the fun of it, I'd like a cheeky brief (but) it would just be so hard to get an actual campaign to be, towards both sides – Fiona

Although expressing relations between the sexes as a 'zero-sum game'⁷⁵ scenario was not present among very many students, there was greater evidence of students taking up positions that indicated they were resigned to the way things are, in the sense that they assume the inevitability of certain advertising trends, and a perceived lack of agency to make change. It appears that this resignation fuels a complacency, which itself feeds, or indeed results in a lack of awareness of and connection to the real-life and lived implications for gender and sexual inequality. This resignation-complacency-acceptance cycle is especially in evidence in terms of student attitudes to the prevalence of women in domestic settings in adverts, as discussed in the previous section. In other words, a general apathy and numbness is apparent, which is due to over-exposure of images of women as either mothers or sex objects:

I think it's definitely something that's been around a while. I don't really see it going anywhere. I don't see it disappearing from culture any time soon – Colette

That apathy and complacency is not evident when discussion turns to the issue of misandry in advertising texts. Arguably this is because the relative scarcity of advertising imagery that could be deemed to be misandric has meant there is not over-saturation, and therefore students are not jaded by discussion of such. Nevertheless, the consequence of students' engagement with such

⁷⁵ This is a reference to Michael Kimmel's assertion that encouraging men to invest in gender equality requires challenging the contention that equality for women represents a 'zero-sum game' and therefore a loss for men. Rather, equality should be understood as benefitting both sexes. See Kimmel's TedTalk at: https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_kimmel_why_gender_equality_is_good_for_everyone_men_included#t-54193

content results in them believing this to be a greater issue than it, in fact, is. In general, iterations of misandry in advertising relates to expressions of concern for the state, status or treatment of men, boys, and masculinity; either by advertising and its imagery or otherwise. There are a few mixed messages within this theme, namely that mostly male respondents reference a concern or a swing toward misandrist representations, while female interviewees talk about how unfair beauty standards perhaps now apply to men even more so than women. There is a perception among some students that men are shown as stupid and incompetent in advertising as a bigger trend than it is. Overall, although there is a recognition that advertising imagery remains more of an issue with respect to women, the questionnaire, interview and observational class data indicates that men want attention to be paid to them, but are then quick to refute being impacted by sexualised, objectified, or condescending imagery. The discourse of misandric advertising is bolstered by a belief that evidence of an exception to a trend disproves the rule. This occurs where one example or illustration is offered as definitive proof that 'the rule', for example that women are objectified and sexualised far more often than men in advertising, does not really exist or reflect the reality. In other words, given that an 'exception' exists proves that the rule/ reality does not, in fact, exist. The Diet Coke adverts were repeatedly referenced, during the interviews, more than any other ad to accompany points being made in this regard.

Discussing beauty pressure on women with Colette turns to sympathy for men and boys and the fact that the increasing social 'embrace' of curvy women and an unmasking of the artificiality and unattainability of airbrushed women and Victoria's Secret-esque models is a courtesy not extended to men with beer bellies, for example. She expresses concern with an unfair double standard that men are now more pressured to look a certain, unrealistic way than women:

Real women aren't expected to look like that on a daily basis, but you would still kind of expect lads these days to have a six pack and have the perfect hair and all.

Referring to a Lynx advertising campaign and explaining why it remains appealing to young men, Kevin notes that it is because of the attractive woman 'on your arm'. In discussing the supposed misandry and objectification of men in adverts, he believes this to be a concern, and cites the 'macho-ness' of the Lynx advert guy, rather than recognising that it is the woman in this type of ad that is objectified. More generally, however, he does object to the stereotyping of the hypermasculine male who is assumed to love sports and fast cars, but does say that '*there is a bit of a, what's the word, a bit of neglect of focusing on male equality as opposed to just women*'.

Bernard more explicitly and definitively raises misandry in advertising as an issue he is concerned with. In the questionnaire completed by him, he had noted that '*the pendulum has also swung to the other way with men depicted as sex objects*'. He talks about taking gender classes and learning about masculinity and femininity, and straight after mentions that misandry has crept into advertising. This seems to indicate that this discussion had been raised in lectures and suggests that the view that we should be concerned about the treatment of men in advertisements was endorsed by the lecturer. He refers to a discussion on the George Hook⁷⁶ radio programme, which covered the topic of gender stereotyping in advertising. While it appears, from Bernard's interpretation of the radio piece that misandry is present in a significant way in advertising texts, the reaction of the radio panellists varied. For instance, one contributor '*argued that it was only kind of maybe balancing out the misogynous trend in advertising ... but as Shane Coleman [co-presenter] pointed out just because something has been wrong... doesn't justify misandry*'. In other words, Bernard feels that two wrongs do not make a right. When asked to provide examples of male objectification and misandry in advertising, Bernard alludes to an advert – referring, it is assumed, to the Diet Coke advert – in which a man washing a window is objectified by the women gawping at him. Similar to Kevin, Bernard demonstrates through this example that he is not aware of the fundamental power imbalances between men and women in society that render any such (questionable) objectification of men fairly benign, given how long and the extent of the dehumanisation, denigration, and degradation of women in advertising and other forms of cultural imagery. This misunderstanding of what is meant by 'objectification' and 'misandry' is likewise demonstrated in his assessment of the below Equinox advert, which he asserted as amounting to '*objectification of the male body*' and as misandric.

⁷⁶ George Hook is a radio personality on Newstalk FM known for his controversial, 'telling-it-like-it-is' approach to broadcasting.



Figure 7.4: Advert for Equinox

In this advert, the male is indeed naked but arguably he is not objectified necessarily. For instance, he is not in a vulnerable position, and given that the nuns are seated and looking demure, albeit longingly, and he is standing and looks physically stronger, the fact that they are nuns and signify virginity and chastity positions him as the more dominant, knowing participant in this scene. Students need to be better versed in the visual cues and able to read these signs and how to differentiate misogyny and misandry and to be cognisant of the differential cultural and social impact of both; that is to say that, while students may be proficient at decoding and reading adverts, they are less able to place that knowledge in a context that is mindful of issues of power. Bernard identifies a gender divide in class regarding opinions on the issue of misandry and male objectification. He explains that while guys in the class did not like the trend towards misandry, he says, the girls had no issue with it. However, rather than the girls not having an issue with misandric representations of men, the truth might be closer to Cat's position that instances of male objectification are not commensurate with women, and therefore cannot be compared.

In an exchange with Paul, he brings up the Hunky Dorys advertising campaign, and - in recognition of the fact that sex sells - says that it is complex, but that certainly if men were depicted in that way, which is to say half naked, playing rugby that there would not be the same uproar.



Figure 7.5: Hunky Dorys advert

Paul alludes to feminists being too sensitised to representations of women at the expense of men, and thinks that offence is taken far too readily. For example, he discusses the backlash against a male NASA employee who was interviewed wearing a shirt with half-naked female cartoon Manga characters on it, which he thought was a 'hilarious' shirt. Although the shirt in question was indeed playful, and the man mortified and apologetic following the fall-out, Paul fails to see wider trends and problems of the objectification of women, and makes the false comparison with men: *'I mean if a girl was wearing a t-shirt of just a guy with a six pack on it no one would... whatever, who cares like'*. Pushing further on issues of male objectification and sexualisation and misandry, he changes tack somewhat and expresses the view that while he thinks it is probably an issue, he is not especially concerned about it. He contrasts his reaction to seeing images of muscled, handsome men – *'man, it would be great if I was a man like that', but ... five minutes later it's gone* – with women's reactions, which is that they cannot let it go because they are far more self-conscious because of the wider prevalence of such images targeted to women. He references his girlfriend as constantly repeating the same anguished, self-conscious worries about her looks; a pattern he does not see with his male friends. For instance, on why the Dove campaign is not needed for men, he says that:

Maybe males just think they're great the whole time or something like that. I don't know like. I just don't think it's needed because we don't think that way at the moment, well I don't think that way at the moment.

This perhaps is an expression of what he thinks is an innate and social confidence that men hold about themselves, and, by reverse, a natural or socialised lack of confidence in women, with men he says much more harsh on women and how they look than vice versa. Paul, therefore, offers competing and contradictory views on misandry and male objectification in advertising. Although he bemoans what he perceives as an unfair, hypocritical and disproportionate concern for female sexualisation and objectification in advertising imagery at the expense of paying attention to similar issues for men, he is quick to eschew that this even is an issue for men. This sense that young men want to be afforded attention was echoed by Fiona in explaining her classmates' reactions to the Diet Coke adverts:

The men were giving out and ... saying like nobody has... like the average man doesn't have a six pack, he doesn't have huge muscles, he doesn't have tanned dark skin and lovely hair, like they were giving out that if women can give out about them things then so can men. That was kind of the general consensus from the Coke ad that came out.

Aside from issues of male objectification, both Bernard and Pauline, an art director interviewed for the study, identify what they perceive as an emerging and concerning trend; that being the incompetent male in adverts:

There's a pet hate of our creative director... he hates the way men are always or quite often perceived to be the bumbling idiot in ads next to the woman. You know, juxtaposed with the woman who is the smart, logical one – Pauline, artistic director

There seems to be a reverse stereotype of (men)... pictured as bumbling idiots – Bernard

It is interesting that Bernard and Pauline both use the same terminology in referring to the 'bumbling idiot' trope, and speaks to the perception of this as an embedded trend. However, to say that men are always or often shown in ways that are designed to demean them is to, by far, over-estimate a supposed swing towards a certain type of depiction of men in advertising. Ging and Flynn's study (2008) shows that areas of expertise and authority firmly remain the preserve of men in advertisements. Therefore, this surprising position that men and masculinity are denigrated in advertising is an important one to examine.

Throughout the postfeminist period beginning in the 1990s, the spotlight began to swing away from examinations of problematic imagery of women, and turn towards how men and masculinity were constructed and represented. Academic research and literature concerned with

hegemonic masculinity has been influential in theorising how normative constructions of a privileged version of masculinity marginalise many men, as well as women (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (2005) makes the case for paying attention to men, since men are the ‘gatekeepers’ for gender equality in that they control most of the resources. Yet, the increased social and academic discussion of men is not without implications. Across a wide range of issues, from poor school performance, increasingly engaged fathers, to male violence against women, ‘(i)n the last fifteen years, in the “developed” countries of the global metropole, there has been a great deal of popular concern with issues about men and boys’ (Connell, 2005: 1802-1803). The heavy, mostly exclusive, focus on women within feminist and gender equality debates facilitated a backlash, which became manifest, Connell posits in a form of antifeminist politics. Such a backlash has gathered pace since the time of Connell writing over ten years ago in such movements as MRA groups (Men’s Rights Activists), and male-separatists proponents calling for MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way). The philosophy of such groups is predicated on accusations being made that feminists and feminist campaigns have hurt and disempowered men. Although Connell does point out that the experience of men is not always favourable to women’s, with males undertaking the majority of ‘dangerous’ work, he debunks the notion that men are now the disadvantaged sex, and asserts that they still hold greater advantage over women. Nevertheless, concern for men and boys is a political and social discourse that continues to thrive and gain momentum. While growing awareness of constructions of idealised masculinity are, of course, to be lauded and are helpful in terms of a wider questioning of gender norms, it is important to bear in mind, especially in a postfeminist context, that concerns over masculinity and a shift away from feminist concerns connected to women, women’s rights, and for the purpose of this thesis, a critique and interrogation of advertising imagery, towards a broader rhetoric of gender equality ‘thereby risk(s) diminishing or diluting the unfinished business of feminism’ (Tasker and Negra, 2007: 14). Although there have always been pockets of support among men for women and women’s rights and equality between the sexes:

...(t)here is, however, also significant evidence of men’s and boys’ resistance to change in gender relations... Research on schools has also found cases where boys assert control of informal social life and direct hostility against girls and against boys perceived as being different’ (Connell, 2005: 1810).

Such animosity can be explained partly as a reluctance to relinquish the ‘patriarchal dividend’ that men and boys have enjoyed. However, there is reason to be hopeful, as seen in the fact that

gender roles shift and change over time, and men and their attitudes have changed along with them. A growing awareness and appreciation of the diverse ranges of masculinity and femininity, or indeed a fundamental questioning of those concepts altogether enables a psychic rethinking in society that does not assume hierarchal relations between the sexes to be natural and inevitable.

The ideas covered in this discussion are applicable, in varying degrees, to the findings of this doctoral study. In particular, the turn towards a concern for men and boys which appears to necessarily entail a disregard for more long-standing and sustained issues facing women and girls, chime with Connell's observations of a masculinist discourse that position the male sex as disadvantaged and disempowered. However, this narrative is mostly benign among the advertising student cohort, since when the spotlight turns to shine full-glare on their attitudes around this, these concerns wilt away. Nevertheless, the presence of this theme suggests that both the young men and women interviewed were picking up on a MRA-esque sensibility in wider social debates around the state of men, and relations between the sexes.

Carlsberg advert – 'The Crate Escape'. A case study

Although not representing a 'concern' as such, there was a 'siding with' men evident in a review of student attitudes to the Carlsberg advert 'The Crate Escape'. This 2012 ad is a parody of the classic 1963 film *The Great Escape*, set in a WWII German prisoner-of-war camp. The updated version by Carlsberg is set in a beauty spa retreat, and concerns a boyfriend character's attempts to undermine the weekend break with his unwitting girlfriend by 'breaking out' of the spa, in collusion with the other put-upon boyfriends, to capture a crate of Carlsberg. Both the successful break-out and the prize of the beer act as antidotes to the disagreeable aspects of the weekend. The advert was shown to all 12 student interviewees, and was chosen because it exemplifies a postfeminist polarisation of the sexes discourse, as well as a narrative of men as adventurous, fun-loving and low-maintenance pitted against notions of women as simultaneously gullible, vain and demanding. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the majority of the young women interviewed really liked the advert, and express sympathy with the male characters in the ad. The male responses, on the other hand, were more varied, and among other interpretations rejected old-fashioned traditionalist masculine assumptions that men would hate undertaking a spa weekend break.



Figure 7.6: Screenshot from Carlsberg advert 'The Crate Escape'

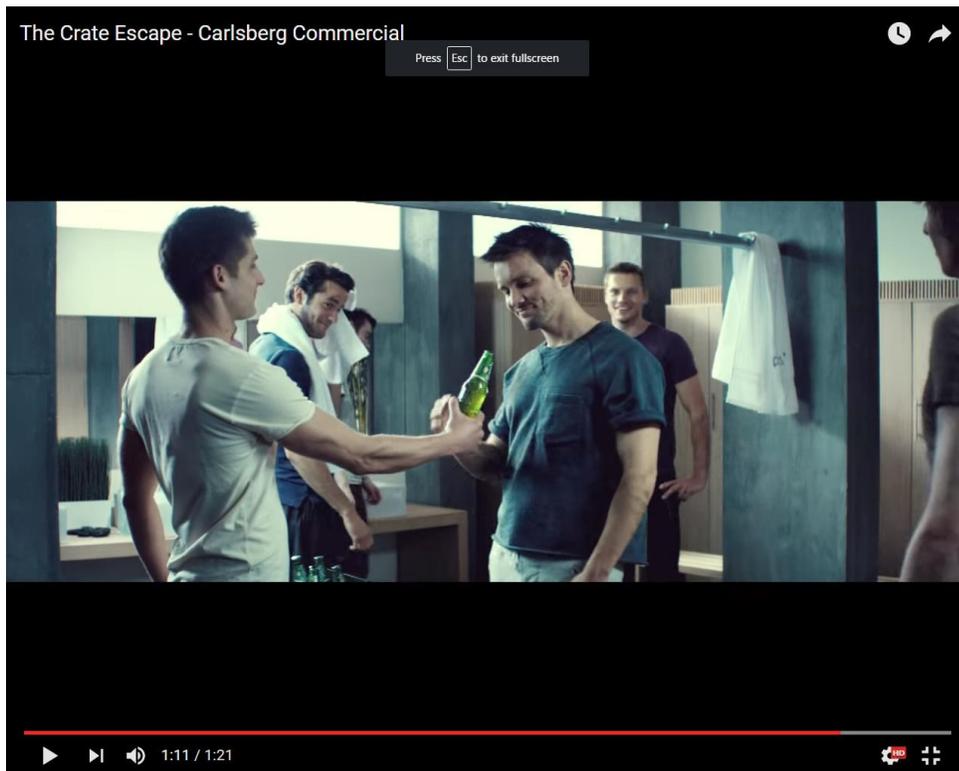


Figure 7.7: Screenshot from Carlsberg advert 'The Crate Escape'

Below are some select quotes from students about the advert:

Colette: *Well the first thing that struck me is that the **women are kind of villainised**, like the spa attendants, they're all pushing the men around... they don't want any of that, any kind of spa treatment so I think it kind of **dismisses some of that stuff as a bit trivial and men are beyond this**... So like the **men in this ad have nothing in common with the women, like they're two completely separate groups**, I suppose.*

Della: *It's **hilarious**. I really liked it but it kind of – it was the stereo... like it's genderised, it really is, like the **girls want to relax** and have like a great kind of relaxing weekend whereas the **guys just want to go out and have fun** like with their friends and stuff. The way they did it was brilliant, it's hilarious ... I'm more **sympathetic towards the guys** ... **The girl seems like the stereo typical bitch** with the blond hair and she's just treating them like absolute crap like.*

Fiona: *I think it's **brilliant** ... You know, like **men actually think a spa weekend is torture**... it looks like they're actually being tortured on a weekend away like they feel like everyone is against them on the weekend because **it's meant to be a women's place**... like I think it's a brilliant ad, it really catches your attention because you want to know what's going to happen and you kind of **you start to root for the men**.*

