Sisters are doing it for themselves:
An exploration of the self-promotional work
women undertake as they seek professional advancement
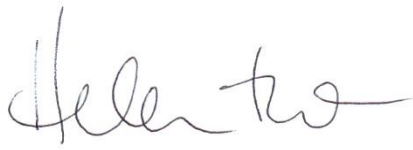
Helen Thompson-Whiteside

Marketing Subject Group, Faculty of Business and Law

Part time PhD, compilation thesis

Declaration of Originality

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Portsmouth. Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Helen Thompson-Whiteside

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Abstract

While legislation and managerial interventions might seek to advance more women, there is also an increasing emphasis on individuals taking personal responsibility for their professional advancement. Entrepreneurs and employees alike are advised to promote themselves and highlight their accomplishments and skills both on and off-line. This popular discourse has been fuelled by the growth of social media platforms which afford individuals unprecedented opportunities to present themselves, and establish their worth. However, prior literature suggests self-promotion is particularly problematic for women.

Therefore, this compilation thesis explores the self-promotional work women undertake. The six articles explore the experience of women who seek professional advancement within entrepreneurialism and advertising's creative departments. While these settings might appear diverse, they provide rich study contexts with some similarities. Both are unstructured, lacking any clear path for progression, with self-promotion recommended as a route to professional advancement. To explore women's self-promotion, this thesis employs a range of qualitative methods intended to capture the lived experiences of women, and enable their voices to be heard.

Individually the papers extend our understanding of women's self-promotion through the lenses of impression management, identity and institutional theories. In contrast to prior literature which found women to be passive, the findings indicate that women are active and innovative in self-promotion. Women are also leveraging promotional tools to expose the gendered practices they encounter within the workplace. However, self-promotional work can cause women stress, and invoke a negative reaction from others. Ultimately, the findings of this thesis expose the limitations of shifting the sole responsibility for women's professional advancement on to individuals. Despite the increased visibility of gender issues, it appears that the communities of practice and societal contexts in which women seek professional advancement, continue to produce and reproduce beliefs and practices which are problematic for women and limit their progress.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this to my Mum and Dad who didn't get to see this work completed, but were life-long supporters of my education. I hope I have made you both proud.

I wish to thank my supervisors, Dr Sarah Turnbull and Dr Liza Howe-Walsh for their support and encouragement, and my 'house mates' in Burnaby Terrace who have been there every step of the way.

I thank my husband, Lee, who makes everything possible.

And to my girls, Isabel and Rosanna. Whatever you want to achieve in life, just do it. Don't wait, put the work in, and please don't give up.

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Declaration of authorship

Papers	Year	Title	Publication	Author/s
1	2018	Developing an authentic personal brand using impression management behaviours: Exploring female entrepreneurs' experiences.	*Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *21*(2), 166-181	Thompson-Whiteside, H., Turnbull,S., & Howe-Walsh, L.
2	2021	How women in the UAE enact entrepreneurial identities to build legitimacy	*International Small Business Journal* in press	Thompson-Whiteside, H., Turnbull, S., & Fletcher-Brown
3	2020	Advertising: Should creative women be expected to 'Fake it?'	*Journal of Marketing Management*, 1-26.DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2019.1707704	Thompson-Whiteside, H., Turnbull, S., & Howe-Walsh, L.
4	2020	Something in Adland doesn't add up: Time to make female creatives really count	*Business Horizons,* 63(5), 597-606.	Thompson-Whiteside, H.
5	2020	Battle-Weary Women: The Female Creatives Fighting for Leadership in Advertising Management	*Advances in Advertising Research Series (Chapter 15, Vol. XI)*	Thompson-Whiteside, H.
6	2021	#Metoovertising: The Institutional Work of Creative Women looking to Change the Rules of the Advertising Game	*# Metoovertising: the institutional work of creative women who are looking to change the rules of the advertising game. Journal of Marketing Management, 37(1-2), 117-143.*	Thompson-Whiteside, H., Turnbull, S.

Table 1 *List of papers, publication status and authorship*

I hereby certify that the authorship as stated above is an accurate record of the papers presented as part of this thesis.

Helen Thompson-Whiteside
February 2021

1   Introduction

While legislation and managerial interventions might seek to advance more women, there is also an increasing emphasis on individuals taking personal responsibility for their professional advancement. In light of this, my published work explores the impact of the self-promotional work women undertake within the workplace. I present six published papers (see Table 1) which consider the experience of women in both entrepreneurial and organisational contexts, and identify the challenges and opportunities they encounter as they employ communicative resources to promote themselves. This accompanying narrative firstly provides background and context to position this thesis and introduces the overarching research questions which guide the compiled research studies. It continues by highlighting the contribution of this work and explaining my research approach. In the chapters that follow, the compilation of six papers is introduced. A foreword to each paper is provided to give some context for the reader, and to highlight how each subsequent paper builds on the last. A concluding discussion then relates these studies to the overarching research questions. Finally, details of how this work has been disseminated and suggestions for future research are provided.