Kevin: *I like it in the sense it is **funny** ... and yeah **us lads we much prefer to... just (be) sitting around and have a Heineken** than be in this crappy spa or something like that ... The **women just seem kind of oblivious**, they're having the time of their life in the spa and the guys are just like 'oh my God I hate this place, it's like a prison get me out of here' ... You kind of **sympathise with the guy**.*

Bernard: *The **males are very docile but very innovative**; they want their Carlsberg come hell or high water... it isn't a great representation of males ... The women don't come across very well either ... the **matron or the nurse comes across as quite severe, quite strict**, you know, but yet **gullible** enough that they actually successfully get away with what they were up to... One gets the impression that it was his partner who decided that he was going there... So, there's an **emasculatation** in terms of **going from being the primary decision maker to in some cases not the decision maker at all** ... he is **reactive rather than being proactive**... it kind of **belittles** (the men)... I mean they should be well able to make their own decisions without being told or being frogmarched into a health spa and told that they can't drink.*

Gillian: *I think it's **hilarious**. I like it ... It's just funny the way they're like trying to get out of it and, I don't know, **the way the women are depicted like it's funny** I guess ... It shows women being all I guess girly, wanting to do **girly things** like going to a spa and the men are like 'no we want to go drink beer and watch the game'. It does show them in like typical roles but it's still funny.*

Paul: *Yeah no I **hate that ad actually** ... like, **I would actually love to go to the spa** and get pampered or whatever ... Because I'd be like, it would probably be more likely that my girlfriend might be in the gym, and I'd be in the spa... or something like that **or we would be hanging out drinking Carlsberg together** or something like that you know.*

Damien: *Eh, I think it's a '**lads lad**' ad, you know, **kind of the boyos watching the football**, which eh... I'm not that kind of person, I don't like football first of all, and ... yeah, I just think it's eh like 'one for the boys', you know; lads, the banter, having the craic, while the girls are off getting their nails done, and 'what are we gonna do? Go off and have a beer', sort of thing.*

Gareth: *it's a **nice cultural reference** to *The Great Escape* ... (the women) come across as quite **stern** there but it's played for laughs ... there has to be a fall guy for someone to make fun upon the kind of... traditionally it tends to be the way with a joke, someone has to be **made to look a fool or ridiculed**. So it seems to be that the fall guy is going to be **women** but naturally or sorry not naturally but they seem to have gone for a very specific kind of stern blonde German woman... The **girlfriend** in the ad is not really given much attention, she's kind of dismissed as a **secondary character**.*

Cat: *I think **men find this way more offensive** like I think this is really **funny** but I think some of the lads were talking about this the other day saying like they hate it ... just like these men who like have to escape like can't... I don't know can't be in a spa or something, I think **they just thought it was really stupid** whereas I actually thought it was very funny.*

Nick: *It's **not very original**, like it's something that would have been used to... sell beer like 50 years ago something like that ... Like 'cos they are pushing the gender stereotypes ... The one main **woman** seems to be very **strict** and very... but she's in charge of the entire place... She (the girlfriend character) seemed very dolled up, very happy to be there, just her ideal place to be and again that's also **limiting the women as well as the men** even though the focus is largely on the men, 'cos like women may not want to go to a spa.*

Des: *now I find that sexist, the girlfriend is bringing him to the spa, he doesn't really want to go but he'll go because it's his girlfriend. Like, my girlfriend would never invite me if I didn't want to go. We're on a good wavelength, if she was like 'do you want to go somewhere?' I'd be like 'no' ... I think they're both depicted badly like, even the boyfriend.*

Des' take on the advert is significant since he demonstrates, amongst the student interviewees, the most consistently gender equal views. He thinks that it is condescending to both men and women and their relationships, which are based more on mutual respect for each and not being 'forced' to do something you do not want. He says maybe it is a reflection of intimate relationships, but not his own, because *'we're able to talk to each other'*. The reactions of the other six male students vary, with Kevin offering the most straight-forward reaction in terms of enjoying the advert, finding it funny and sympathising with the men. Both Paul and Nick do not like the advert for reasons of unoriginality, and for it being stereotypical and reductionist towards men in terms of assuming that men would not enjoy a spa weekend break. While Gareth appreciates the appropriation of the classic film element and reads the ad well, he does not take a personal view, nor does Damien, who explains that he does not relate to the advert because he is not interested in football. Although he did go on to say that he thinks that the ad is reflective of reality, and gave the example of his friends and he watching UFC and the girls *'drinking wine and talking about kittens'*. Bernard had the strongest reaction, and expresses concern about the advert belittling the status of men in society as not the primary decision-maker. As a mature student, quite a bit older than the others, perhaps Bernard is more attuned to social gendered norms that expect men to be the primary decision-maker for both sexes, and thus conscious of why taking that role away from men amounts to 'emasculatation'. As a consequence, Bernard endorses the view that women in control equates to disempowerment for men.

With the exception of Colette, who gives an accurate interpretation of the advert but does not offer a personal view, the rest of the young women interviewed liked and enjoyed the advert. Most of their reactions indicate an androcentric viewpoint, resulting in a 'sympathy' for the male characters in the ad and a 'rooting' for them against the 'strict', and 'bitchy' spa-attendant and the unwitting, 'oblivious' and 'gullible' girlfriend. It is interesting, although not surprising, that most of the young women interviewed took this position. Facilitated by the unflattering depictions of women in the ad, a more general internalisation of women's inferior status can reasonably be assumed to often manifest in alignment with men. In addition, the word 'escape' in the ad title,

while being a play on the Great Escape film title, also serves to position women as something which men need to escape 'from'; such that wives and girlfriends are a drag, no fun, and serve to spoil and interrupt men's playtime. As previously discussed, this is something Barthel (1992) identified as 'masculine nostalgia' in advertising and represents the uncomplicatedness implied by men being with other men, and without women. This 'siding' with the men in the ad is perhaps explained by McRobbie's (2007) 'sexual contract' and Peterson's (2014) 'Cool Girl', and their assertion that women and girls are compelled to buoy men up, at the expense of calling out jokes, portrayals, narratives or imagery that they may find demeaning, reductive or sexist. In examining attitudes to gendered tropes in the Carlsberg advert, the theme discussed in Chapter 6 of 'I am different' is especially understandable, since the female students interviewed were keen to reject the 'girly', nagging and emasculating women portrayed. Women implicitly understand that if they do not firmly reject those figures, they are guilty by association. More generally, rooting for the men in the Carlsberg advert perhaps comes easily because of a tendency towards androcentrism, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Educational context

The three strands discussed, which include the sexualisation of women as problematic, equating women to the domestic sphere as inevitable and natural, and a growing concern for misandry in advertising texts, are found to be fuelled by educational gendered discourses and lecturer influence to varying degrees. The idea that advertising campaigns for household and domestic products should and would always be marketed and built around women as a target market was difficult to link with educational instruction. However, the fact there is so little questioning of this assumption among students points to a silence in the educational setting that there might be alternatives. More explicitly, students, in numerous exchanges, pointed out that they had learned from their lecturers to be more critically aware of the prevalence and impact of sexual and objectified imagery of women. Colette notes that '*one of our lecturers actually mentioned that sometimes women are... used to sell products to men*', while Fiona, in discussing the controversial Dolce & Gabbana advert (pictured below), said '*At the time I just thought it was a bit male dominance ...but my lecturer... explained it's actually a rape scene*'.



Figure 7.8: Dolce & Gabbana advert

As part explanation of why Bernard, Colette and several other students express a concern for men, body image issues, and misandric representations in advertising, an exchange with Therese, the BA programme leader and lecturer, was revealing. She expresses the view that the issue of gender stereotyping is not of much concern, and believes that advertising has improved hugely since the overt sexism of the 1950s. Furthermore, she posits the view that it has turned the other way, with men being stereotyped and ridiculed:

We even went the other way in a way, that you know sending up males and maybe you know women were... or there was this recognition I suppose that women were being stereotyped so then the attention was turned to men. I suppose still though women's beauty and figures and you know sex is still selling and it's women are used to sell that a little bit but it doesn't overly... I don't think... I think the balance is better now than certainly if you go back to 20/30 years where it was so clearly women didn't do well out of advertising.

The issue of gender stereotyping is not something that is explicitly and pointedly addressed in the modules or in ethics class. Rather, she says that she allows students to raise what they consider are issues that concern them, with some students talking about the overly sexualised portrayals of young women, but a larger concern is advertising's promotion of consumerism. On gender stereotypes and student's awareness of such, she notes that '*They don't seem very... it doesn't come up if you leave it to them but it's something I would raise with them, you know*'.

Therese's position on advertising and gender stereotypes was starkly contrasted by Helen, the lecturer on the Analysing Media module. She aligns herself with the view that this continues to

be a consistent and prevailing issue, rather than a recent problem, and believes that sexism is often shrouded in humour. She says she would not subscribe to the view that misandry and advertising's treatment of men is an issue of concern, and says that instances of men being shown as foolish in the kitchen come nowhere close to the prevalence of instances where women are depicted in ways that show them as *'foolish or sex objects or whiny or lazy or underachieving or... materialistic, for instance'*. Consequently, students certainly seem to be getting mixed messages, or no message at all relating to the most prevalent and persistent issues in connection with gender stereotyping in advertising texts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, student attitudes to pertinent issues concerned with gender in advertising texts has been addressed. While there is strong awareness, particularly among female students, that sexual objectification of women in advertising remains problematic, such a position is more precarious when analysing the various responses from male students. The men interviewed, and the male responses on the questionnaire data indicate that they are cognisant of such a trend, but there is a degree of denial that it is something to deserve continued attention. Moreover, discussions of such problematic imagery was often greeted with a 'yeah, but what about men?' response. This calling for attention to be paid to men and boys results, among some study participants, in misguided assertions that misandry is a newly emerging and unwelcome trend in contemporary advertising texts. Within these discourses and themes of sexualisation and objectification of women and men, and the spread of misandry, are contradictory and competing assertions; even within individual student positions. Much as was outlined in the previous chapter, an intellectual or abstract knowledge of women as worthy of greater attention does not result in a sense of urgency to address advertising's culpability in perpetuating stereotypes that disproportionately affect women. Rather, a type of backlash is evident in a turn away from women and girls towards a sympathy and alignment with men. Less contradictory, but just as concerning, the almost total lack of interest or investment in depictions of exclusively women in domestic roles in advertising is especially noteworthy. Although there was some suggestion that one or two adverts showing men doing household chores in adverts marks a turning tide, there was an acknowledgement that women will remain the primary target, and therefore will continue to be portrayed performing those tasks in advertising campaigns. With no consistent or co-ordinated educational 'position'

on these issues, students are not adequately equipped to challenge gender stereotyping when analysing and reading adverts, and indeed when working on planning advertising campaigns.

Chapter 8: Attitudes to gender in advertising practice – creatively thinking, men are funnier

Introduction

This chapter deals with attitudes that relate to advertising practice, generally, and more specifically to gender in connection to such assertions that the nature of the medium militates against representations that offer greater diversity and less gender stereotyping. The inferred support expressed by students for gender equality, for challenging and tackling issues facing women and girls both in society, and in advertising texts, as well as problematic portrayals of men in adverts, comes under scrutiny in this chapter and is shown to rest on shaky ground. When moving from the level of ‘surface’ or abstract avowal of the continued need to strive for genuine equality between the sexes, to concrete discussions of bringing that reality about, attitudes counter-productive to that struggle emerge. For instance, while there is certainly a strong awareness of the social responsibility of advertisers to accurately and fairly portray people, and the need to avoid stereotyping, steps towards active efforts to ensure that happens is largely met with one of three reactions: shrugged shoulders, suggesting there is little that can be done; scepticism that any action, regulatory or otherwise, would make a difference; or hostility to such measures, which is accompanied by recommendations that a sense of humour dilutes any perceived negative social impact of problematic gendered imagery in advertising texts.

Constraints of the medium: *‘advertising is a stereotype game; you know, you have to play to the masses’*

It was found that a desire to be more ethically sensitive butts up against certain constraining factors. These include advertisers being caught in a Catch 22 scenario, with several students talking about the fact that advertising campaigns target certain markets because the research and reality dictates it, while simultaneously recognising that this also reinforces a set of behaviours. However, there was not always an awareness of the social impact of advertising on shaping gender roles:

I could see that like it would be cost effective just to advertise to women because it is women who do the (domestic) things... but I never thought that maybe society has shaped our views ... that it should be the women doing it – Fiona

Also there are constraints associated with the mode of advertising. Given the medium that advertising occupies, it is professed that there is little room for complexity or nuanced 'story-telling':

*I mean advertising, they have a limited budget... more importantly they have limited time, a certain number of seconds and they have to get their message across within that time channel so if it's more nuance(d) than that, will it achieve its desired effect?
– Bernard*

Bernard's hypothesis is borne out in Pauline's explanation that, in her role as art director, she is very aware of the spatial limitations that work against infusing nuance into an advert:

I think with advertising there's often... you're very aware that there might be misrepresentation but you've got such a short amount of time to communicate something to a certain group of people that you kind of have to use shortcuts ... you'd love to be able to you know have a broader range of people or colours or shapes or whatever in an ad, (but) sometimes at the end of the day just logistically it doesn't work out but it's never... I don't think it's... it's never you know malicious.

Furthermore, the notion of the idealised self and ideal society was raised, where it is explained that advertising's function means that there is little room in advertising for complexity or diversity since it has to play on the ideal-self/society narrative in order to be more easily understood, 'read' and translated by consumer. This can involve characteristics of 'whiteness'; 'youth'; 'attractiveness'; and appropriate gender roles.

In addition to making reference to the limitations of space to tell a story, constraints on advertisers also include the onus to give the client what they want, with Paul theorising that the creatives who designed the Hunky Dorys advertising campaign were delivering 'that real masculine image' that the client presumably wanted. Tania Banotti, CEO of IAPI (Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland) put it thus:

If the client says 'I want a woman in an apron presenting this gravy ad', you know and you're like, 'well, no I think it should be such-and-such and such-and-such', but if the client says 'well, no this is what my consumer research is telling me', or 'this is just what I want, period', you are in a difficult situation.

In other words, the nature of the 'conservative client' makes it difficult to be progressive and innovative in the industry. Michelle, an advertising practitioner in the digital arena, suggests that clients may want to be seen as socially conscious not because of a concern for the social impact of the adverts that represent their product, but because, cynically, if their brand is attached to an advertising campaign that was perceived as '*wrong, they'd be mortified*'. What also makes it difficult to be progressive is the need for definitive 'proof' from market research that doing something counter to an established trend is a good idea. A strong thread of 'the market research tells us...' is present among students, which involves expressing or alluding to the infallibility of what market research advises. This often works as justification for upholding social norms, and established gender roles. During the interview with Kevin, he emphasised repeatedly the role of market research. While he expresses concern with issues of accuracy in terms of not perpetuating lazy stereotypes, but, rather appealing to various target groups through accurate representations, he does reinforce gender essentialist notions of 'unknowable' women through his adherence to the absolute importance and veracity of market research information:

I wouldn't have the first idea of how women think or what their stages would be before they actually purchase that so that's where the research would come in –
Kevin

Connected to this idea of market research is the notion of targeted ads. Students talk about segmented and differentiated target markets and assumptions about men and women, with a degree of acknowledgement and awareness that women are advertised to and targeted by advertisers far more than men, although some students think that a far greater number of ads are advertised to both sexes and are therefore less gendered than in fact they are. The target market is not usually up for debate, they explain, and was found to revolve around gendered assumptions about what appeals to men and women, in terms of product categories and adverts themselves. Additionally, there was a feeling among students that, despite an implied willingness to show or do things differently, the hands of advertisers are somewhat tied or hamstrung because market research and precedence makes it less likely that the more risky approach will be taken. In other words, students suggest, advertisers often do not ideologically object to portraying men in a washing up liquid advert for instance, with men as the target market, but are 'unable' to do so.

Gareth talked about market research and targeted ads extensively. Advertising, by its nature, he suggests, is attention-seeking and therefore has to be inventive. It reflects other art-forms and society generally. It is also aspiration-based, and does not nor should not fully reflect realities,

although just enough to give credibility to people's aspirations. He distinguishes between cosmetic and beauty advertising (which appeals emotively to peoples' desires to be their 'ideal self'; that is to say, attractive and loved) and car advertising (which appeals to ones desire to buy into a perception of functionality). He understands and articulates well the limits of advertising in not being able to introduce 'dramatic tension' or the 'unknown' into adverts, and he notes that cultural representations of the ideal family being comprised of White, husband/wife/children in most American sitcoms have been highly influential in feeding into advertising imagery. Interestingly, he talks about the lack of single-parent representations in adverts and suggests that this absence is what consumers and viewers want since, he assumes, they obviously long for a relationship and appreciate seeing monogamous, committed man-woman relationships depicted on television since it motivates them to seek to achieve that. While this viewpoint is, arguably, not only insulting, but also condescending and heteronormative, Gareth does think the advertising industry can be a force for positive cultural and attitudinal change. However, this can only come about if done collectively as an industry to reverse or kill a trend, at which point the positive effects could expect to be felt a number of years on from such a concerted effort. He hypothesises that making the moral case for changing and increasing the representativeness of a minority group shown in advertising texts would not be enough for advertisers and the hard research case would need to be met:

There has to be figures to back it up, so unless that person (i.e. the advertiser) can find some evidence from the public, a statistic that proves people want to see this, it isn't just that they approve of homosexuals in advertisements it's that they want to see (it), that they're upset by the lack of representation in advertising.

The major point of contention for advertisers is that they want to appear progressive, while being fearful of alienating viewers.