1.1   Research background and context

The United Nations Development Programme (2016) reports that no country in the world has achieved economic parity between men and women. Yet, beyond any moral argument for parity, greater gender diversity is positively linked to business success (McKinsey & Co, 2015; Reguera-Alvarado et al., 2017) and company value (Isidro & Sobral, 2015), with female entrepreneurship considered crucial to driving the global economy and delivering social change (World Bank, 2017, 2020). However, despite the clear advantages of women's professional advancement, some female entrepreneurs struggle to grow their businesses, while many women within organisations fail to progress to senior roles. Even in societies that stress the importance

of gender equality, evidence of an imbalance is clear. For example, women across the EU still only account for 7% of board chairs and presidents, and just 6% of chief executives in the largest companies (Boffey, 2017). In the UK, women hold less than 10% of executive roles in commercial organisations (Fawcett Society, 2018), while female entrepreneurs grow businesses less than half the size of those led by men (The Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship, 2019).

Interventions from both public and private sectors have sought to address these issues and advance more women within the workplace. Governments worldwide continue to discuss how to realise the economic contribution of female entrepreneurs (World Bank, 2020; RSA, 2014; The Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship, 2019), while global companies are working to increase female representation (Krivkovich, et al., 2018), with those in the UK signalling their desire to hire more women into senior level positions (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2017).

The topic of women's professional advancement has also drawn interest from a wide range of academic fields. Gender imbalance in the workplace remains a pervasive problem for business scholars to address (Gloor et al., 2018), and might be considered something of a "wicked" problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973), or "grand challenge" (Ferraro et al., 2015; George et al., 2016). It is chronic and complicated (McConnell, 2018), lacking any shared or definitive understanding of either the problem or indeed, the solution (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Whilst interventions from governments and companies alike are valuable and much-needed, this thesis explores the impact of the increasingly popular discourse which places responsibility for professional advancement on to individuals. This discourse suggests that anyone can communicate their personal value in the marketplace, and secure professional advancement for themselves (Vallas & Christin, 2018). While such self-promotion has previously been understood as "an endemic human activity" (Kotler & Levy, 1969, p. 12), it is

now recast as an important point of differentiation for both entrepreneurs (Gandini, 2016; Resnick et al., 2016), and employees alike (Vallas & Cummins, 2015; Vallas & Christin, 2018).

The prevalence of this economic discourse is further fuelled by the growth of social media platforms, which have lowered barriers to self-promotion for individuals, and enabled individuals to develop a digital self (Belk, 2013). Although critics see these apparent freedoms as little more than new expressions of power (Hearn, 2008; Lair et al., 2005), self-promotion via social media provides unprecedented opportunities for individuals to increase their visibility, and leverage networks to build their personal profile (Chen, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2011; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). The accessibility of these platforms has even led some to argue that social media has democratised the process of self-promotion (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

Within the impression management (IM) literature, self-promotion is defined as, "pointing with pride to one's accomplishments, speaking directly about one's strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions for achievements" (Rudman & Phelan, 2008, p. 629). Yet, this primary form of IM (Jones & Pittman, 1982), may be problematic for women. According to prevailing gender roles within society (Eagly & Karau, 2002), women who engage in the assertive behaviours typical of this approach, more commonly associated with men, are seen to be acting against the prevailing view of their gender. Consequently, they will often suffer a backlash or be seen as less likeable (Rudman & Phelan 2008). Not surprisingly perhaps, prior literature has identified women as less self-promoting than men (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Bolino et al, 2008; Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Singh et al., 2002; Smith & Huntoon, 2014), and more likely to engage in ingratiation than assertive behaviours (Capezio et al., 2017). Understanding more about the impact of the work women undertake to promote themselves as a means of professional

advancement, would therefore be of value to academics and practitioners alike. To introduce each research question, this thesis now proceeds with a short review of literature relating to women and self-promotion.

1.2 **Introduction to research questions**

Within the field of entrepreneurship, prior research has linked the success of a start-up to the marketing skills and competencies of the business owner (Franco et al., 2014; Hills & Hultman, 2013). Self-promotion is considered essential for entrepreneurs (Franco et al., 2014; Hills & Hultman, 2013), with the identity of the owner often serving as a proxy for the legitimacy of a nascent venture (Fisher et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2016; Überbacher, 2014). This might be developed into a personal brand, which can provide a sustainable form of differentiation for a business (Resnick et al., 2016; Ward & Yates, 2013). Web 2.0 has also arguably democratised marketing, making marketing tools and practices widely accessible to more people (McQuarrie et al., 2013).Yet, many female entrepreneurs still lack the knowledge or confidence needed to promote themselves or their business (Bamiatzi et al., 2015; Entrepreneursuk.net, 2017; Federation of Small Business (FSB), 2016). To-date, few studies have explored self-promotion for female entrepreneurs. Yet, given that the potential social and economic contribution of female entrepreneurship is yet to be fully realised, further investigation is now justified. Consequently,

RQ1 asks: How do female entrepreneurs promote themselves and their businesses?

Simply taking up the challenge however, to engage in self-promotion by highlighting accomplishments and skills, is only one part of the equation. Presenting the self, both on and off-line, may evoke a reaction and response from other actors which may not always be positive, or secure the desired career or business success (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). This effect may be further exacerbated within strongly-gendered organisational environments typical of those

found in advertising (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020), which like many sectors, including finance (Boateng, 2018), politics (Fawcett Society, 2018) and STEM (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016), is still dominated by men. While gender imbalance is problematic for any industry, it is considered a particular problem for advertising, which is credited with the additional power and responsibility to influence and reflect society (Shabbir et al., 2019).