In Damien's estimation, advertising is a '*stereotype game ... you have to play to the masses, and I think the masses are still pretty much in the stay-at-home-mam, and the old traditional aspect*'. However, he admits to not really thinking much about gender issues and says his experience of doing work experience and training programmes in the industry have mostly put him into contact with high-profile women in positions of authority in the advertising field. On the low levels of representation of women shown in professional positions in Irish advertising, he says it is surprising that those women working in the industry are not making a change and ponders why they are not '*fighting their corner*'.

Echoing Kevin's belief that market research makes people 'knowable', Cat points out the importance of considering products and campaigns in an open and curious manner that may be outside of one's own interests, or frame of personal experience; '*we're supposed just to be open to all kind of influences*'. Market research therefore constitutes an important element in educating oneself about an unknown target market group. However, as far as market segmentation goes, Cat believes that '*things are changing, it's going maybe a bit beyond just gender... it's kind of like more specific than that*'. That is to say that advertising is employing far more diversified segmentation or targeted marketing, so that there is perhaps no longer an 'umbrella' category of 'women', but there are very specific types of women. Conversely, Cat posits that traditional advertising, such as that on television, plays a greater role in perpetuating idealised and narrow representations, whereas online and more targeted advertising has the potential to break down those restrictions and offer much more diverse portrayals. For now, traditional advertising will continue to reflect the still mostly traditional views of Irish society, she says; views that are generational and do not apply to the current young generation who grew up with a different set of views: '*I guess yeah maybe like with our generation, kind of, it will completely change or whatever*'. Cat also is conscious of women being over-advertised to, above and beyond men:

I suppose I feel like men are probably advertised to less in general because women... there are so many products around women and so many multiple versions of that product so then you're like inundated with ads.

Des reiterates Cat and Kevin's sentiments in talking about the importance of market research into giving an insight into people. When asked to elaborate on the choice and use of male or female voiceovers in adverts and what that represents or says about gender roles, he says: '*But again, if it's an ad for something soothing, maybe they get a woman's voice, are they being sexist in that way or is it just they know their target audience?*'. In terms of breaking down differential roles among women and men and encouraging men to do more domestic work, he does think the potential of advertising could be powerful, but that too often the conservatism of clients puts paid to that:

They (i.e. advertisers) could come up with really great ideas and ... the agency won't use them. Or they might come up with an idea but they (i.e. the client company) are like 'no, just go back to what we do normally'. A lot of agencies are afraid to do anything above the norm because they're in huge contracts, they don't want to lose that contract.

The relationship with the client company is the one, over-riding element curtailing the work of, especially, smaller agencies (Nixon and Crewe, 2004: 133). Tensions exist for the advertising practitioner and especially the ‘creative’ between pushing boundaries and playing it safe. The client company might insist on road-testing advertisements on focus groups, and if there is any degree of unfamiliarity of the advertising strategy, structure, format or content from the audience members – if it is not tried-and-tested – then the instinct on the part of the client company may be to backtrack rather than risk it. In addition, it needs to be considered that the representative from the client company is both producer and consumer, and is therefore also bringing to the table their own worldviews and subjective identities (Cronin, 2004). On the issue of risk and cost, Cronin quotes an IPA (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising – UK) spokesperson as saying, ‘*if that advertisement is novel, challenging, brave, then unless that client is extremely self-confident... they’re being asked to make a judgement on something which is going to cost a lot of money to make*’ (2004: 359-360). In terms of representations of gender, then, ‘brave’ could refer to, for example, the degree of gender deviation from the norm, and consequently the impulse may be to stick to rigid gender norms and stereotypes.

Another client-based constraint comes in the fact that men tend to dominate the top echelons of most organisations, and therefore the client company’s vision for its advertising campaign will predominantly represent the male view. The creative team also remains male-dominated across the globe (Grow and Deng, 2015), with the proportion of male copywriter and art directors in the Irish industry increasing from 67% in 2013 to 74% in 2015 (IAPI Census, 2015). A participant in Gregory’s study, who is identified as a woman director of research, notes that: ‘*Some multinational clients won’t deal with women, even women in top positions. They just don’t like women. But in advertising you must keep clients happy*’ (2009: 337). This reflects the kind of restraining effect of satisfying the client; the bigger the client, the more money they will spend, the more power they have to demand a particular ‘ad product’ and/ or to resist and impose gendered prejudices. The power held by clients to influence advertising campaign design becomes even greater during recessionary periods, when they are under pressure to justify marketing spends and to maximise value for money (Nixon, 2003). Clients have also become far more discerning, as explained by Mark, a male copywriter at a prestigious Dublin-based advertising agency, who was interviewed for this study.

These constraining factors prove to be hugely frustrating for practitioners working particularly in creative roles. One participant from Nixon’s study expresses it like this:

There’s a hell of a lot of businesses (clients) which, seriously, don’t want to be edgy, they don’t want to be progressive, they don’t want the next generation of people to switch onto them, they just want to copy the trends because it’s safe (Nixon, 2003: 89).

The irony for advertising practitioners is that the kinds of advertisements that win prestigious awards *are* progressive and edgy and artistic, and at industry-level there is less recognition for campaigns that are commercially successful (Nixon, 2003). There is, therefore, a clear distinction between what should be considered as ‘creative excellence’ and what is deemed effective or money well spent on the client company’s side. This is important, since if career advancement is somewhat predicated on winning these awards and being recognised and revered by ones industry peers then it is going to be worth pushing the client to go in your desired, risqué direction. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the client company will always dictate the terms of the advertising campaign and win, since there is a high degree of incentive for creatives to not play it safe. This suggests that advertising practitioners, particularly creatives, who are inclined and invested to push the envelope, could offer radically different, diverse and less stereotyped representations of the sexes.

Awareness of social responsibility of advertisers: ‘everyone deserves a fair and accurate representation’

Questions were asked to gauge students’ awareness and responses to issues concerning the social impact of advertising imagery on people, and the degree to which advertisers should take responsibility for creating and disseminating images contained in their texts.

Questionnaire response – Question: Does it matter how advertising represents people or groups of people (e.g. gay people, Black people, women)?

	Male	Female
Yes	94%	94%

No	2%	2%
Left blank/ too vague to code	4%	4%

Table 8.1: Questionnaire question – advertising, and representing groups of people

With equivalent percentages of both sexes answering ‘yes’ to this question, almost all male and female respondents in this vein expand on their answer. The most common reasons include references to the social impact of advertising imagery, which was accompanied by implicit or explicit understandings of the wider social implications of representations; the need for accuracy and diversity in depictions of people (the inference being to avoid stereotypes); the necessity to avoid causing offence; that equal treatment of people is imperative; and a concern for brand/ agency/ regulation. Only one male respondent answered ‘no’ to this question, offering that ‘*No. Everyone is equal*’; while the one female respondent who answered ‘no’, suggested that ‘*No. I don't think so. Brands who try to be ethically⁷⁷ diverse seem like they are trying too hard. Ex – Benetton*’.

The vast majority of respondents adhere to the view regarding the responsibility of advertisers to avoid discriminatory, unfair, racist or sexist representations of people in adverts. There is a good array and variation of answers, indicating an understanding of why stereotypical and generalised depictions of social groups should be avoided. There is a suggestion by a few that this onus of responsibility on advertisers is because people are 'sensitive', with some more analytical answers suggesting that the ethical side of this responsibility is because if people believe a 'truth' about a group of people, it can lead to real-life repercussions and discrimination.

Questionnaire response – Question: Do you think advertising has an influence on the public beyond encouraging them to buy the products being advertised? Explain / further comments

	Male	Female
Yes	94%	88%
No	2%	8%
Left blank/ too vague to code	4%	4%

⁷⁷ It is suggested that this student intended to write ‘ethnically’ diverse, rather than ‘ethically’.

Table 8.2: Questionnaire question – social influence of advertising

The majority of both male and female respondents answering ‘yes’ to this question expand on their answer. Reasons for answering in this vein include references to advertising’s creation of aspirations and/ or social norms; and advertising raising-awareness in the public domain, for example with road safety campaigns. There were only 2 or 3 respondents suggesting that advertising does not have a major impact or influence, as people do not *‘take it too serious’*. Advertising is seen as a tool for people to benchmark themselves against others, and is understood to conventionalise behaviours and embed social norms. It is also viewed in an altruistic light, something echoed in interview exchanges, where students allude to advertising as being a force for good and positive change, and that it can help people. Nick, for instance, expresses the view that engaging with a target market, and better understanding their needs enables advertisers to give them what they want, which is beneficial for the target market. More broadly, Des talks about advertising campaigns *‘starting movements and being really successful’* in leading to societal behaviour change for the common good.

In terms of the charge that advertisers create needs in consumers that are predicated on aspiring to an ‘ideal self’, Gareth rejects that advertisers should bear full responsibility by saying that concepts of attractiveness are already present in society, and that other media industries are equally culpable. However, he does outline how narrow representations of groups of people, with for example the depiction of predominantly White people in adverts, *‘warp[s] people’s perception of the world’*. He feels such narrow representations in ads are *‘outdated’* and says he sees far more multiculturalism in British adverts, which reflect more accurately British society. This trend has been driven by market research and recognition of a way to be progressive and do something innovative that the competition is not doing.

In the main, the negative social impact of advertising is thought to be connected with, not surprisingly, valorising consumerism above all else, and of creating the myth that material goods equate to happiness. Jhally argues that since ‘every ad says it is better to buy than not to buy, we can best regard advertising as a propaganda system for commodities ... (which) is all pervasive’ (2011: 202). The capitalist nature of advertising drives the creation and promotion of images and lifestyles that depict the lives we should be living, rather than the lives we actually are living. Since we are rarely, if ever, living the exalted lives of those represented in advertisements, we have to consume products that bring us nearer to achieving that ideal. However, it is not a clear-

cut deception, and Cronin recognises that ‘consumers are complicit in its ‘myth-making’ processes’ (Cronin, 2004: 362). The proliferation of consumer choice can make modern life tricky and stressful. Therefore, if we respond to a brand’s ethos, we may often remain very loyal because it takes away pressures of having to choose. This chimes with Nick’s assertion that understanding the target consumer and delivering what they want is helpful and soothing for people. An opposing view, as Cronin (2004) explains is that brands explicitly do not seek to make consumers feel safe. Rather, they set out to tug at consumers’ insecurities.

Related to this, Coleman (2012) is critical of how women have been constructed as vulnerable to advertising, while men assumed to be impervious. While her contention that consumerism is discursively constructed as feminine, with production understood to be a male sphere is a fair point, she does not account for the fact that this represents more an extension of how gender is socially constructed, with production and its equation to activity associated with men, and consumerism and its connotations of passivity associated with women. Rather she suggests that associations of consumerism with the ‘vulnerable’ woman amounts to understanding women to be intrinsically emotional, passive or irrational; a distinction that feminist critiques of advertising and marketing are at pains to make clear. Specifically, she holds second-wave feminists to task for perpetuating notions about women’s lack of agency and their susceptibility to oppressive media images in service of ‘attacking advertising’s portrayal of women’ (p. 8). However, she does not really make a convincing case about what is problematic about critiques of advertising and marketing as they relate to women, and seems to misunderstand or misrepresent 1970s feminist critiques of advertising as essentialising women’s innate fragility and weakness. Williamson and Goffman, writing in the late-‘70s, however, were criticising advertising imagery and what it denoted and connoted about women’s place in society. Coleman’s inference that 1970s feminist distrust of the media and its role in women’s oppression was somehow ill-founded and misguided does not square with the fact that such writers were not attesting to women’s incontestable vulnerability in the marketplace. In other words, these second-wave writers were writing out of a recognition that the images that advertisers and marketers were using on their advertisements to appeal to women and to ‘hail’ women were a visual reaffirmation and endorsement of women’s inferior status in a patriarchal society; not that women actually were weaker and inferior. Whether Coleman is talking about literature dealing with the effect of advertising imagery on women and society, or the impact of advertising on women’s consumer

decisions is not clear. In any case, the social impact of advertising and the images and texts it disseminates is, without doubt, a contention well understood by the students of this study.

Questionnaire response – Question: In general, do you think the advertising industry is viewed in a positive or a negative light by the general public

	Male	Female
Positive	47%	40%
Negative	44%	50%
Both positive and negative	9%	8%
Left blank	-	2%

Table 8.3: Questionnaire question – public perception of advertising

The majority of both male and female respondents who broadly believe that advertising is perceived in a positive light by the public expand on their answer. Common reasons for answering in this vein include references to the enjoyable aspects of good and creative adverts; the important informational aspects of ads; the economic and revenue benefits of the industry; the humorous and/ or emotive appeal of advertising; and a new-found public appreciation for advertisements. There were also some ambiguous references to people not understanding or engaging with advertising. All male and female respondents who thought advertising was probably viewed by the public as negative offered further insight. Common reasons for answering in this vein include references to the perception of advertising as a manipulation; resentment at the intrusive aspect of advertising; its promotion of consumerism; a distrust of the unethical aspects of advertising; adverts as annoying; and the bad production of some adverts. This broadly even split between students speaks to the inner tension that they must navigate in terms of reconciling their own personal enthusiasm and enjoyment for adverts and the industry with a recognition that often it is viewed with disdain and scepticism by the public.

Studies have shown more favourable attitudes to advertising among advertising students than other students, in general. Referencing a study by McCorkle and Alexander (1991), Fullerton et al. (2008) note that their findings:

...indicated that advertising education favorably influenced students' attitudes toward advertising, especially in the areas of entertainment value and support for the media. Students' attitude about the manipulative powers of advertising became less negative after they learned more about the field' (p. 16-17).

Students are most enthusiastic about, Fullerton et al. explain, advertising's contribution to the economy, while being less engaged by the social and ethical considerations of advertising practice. Consequently, the authors posit that educators need to be more mindful of the need to motivate students to actively consider such issues. The findings of this doctoral study suggest that students are less concerned with the contribution of the advertising industry to the economy and more complimentary and attuned to the creative and entertainment aspects of adverts. Furthermore, while students participating in the questionnaire and interview component of this project were seen to have strong awareness of the social and ethical implications inherent in advertising, on balance, when moving from the abstract into the realm of practical measures, the student attitudes were skewed towards a neutral/hostile position. This is discussed in detail in the following section.

Ethics and the tolerance for sexism: 'it's just a bit of humour, a bit of fun'

Several questions were included in the questionnaire and topics covered in the interviews to ascertain the ethical standpoints of students. Ethical concerns and considerations appear to buckle under the weight of their principles.

Questionnaire response – Question: If, in a professional situation, you were told by your boss to create a campaign that was deliberately sexist (whether ironic or to create controversy, or both) how would you feel about that? What do you think you would do?

	Male	Female
Would do it	64%	35%
<i>Unequivocal/ undistressed responses</i>	66%	33%
<i>Unhappy/ anguished responses</i>	34%	67%
Would not do it	27%	44%

	Male	Female
<i>Would offer alternatives</i>	33%	39%
<i>Reference to feeling uncomfortable/ or to it being morally wrong</i>	20%	35%
<i>Unequivocal responses (e.g. 'would refuse'; 'would quit')</i>	20%	26%
<i>Concern for reputation</i>	20%	-
<i>Reference to it being poor advertising</i>	7%	-
Depends or Don't know	7%	10%
Left blank/ too ambiguous to code	2%	11%

Table 8.4: Questionnaire question – working on a sexist advertising campaign

Mostly, respondents 'get' why a sexist brief is negative, or at least perhaps were prompted to do so by the question⁷⁸. Those who did not have a problem with it answer in terms that people are too sensitive or lack the maturity needed to not be offended by sexism in ads; or they felt it was part of the job, and that they would be just following orders. Likewise, those who did not exhibit any qualms commonly suggest that 'money is money' and that controversy is good:

I would create the campaign. People need to realise sexism isn't a thing. Diet Coke ads featuring buff men are not indicative of the male population but men do not brand it as sexist. But a topless woman is. How does that work? (Male student, 2nd year, age 19)

I don't mind. The goal is to get noticed and get the message across - people should be mature enough to not take personal offense (Female student, MSc, age 22)

More anguished responses concern being uncomfortable with creating such an ad campaign, but it being outside of their individual control to resist. References to 'controversy' was sometimes framed in a positive light (e.g. all publicity is good), and sometimes negative (e.g. could lead to alienation of potential customers). Responses on the more morally uncomfortable side range from

⁷⁸ Further to clarifications provided earlier in the thesis, 'sexism' entails a wider and more common-sense and 'felt' understanding of the kinds of attitudes that are antagonistic to, and militate against feminist principles. Postfeminism, on the other hand, comprises a combination of certain gender values that contribute to a climate of sexism that permeates society.

problem-solving and supposed individual agency to influence the outcome, either to change the brief entirely or to reframe the sexist campaign in humorous terms, indicating an internal moral negotiation or trade-off; others express concern for potential or possible damage to personal reputation; while a few suggest they would just quit the job altogether:

I would make it. Try to make it funny (Male student, 1st year, age 19)

I think I would try to create it very ironic, so that everyone recognises that the ad is making fun (without models!) about sexism and doesn't support it (Female student, 3rd year, age 20)

The differences in female-male percentages are significant; especially the figures that reveal that, of those students who would do the requisite work on the campaign, more men than women do not express ambivalent feelings about this (66% : 33%). This is noteworthy since the phrasing of the question makes no reference to the hypothetical advertising campaign perpetuating sexism against either women or men, but suggests an understanding among students that women are more widely and likely to be represented in sexist ways by advertising. As such, women are more conscious and concerned with perpetuating sexist images because of a more personal identification with its effects. In addition, recourse to humour among both male and female students as a way to purportedly dilute the sexism of the advert is important, and is elaborated on in the discussion at the end of this section.

Questionnaire response – Question: Should adverts that are controversial and /or receive a lot of complaints from the public be banned?