While this alone makes the advertising industry a rich research context to explore the lived experiences of women, a shift of research focus to this organisational context was further prompted by the popularity of female empowerment as a theme within advertising (Akestam et al., 2017; Champlin et al., 2019; Drake, 2017). The sector's apparent enthusiasm for the empowerment of women might suggest that women are flourishing within this setting, yet female creatives still struggle to progress and remain a minority in the departments where these ads are made (Mallia & Windels, 2018; Mensa & Grow, 2019). Furthermore, and similar to entrepreneurialism, advertising is largely unstructured and offers little formal training for those seeking progression. Instead, self-promotion is considered necessary for professional advancement within creative departments (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Windels & Lee, 2012), making an exploration of the self-promotional work women undertake of great interest. Therefore,

RQ2 asks: How do women in organisations promote themselves?

While women within organisations can employ IM behaviours and seek to enact a desired identity, they do so within an institutional framework. Prior research has identified some of the barriers that women face within advertising's established cultures, yet the persistent under-representation of women at the senior levels of advertising's creative departments suggests that there is still more to understand about the problem (Windels & Mallia, 2015; Mallia & Windels, 2018). While previous studies have characterised women as passive and engaging in only low-

levels of assertive IM (Bolino et al., 2016), recent studies find women are actively engaging in self-promotion (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). However, paradoxical demands that they should at once both fit and stand out within these established cultures, gives rise to a number of tensions. Struggling to meet these often conflicting demands, causes many women to feel inauthentic, and crucially does little to bring about change within these strongly-gendered organisational cultures (Thompson-Whiteside et al. 2020). Furthermore, women may well communicate their desire for professional advancement by enacting the identity of a desired self, but if this is not confirmed by their community of practice, they may still fail to progress (Thompson-Whiteside, 2020a). Women communicate their experience of this institutional community and culture using war-like metaphors (Thompson-Whiteside, 2020b), but growing tired of the fight, they might choose to challenge the established logics of institutions instead. Yet, to-date the role of communicative resources in institutional work has received limited attention (Cornelissen et al., 2015). To explore this further,

RQ3 asks: How do women in organisations use communicative resources to bring about institutional change?

A summary of the linkages between the research questions and papers is presented in Figure 1 (overleaf).

Figure 1: *A summary of the linkage between research questions and papers*

While effective self-promotion is indicated for career success, women are not active in promoting themselves.

RQ1 How do female entrepreneurs promote themselves and their businesses?

Is how women promote themselves different in an organisational setting?

RQ2 How do women in organisations promote themselves?

Can women use promotional tools to change the organisations in which they seek greater representation?

RQ3 How do women in organisations use promotion to bring about institutional change?

Paper 1 How female entrepreneurs use Impression Management to develop a personal brand.

Paper 2 How women produce and enact an entrepreneurial identity through the media in order to secure legitimacy.

Paper 3 How women in creative advertising use Impression Management to promote themselves.

Paper 4 How women negotiate a leadership identity in advertising's gendered creative departments.

Paper 5 How women experience seeking career progression in a creative advertising department?

Paper 6 How communicative resources can be used to expose sexist attitudes found in the workplace

1.3 **Contribution**

An exploration of these research questions has enabled me to make contributions to four areas of literature.Contribution to IM theory

In contrast to prior research which found women to be passive and engaging in only low levels of IM behaviours and self-promotion (Bolino et al., 2016), this thesis identifies women's active engagement in IM behaviours (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). It also reveals how women are combining IM tactics in novel ways and experimenting with the acceptable boundaries between their public and private personas (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). Whilst prior literature indicates that negative images are generally avoided, this thesis finds that women are deliberately sharing their weaknesses and vulnerabilitites in a bid to build trust with their audience and be authentic (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). Its findings also address the gap in our understanding of the internal impact of IM behaviours on individuals (Bolino et al., 2016). They highlight how women's engagement in inauthentic behaviours, prompted by their desire to fit in within male-dominated organisational cultures, is causing women stress and leading to a sense of misalignment with their "true" self (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020).

1.4 **Contribution to entrepreneurial literature**

This thesis also contributes to the emerging stream of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) literature. It highlights the risks associated with self-promotion for female entrepreneurs and how women manage this risk. It therefore extends our understanding of the dimension of risk management within EM. Self-promotion for female entrepreneurs emerges as intuitive, experimental and risk-taking (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). This published work also usefully adds to knowledge of how entrepreneurship can give women increased agency, disrupting existing institutional arrangements, particularly in highly-gendered cultures in which

women face a number of societal constraints (Thompson-Whiteside et al., in press). The use of netnography also makes a contribution to the field as it responds to a call from Henry et al. (2016) for more imaginative in-depth qualitative methodologies in exploring female entrepreneurship.

1.5 Contribution to identity theory

This thesis also contributes to our understanding of how women construct and enact identity in response to gendered contexts (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018; Thompson-Whiteside et al., in press). This published research finds that desired identities, such as "entrepreneur" or "creative director" are seen as male (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018; Thompson-Whiteside et al., in press), with male-dominated communities of practice retaining the power to affirm or discourage the enactment of a desired identity (Thompson-Whiteside, 2020a). Yet, this research also shows how women in organisations adapt their behaviours and engage in self-promotion to both fit in and stand out (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). Furthermore, the findings of this thesis highlight how women in gendered contexts might use the media to legitimise an entrepreneurial identity and secure a more public role for women (Thompson-Whiteside et al., in press).

1.6 Contribution to institutional theory

This thesis also contributes to institutional theory by highlighting how women can challenge persistent institutional logics. In particular, it extends our understanding of how communicative resources might be used to challenge existing institutional logics, a previously under-researched area (Cornelissen et al., 2015). It indicates how female entrepreneurs are using the media to highlight their engagement with institutional pluralism and display their "freedom" from exisiting institutional arrangements (Thompson-Whiteside et al., in press). Furthermore, it highlights the use of advertising to expose sexist langauge and behaviour in the workplace, and

terms this novel form of communication as #metoovertising (Thompson-Whiteside & Turnbull, in press).

The linkage between my research questions, papers and contributions is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: *A summary of the linkage between research questions, papers and contributions.*

While effective self-promotion is indicated for career success, women are not active in promoting themselves.

RQ1 How do female entrepreneurs promote themselves and their businesses?

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Paper 4 How women negotiate a leadership identity in advertising's gendered creative departments.

Paper 5 How women experience seeking career progression within creative advertising

Paper 6 How communicative resources can be used to expose sexist attitudes found in the workplace

Contribution to IM and EM literature. Identifies women as active in IM behaviours. Highlights risks of self-promotion for female entrepreneurs. Managed by sharing weaknesses and fears to be seen as trustworthy and authentic.

Contribution to entrepreneurship and institutional literature: Identifies how women in a Muslim context enact an entrepreneurial identity through the media, which challenges institutional logics and affords women a greater public role.

Contribution to IM literature: Extends the understanding of the effects of IM on not just the audience, but on the individual. Women are "faking" behaviours to fit into gendered contexts which causes them stress and feels inauthentic.

Contribution to advertising literature: Highlights the crucial role of the community of practice in affirming women and identifies how the ad industry can do more to enable women to make a full contribution.

Contribution to marketing literature: Identifies the role of metaphor in shaping the workplace. War-like metaphors legitimise combative behaviours and attitudes which are problematic for women.

Contribution to institutional literature: Identifies that actors with less power can use advertising to challenge the legitimacy of institutional logics and its success is enhanced if aligned with a wider social discourse.

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2   Research approach

2.1 **Research philosophy**

My research is aligned with an ontological position of constructivism which views social phenomena and the meanings attached to them, as continually constructed and negotiated by social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Lee & Lings, 2008; Smith, 2015). In common with constructivists, I see that knowledge is not an objective external reality waiting to be uncovered, but may be subjective and accessed through the interpretations, representations and narratives of individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Chapleo, 2010; Chapleo, 2011). However, my personal interests and background as a practitioner temper this position. In common with the approach of Deweyan pragmatism, I also see the individual as culturally located (Dewey & Nagel, 2008), as "rooted in life"; a life that is "inherently contextual, emotional, and social" (Morgan, 2014, p. 1047). While I greatly value the interpretations of individual women, I also recognise that meaning is created within contexts and frameworks and continually remade through the functions of practice (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Hatch, 2012).

This preference for a constructivist ontology indicates an interpretive epistemology (Goldkuhl, 2012). Within this thesis, interpretivism as a representational practice (Hackley, 2003) is applied in a number of layers. For example, social actors such as women in the workplace interpret their worlds; this interpretation is then interpreted or translated by myself as the researcher; and finally this new "knowledge" is then additionally interpreted by other researchers as a potential contribution to knowledge by the field, or not (Hay, 2011). Such interpretation is evidenced by the publication of papers in peer-reviewed journals (Thompson-Whiteside 2020a, 2020b; Thompson-Whiteside & Turnbull, in press; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020; Thompson-Whiteside et al., in press). Interpretivists must then

consider, "whether the interpretation is consistent with the aims motivating the study, can be directly supported by reference to participant descriptions, and provides insight into the phenomenon being investigated" (Thompson et al., 1990, p. 347). Consistent with the aims of this study, the epistemology of interpretivism is adopted here so that women's voices may be heard. However, this work is also guided by a desire to produce knowledge that is socially useful (Feilzer, 2010). I strive to not only develop our understanding of the lived experience of women who seek to advance within the workplace, but also provide additional insight into the attitudes and behaviours which limit their progress.

2.2 Methods

To access the subjective views of individuals and uncover the descriptions of participants, an interpretative approach indicates qualitative methods such as case studies and interviews to generate rich data and provide insight (Lee & Lings, 2008; Willis et al., 2007). Ontological individualism and methodological individualism are closely aligned in three of the papers presented here with semi-structured interviews used to explore the phenomena in question through the eyes of individuals. However, in my aim to produce socially useful knowledge, multiple tools of inquiry were adopted to allow other messages to be heard (Feilzer, 2010). Qualitative data is gathered from not only semi-structured interviews (Papers 1, 3, 4 and 5), but also through netnography and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Papers 2 and 6). Netnography reveals how entrepreneurial identity and institutional work might be enacted through the media, while CDA reveals the imbalanced power relations embedded in the language of advertising's workplaces.