	Male	Female
Yes	15%	27%
No	69%	48%
Depends*	16%	23%
Left blank	-	2%

Table 8.5: Questionnaire question – banning controversial advertising campaigns

**'depends' relates to answers where participants did not respond broadly 'yes' or 'no' and instead referred to contextual, circumstantial and determining factors concerning the question being asked*

Only 8 male responses answer 'yes' to this question, while fourteen female respondents answer in this vein. The reasons for answering as such include references to the right to not be offended; to keep the peace; respect for people power; the need to abide by regulations; and that advertising has failed in its duty and function if people are unhappy. For those male and female respondents answering 'no', that controversial adverts should not be banned, common reasons for answering in this vein include references to the 'truth' of the advertising message and/ or 'shock' advertising as necessary for the public good (e.g. Road Safety Authority campaigns); that controversy is good for publicity; controversial adverts catch attention and/ or make people think; freedom of speech should be respected, and/ or the need to let people think for themselves. It is also suggested that instead of banning the advert, it could be shown to a more appropriate audience; and that any fallout or reputational damage is punishment enough. Among those responses indicating that controversial ads should not be banned, there is a sense that such advertising is sometimes saying something that needs to be said, that is socially valuable, or that it reflects attitudes that - whether offensive or not - should be reflected in media. Also, some of those on the 'no' side are interpreting this question as, for example, banning graphic, road traffic ads which they believe serves a public function. While not very large, the disparity between the male-female responses is significant, given that a greater proportion of women than men are in favour of banning controversial advertising campaigns.

Issues of an ethical nature were also discussed during interview exchanges with students. They exhibit aspects of all three ethical categories devised by Drumwright and Murphy (2004), as discussed in Chapter 4: moral blindness, moral muteness and moral imagination. An additional category was found to be present among the participants of this doctoral study; one of 'moral distancing', such that students were seen to hold ethical concerns at arm's length. In other words, while issues are acknowledged by students, they are brushed aside because they do not really care or feel affected or connected to the ethical and moral implications. There was a strong thread among students of a kind of 'get over it' attitude and that it is up to individuals to not be offended. This occurs because adverts are taken in isolation and are not understood to be part of wider trends. For instance, there was significant agreement across students, although not all, that there is no point objecting to an individual advert:

Like, if it's an actually like trend-trend and like it's all you see on TV and you can see it impacting men's view on women, then yeah but I wouldn't say it's the actual ad you need to complain about you just need to say it to - I don't know - the advertising

agencies or regulators themselves, saying 'look this is getting out of hand just, when you're doing your ads from now on could you be a bit more conscious of this, that or the other', as opposed to saying that ad was disgraceful, take it down now, and blowing a gasket – Kevin

There was also adherence to the view of the inevitability of offending someone and that people are too sensitive; something especially prevalent in the questionnaire data. Among male interview participants, in particular, sexism in adverts was thought to be 'lazy', 'uncreative', 'bad taste' and bad for one's reputation rather than they express any explicit concern for women as subjected to sexism. There was frustration evident in having to consider ethical issues, which was thought to stunt the creative process. Additionally, the impact of the client relationship comes to bear on ethical issues in that the client determines what is 'offensive', and/ or stands in the way of progressive changes. However, there is optimism and hope for change, as evidenced in the presence of a moral imagination or moral compass. Such change would or could be industry-driven through collective action. This would be slow but can happen. For instance, as a guiding principle, Nick talks about the benchmark of '*would you show this to your mother?*', which offers an opportunity to rail against lowest common-denominator sexism, and means that occurrences of offense is not to be taken as a given. Fiona, however, expresses little to no concern with gender stereotyping and sexism. Despite the pretty clear case of objectification of women in the Hunky Dorys adverts, Fiona, while being adamant she '*wouldn't be real like oh you know show women as the weaker character or anything*', would relish being given a 'cheeky' campaign, such as Hunky Dory's, to work on. The clear contradictions inherent in this exchange mark a core characteristic of postfeminism, and demonstrates how conflicting discourses around independence and empowerment collide with discourses of femininity and attractiveness to men.

Cat much more clearly expresses ethical reservations about the industry and is unsure how those concerns can ever be resolved. She likewise muses on what power or agency she would have as a junior person working in an agency to push back on problematic briefs, but she does say that critical awareness about the industry is high among her and her classmates, and that they are strongly encouraged by lecturers to be critical of the industry and to talk about things they do not agree with or would change if given the chance. She maintains that there are innovative ways to challenge and make changes in the industry, thereby demonstrating a moral imagination. She also alludes to organisational cultures and how different agencies have varying approaches and styles towards campaigns, and that it is important to be mindful of the 'kind' of agency one may be

going to work for, and to *'try and orientate yourself towards maybe the type of agencies that you like or just become informed about what their atmosphere or ethos might be'*. The Catch-22 of lodging complaints about adverts, for example in discussing the controversial nature of the Hunky Dorys ads, is that it simply adds fuel to the publicity fire for the advert, the product and the agency, Cat suggests.

Gillian meanwhile, for the most part, subscribes to a 'controversy is good' view. On the Hunky Dorys campaign and complaints levelled against it, she says: *'Yeah I guess you can kind of see why people are outraged but with stuff like that I'd just be like 'oh get over it'*. She demonstrates that she is not particularly tuned into advertising images and negative representations of people and social groups, and has very little to add, or responds with 'don't know' when asked to reflect or comment on gendered market segmentation, and differences among men and women in class. Kevin similarly advises that *'I just think they need to remember it's a fictional film or it's a fictional ad, it's just a bit of humour, a bit of fun'*.

Expressing contradictory ethical views and a degree of 'moral distancing', Paul agrees with the importance of advertising codes of standards and says he is aware of the impact of advertising in influencing 'the masses'. On the one hand, he says that he would not like to be part of a campaign that is intended to make people feel uncomfortable, but that he might do so if it is required as part of his job. Yet he says of the Hunky Dorys campaign, not that he understands that it might make women uncomfortable, but that it is not very creative. However, even on this basis he goes on to say that he does not see an issue and that he would not have a problem with releasing that advert; especially since it was probably effective at appealing to its 'laddish', typically masculine target market:

I guess for me, I don't really take offence very easy or anything so I always find it quite hard to see why someone would get very upset about something like that ... I just don't see the point. I've better things to do with my time ... They (advertisers) definitely do have a huge responsibility to make sure that everyone's rights are maintained and everything like that, but I think what I was trying to get at there was just they (people who make complaints about adverts) need to ease up. I mean some of the stuff are a bit... like Hunky Dorys, like I can understand why complaints were made and stuff like that but I think they just need to maybe lighten up a bit like I don't know, I think everyone just needs to lighten up.

Somewhat similarly, Damien is not especially concerned with being unethical, but thinks the need to be politically correct is more linked to staying out of trouble than an ethical regard for its consequences:

I think everything gets picked up on these days a bit too much. I think getting into the industry, I would say be politically correct just so you don't get in trouble, more so than doing it because I have any strong beliefs that this is right, sort of thing.

Likewise, being sexist in advertising is understood to be 'lazy' rather than ethically wrong. He clearly feels a bit confused and conflicted about how to do things differently in the industry, while simultaneously acting on market research and also trying to avoid gender stereotypes. He talks about the challenge of having to admit that some stereotypes might work, and that they not only *don't* offend some women but actively appeal to them; for example, that some women might see an advert for a domestic product and think it looks great. He suggests that a way around the minefield of gender stereotypes is to not feature a person in the advert altogether, but instead to feature, for instance, dancing cartoon detergent bottles, showing here a 'moral imagination'.

When pushed on whether the pressure to conform to an ideal leads to real-life discrimination, Gareth reveals that he believes advertising represents a sort of 'soft' discrimination. Using the analogy of chemical erosion, he says: *'Advertising will never hurt in big clumps and hurt people directly in a big provocative way but slowly it kind of drains away a kind of the worth or the value in something'*. However, he is adamant that progress is being made and that we are seeing far greater diversity than ever before in ads. Ethics was an important consideration from what Nick saw in the agency at which he completed a work-placement; especially the onus to be honest and truthful. He brings up what he considers to be unethical rape-culture references in recent adverts like the Bud Light tagline 'The perfect beer for removing 'no' from your vocabulary for the night', and he puzzles over how the advert was conceived: *'even if like they may claim stupidity or whatever else but like you really can't do things like that to sell a beer'*. He takes a strong moral stand on this in asserting that ignorance is not an excuse. As an explanation for why that particular Bud Light advert made it to finalised production stage, Nick theorises that there were no 'fresh eyes' on it before publication, and agrees that it was the right thing to pull it in sensitivity to people who have suffered the trauma of rape. Nick's assessment of the slogan for Mother advertising agency in London – 'would you show this to your mother?' – is that it is helpful as *'a sort of way to step away from the cop out of the 'sex sells''*; again, like other students, showing a capacity for moral imagination.

Des similarly believes that reverting to sexism in advertising represents lowest common denominator advertising practice and shows a lack of creative imagination. However, the ability to sidestep the easy, expected approach is constrained by the conservatism of the client companies, who may often say 'no' to ideas. Nevertheless, the smaller the brand, and the smaller the agency, the more scope there is to be risky and try to do something outside of the norm, because there is less at stake, and there is not such a big precedence of 'tried and tested' and a sense of what has worked in the past. Des is optimistic about the capacity for ethical practice in advertising:

So there is space to be idealistic and principled in advertising? Yeah, I definitely think. It might be a slow movement but I think it can easily, it can be done.

The feasibility and desirability of being idealistic and principled in advertising, especially as it pertains to more diverse representations in adverts, meets with contradictory opinions by two female practitioners interviewed for this study. Anna, a strategic planner, is all for 'tokenism' in adverts, if that is how it needs to start out. She talks about the perceived need for 'token' characters being met with resistance by others working in the industry. She notes that, especially those who are White and male, 'don't get it ... 'of course you're not going to get it because you're everywhere, you are represented fully in a multitude of roles''. The idea of the token character was also raised by art director Pauline, who positioned herself differently to Anna, and said:

The thing that kind of grates on me sometimes is when people do it really on purpose, when you know that that's the token character in that ad because they're trying... like sometimes it's a little bit too 'there's a character of a different ethnicity' or 'there's a character with something...', and they've just done it just because... I think when it's part of the story, it's nice because it's more natural.

Anna's point that it needs to start in a more contrived manner with a 'token' character introduced very consciously before it can become 'natural' and just part of the story is not fully appreciated or considered by Pauline.

Although citing research dating from the mid-late 1990s, Fullerton et al's (2008) assertion that 'men (are)... less offended by advertising and less inclined to regulate it' (2008: 16) and that 'women tended to agree more strongly with the statement "there should be less emphasis on sex in advertising"' (p.19) speaks to and squares with the findings of this study. Particularly, the questionnaire responses reveal that far fewer men than women would have qualms about working on a sexist advertising campaign, and also fewer male respondents than female agree that offensive and controversial advertising should be banned, thereby demonstrating a reticence

among men who participated in this study to resist sexist advertising and/ or take action to regulate it. In addition, the evidence of recourse to humour among both male and female students as a way to purportedly dilute the sexism of the advert is important. Resorting to humour is hugely relevant when considered alongside gender stereotypes and sexism in advertising imagery. This chimes with Mallia (2008), who identifies the importance of a specifically masculine style of humour in advertising. It also echoes Whelehan's (2000) contention that postfeminism, Lad Culture and humour are inextricably tied in ways that mean sexist banter enjoys immunity to critique, and instead can be injected into advertising texts and imagery with impunity.

More specifically, answers to questions and discussions of an ethical nature with students raise issues of personal responsibility and perceived agency. Embracing or rejecting personal responsibility, as exhibited in student questionnaire responses about taking on work to design a deliberately sexist ad campaign, can be understood – as already indicated – using Drumwright and Murphy's (2004) research study, and their three categories of ethical response: moral myopia; moral muteness; or moral imagination. For instance, present within the category of moral muteness, there is the sentiment that the client is always right and that the advertising practitioner could not or would not challenge the client company on its desired direction. In the student responses, those exhibiting a 'moral muteness' were clearly aware of the ethical implications entailed in devising a sexist campaign. However, rather than references to the client company, they made reference to a 'the-boss-is-always-right' kind of narrative. Some of the student responses demonstrate attempts to devise innovative and imaginative ways to get around the ethical concerns, and therefore fit the description of displaying a 'moral imagination'. For instance, one student responded: *I would advise against it and suggest ethical and moral views and how it could potentially damage brand image and perceptions* (female student, 2nd year, age 20).

An additional category that could be added to Drumwright and Murphy's framework is one of 'moral distancing', fitting somewhere between moral myopia and moral muteness⁷⁹. Moral myopia, the authors explain, skews ones reactions to ethical considerations and results in varying justifications for problematic practices. These range from the only imperative being to operate

⁷⁹ Similarly, Tuncay Zayer and Coleman's (2014) adaptation of Drumwright and Murphy's 2004 study, which resulted in their devising four categories (*silent professionals; Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus; Talk the Talk; and Walk the Walk*) did not adequately capture the situation for this doctoral project's participants.

within the regulatory system, to assertions that advertising is merely reflecting back to society already established dynamics and social structures, as well as the ‘ostrich syndrome’ which entails brushing aside and shutting one’s eyes to ethical issues. Moral muteness, moreover, implies simultaneous recognition of ethical issues alongside a refusal to speak up about them. The features of this position, including ‘ethics is bad for business’, ‘the client is always right’, and the ability to ‘compartmentalise’, were not present in any significant way among this doctoral study’s student participants. This is why a fourth category has been devised to capture a trend that shows itself to be present in how students – in both questionnaire and interview data – navigate ethical issues. ‘Moral distancing’, similar to both moral myopia and moral muteness, implies acknowledgement, justification, complacency and inaction with respect to ethical considerations. However, the underlying reasons for belonging to this position, is one not identified by Drumwright and Murphy, and therefore presumably not present among their cohort of advertising practitioner participants. This is one of emotional disconnection and apathy in connection with the ethical implications of advertising practice. For the purposes of this study, those considerations concern issues of gender representations and gender stereotyping in advertising texts. This absence of interest in or concern for the social impact of problematic gendered tropes in advertising imagery reveals itself in the numerous contradictory responses expressed by students. On the one hand, they adhere to the view that, for instance sexual objectification of women in advertising, is both prevalent and undesirable, however on the other hand they assert the view that the appropriate response for those that are concerned with such is to ‘get over it’. While this attitude bears the hallmarks of Drumwright and Murphy’s ‘ostrich syndrome’, it is distinct in the sense that students are not so much shutting their eyes and ears to ethical considerations, rather they are looking those issues square in the face, and pushing them away at arm’s length.

Creativity and Humour: *‘it just seems to be more a defining aspect of male culture is to make each other laugh’*

Throughout both the literature covered in this thesis and topics considered, discussed and raised by student, lecturer and practitioner participants, the concepts of creativity and humour have emerged as key considerations in addressing the research questions of this study, as well as more generally understanding salient issues connected to gender and advertising practice. This section

deals with constructions, understandings, and attitudes to both creativity and humour, specifically as they pertain to gender.

Questionnaire response – Question: When you are working on group projects in college, are there specific roles that males and females are more likely to adopt? Explain / further comments

	Male	Female
Yes	14%	19%
No	82%	77%
Left blank/ not sure	4%	4%

Table 8.6: Questionnaire question – gendered roles in group project work

Only eighteen out of the total of 107 male and female respondents answer ‘yes’ to this question. Reasons for answering in this vein include references to women being drawn to the organisational, supporting or ‘quieter’ roles, with the young men positioned as risk-takers, and as more humorous and creative. With the majority answering ‘no’ to this, the suggestion is that people fulfil the roles they are interested in. Most of the ‘no’ answers refer to an assumption that students are all equal now, or that personality type and individual strengths overrides gender. This sentiment is summed up in the quote *‘I think my generation is mature enough not to be sexist’*. Despite assertions by students that there is no discernible gender divide in terms of roles undertaken, the reality is vastly different, and reveals that there is far greater skewing of male students towards creative roles and female students towards the executive roles. In addition to attendance at both BA and MSc end of year showcases which showed this to be true and in comments made by the undergraduate programme chair⁸⁰ reinforcing this trend, the below question shows male students to be more firmly in the creative sphere.

⁸⁰ Both of these findings are discussed in greater detail in the ‘Educational context’ section of this chapter.

Questionnaire response – Question: What role would you most like to have?

	Male	Female
Creative*	53%	23%
Executive**	29%	35%
Don't know/ left blank	14%	36%
Too ambiguous/ vague to code	4%	6%

Table 8.7: Questionnaire question – desired roles in the advertising industry

* creative = copywriter; art director; creative director; more general references to interest in the creative roles

** executive = account manager/ planner/ handler roles; media planner; events; CEO; client services; marketing; media

Students were asked what role they would most like to take up if they go on to work in the advertising field. The breakdown of answers that veer towards creative jobs, which is articulated in answers such as copywriter; art director; creative director; ‘making ads’; and more general references to interest in the creative roles or to being on the creative side, shows that 53% of male respondents indicate a desire towards a creative role, compared with only 23% of female respondents who answer in a similar vein. A significant proportion of 36% of female respondents answer that they are ‘not sure’, ‘don’t know’ or left the answer blank. This indicates a lack of conviction of the part of young women entering the field in terms of career options and/ or longevity.

Aspects concerning the concept of creativity were also raised by and with student interview participants. Such exchanges reveal their understandings of, or interest in the creative aspects of advertising work, or creativity in general, as well as expressions of perceived creative competence, and some gendered connotations connected to creative endeavour. The lack of proportional representation among female creatives was seen as affecting the career choices and path for one female student. All of the students, with the exception of Bernard and Des express excitement and enthusiasm for the creative opportunities that advertising work affords. Della and Fiona both reveal their eagerness to take up creative work, and are both confident about their abilities to contribute creatively to the industry. Fiona, in particular, mentions the ‘fun’ of advertising work a number of times and is really fired up about the possibilities and creative aspects of the work. She shows an infectious enthusiasm around the group efforts that lead to

creating innovative ideas. Revealingly, she associates the guys in her class as taking the 'cool' approach and the girls with taking the 'sensitive' approach, echoing findings about assumptions connected to creativity and gender by Windels and Mallia (2015).

Early in the interview with Kevin he affirms his creative proficiency: *'I was told I was creative'*. He is motivated by the perception of the 'fun' of advertising as a career choice and is confident in his ability to create adverts that are funny, witty, and intelligent. Gillian also is looking forward to the scope to be creative and is keen to be involved in the kinds of campaigns that are not run-of-the-mill TV adverts, but something more innovative, and more memorable. She expresses disillusionment with the lack of dynamism and innovative ideas coming up in class, and is not really attracted to the idea of working for an agency in an office. She is more drawn to the events-planning side of marketing work, and, consequently, although she is unsure what role she may take up, it is unlikely that working as a creative would fulfil those conditions.

Paul came to advertising through his interest in the film industry and discovering that some of his favourite directors had started their careers in the advertising field. In other words, the precedent set by role models for Paul was an influential factor in him applying to do the course; something the female students did not identify. He talks about his perceptions of the industry being 'cool', 'hip', 'trendy' and 'creative' and *'everyone says advertising is like a young person's game and everything'*. Advertising, he says, is partly coming up with *'awesome ideas'*, but is also clearly knowledge-directed through research. Nevertheless, he demonstrates lots of excitement and enthusiasm about the scope to be creative, with less interest apparent for the business side of increasing client sales of a product. He defines 'hip'; 'fun'; 'trendy' as *'super modern, everything being like super sleek and super cool'*, with a very idealistic view of what contemporary advertising can mean or represent: *'a lot more free thinking and open mindedness I guess as well, like there's no barriers, you can be whoever you want to be it doesn't matter or you can think whatever you want to think'*. While he regards with disapproval retrosexist celebrations of the lifestyles and careers of Mad Men, and that era, he holds strong gendered notions of creativity. He sees women in class as drawn to events management and account handler roles with men preferring the creative aspects, and argues that this is because women are more 'social', and therefore less creative. This aligns to views held by male creatives interviewed by Nixon (2003). By implication, Paul positions women in the role of emotional labourers:

You can be really creative and you can be a complete recluse like you don't really have to talk to anybody like as long as what you're doing is good but if you are engaging with the public you have to be a real figure like so yeah. I think generally women are, women do seem to be better at that like I mean I don't know I think they can hide when they're in a bad mood or something like that, men can't really do that.

Being really drawn to, and enjoying the creative elements of advertising work, Damien talks about being especially interested in working on humorous campaign. He makes reference to 'quirkiness' and to 'Monty Python' as the style of humour he likes. He suggests a gender divide in terms of competence and interest in certain roles among classmates, and believes – echoing Nick's assertion that women are a civilising influence on men – women to be more mature and organised, and not as much interested in creative roles. Men, he thinks, are slower to mature, are 'messers' and are a bit flaky. Damien constructs creativity in terms of not taking things too seriously, but recognises that this has its drawbacks and therefore the working process needs a firm hand to keep the creatives on track; that firm hand being the more organised, serious, and mature female classmates:

Like, four lads working in a group, it can get a bit kind of 'did you do that?', 'no', 'me neither', so you know. Whereas, had Sarah⁸¹ been there we would have been in trouble, we would've got (it) done.

In discussing gendered roles in her Masters class, Cat notes that she sees the guys being more 'laid back' and relaxed, with the girls more likely to be organisers and taking care of logistical concerns. She also expresses surprise that the girls were stepping up to roles that involve them taking charge and leading teams. Interested in taking up a creative role in the industry, she sees creativity as '*not doing the obvious thing*'. She thinks that creatively 'pushing boundaries' does not have to be overtly or explicitly shocking but more that it offers up something unexpected, such as the Cadbury's campaign devised around a drum-playing-Gorilla. In terms of future career plans, she reveals:

I'm kind of gravitating more towards copywriting because I know there is more women copywriters and there's less women art directors or creative directors, that it's harder to sort of ascend that side of things ... that would play on my mind is where women are distributed in agencies and stuff.

⁸¹ Sarah is a pseudonym for the female classmate he references.

However, despite an awareness of the paucity of women in certain creative roles in the Irish advertising industry and a sense that this might create barriers to her being '*taken seriously*' in a male-dominated space, she bears the sole burden of that, and says that is just something she should '*get over*'. Thus she demonstrates adherence to a neoliberal, meritocratic belief that the onus to surmount obstacles to progression rests on the individual. Likewise, and counter-intuitively, Cat goes on to say that during a class discussion of gender representativeness of various roles in the industry, despite knowing that there is a clear gender gap among male-female creatives, and of women in higher positions of the industry, the issue of quotas came up, with '*people ... staunchly anti-quotas*', on the basis that the best person should get the job.

This anti-quota sentiment was discussed by both Pauline and Tania, in their respective roles as Art Director and CEO of IAPI. While Tania, who was instrumental in launching the Doyenne Awards in Ireland aimed at promoting career progression for women in the advertising industry, expresses disappointment that there is such resistance to the initiative, Pauline positions herself as firmly against the notion:

I don't think I should be acknowledged for any achievements in my career because I have a set of ovaries or anything else. I can see why they're doing it but I kind of feel in a way it's a sexist award because men can't enter.

For Nick, creativity allows for '*freedom*' and '*bouncing ideas back and forth*'. He clearly understands it in 'craft' terms, and not as something teachable. The creative process should be totally uncensored and involve completely open and frank and off-the-wall, potentially offensive associations. He posits that advertising's aim is to be remembered, but that '*you're not going to be memorable if you're not making people uncomfortable or laugh*'. However, despite adhering to a total freedom to play with any idea, regardless of how controversial, he is very adamant that these things should not necessarily make it to idea, concept or pitch stage. If it does and if it is inappropriate and unfairly offensive, he thinks that is a symptom of what he calls the '*sitting in a room too long syndrome*':

...because like you can sit in a room for two hours with creatives and go like that makes total sense and then when you say to someone who hasn't heard any of it before they're like 'lads, you're off the wall, you've been sitting in that room too long'.

Closely tied to creativity is the concept of humour. The presence of humour was at times understood to act as an agent that cancels out any sexist elements in adverts. Fiona and Nick both

identify humour as functioning in this capacity, with Nick positing that, much like comedy, saying something provocative is more easily ‘brushed off’ when it is funny. Fiona, meanwhile, says that couching sexism in adverts in funny terms means that the viewer understands that the advert is ‘*taking the mick*⁸² *out of actually like men being the upper-class or the upper sex*’. Mark, a copywriter, similarly talks about fusing humour and sexism, and much in the vein of Lad Culture notes that:

...it's almost like you feel if the advertising doesn't take itself too seriously that it's okay to sort of tread into slightly dodgy territory when it comes to say sexism ... it's done in the kind of acknowledgement that look ‘we may recognise that this is wrong but boys will be boys’, so you know to some extent there’s a naughtiness and a fun to be had in that naughtiness.

However, not all interviewees condoned the use of humour in this capacity. Cat expresses the view that if humour is used as ‘a crutch’ or to cloak something offensive that those types of adverts tend not to appeal to her.

Evident among several student participants is a thread of humour as integral to masculinity, and as a defining feature of the male experience. There is simultaneously an acknowledgement that women are often the butt of the joke, as seen in attitudes to the Carlsberg advert discussed in the previous chapter. This recognition, however, sits alongside an insistence to ‘lighten up’. When men are the butt of the joke, some of the male students say it is not an issue for them, that they do not take it seriously and can laugh it off. In contrast, Bernard was of the view that it is not good and that it is denigrating and detrimental to the status of men to belittle them:

There is a clear difference between laughing with someone and laughing at them. And unfortunately too many of the advertisements now that we see they seem to laugh at men rather than with them, which can create, kind of create a trend over time that is not favourable.

There are gendered constructions of both comedy and humour, with an implicit understanding that women and girls are never, or at least, rarely funny. Present here too, although more tenuously, is a sense that men can often afford to have a sense of humour, and indeed give voice it. In other words, having not been the more oppressed of the two sexes and having not been at the receiving end of sexist advertising in the ways women have had to contend with, they have the greater luxury of not being so invested in advertising imagery, and therefore are more

⁸² ‘Taking the mick’ is a slang expression meaning to make fun of.

inclined to suggest an appropriate response to problematic adverts is to laugh it off. This trend was evident in exchanges with Kevin who also demonstrates a lack of appreciation and understanding of the social impact of advertising, in particular the implications of sexual objectified tropes of women in advertising. This coincides with this notion that women need to find a sense of humour, and he advises women to *'remember it's a fictional like film or it's a fictional ad, it's just a bit of humour, a bit of fun'*. When discussing the Carlsberg advert, in the knowledge that women are the butt of the joke, Kevin was asked to reflect on and provide examples of humorous advertising that centres on women. The aim of the question was to ascertain if Kevin could identify adverts in which women are portrayed as funny and humorous themselves. He calls to mind a Yorkie advert, as per below:

The one that comes to mind is the Yorkie ad. They're going to a football match wearing their jerseys and the girl turns around and says 'you're going to have to take me home', he says 'why?', 'that girl over there is wearing the exact same top as me'.

When asked who the advert is targeting, and who we are laughing at and with, Kevin concedes that it is an ad targeted to men, and we, the viewer, are being cued to laugh at the silliness and cluelessness of the girl character who fails to understand that everyone wears the same jersey to matches. While arguably a funny and humorous advert, it was revealing that this ad sprang to Kevin's mind, in which clearly the woman is decidedly not the funny character. Indeed, when asked again to try to identify an advert that revolves around women actually being funny, he has to admit to not being able to think of one. Likewise, Della said that *'there's definitely really funny ads with both like, it's not defined by one gender. I can't think of any really now'*. This is a testament to the dearth of such advertising, and is reiterated in an exchange with Gareth, in which he explicitly makes the connection between male-targeted adverts and the element of comedy and humour. In so saying, he observes that when men are used in adverts it always has to be done in a 'laddish' manner:

It's unrealistic if you're going to have a group of men on screen and not for there to be humour ... they have to put in some humour because it's such a definition of what ... men are like.

Humour, Gareth believes, is far less a feature of women and women's experiences, in terms of growing up and communicating with each other. He talks about the skill and capacity that men and boys have for creative 'jeering' and insults, and marks out the *'inventive'* witty put-down as a male phenomenon. However, arguably, what may be deemed a 'humorous', witty 'put-down' in

male circles may be considered ‘catty’ when applied to women. While this is something Gareth does not consider, it echoes a position taken by Della, when she said ‘*girls can still be catty and guys can still be their, like, mocking kind of self, you know, prankster kind of person*’. Clearly one has positive connotations and one negative. As well as denying that women possess the capacity for witty and clever teasing, Gareth thinks male-female creative advertising practitioners bring different perspectives and approaches to humour. However, he notes that in cases where women are being humorous ‘*it seems to be more a subtle thing and ... naturally that doesn't lend itself to comedy because comedy tends to be more overt and obvious*’. By implication, therefore, he suggests that women cannot and are not funny or comedic. In terms of the disproportionate numbers of male creatives over women who take up creative roles, he posits the theory that women leave the workforce to have children and find it difficult to break back in, and that the impression becomes one of ‘*there's a sense that, maybe rightly or wrongly, is that 'oh well she's obviously not that interested in her job compared to her child*’’. Gareth’s understanding that women creatives are not adept at creating funny advertising is hugely significant in terms of advertising practice since humour is, as explained by Gareth, a massively important device in advertising because it disarms people, meaning that they are therefore more open to the adverts message.

As previously outlined in this thesis, focusing on the creative role in advertising remains crucial because of its influence as an ideological actor (Soar: 2000). Marchand (1985) argued that those creating advertising were far more inclined to ‘portray the world they knew, rather than the world experienced by typical citizens’ (cited in Soar, 2000: 425). Cronin (2004) likewise notes from her study participants that professional decisions, creative and otherwise, are driven and influenced significantly by their personal opinions, attitudes and engagement with advertising and the consumer space, as much as established working practices. Cronin concludes from her study that ‘their practices are more reactive than proactive’ (2004: 365). This is significant when considering the lack of diversity among industry creatives, who are typically male and White. Rather than being proactive, pushing boundaries and presenting new, progressive ways of being, or for example ‘doing gender’, advertising practitioners tend towards rehashing established and understood norms, while also getting inspiration from newly emerging trends and adapting those into their campaigns. If this accurately represents the role of the advertising practitioner, as Cronin (2004) suggests, it is probable that such creatives will focus on ‘new’ trends that are more closely aligned with, and reaffirm, their own – mostly young, White, male, middle-class –

worldviews, than readily appropriate perhaps uncomfortable, unfamiliar radical thought movements, which challenge the very status quo and structures, such as racial and gender privilege, that have gone in their favour. An article appearing in the New York Times in May, 2016 focuses on the fact that the advertising industry remains male-dominated, and that women make up only 11% of creative directors. As noted by a female creative director at DDB Chicago, *'If all the advertising is being created through that dominant male lens and you look at what the result is, there's a bias in that and there's only one perspective'* (Ember, 2016). Similarly, in a profile piece in The Guardian newspaper in June, 2016 Cindy Gallop, former president of BBH agency in New York, predicts that until and unless parity is reached between the sexes in terms of creative positions, *'you will not see anything change in terms of gender stereotypes in advertising'* (Saner, 2016). Therefore, practitioners perceptions of gender roles and behaviours can, and indeed does, influence advertising content.

Being proactive and progressive in creative advertising work may require traits that Schweizer (2006) identified as crucial for creativity, as discussed in Chapter 4. Among others, she notes that expressly resisting established norms, taking risks and exhibiting an 'openness' are foundational to creative work. The findings of this doctoral study indicate that students, with the majority of those interviewed interested in taking up a creative role, do not for the most part display attitudes that are highly critical of social and cultural norms. Nevertheless, the capacity for creativity, and its associated attributes, can be taught and nurtured (Schweizer, 2006; Windels and Lee, 2012). This would prove favourable to questioning, critiquing and offering alternatives to the kinds of gendered representations that currently make up advertising imagery. Encouraging a nascent creativity in advertising students must also include future female creatives and practitioners, in order to tip the balance that heretofore has resulted in predominantly male-created advertising texts.

This is especially urgent given the findings outlined in this section which indicate, among other things, a disproportionately male drive in the questionnaire answers towards the creative roles as compared with answers from female respondents. This result is not surprising in light of the fact that creativity is socially and culturally understood to be a male trait (Nixon, 2003; Windels and Lee, 2012; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015). The effect of which, as evidenced in the findings of this study, is to largely reserve the creative roles in the advertising industry for men. This was reinforced by several male students interviewed, as well as being understood by Cat, who was

reluctant to pursue an art director role in the knowledge that men dominate in that position. This does not only have a potentially massive impact on the content emanating from the industry, but as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2015) point out, there is a degree of esteem and status implicit in creative roles that is thereby mostly only afforded to male workers in the industry.

In addition to assumptions of women's competence lying in the direction of communication and caring skills, Hesmondhalgh and Baker identify another unhelpful supposition in the realm of the cultural industries; that being a belief that women are better organisers and logisticians than men. Where this impacts female creatives is that these skills are thought to be in direct contrast to those needed for creative work. Certainly, comments by Damien and Paul, and a view more implicitly expressed by Nick, reveal that they held such a conviction of women's strength for whipping the boys into shape, but not necessarily for immersion in creative work. So too, the centrality of humour to notions of advertising creativity has been constructed by some study participants as male and as more a feature of male-directed advertising. Indeed, a content analysis study by Eisend et al. (2014) shows that when men and women are portrayed in gender stereotypical roles in advertising, humour does not tend to be present in the female-scenario, unlike the male-focused adverts which do apply humour and comedy. This study largely tallies with findings by Ging and Flynn (2008), as well as comments made by Gareth, and attitudes by students to sexist content as 'just a bit of fun'. It serves to reinforce notions that women and the ways they engage with each other, themselves, their work and the world are not fun, funny, or fun-filled, while the reverse is reinforced in understandings of men.

Cultural and social constructions of creativity and humour as male is something, arguably, female advertising students have intuitively internalised. However, the crux of the issue becomes the fact that all possible barriers to advancement have apparently been removed and equal opportunities are supposedly open to all, in which case the poor representation of women in creative roles is merely a reflection on them, and nothing more. This was the position taken by Cat. In the creative and media industries, the 'rhetoric of the meritocracy prevails and "not making it" is interpreted through a toxic discourse of individual failure' (Gill, 2011: 63). This discourse is highly evident in an article featured in the Irish Times weekend magazine of 29th March 2014. The article offers a profile of 12 women working in various roles within the Irish advertising industry; although notably with only one female creative (copywriter). The other women occupied a mixture of positions, some being very successful, and having reached managing director level, as well as

mid-level executive roles. In addition to a constant reversion to discussions of the motherhood role throughout the article, and qualifying statements of ambition, drive and power that involve depictions of women as narcissistic, vain and insecure⁸³, there is also a neoliberal and meritocratic narrative expressed by the women. Coupled with this, there is little regard for structural, cultural, or attitudinal biases and barriers for women operating and working in the industry. For instance, Rachel Carey, a copywriter notes that while the creative roles remain male-dominated, agencies are making adjustments to allow for women to join the ranks. Carey also adds that *'if you are good enough, the agency should adapt to you'* (Gallagher, 2014: 10). Such iterations of meritocracy make it difficult to tangibly point to discrimination, and therefore it does not get articulated or spoken about. These issues are worthy of attention and, echoing Mallia (2008), need to be expressly communicated to students who are about to commence a career in advertising.