2.3 Ethical considerations

Before collecting data, ethical approval was sought from the relevant ethics committee at the University of Portsmouth. Following a favourable outcome, ethical guidelines were

adhered to throughout the research process. The guidelines covered the issues most often encountered in interpretive research. These include: providing information about the purpose of the research to aid the informed consent of participants; advising participants of the voluntary nature of their involvement and their freedom to withdraw from the research; and the steps taken to protect their privacy and respect confidentiality (unless indicated otherwise). These issues were addressed in the information sheet provided to participants, both electronically when making initial contact, and as a hardcopy when face-to-face interviews were conducted. The information sheet contained the researcher's contact details to ensure participants could access the researcher or their supervisor to ask questions and provide feedback throughout the data collection period. Each condition of participation was reiterated with participants before they signed the consent form. Participants were reminded about the voluntary nature of their participation, and were made aware of their right to terminate the interviews and withdraw from the project up to the point of data analysis. In addition, they were asked to explicitly agree to the recording and transcription of the interviews.

2.4 **Position of researcher**

Akin to the pragmatists' view that individuals are rooted in context, interpretivists view the phenomena being studied as inextricably linked with the time and the setting of the research (Lee & Lings, 2008). Consequently, it is pertinent to also consider the position of the researcher in relation to the context of this research and the participants. Greene, (2014, p. 1) notes that, "as qualitative researchers the stories told to us, how they are relayed to us, and the narratives that we form and share with others are inevitably influenced by our position and experiences as a researcher in relation to our participants". However, Lee and Lings (2008), draw on the work of Chris Hackley (2003), to offer cautionary notes to the interpretive

researcher, drawing particular attention to issues of reflexivity and representation. In light of this, I acknowledge my own position as follows.

As a woman with over 30 years of experience in the marketing field, it would be difficult for me to claim objectivity, or to argue that I can entirely separate myself from my research into the self-promotional work of women. During the period of this research I have recorded reflections, ideas and insights which might be considered field notes (Patton, 2002). As a qualified coach, I place importance on self-reflection, and within these field notes I have recorded how some of the struggles and challenges the research participants outline, echo my own experiences.

Sharing an identity or experiential background with research participants, might arguably make me an insider within the world of my participants (Asselin, 2003). Insider research is defined as the study of one's own social group (Naples, 2003), undertaken by a member or someone with knowledge of the community (Hellawell, 2006), who share some of its characteristics (Loxley & Seery, 2008). It may offer advantages in gaining acceptance and trust from research participants, while those on the outside may be seen as more objective, but will find access harder to secure (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). While being either inside or outside are often portrayed as antagonistic positions, scholars have also recognised a third position, a space in between both inside and outside (Chavez, 2008; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). A partial insider who shares an identity with the group under exploration, but has achieved some distance or detachment from the community in question (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), better describes my own position. I was a marketing executive then marketing manager, and subsequently brand manager, before shifting to new roles as entrepreneur, coach and academic. This evolution has brought two key advantages; firstly it has facilitated acceptance and trust from participants with whom I share common experiences, and secondly afforded

me some distance and degree of detachment from the discussion in hand. I did not pretend however that I was an entirely "dispassionate observer" completely outside of the field, but instead saw myself and the participant as "co-investigators", exploring the issues and phenomena under investigation together (Hunt & Ortiz-Hunt, 2018, p. 451). The differing theoretical lenses used to view the experience of women in these differing contexts, have also brought added value in helping me to understand my own experience, generating new insights into how, and why, my own career challenges have arisen.

Greene (2014) also argues that positionality can shift throughout the process of conducting research. In my own case, I perceive a shift between the first studies undertaken as part of this thesis, and the later papers included here. In considering how women are using IM strategies and enacting identity to both fit in and stand out within entrepreneurial and organisational contexts, I appear to accept the argument that women must assume responsibility to promote themselves and communicate their worth. However, the findings of these papers underline the difficulties of such endeavours for women. They indicate that while women may enact the relevant strategies and behaviours, the response to these and indeed their experiences in doing so, may not always be positive. Within later papers, by considering the role of a community of practice in its response to women's identity work, and by recognising the possibly detrimental effect of conceiving of marketing as warfare, I begin to question whether responsibility might be more usefully assumed by the gendered systems and organisations within which women operate. The final working paper, applies institutional theory to the promotional work of women, this affords women with agency and begins to shed light on the role that communicative resources could play in helping women redress the imbalanced power relations they experience in the workplace. This reflects my current position, I believe that women can challenge the current systems, and that the tools and practice of promotion might play a crucial role in helping them communicate an alternative

narrative. This overarching statement now continues by introducing each of the papers which make up this compilation thesis. To aid the reader, a foreword is provided as an overview, followed by the full paper.

3 Paper 1: Developing an authentic personal brand using impression management behaviours: Exploring female entrepreneurs' experiences

3.1 Foreword

Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) helps to explain the challenges of the entrepreneurship/marketing interface (Crick & Crick, 2015, 2016; Kilenthong et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2002). With its focus on agility and adaptation to dynamic conditions, it has has come to represent a marketing mindeset which is increasingly being adopted by larger businesses as well as SME's and entrepreneurs (Alqahtani & Uslay, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010). Earlier literature in the field highlighted the spontaneity and creativity which characterised the marketing of entrepreneurs who were responding to uncertain market conditions with limited resources (Hills et al., 2010; Morris et al., 2002). It identified seven dimensions to this marketing, including risk-taking and the role of customers and recognised not only the challenges small business owners might face in adopting more formal approaches, but also the opportunities a less planned approach might present (Morris et al., 2002). Marketing is still considered something of a challenge for entrepreneurs (Franco et al., 2014), but is seen as a particular difficulty for some female entrepreneurs, with many lacking the knowledge or confidence needed to develop marketing activities for their business (Bamiatzi et al., 2015; Entrepreneursuk.net, 2017; FSB, 2016).