Educational context

The educational role and influence on the themes and discourses discussed in this chapter vary. While it seems that lecturers have done their best – and have succeeded – in instilling some sense of moral responsibility into students, it is not ‘sticking’. Such concerns remain too abstract, and at an intellectual rather than at a ‘felt’ level. Therefore, they need more specific guidance, and for pressure to be put on them to apply their ethical principles, along with greater awareness of the real social impact of stereotyping, which disproportionately has an impact on women and girls. However, this is not without its challenges, something identified by Helen, the Analysing Media lecturer. She notes that the moral responsibility for advertisers to do more to combat stereotyping and related ethical concerns is tricky since advertising is ultimately and fundamentally a capitalist enterprise and profit remains the driving factor. The educational role in students’ propensity to ‘laugh off’ sexist advertising content is less evident, and likely this attitude does not arise from lecturer influence. However, in addition to wider social discourses that reserve creativity and humour as male traits, the influence of the educational sphere in constructing creativity as a male preserve is very much in evidence in student responses and opinions, as well as on actual assignments of creative roles. This is outlined below.

⁸³ For instance, a disadvantage identified in the ambitious career plans of a 26-year account executive is that it meant she ‘has put on a stone in weight’.

End of year student showcases

An invitation was extended to attend the undergraduate, B.A. final-year student project showcase. As part of their fourth-year requirement to graduate, students are divided into a team with three fellow classmates and are allocated a client, with which they work on developing an advertising campaign. Conceptually speaking, regarding the campaign design, for the most part there was not much to report in terms of how gender was conceived of and represented in the adverts that were designed by the students. There were, however, two campaigns of note: an advert designed around a make-up product which was pitched as an 'aspirational' product, thereby echoing student perceptions of beauty as something women want to work to achieve. There was also another campaign whose client was a financial services representative body. This organisation specifically stated that students should devise the advert and the campaign around a young male professional as opposed to a woman. On the evening of the final year student's showcase, during which a stand was allocated for each of the eight teams, 30 students were encountered. There were two students absent at the event, meaning that for Team 6 there were only two members present at their stand; male and female. Additionally, the opportunity to ascertain the division of tasks for these two students was not possible.

Role	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Team 6	Team 7	Team 8
Creative	Male (n = 2)	Male (n = 2)	Male (n = 1) Female (n = 1)	Male (n = 2)	Male (n = 2)	-	Male (n = 2)	Male (n = 2)
Executive	Male (n = 2)	Male (n = 2)	Female (n = 2)	Female (n = 2)	Male (n = 2)	-	Male (n = 1) Female (n = 1)	Female (n = 2)
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	Male (n = 1) Female (n = 1)		

Table 8.8: Gender-role breakdown of final-year B.A. class

Across the 4 mixed-sex teams⁸⁴ of 4 students each, totalling 16 students, there were 8 female and 8 male students. Within these 4 teams, there were 8 creative roles and 8 executive roles. Male students were allocated 7 out of 8 of the creative roles. Consequently, there was only 1 male in a non-creative role in a team of two other males where both were creatives, and a female classmate who was likewise allocated an executive role. This skewing of the creative role towards the male students is something that was found to be reinforced by the programme leader, Therese, but a tendency to which she appears to be unaware. Although suggesting that greater numbers of women working in the industry have altered the nature of content, and how women are being represented in adverts, she is unclear of the statistical breakdown, and surmises that probably the creative roles are still dominated by men. This lack of clarity on the gender breakdown of the Irish advertising industry amounts perhaps to a shirking of her responsibility to know the industry biases against female creatives and women making it to top positions. When pushed on her responsibility to address gender bias in the industry, she admits that they do not address the issue of gender too much or talk about the gender-breakdown of people working in the industry. Instead, she says, she prefers to focus on people's skills. Nevertheless, she does say that *'it might be something we need to think about because the realities as well... But I would tend to just 'go for your strengths' you know 'what are you good at?' and try for that'*. However, while not intentionally doing so, she does seem to hold slightly essentialist views about male-female competence, in thinking that women are better multi-taskers and more organised, and that they can be put off the creative work because of its increasing reliance on technology and Photoshop. She says that *'on the creative side, yeah I mean if they've talent as females they'll go into the creative'*. However, she also observes that *'sometimes it's just, the females, they do those things (i.e. organisational tasks) better'*. This comment serves to subtly, although unconsciously, undermine female creative talent. Therese explains that the process of allocating students into roles and tasks for the final year project is based both on student interests and the role they interview for, as well as an assessment made by her that involves looking back over the course of the four years to ascertain their competence. Considering that the questionnaire reveals that more male students than female plan to take up creative roles, but that far more young women than men express uncertainty about desired roles in the industry, more attention needs to be paid by Therese and course lecturers to encouraging female students who might otherwise believe they

⁸⁴ This includes Team 3, Team 4, Team 7, and Team 8. However, Team 6 is not included, as only one male and one female student were present, and their allocated role is unknown.

are not capable of going on to be creatives. Lack of recognition, encouragement and underrating women’s creative abilities proves damaging to women’s confidence and creative competence, leading to – among other factors – lower representation of women in these roles in the advertising industry (Grow and Deng, 2015; Windels and Mallia, 2015; Mattern et al., 2013; Windels and Lee, 2012; Windels, 2011; Mallia, 2008).

The MSc students likewise hold an annual, end-of-year showcase of the work undertaken with a client company. The entire Masters class is divided into two for this task, and each team is given a separate client with which to work and devise an advertising campaign based on a developed brief. In the class there were 28 students, evenly divided between male and female students. There were 2 teams made up of 15 creative roles and 13 executive roles across both teams. The allocation of creative roles was more evenly assigned than at undergraduate level with 6 out of 14 female students taking up creative roles, and 9 male creatives out of 14 male students.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Team 1</u>	<u>Team 2</u>
Creative	Female (<i>n</i> = 3) Male (<i>n</i> = 4)	Female (<i>n</i> = 3) Male (<i>n</i> = 5)
Executive	Female (<i>n</i> = 5) Male (<i>n</i> = 2)	Female (<i>n</i> = 3) Male (<i>n</i> = 3)

Table 8.9: Gender-role breakdown of MSc class

For Team 1, whose client was a national television network company, they were working with the brief of raising the profile and viewership of one of their soap opera shows. The campaign was notable for its distinctly overt masculine tone. However, there was no mention of gender in the entire presentation, specifically with no explicit reference to whether the team were seeking to target and attract men and/or women, when it seemed quite clear they had developed their campaign around raising the show’s ‘coolness’⁸⁵ and by implication hoping that this would attract male viewers. The second team were allocated a national broadsheet newspaper as their client. They delivered a very slick and professional presentation. The campaign came across as more gender neutral than Team 1’s campaign, and was noteworthy for its polished and sophisticated concept. These differences from the first team’s approach might have been due, however, to the influence of the ‘seriousness’ of the brand, as much as, or perhaps more than, the specific approach of Team 1. An online overview on the Institution’s website of the MSc content

⁸⁵ i.e. in the sense that the ‘vibe’ of the campaign had a distinctly laddish, masculine, ‘cool’ tone

delivered during the course of the year describes creativity as being about ‘great ideas that sell’. Ideas are conceived of as ‘the foundation of advertising... Ideas matter when they disrupt, surprise, engage, challenge, connect and change, and they matter because they do these things’. If this is how the institution frames creativity, then the notion of ideas that ‘disrupt’ offers exciting and wide scope for pushing away and rejecting gender norms and stereotypes.

Conclusion

Both a willingness to recognise the issue of gender stereotyping and the drive to do something about it was found to be largely absent among study participants. Various justifications are put forward to explain that reticence and inaction, including assertions that the medium of advertising does not allow for ‘nuanced’ storytelling and therefore, by inference, is incompatible with more diverse and alternative representations of the sexes. Perhaps more understandably and justifiably students, and practitioners, express a constricted sense of agency to be progressive and ‘brave’ in their practices given the need to satisfy and please the client. In addition, advertising strategies, especially the use of market research, work to further ‘ghettoise’, polarise, and essentialise women and men, who alternately only become knowable to each other through these tools.

While there was extensive awareness and tacit support for the advertising industry to own and take seriously its responsibility for the social impact of its content, this openness appears to close down when students are asked to apply these principles and predict what actions they would or could take when working in this sphere. Rather, students buckle under the weight of making ethical decisions, and revert to a ‘moral distancing’ that enables them to abdicate responsibility. This stance also facilitates claims about the usefulness of humour in diluting the negative implications of sexist advertising.

Indeed, humour, and its associated concept of creativity, are discursively constructed as male skills and attributes in student attitudes and discourses, and actually manifest as reserved for male students in the educational setting. This thereby implicitly and explicitly discourages women from taking up these roles. Far greater numbers of female students need to be encouraged and nurtured into the creative space. This would offer the potential, at the very least, of a greater diversity and array of perspectives and worldviews shaping the gendered content of contemporary advertising imagery. Furthermore, a decidedly postfeminist utilisation of humour

to excuse and often promote sexism and stereotyping in adverts, that disproportionately impacts women and girls, requires direct and significant challenge by lecturers and course module material.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

The resurgence of a vibrant and active feminist movement has resulted in increasing social discourse and discussion around issues that affect the sexes, and particularly concerning the ways in which women and girls continue to be systematically oppressed, silenced, and marginalised. In Ireland, the preceding two years has witnessed a successful referendum to legislate for same-sex marriage, a far larger percentage than previous of Irish people indicating support for liberalising the country's restrictive abortion laws, and the widely publicised and much supported grass-roots theatre-based and arts movement #WakingTheFeminists, which began life as a critical response to The Abbey Theatre's lack of inclusion of women playwrights in its year-long 'Waking the Nation' programme. The similarities shared by these movements and campaigns echo a wider-world conversation that is, once again, turning attention to issues of women's visibility, voice, equal rights, and representation. Within the microcosm of an Irish context, calling advertisers to task for their portrayal and perpetuation of gender stereotypical advertising texts and imagery capitalises on that energy and implies a timely potential for change.

Advertising and its outputs are especially worthy of attention given its undeniable omnipresence, not just across multiple media platforms but also in our physical environment in the form of billboard and poster campaigns. The universality of adverts also testifies to its social influence and impact. Jhally's (2011) assertion that *all* advertising demands attention from *all* people, not just the target market, means that a continuous computation, interpretation, and internalisation of advertising images, texts and messages – both at a conscious and sub-conscious level – is ongoing. Therefore, how advertisers choose to frame gender, gender roles and relations between the sexes becomes part of the psychosocial landscape which impacts people's attitudes and behaviours towards women and men. Like other media forums, advertising is far from immune to the gender ideologies that pervade our societies. Indeed, the notion of whether the media breeds and feeds certain beliefs about the sexes or simply reflects them is not an easy case to answer. Nevertheless, what is clear is that such ideological attitudes to gender and gender roles that are characterised by patterns of domination and subordination, which dichotomously position men (as a group) in a privileged position over women (as a group), are excessively concentrated in advertising texts (Williamson, 1978; Goffman, 1979; Kilbourne, 1999; Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2006).

The postfeminist era, and its distinct discursive constructions and expressions of women and men and gender roles, changed the landscape of advertising imagery (Gill, 2007). Postfeminist tropes

became highly infused and enmeshed in advertising texts from the mid-1990s, right through the first 15 years of the 21st century. In particular, this period is marked by a return to biological essentialism, characterised by a supposed playful ‘men-are-from-Mars, women-are-from-Venus’ narrative. Significantly, the rebirth of a naturalised gender differences rhetoric occurred in simultaneous conjunction with an eschewing of the legitimacy of both feminism and ‘political correctness’ and fostered a tongue-in-cheek, jokey, retro-sexist bent in media in general, and advertising in particular. This was especially facilitated by a Lad Culture humour and aesthetic, which continues to be felt today in certain types of adverts that pervade the medium, such as the Hunky Dory’s campaign, which students of this study referenced extensively. As Lazar (2007) has noted, the ‘discourse of popular postfeminism requires urgent need of critique, for it lulls one into thinking that struggles over the social transformation of the gender order have become defunct’ (p. 154). Although postfeminism appears to be loosening its grip on gendered attitudes, depictions and representations of gender in advertising remain problematic. Whether influenced by postfeminist discourse or not, the challenge inherent in interrogating the prevalence of hierarchical gender representations in advertising is in the hegemonic nature of gender ideology and the fact that ‘it often does not appear as domination at all, appearing instead as largely consensual and acceptable to most in a community’ (Lazar, 2007: 147). This masking of inequality between the sexes is abetted by what Lazar calls the ‘pervasiveness of tacit androcentrism’ (2007: 147), which crucially and fundamentally is supported and endorsed by women as well as men. This assertion is much like McRobbie (2004; 2007) and Bourdieu’s (2001; 2003) theorisations about women’s role in her own oppression and subordination. Among other attitudes prevalent among the student participants of this doctoral study, skewing towards an androcentric position was one of the significant findings.

The proliferation of sexist content in advertising is testament to the fact that problematic adverts do not occur by chance. Rather sexist stereotyping in advertising is systematic and therefore the logical place to launch an exploration of that ‘system’ begins with the personal opinions and attitudes of those embarking on a career in the industry. Consequently, the objectives and aims of this research project were to ascertain the predominant attitudes to gender, gender roles, women and men’s relationships to each other, and perceptions of gender in advertising texts among advertising students. Some analytic limitations implicit in the research design and the resulting large body of qualitative data collected meant that more in-depth comparative analyses and a more nuanced examination of contradictory discourses was unfortunately beyond the scope of

this study. Nevertheless, garnering a sense of the predominant attitudes was deemed central to answering the research questions and in the potential to offer conclusions and recommendations based on the attitudes and opinions held by the students, as a whole. It is argued that the attitudes that rose to the surface, and that represent the majority viewpoint will come to bear on future advertising campaign design when students are practitioners in the industry. Furthermore, documenting and understanding those opinions and worldviews offers the opportunity to address and challenge the position of students, and represents scope to make recommendations and suggestions for an alternative way forward, particularly pertaining to the educational field.

Considering that this study is concerned with investigating general attitudes to gender norms among students, and whether postfeminism retains a strangle-hold on gender ideological discourses, it was found that adherence to postfeminist discourses was less than predicted in some respects, and holding steady in others. For instance, postfeminism continues to exert an influence on gendered attitudes, particularly those connected with a naturalised gender differences discourse. However, other features of a postfeminist culture were less present, such as overtly antagonistic attitudes to feminism, which perhaps is due to a resurgence of feminism and an emergence of a fourth-wave, especially in the visibility of popular cultural figures identifying as feminist. Some of the findings were unexpected and somewhat counter-intuitive to what was expected, such as female students liking the Carlsberg 'Crate Escape' advert more than their male classmates, while others broadly aligned to long established assumptions about women and men, such as the domestic space as reserved for women, and therefore did not offer any such surprises.

Across all three platforms that formed the bases for discussing the results of this study, namely attitudes to gender, attitudes to gender in advertising texts, and attitudes to gender in advertising practice, an androcentric thread was found to be present. Women are discussed in ways that mark them out as 'problematic' and that privilege men and the male experience as aspirational, sympathetic, and relatable. This was seen in how students talk in subtle ways that denigrate traditionally associated female traits and interests. Issues such as objectification, sexualisation and sexual harassment of women, and especially social pressures concerning beauty, perfection and body image are de-contextualised, and framed in such ways that the onus is on women to change their behaviours, deal with their insecurities, and empower themselves; thus, amounting to an individualisation of the issues facing women as a whole. Male students, in particular, exhibit a disinterest and a disregard especially during discussions of sexism in advertising and

what could or should be done to address that trend. Such exasperation manifested in iterations of 'lighten up', and that sexist representations of women in advertising is just a bit of fun and should not be taken seriously. This position is more often taken by the male students, it is suggested, because they have the luxury of not having to be concerned with sexism since men have historically not been subjected to discrimination based on their sex in the systematic ways that women have. Consequently, men can afford, as it were, to have a sense of humour about sexist or risqué content in advertising. Having said that, however, both male and female students were found to articulate and subscribe to feminist views, but this was found to be a 'theoretical' or abstract adherence to feminist principles. 'Abstract', in this context, refers to an emotional distancing, or a lack of emotional connection and investment in gender equality issues. This indicates a perception versus behaviour rupture, in that students may aspire to be feminist and progressive, but they do little to consciously enact and live their feminism. In fact, when probed, the 'abstract feminist' often reveals themselves to be 'androcentric' at heart. It is suggested that this is abetted, in particular and very effectively, by students' tendencies towards postfeminist essentialist thinking. For instance, given that they, for the most part, dichotomously position girls and women as rarely cool or funny, as clueless, high maintenance and interested in the 'wrong' things, while men and boys are understood to be funny, cool, chilled out, and low maintenance, it is therefore explicable and understandable that both sexes align themselves to the male experience.

While students did get animated around a number of issues, especially evidenced during an in-class discussion around men as doubly victims of violence and supposed feminist denial of that phenomenon, an emotional disconnect exhibited by students pervades many issues covered within this research study. Lack of emotional investment was particularly evident and noteworthy around discussions of unequal sharing of domestic tasks with female students. While there was acknowledgement that working women and mothers continue to retain the burden for the 'double-shift' in the home, there was an almost complete or total lack of a sense of unfairness that this continues to be the case. That a sense of outrage or injustice is missing points, perhaps, to Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence', and may also be in evidence among this study's cohort because they are young. In other words, for those young women that are heterosexual and have not yet embarked on a co-habiting intimate relationship, they have not felt first-hand the frustrations of that reality and therefore lack a personal frame of reference in which to rail against the unfairness and its impact on achieving full equality with men.