Unlike larger firms, the success of a start-up will depend heavily on the marketing skills or competencies of the entrepreneur (Franco et al., 2014; Hills & Hultman, 2013). The owner's identity might even act as a proxy for their venture; used to establish legitimacy for a new business, especially in the early stages of development (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Überbacher, 2014). Consequently, the development of a personal brand might provide a sustainable form of differentiation for a business, which cannot easily be imitated by

competition (Resnick et al., 2016; Ward & Yates, 2013). To promote this personal brand and market themselves, entrepreneurs might engage in impression management (IM), particularly the tactic of self-promotion. This trend for self-promotion has been further fuelled by a variety of social media platforms. These not only provide unprecedented opportunities for individual self-expression and self-presentation, but have arguably democratised marketing, making marketing tools and practices widely accessible to all (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

IM refers to the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions that others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). It is considered particularly important when an individual's behaviours are public, and their image has a role to play in achieving their goals (Bolino et al., 2016). While the use of IM within organisations has been widely explored by a number of scholars (see Bolino et al., 2016 for a review), how entrepreneurs, particularly women, use the strategies and tactics of IM has with some notable exceptions (Nagy et al., 2012; Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014), received limited attention from academics to-date.

To address this gap, this first paper set out to explore the EM activities undertaken by female entrepreneurs, focussing on their use of IM behaviours and tactics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs in the UK. As the founders or owner/managers of their enterprise each was using IM strategies and tactics to promote themselves, adopting marketing tools and practices to communicate their personal brand. The findings contribute to both the IM and EM literature. They develop our understanding of how women engage in IM tactics and behaviours to present themselves. They indicate that women are not passive as previously indicated (Bolino et al., 2016), but instead actively engaged in IM tactics. Furthermore, the findings indicate that female owner-managers are innovative in their use of these behaviours, combining self-promotion with the IM tactic of supplication,

which is typically seen to indicate weakness. This engagement however, is not without challenges and risks.

The findings of this paper indicate that the gendered nature of the societal context, and of entrepreneurialism itself, present challenges which female entrepreneurs experience as risk. Women's self-promotion is seen as going against prevailing gendered expectations and can often provoke a backlash (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). To mangage this risk, women are putting what Goffman (1959) saw as the hidden back stage, firmly front stage, in order to be authentic and build trust with their audience. Therefore, these findings make an important second contribution to the emerging domain of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) by contributing to our understanding of risk management, specifically identifying how new approaches to marketing enable female entrepreneurs to manage risk.

3.2 **Published Paper**

Developing an Authentic Personal Brand using Impression Management Behaviours: Exploring Female Entrepreneurs' Experiences

Helen Thompson-Whiteside
Dr Sarah Turnbull
Dr Liza-Walsh

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into how female entrepreneurs develop and communicate an authentic personal brand. We examine the entrepreneurial marketing (EM) activities undertaken by female entrepreneurs and identify the Impression management (IM) behaviours and tactics employed. We explore the risks associated with self-promotion to gain a better understanding of how female entrepreneurs market themselves and their businesses.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopts an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA). Using semi-structured interviews, we explore the experiences of female entrepreneurs as they engage in IM behaviours. The sample is drawn from female entrepreneurs who have small-scale businesses which span a range of specialist service sectors. All participants are engaging in personal branding activities. Participants were recruited via a gatekeeper and invited to take part in the study. Data from eleven female business owners was collected and analysed using IPA. Interview transcripts and field notes were analysed for broad patterns and then initial codes developed which allowed for themes to emerge, with a number of core themes being identified. These core themes are presented, together with verbatim quotes from participants to provide a rich insight into the marketing activities of these female entrepreneurs.

Findings – The findings reveal the complex challenges faced by female entrepreneurs as they engage in self-promotion and IM to market their business. Four key themes emerge from the data to explain how female entrepreneurs engage in managing their brand both online and

offline: experimental; risk; authenticity and supplication. The study identifies in particular that female entrepreneurs use the tactic of supplication in combination with self-promotion to communicate their brand. Additionally, it was found that female entrepreneurs share their personal fears and weaknesses in an attempt to be seen as authentic and manage the risk associated with self-promotion.

Originality/value – We contribute to the EM literature by extending our understanding of the risks associated with self-promotion for female entrepreneurs. The study also contributes to the IM literature by providing a better understanding of IM beyond organisations and applied to an entrepreneurial domain. The study highlights a number of important implications for entrepreneurial practice and policy.

Introduction

Marketing is one of the greatest challenges for all entrepreneurs (Franco et al., 2014) and a particular challenge for certain female entrepreneurs, with many lacking the knowledge or confidence needed to develop marketing activities for their business (Bamiatzi et al., 2015; Entrepreneursuk.net, 2017; FSB, 2015). Unlike larger firms, the success of a start-up will depend largely on the marketing skills or competencies of the owner (Franco et al., 2014; Hills & Hultman, 2013). The entrepreneur often personifies the marketing activity with personal branding indicated as a form of differentiation for the business which cannot easily be imitated by competition (Resnick et al., 2016). Ward and Yates (2013) link such personal branding activity to self-promotion and Impression management (IM). The IM literature has identified that women in organisations are often reluctant to promote themselves, showing low levels of self-promotion, with self-promotion even identified as a risk for females (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Singh et al., 2002; Smith & Huntoon, 2014). However, less is known about female entrepreneurs and self-promotion, or of how they manage any risks associated with promoting themselves.

To address this gap in our understanding, this paper sought to explore the entrepreneurial marketing (EM) activities undertaken by female entrepreneurs. In particular, we seek to identify the IM behaviours and tactics employed by female entrepreneurs as they engage in personal branding as a way to market their business. This study contributes to the EM literature by extending our understanding of the dimension of risk management identified by Morris et al., (2002). Specifically, this study explores the risks associated with self-promotion for female entrepreneurs. The paper also contributes to the currently underdeveloped stream of research which extends IM literature beyond organisations and applies it to entrepreneurs (Nagy et al., 2012; Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014).

Female entrepreneurship is seen as key to driving the global economy and delivering social change (World Bank, 2017). However, while the ratio of female entrepreneurs has increased in many countries (GEM, 2016), even in developed economies, such as the United Kingdom (UK), women are only half as likely as men to start their own business (Women's Business Council, 2016). Increasing the number of female entrepreneurs to equal that of men would contribute over £100bn to the UK economy in the next 10 years (Deloitte, 2016). While boosting the "birth-rate" of female-led businesses is vital, it is only part of the story. Start-ups must also be encouraged to grow if their economic contribution is to be realised (RSA, 2014), with sales and marketing considered essential to business growth (Nwankwo & Gbadamosi, 2011). Prior research found marketing is different for small entrepreneurial ventures when compared to large organisations (Resnick et al., 2016), with EM emerging as a domain to help explain the challenges of the Entrepreneurship/Marketing interface (Crick & Crick, 2015, 2016; Kilenthong et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2002). Morris et al., (2002) argue that EM is characterised by creativity, intuition and insight leading to a different marketing consciousness which contrasts with the more rational decision making that underpins traditional marketing approaches. Risk management is identified as one dimension where this new approach to marketing may have a role in mitigating or sharing risks, with greater levels of collaboration and working with lead customers being suggested. This study explores how female entrepreneurs are using new approaches to marketing to manage risk.

This paper is structured as follows. In the next section the existing literature on personal branding and IM is reviewed. We then describe the methodology, including our approach to the sample strategy and data collection. In the following section we report on the findings and then discuss the implications of these to both the literature and entrepreneurial practice. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for entrepreneurial policy, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Personal branding

Previous research has identified that traditional marketing activities are seen by entrepreneurs as impersonal, and personal branding offers a better way to leverage the specialist knowledge or unique contribution of the individual entrepreneur (Resnick et al., 2016). This personal means of marketing is also fuelled by new media platforms which offer unprecedented opportunities for individual self-expression and self-presentation. Individuals need no longer be tied to media agencies and can undertake marketing activities designed to market both themselves and their products and services whilst building an audience for their personal brand (Chen, 2013; Harris & Rae, 2011; Labrecque et al., 2011).

Within the branding literature the extension of the branding logic beyond products and services to now include people is widely acknowledged (Bandinelli & Arvidsson, 2013; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003). To date, there have been very few studies in the field of personal branding underpinned by branding theories. Prior studies have identified two main challenges with the application of branding theory to people. Firstly, whilst products and services are relatively fixed and stable entities, lending themselves to branding processes, people brands are much less so, making it potentially difficult to consistently deliver on a unique promise of value (Bendisch et al., 2013). Secondly, the process of personal branding encourages individuals to engage in self-promotion activities to achieve visibility in the marketplace, communicating a unique promise of value, based on personal strengths and assets (Shepherd, 2005). This is referred to as an "inside-out" process (Chen, 2013; Khedher, 2014). The latter part of this process leads some critics to argue that a personal brand is built to satisfy the market (Khedher, 2014) and may present a challenge for individuals who wish to remain authentic (Shepherd, 2005).

While for some authors authenticity in personal branding is emphasised and considered vital (Harris & Rae, 2011), critics writing in the socio-cultural field perceive personal branding as simply the elevation of image over substance and an exercise in self-packaging (Lair et al., 2005). Hearn (2008) conveys her distaste for a process that is self-consciously creating a detachable image of the self for market consumption, while Gehl (2011) argues that those seeking to build a personal brand are cynically invited to expose their private lives as a way of enhancing authenticity.

The use of social media and online tools for self-promotion is also attracting academic interest. Harris & Rae (2011) refer to a new digital divide which distinguishes between those who have the skills, time and confidence to use digital tools effectively, and those who do not. Individuals with digital skills who can create an authentic personal branding both on and offline can widen their audiences and career opportunities. This is an idea supported by Chen (2013) who finds that media amateurs, including entrepreneurs, have the opportunity to use these new platforms to manage and project their profile and build an audience for a personal brand. A study by Ruane & Wallace (2015) found that social media, including Facebook and Twitter, allows individuals to engage in self-presentation, creating online identities. Developing a holistic authentic online brand however, which transcends social and professional distinctions is a challenge (Labrecque et al., 2011), as is the question of how to control that profile in a dynamic environment in which both the site and other parties can affect and contribute to an individual's online brand. Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) argue that this should not be seen as a lack of control. Instead, they conceive of brand building through social media as collaboration and liken the process not to a traditional performance, but to improvised theatre where both the audience and the performer work together to co-create the brand. E-marketing activities are seen as an effective means to expand EM activity and an opportunity to co-create a personal brand for entrepreneurs (Miles et al., 2016).