It was found also that an emotional connection and investment in wider gender issues is largely absent. This apathy, it is asserted, manifests from a kind of numbness due to overexposure to feminist issues connected with women's rights generally, and sex-stereotyping in advertising texts in particular. This also explains why students became far more animated when issues of misandry in advertising, and society more generally, were raised, since it is a less referenced social discourse. Facilitating this apathy also is an underlying belief that gender equality, for the most part, has been achieved, and that contemporary culture is more progressive. This leads to complacency; itself an effect of postfeminism, such that the veneer of equality eclipses the reality. Students talk about the state of the sexes in a 'we're progressing' narrative, and they make unfounded assumptions on the degree of changes happening in society at large, and advertising in particular, that leads to the contention that 'it's not so bad'. However, there is a possibility that the attitudes exhibited by students, especially those in connection with gender essentialist sentiments, are not as complex as being argued here, but perhaps point to the possibility that students are just far more conservative than expected.

While there is not a malicious sexism running through the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of this study's participants, and students were found to be articulate, thoughtful, intelligent and engaging subjects of this study, there is a sort of 'sexism' through taking up a stance of 'moral distancing', as well as a 'sexism' borne out of an exasperation and boredom with feminist concerns. While student's espousal of feminist views was genuine on some level, the contradictions that emerged in this study indicate that students are misinformed and misguided. The contradictions evident are also indicative of the continued influence of postfeminist discourses, with Gill (2016) arguing that this points to – among other reasons – the sustained imperative of feminist media research to interrogate postfeminism. In addition, and absolutely fundamental to the overarching driving question of this doctoral project, the educational instruction received by students was found to be offering mixed and contradictory messages. Lecturer influence was also found to perpetuate certain unfounded falsehoods, such as the fact that misandry now represents more of a concern than misogyny. The fact that students believe this indicates that such ideas and notions have been endorsed, approved, backed up, or left unchallenged by lecturers. Indeed, undergraduate program leader, Therese, intimates as much in her contention that pillorying men in advertising has come to eclipse issues concerning representations of women.

So why should the advertising education sector and the advertising industry reflect on these findings? And how may it respond in ways that are constructive and proactive? Firstly, at industry-level, it is essential that practitioners have a professional stake in pushing more diverse and less stereotyped representations of gender. In other words, incentivising industry players and especially creatives would create a motivation and drive to do things differently. The potential of engaging organising committees of industry awards on this issue has not yet been exploited but represents an opportunity to bring about real and substantive change. For instance, organisers of the annual Irish ‘Kinsale Sharks’ awards that recognise outstanding creative work in the advertising field could include a category that celebrates advertising that offers unexpected, complex and multi-dimensional portrayals of women and men. Thus, creatives would be explicitly encouraged to push themselves and their clients to reconceptualise standardised and staid gendered advertising texts and imagery.

In a broader capacity, practitioners from the industry alongside the third-level educational institutions tasked with instructing and preparing students for careers in the advertising sector could join Hearn and Hein’s (2015) call for alternative gendered theorisations of the market in contemporary marketing and communications research (MCR). In particular, these stakeholders could urge advertising academics to reconsider their current framing of the sexes in gender essentialist terms, and in ways that both de-politicise the hierarchical power differentials that are at play in wider society and that overly rely on cultural specificities to account for and justify inequalities between women and men (Hearn and Hein, 2015). The strong case to be made in doing so speaks to the anachronistic biological determinist bases of much MCR, such that pre-determined, prescriptive and defined gender roles not only serves to impede progress towards full equality between the sexes, but which also positions advertising research and practice outside of a zeitgeist that is engaged in and invested in the fight for equality. A shift in the academic conversation about women and men would allow for a different and more diverse way of conceptualising the sexes, and enable both a challenge to assumptions concerning gendered consumer behaviours and a rejection of stereotypical gender roles and advertising strategies.

At an educational-institutional level, there is much to hope from convincing advertising program architects and lecturers to become invested in engaging students in a broad array of critiques of the industry and also concerning inherent ethical and moral challenges they are likely to face (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004). Moreover, pressuring the advertising educational sector to

pave the way for cementing diversity as a mainstay of advertisements begins with sensitising students to that need at the very outset of their educational instruction (Golombisky, 2003; Rios, 2003). On that basis also, in terms of gender and its connection to advertising texts and design, increasing awareness among advertising students of the social impact of their choices offers greater likelihood for change to occur with respect to gendered advertising.

Given that the question of whether advertising educators need to pay greater attention to issues of gender has been answered in the affirmative, the first point to be made is that there seems to be little opportunity to do so at Master's level, given the short duration of the course, and the fact that it is, consequently, far more practice-based. Nevertheless, considering that there is scope to make changes at undergraduate level, the next consideration is to what degree and in which kind of format. Should there be specific, stand-alone modules dealing with issues of gender or a more gender-mainstreaming approach that involves a less segregated and more integrated conversation about gender and advertising? A two-tier approach is hereby recommended that incorporates both of those aspects. In terms of gender mainstreaming, this would involve the commitment of lecturers across all subject areas to, as suggested by Golombisky (2003) in relation to diversity, address and expand on issues of gender if and when they arise. That is to say, while 'gender' as a topic may not be integral to, or covered in certain modules, there is always the potential of it coming up in class discussions. Such a commitment from lecturers would require a faculty-wide discussion with one's peers on their attitudes and worldviews, and would entail open and honest reflection on one's own biases and positions of privilege and power as it pertains to sex, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. It would be desirable also that a somewhat standardised school approach be taken in relation to how, at the least, it conceptualises gender. For instance, advertising schools could agree, formally or otherwise, that all academic staff commit to challenging and addressing positions taken by students and/ or course material that may be considered sexist, or stereotypical, or based on gender essentialist thinking. The second response involves a more concerted effort on behalf of the educational-institution. While the delivery of one or two specific gender classes and/ or modules risks ghettoising gender, and positioning such considerations as an 'add-on' and therefore not particularly significant, a more substantive and embedded 'gender unit', as conceived by North (2015) for journalism education, would mitigate that danger. The following adapts some aspects of North's gender unit as a template for the purposes of advertising education, especially how she devised content to consider macro-, micro-, representational, and industry-level matters concerning gender and journalism education. In

addition, the overview she provides of assessment given to students likewise provided food for thought for this doctoral study.

It is suggested that a gender unit or a gender course would be delivered by a competent and enthusiastic lecturer with expertise in the area of feminist media research with a special focus on gender and advertising and would be best positioned to operate on a semester-long basis in the second semester of year 3 of students' four-year degree course. Students are more mature by this point, and having been out of secondary level education for almost three years, they will have already been exposed to critical thinking skills and alternative worldviews and approaches. Their fourth and final year, and all that is entailed with work placements, final-year projects and graduating is perhaps too stressful and loaded a year in which to dedicate course time to in-depth explorations of gender. In order to engage students and raise their excitement about undertaking the course, an intriguing and playful title could be applied to it, drawing on advertising industry terminology, such as 'Created. Marketed. Branded: Let's Talk about Sex'. Four topic areas would ideally be covered over the course of the 11 or 12 week period. These would include offering a contextual look at issues of gender, and would take a broadly feminist overview of issues concerning women and women's rights from the first-wave in the 19th century through to areas of concern that continue to prevent equality between the sexes. Some feminist theorisations explaining gender as a social construct, as well as looking at cultural manifestations such as postfeminism, would be helpful to include in this topic area. The second subject matter would involve theorisations about the social impact of representing people in particular ways, and should include examples that demonstrate how gendered representational ideology gets played out. For instance, lectures delivered under this umbrella could look at the historical portrayal of women and men in the media and in advertising, and offer some comparative analysis of how that has changed, or indeed remained the same, in the contemporary period. Thirdly, it is crucial to address the topic of advertising practice and advertising production and how it intersects with gendered concerns. In particular, gender gaps in the Irish advertising industry which sees very few women in top positions and which exhibits a bias towards male creatives needs to be explicitly explored and discussed. Finally, the fourth topic area should be primarily discussion-based and aimed at encouraging students to reflect on the previous three subjects, to question and challenge and think about a way forward and to 'practice' flexing some degree of agency and enthusiasm for changing the industry. However, this series of lectures does also need to be

prescriptive in some respects, particularly in encouraging students to reject essentialist assumptions about natural skills and capacities differentially assigned to women and men.

Furthermore, the gender-focused course should be compulsory, rather than elective, and involve a tripartite approach to assessment. This lends gravitas to the subject matter, speaks to its importance, and evaluating students knowledge and responses to the content invests them further in the material being covered. Students would be graded and tested on three platforms: individual student essay; in-class group presentation; and end of semester exam. The individual essay assignment, whatever the subject matter or essay title, gives space to the student to reflect personally on certain topic areas being raised and discussed by the course lecturer. They therefore develop an intellectual and emotional response to an essay question, and should be encouraged to bring in competing and conflicting opinions and positions that the question raises. The solitary nature of the essay work is perhaps best put to use around a broader question concerning conceptualisations of gender, the social impact of gender stereotyping, or the need (or not) for feminism and the legitimacy of its aims and objectives. The group collaborative task is designed to develop skills around debating with each other on what can be contentious and emotive issues. It also encourages consensus-building and respect for others' viewpoints and personal lived experiences, and allows for practicing a 'moral imagination' in coming up with innovative answers and solutions to ethical considerations. Therefore, such presentation topics could include semiotic readings of gender in adverts, or devising advertising campaigns that subvert and disrupt expected gender norms and roles. Finally, the end of year exam offers students the opportunity to showcase newly acquired knowledge, and also functions as a helpful tool by which the lecturer can gauge the success of the course.

There are reasons to be hopeful and optimistic for change occurring in the Irish advertising landscape, not least because Therese as undergraduate programme chair expressed, with such warmth and generosity, an openness to consider embedding, in more formalised ways, gender and diversity issues in the curriculum. In addition, as the spokesperson for the Irish advertising industry, Tania Banotti was confident on the willingness of the industry to engage with academic research that documents the prevalence of gender stereotypes in adverts, and believes that there would be an interest among creatives in being given that information. Finally, this doctoral study represents the first comprehensive survey of the gendered attitudes of advertising students, and therefore future practitioners, in Ireland. Thus, it offers a useful jumping off point from which a

teaching guide and policy document could be developed in order that the advertising educational sector can play its part on working to eliminate sexist content and gender stereotyping emanating from the advertising industry.

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Appendix A – Interviewee profiles (names are all pseudonyms, with the exception of Tania Banotti of IAPI, who signed a ‘on-the-record’ consent form)

Undergraduate students:

1. Gillian, 3rd year. Age 22
2. Kevin, 3rd year. Age 21
3. Bernard, 3rd year. Mature student⁸⁶
4. Fiona, 2nd year. Age 20
5. Colette, 2nd year. Age 20
6. Della, 2nd year. Age 18
7. Paul, 4th year. Age 22
8. Gareth, 4th year. Mature student
9. Damien, 4th year. Mature student

Postgraduate students:

1. Nick, MSc. Mature student
2. Cat, MSc. Mature student
3. Des, IAPI-DIT Postgraduate course. Mature student

Lecturers (undergraduate level):

1. Therese, undergraduate programme chair and lecturer
2. Helen, service lecturer on undergraduate Analysing Media module

Practitioners:

1. Mark, Copywriter
2. Michelle, Digital Advertiser
3. Pauline, Art Director
4. Anna, Strategic Planner

Representative body:

Tania Banotti, CEO of IAPI (Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland)

⁸⁶ Any student who is at least 23 years of age is referred to as a ‘mature student’, both keeping in line with university policy and to further protect the identity of these particular students.

Appendix B – Student Questionnaire

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



ADVERTISING – talking about gender

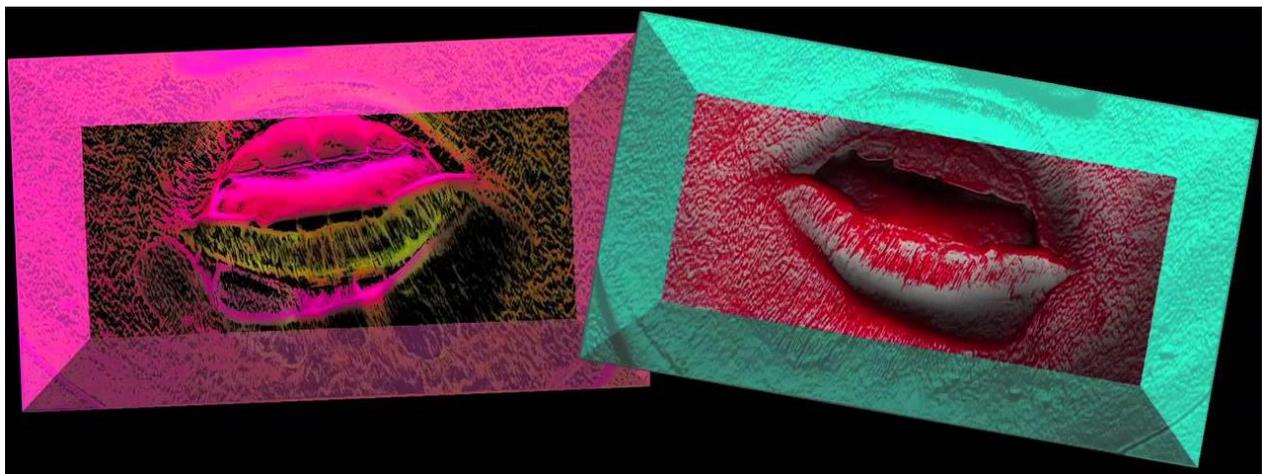
This research study is concerned with surveying the attitudes of advertising students in Ireland to issues of identity and representation, particularly gender identities and representations of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. It will involve examining students' personal views on gender, as well as their perceptions of the advertising industry, the creative process of advertising and the content of advertisements.

Participants are not obliged to participate in the study, should they not wish to do so. For those who do complete the questionnaire, it will be treated on an anonymous and confidential basis.

Please answer all questions as fully and honestly as possible.

Thank you.

Aileen O'Driscoll
PhD Candidate
Dublin City University



1. Sex:

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

3. What attracted to you to study advertising?

.....

4. Do you hope to work in the advertising industry?

- Yes
- No
- Other

5. If so, what role would you most like to have?

.....

6. What are your favourite adverts or ad campaigns (both Irish and from elsewhere) of all time?

.....

Why?

.....

7. What are your least favourite adverts or ad campaigns of all time?

.....

Why?

.....

8. In general, do you think the advertising industry is viewed in a positive or a negative light by the general public

- Positive
- Negative

Explain / further comments:

.....

9. Does it matter how advertising represents people or groups of people (e.g. gay people, Black people, women)?

- Yes
- No

Why?

.....

10. Apart from selling products, do you think advertisers have other responsibilities or functions?

- Yes
- No

If yes, can you explain:

.....

11. The advertising industry receives a lot of criticism. Why do you think that is?

.....

12. Have you learnt about gender in your advertising modules in college?

- Yes
- No

13. What are the most controversial adverts/ad campaigns you can think of?

.....

14. A lot of people claim that advertising damages young girls' and women's self-esteem. What do you think about that?

.....

15. Was the show *Mad Men* an inspiration to you to become involved in the field of advertising?

- Yes
- No

If yes, why?

16. Should adverts that are controversial and /or receive a lot of complaints from the public be banned?

- Yes
- No

Explain / further comments:

.....

17. Do you think equality between men and women has been achieved in Western society?

- Yes
- No

Explain / further comments:

.....

18. If, in a professional situation, you were told by your boss to create a campaign that was deliberately sexist (whether ironic or to create controversy, or both) how would you feel about that? What do you think you would do?

.....

19. When you are working on group projects in college, are there specific roles that males and females are more likely to adopt?

- Yes
- No

Explain / further comments:

.....

20. Traditionally, feminists have been concerned with the objectification of women's bodies in advertising. Do you think this is still an issue?

- Yes
- No

Explain / further comments:

.....

21. What does the term 'feminism' mean for you?

.....
22. Do you think feminism is still relevant in today's society?
.....

23. Do you think men's bodies are objectified and eroticized in contemporary adverts in the same way as women's?

- Yes
- No

24. Please tick. Do you think ...?

- men and women exhibit naturally different characteristics because of their biological make-up
- gender differences are learned

Explain / further comments:
.....

25. What key words describe (stereo)typical male characteristics?
.....

26. What key words describe (stereo)typical female characteristics?
.....

27. Do you think the use of sexually violent imagery in advertising is ever appropriate or justified?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- Never
- Other.....

28. What factors do you think might influence the decision-making process in designing an advertising campaign?
.....

29. Do you think advertising has an influence on the public beyond encouraging them to buy the products being advertised?

Yes

No

Explain / further comments:

.....

30. Are you interested in taking further part in this study? This would involve individual one-on-one interviews and/or participation in focus groups, discussing some of the issues raised in this questionnaire

Yes

Please provide email address

.....

No

Thank you for completing this survey!

Appendix C – Interview Topic Guide (student participants)

Interview Guide

Theme One: Perception of the Industry

Key Question: Can you tell me a little bit about what attracted you to study advertising? Why do you want to work in advertising?

Floating prompts:

- What are your perceptions of the advertising industry?
- What attracts you to advertising sphere? / Perceptions of industry as blurring distinctions between work and play? Is that important? Did you think it would be a fun job?
- What about the perceived socialising benefits? E.g. subsidised drinking nights-out. Is that attractive and why?
- Is it important to be ‘stylish’ or ‘cool’ when working in the industry? What does this entail?
- Do you feel there is pressure to look a certain way for those working in the advertising industry?
- Do you think people working in the advertising industry should look a certain way (e.g. cool, attractive, stylish etc.)? If so, why?
- Is there an awareness of ‘making culture’ through advertising?
- Is personal experience important in the advertising process, whether it’s the creative side or account planning etc.?
- What do you think of the view of ‘advertisers as cultural taste-makers or ‘trend setters’?’
- How do you view the importance of the client in the process of creating an advertising campaign? Or should the vision and expertise of the advertising practitioner take precedent?
- Do you think adherence to strategies, such as market research tools, is key? Or (again) should the vision and expertise of the advertising practitioner take precedent?
- Did you care greatly about the effectiveness of advertising? Does it matter to you if sales of a product increases as a result of an advertising campaign?

Theme Two: Attitudes & opinions to issues of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation

Key Question: Do you ever think about what it means to be a {man}{woman}? Can you say a little bit about that

Floating prompts:

- General attitudes to gender norms
- Do you have friends of both genders?
- Do you think (heterosexual) women and men can be friends?
- Did you go to a single-sex or mixed secondary school?
- Is gender stereotyping of concern or relevance to you? What if it’s done in humorous way?
- Thoughts on sexualisation of culture ... reference, e.g., Miley Cyrus / Rihanna

- Thoughts on ‘feminism’
- What does the term ‘feminism’ mean for you? Do you think it’s still relevant?
- Do you think equality between men and women has been achieved in Western society?
- Should there be separate but complementary roles for women & men in society? i.e. that men are better suited to some roles / professions and women more suited to other roles / professions

Theme Three: Attitudes & opinions to advertising industry’s portrayal of gender, women & men, masculinity & femininity

Key Question: In thinking about designing an advertising campaign, do you give much consideration to how, for instance, various social groups – such as gender / women & men – are represented? And can you say a little bit about that

Floating prompts:

- What do you think of the current state of advertising in Ireland in terms of portrayal of women and men? For example what did you think of the Hunky Dory’s or Club Orange *Best Bits in the World*
- What are your favourite adverts or ad campaigns (both Irish and from elsewhere) of all time? Why?
- What are your least favourite adverts or ad campaigns of all time?
- Is gender stereotyping of concern or relevance to you? What if it’s done in humorous way?
- Traditionally, feminists have been concerned with the objectification of women’s bodies in advertising. Do you think this is still an issue?
- Does it matter how advertising represents people or groups of people (e.g. gay people, Black people, women)? Why?
- A lot of people claim that advertising damages young girls’ and women’s self-esteem. What do you think about that?
- Do you think men’s bodies are objectified and eroticized in contemporary adverts in the same way as women’s?

Theme Four: Attitudes & opinions to actually working in an advertising agency

Key Question: Do you imagine that there is, or should be, room to be ethical or gender sensitive in designing an advertising campaign? Or do you think ‘political correctness has gone mad’?

Floating prompts:

- If, in a professional situation, you were told by your boss to create a campaign that was deliberately sexist (whether ironic or to create controversy, or both) how would you feel about that? What do you think you would do?

- What factors do you think might influence the decision-making process in designing an advertising campaign?
- Do you think whether a creative team in an advertising agency is all male, all female, or mixed-gender will influence the creative decisions made? If so, why? If not, why not?

Theme Five: Discussion of gender issues in course modules

Key Question: Do you discuss in class any / all of issues arising in relation to gender, gender stereotypes, how advertising represents men, women, gay men, lesbians et.?

Floating prompts:

- Have you learnt about gender in your advertising modules in college?

Theme Six: Interest in the Creative Side

Key Question: Is the creative side of the advertising industry something that interests you? And can you explain what ‘creativity’ means in that context

Floating prompts:

- When you are working on group projects in college, are there specific roles that males and females are more likely to adopt?
- Where do you draw inspiration for advertising work?
- Do you think being provocative or shocking constitutes pushing boundaries and what does that ‘look like’, in your opinion?
- Do you think it’s important for advertisers to follow codes of conduct, and how ‘strict’, in a sense should they be? Does this, in your view, stifle creativity?
- If you’re interested in being a ‘creative’ (i.e. copywriter or art director), what about the role appeals to you?

Theme Seven: Ambitions / Future (to ascertain % women / men planning adv careers in various roles)

Key Question: Where do you see yourself positioned in the advertising industry after you graduate?

Floating prompts:

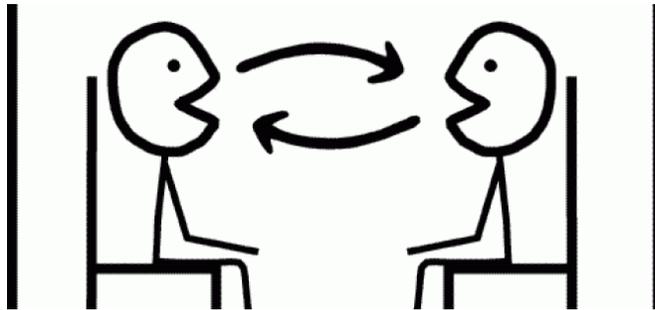
- What are your motivations / career ambitions?
- What areas of advertising do you hope to work in?
- Are there areas of interest in the advertising field that you feel are not covered by course modules?

Appendix D – Research Volunteers Needed

Let's talk about sex (& gender)!

Be part of this study! This is your opportunity to be part of an exciting research project

- Join me for a one-on-one interview



AND / OR

- Participate in a focus group



We will talk about:

- ✓ your experiences as an advertising student
- ✓ your views on gender and sexuality
- ✓ your views on
 - popular culture,
 - the portrayal of women and men,
 - expectations to conform to certain behaviours because of gender and sexual orientation,
 - the existence and accuracy of stereotypes, and
 - the role of advertising in representing women and men

Interested in taking further part in this research study?

Please contact Aileen O'Driscoll at aileen.odriscoll22@mail.dcu.ie

Individual interviews will be conducted on an anonymous basis and carried out in a highly sensitive and confidential manner. The data resulting from the focus groups, likewise, will be treated in strictest confidence.

Appendix E – Plain Language Statement and Informed Consent Form



DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Statement

I. Introduction to the Research Study

This research study is concerned with surveying the attitudes of advertising students in Ireland to issues of identity and representation, particularly gender identities and representations of sexuality and sexual orientation. The examination of attitudes among research participants will refer to their personal views, as well as their perceptions of the advertising industry, the creative process of advertising and the content of advertisements.

DCU School of Communications

Principal investigator: Aileen O'Driscoll; aileen.odriscoll22@mail.dcu.ie

II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require

Involvement in this research study will comprise the following:

- ✓ *completion of a questionnaire*
- ✓ *audio-recorded interviews*
- ✓ *follow-up audio-recorded interview after a specified period of time, if applicable*
- ✓ *It is estimated that the total time commitment connected to periodic involvement with this study should not exceed 3 hours*
- ✓ *Your involvement will comprise open and frank discussions around issues such as your views on gender and sexuality. For instance, it is envisaged that you will discuss with the researcher your views on popular culture, the depictions of women and men in various popular culture formats, expectations to conform to certain behaviours because of gender and sexual orientation, the existence and accuracy of stereotypes, and the role of advertising in representing women and men*

III. Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)

There are minimal perceived risks to personal or other safety connected with this research study. Potential risks, however, concern the possibility of raising matters of a personal and private nature related to the topic area. The researcher is mindful of the sensitive nature of discussing issues of gender and sexual identities, and the emotional feelings that may result.

IV. Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study

Involvement in this research study affords the participant the opportunity to contemplate, discuss and explore perhaps previously unexamined attitudes to gender roles, gender behaviours, sexuality and sexual orientation. This could prove to be a highly enlightening and positive experience for participants.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Questionnaires to participants will be returned on an anonymous basis. The questionnaire will be formulated in such a way to avoid any identifying characteristics, with the exception of the gender of the respondent, as well as an email address provided by those respondents who wish to participate further with the study.

Interviews with participants will be conducted on an anonymous basis. Each participant will be given a pseudonym; the only identifying characteristic that can be established from the interview transcript is the gender of the interviewee. Beyond the gender of the participant, any identifying markers, such as the course they are taking or mention of specific lecturers' names, for example, will be removed from the transcripts of the interviews, if deemed necessary.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of each participant, they will be allocated a pseudonym at the outset of the study. Only the researcher will have access to the document that gives detail of which pseudonym is allocated to which participant. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the data, both textual and audio, storage will be in line with international recommendations for researchers. The researcher will provide for the safe and secure retention of the data for up to 5 years following completion of this doctoral research project. The safe storage of data will be guaranteed through endeavouring to leave no paper trail of documents that may identify research participants. In addition, individual identities of participants will only be retained up until the researcher no longer requires these details for cross-reference purposes.

VI. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period

Primary data will be destroyed after 5 years have elapsed since the completion of the doctoral research study.

VII. Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Participants are not obliged to participate in the study, should they not wish to do so. Such a decision will not result in any negative outcome. Participants may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000



DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

Learning to sell sex? A cultural sociological analysis of gender and sexuality in the educational cultures of advertising students in Ireland

DCU School of Communications

Principal investigator: Aileen O'Driscoll; aileen.odriscoll22@mail.dcu.ie

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

This research study is concerned with surveying the attitudes of advertising students in Ireland to issues of identity and representation, particularly gender identities and representations of sexuality and sexual orientation. The examination of attitudes among research participants will refer to their personal views, as well as their perceptions of the advertising industry, the creative process of advertising and the content of advertisements.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

<i>I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I understand the information provided</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am not obliged to participate in the study, should I not wish to do so. Such a decision will not result in any negative outcome for me. I understand that I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Questionnaires to participants will be returned on an anonymous basis. The questionnaire will be formulated in such a way to avoid any identifying characteristics, with the exception of the gender of the respondent, as well as an email address provided by those respondents who wish to participate further with the study.

Interviews with participants will be conducted on an anonymous basis. Each participant will be given a pseudonym; the only identifying characteristic that can be established from the interview transcript is the gender of the interviewee. Beyond the gender of the participant, any identifying markers, such as the course they are taking or mention of specific lecturers' names for example, will be removed from the transcripts of the interviews, if deemed necessary.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of each participant, they will be allocated a pseudonym at the outset of the study. Only the researcher will have access to the document that gives detail of which pseudonym is allocated to which participant. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the data, both

textual and audio, storage will be in line with international recommendations for researchers. The researcher will provide for the safe and secure retention of the data for up to 5 years following completion of this doctoral research project. The safe storage of data will be guaranteed through endeavouring to leave no paper trail of documents that may identify research participants. In addition, individual identities of participants will only be retained up until the researcher no longer requires these details for cross-reference purposes.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher/s, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F – Ethics Clearance (DCU Research Ethics Committee)

Oliscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Ms Aileen O'Driscoll
School of Communications

6th May 2014

REC Reference: DCUREC/2014/031

Proposal Title: Learning to sell sex? A cultural sociological analysis of gender and sexuality in the educational and workplace cultures of advertising students and practitioners in Ireland

Applicants: Ms Aileen O'Driscoll, Dr Debbie Ging

Dear Aileen,

This research proposal qualifies under our Notification Procedure, as a low risk social research project. Therefore, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal. Materials used to recruit participants should state that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Donal O'Mathuna'.

Dr. Donal O'Mathuna
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee



Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacalocht
Oliscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

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Appendix G – Coding framework – Phase 2 of Thematic Analysis

Name	Description	References	Sources
Advertising as 'post-gender'_semantic, inductive code	Suggestions that advertising no longer pays attention to gender.	21	6
Altruistic advertising_semantic, inductive code	Allude to advertising as being a force for good, or as helping people, or that if it's done right it's good for people; and/ or where participants express the potential for advertising to be a force for positive change.	65	9
Attempts to defeminise advertising_latent, inductive code	Instances of talk that seems to be aimed at defeminising or at masculinising the perception of advertising.	5	2
Beauty_semantic, a priori code	Whether curvy/skinny; realistic and attainable, it's still remains imptt for women to believe themselves to be beautiful and to be perceived as such, in a way it's not for men. Also, more general references to beauty - both men and women	168	10
Catch 22_semantic, instructive code	Exchanges about fact that campaigns target certain markets because the research and reality dictates it, but recognising that this also reinforces a set of behaviours.	22	12
Commodification of women's bodies_semantic, a priori code	References - either in condemnation or uphold views that result in viewing women's bodies as commodities to be used (e.g. prostitution conversation)	23	6
Concern for men and boys_latent, inductive code	Expressions of concern (or refute this) for the state, status or treatment of men and boys, masculinity; either by advertising and its imagery or otherwise.	59	10
Constraints of the medium of advertising_semantic, inductive code	Given the type of medium that advertising is, there is little room for complexity or nuanced 'story-telling'.	35	11
Creativity_semantic, a priori code	Understandings of/ or interest in the creative aspects of advertising work, or creativity in general, as well as iterations of creative competence.	160	13
Deconstructing gender ideology_latent code	Demonstrations of an adeptness or not at adequately and accurately 'reading' gender in ads, or otherwise; and/ or instances where participants express and take a critical stance against restrictive and reductivist gender depictions in advertising.	153	13

Domesticity_semantic, inductive code	Any references made to the domestic sphere; motherhood, fatherhood, caring work etc.	92	14
Education_semantic, a priori code	Collation of comments re: educational modules/ lecturers/classmates [influence of etc.]	156	13
Ethical concerns_latent, a priori code	Students touch on either/ any/ all of the 3 categories of ethical responses to pertinent ethical issues (Moral blindness, muteness & imagination); as well as more general references to ethical considerations and concerns	449	13
Feelings of (dis)empowerment_latent, inductive code	Variety of exchanges with students that touch on the concept of empowerment or disempowerment, either in connection with themselves or others.	177	14
Feminism_latent code	Collation of study participants conceptualisations of what is meant and understood about, or by feminism.	137	7
Fun_semantic, inductive code	References to fun; the fun of advertising work etc.	23	9
Gender equality has been achieved_latent, a priori code	Exchanges that demonstrate that they're operating under the allusion that gender equality has been achieved (or where they challenge this assumption); and other opinions formed by them extend from that assumption	132	11
Gender, gender roles & behaviours_latent, a priori code	General references to the concept of gender and gender roles; e.g. masculinity and femininity. Also include references to a biologically deterministic, 'War of the Sexes' or essentialist rhetoric.	578	14
Hands are tied_latent, inductive code	Expressions of a willingness to show or do things differently but market research/ precedence mitigates against that; i.e. don't ideologically object to portraying men in washing up liquid ad, with men as target market, but just 'unable' to do so.	18	8
Humour_semantic, a priori code	Talk about humour - in general, and/ or as justification for sexism or the presence / connection of humour with sexism; or reject this type of defence for sexism. (Ironic Sexism)	86	13

'I am different...'_latent, inductive code	Women expressing themselves in ways that differentiate and distance themselves from other young women; individualised experience & internalisation of neoliberal self-empowerment. Solidarity and sense of genealogy with other women is absent. Reason for this distancing? arguably, a lack of female representations that chime with their own opinions etc. (e.g. lack of cool, interesting, funny, not-self obsessed, vain etc.)	41	7
'Idealised' self & society_semantic, instructive code	Participants explain advertising's function (whether condoning it or challenging it) that there is little room in advertising for complexity or diversity since it has to play on the ideal-self/society narrative in order to be more easily understood and 'read' / translated by consumers; often involves characteristics of 'whiteness'; 'youth'; 'attractiveness'; appropriate gender roles	20	5
'Market research tells us...'_semantic, inductive code	Iterations that allude to the infallibility of what market research suggests, and can/may use it as justification for upholding social norms, and established gender roles.	37	11
Neoliberal individual_latent, a priori code	Exchanges or answers given by participants that indicate their internalisation (or rejection) of a neoliberal discourse that emphasises the decontextualised agency of the individual to navigate one's life without recognition of structural / cultural barriers.	85	11
One gender must lose for the other to win_latent, inductive code	The understanding that for an ad to appeal to one gender (whether humorous or whatever) that it necessarily entails trampling and ridiculing or manipulating or fooling the other gender.	10	5
'Our generation is not sexist'_semantic, inductive code	Suggestions that the current, young, generation is no longer sexist.	12	7
Personality type overrides gender_semantic, inductive code	Differences they notice between people (classmates, colleagues, housemates) manifest along personality lines rather than any discernible gender divide differences.	24	9
Political correctness_semantic, a priori code	Opinions etc. on political correctness [e.g. that PC advertising (or other) is trying too hard.]	13	4
Resigned to the way things are_semantic, inductive code	Exhibit a resigned tone in terms of the inevitability of things, and a perceived lack of agency to make change.	18	6

Sexualisation & Objectification_semantic, a priori code	Discussion of issues re: to the sexualisation and objectification of women and men's bodies.	95	11
Social class_semantic, instructive code	Views that indicate that social class might determine the absence or presence of progressive or retrogressive views.	7	4
Targeted ads_semantic, inductive code	Talk about segmented and differentiated target markets and assumptions about men-women.	150	12
The exception that disproves the rule_latent, inductive code	Where one example or illustration is offered as definitive proof that 'the rule' (e.g. that women are objectified and sexualised far more often in advertising) does not really exist or reflect the reality. In other words, given that an 'exception' exists (e.g. Diet Coke ad) proves that the rule/reality does not, in fact, exist.	43	11
Tyranny of perfection_semantic, inductive code	How women have internalised ideas that they need to be and look perfect, and its effect on their confidence and how they operate in class projects, discussions, dynamics etc. Also more general exchanges that touch on societal pressure on women to look/ be a certain way.	112	9
Women as 'emotional' labourers_latent, inductive code	The view that assumes women to be better at the social/ emotional side of work or otherwise.	52	12
Working atmosphere and environment_semantic, inductive code	References to experience of working atmosphere, organisational culture etc. in agency during work placement.	51	5