Previous research has identified personal branding as a means to achieve visibility in; academia (Noble et al., 2010), accountancy (Vitberg, 2010), librarianship (Gall, 2012) and modelling (Parmentier et al., 2013) with Khedher (2014) suggesting personal branding is a logical response to an increasingly competitive and uncertain economic climate. While critics might perceive an implicit invitation to self-commodification (Hearn, 2008), shifting responsibility away from society to the individual (Lair et al., 2005) in a time of economic precarity the discourse of personal branding is now pervasive (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). However, a search of the extant literature has not identified an exploration of the personal branding activities of female entrepreneurs, or the challenges they face in communicating an authentic personal brand both on and offline. If the application of branding theories is problematic, then IM may prove a useful lens through which to explore these activities.

Impression Management

Similar to personal branding, IM refers to the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions that others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995). IM is attributed to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical view of social interactions whereby individuals are conceived of as social actors generating positive external impressions (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). IM is still regarded as one of the most influential theories regarding reputation (Srivoravilai et al., 2011). Individuals are more motivated to engage in IM strategies when their behaviours are public and their image is seen as important in achieving their goals (Bolino et al., 2016). IM is often utilised within the organisational literature to identify how well an individual presents themselves, directly impacting on their ability to get a job, secure promotion or a pay increase (Bolino et al., 2016). However, there is limited exploration of IM behaviours adopted by entrepreneurs as they seek to positively

influence others, including potential investors (Nagy et al., 2012; Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014).

Both the direct and indirect techniques used when constructing an image are discussed in the literature. Direct techniques might be used when presenting information about personal "traits, abilities and accomplishments" (Cialdini, 1989, p.45) and indirect techniques might be employed to manage information about the "people and the things with which one is associated" (Cialdini, 1989, p.46). A further distinction is made in the literature between assertive and defensive strategies (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Assertive strategies are considered to be initiated by the individual seeking to create a particular image and defensive strategies are seen to be employed in response to an undesirable image which may have been formed (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Five different IM behaviours with descriptions (see Table 2) are associated with assertive IM strategies (Jones & Pittman, 1982).

IM strategy	IM behaviour	Description
Assertive strategy – individuals proactively manage impressions about themselves to create a desired image	Ingratiation	Seeking to be likeable, showing oneself to be of benefit to others
	Self-promotion	Mention of abilities/accomplishments
	Exemplification	Doing more than necessary, going beyond call of duty
	Supplication	Showing weaknesses or limitations
	Intimidation	Threatening/bullying

Table 2 *Assertive strategies associated with IM (Jones & Pittman, 1982)*

The literature has mostly focussed on the use of assertive strategies with an emphasis on the use of self-promotion and ingratiation behaviours (Bolino, et al., 2016). These are most often used to create a positive image in the minds of a target audience while negatively valued images are avoided (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). One exception to this is provided by Becker & Martin (1995) who investigate deliberate attempts to create a negative impression in the workplace which they attribute to a variety of individual motivations, including a desire to reduce expectations and avoid responsibility. However, relatively few studies appear to have

explored behaviours which might make people seem less desirable. Yet, Parhankangas & Ehrlich (2014) found when entrepreneurs risk appearing less desirable by revealing their weaknesses (which might be thought of as a supplication technique), it can increase trustworthiness and increase their chances of funding, introducing an interesting avenue for exploration.

Any deliberate attempt by an individual to develop or cultivate a desired image is not without risk. Similar to critics of personal branding, some see IM as manipulative and inauthentic (Bolino et al., 2016). Goffman (1959) sees people as social actors but warns that there must be no discrepancy between front and back stage, or in other words, between the desired image projected to an audience and the reality. Discrepancies between the two can result in damage to an individual's reputation. In addition, the IM behaviours employed to create a particular desired image may equally create an undesired image. Attempts to ingratiate oneself with a target audience in order to be liked might be seen as sycophantic, whilst promoting oneself in order to be seen as competent may equally be seen as bragging (Bolino et al., 2016). Parhankangas & Ehrlich (2014) found that when entrepreneurs seek to gain legitimacy for themselves and their ventures, just enough self-promotion is required. Both excessively low and excessively high levels of promotion should be avoided leading to the "self-promoter's paradox" (Bolino et al., 2016. p.385). Sezer et al., (2015) also caution against the indirect tactic of "humblebragging", a unique IM behaviour whereby individuals might combine a supposed weakness with bragging, e.g. *"It's been 10 years but I still feel uncomfortable with being recognised. Just a bit shy still I suppose" (p.5)*. Combining self-promotion and supplication may seem an attractive solution to the "self-promoter's paradox" however Sezer et al. (2015) found it to be ineffective and inauthentic with effective responses to this paradox warranting further investigation.

While there is some consensus that utilising IM strategies effectively and authentically is a challenge regardless of gender, self-promotion behaviours may present an additional challenge for women. Bird & Brush (2002) highlight the gendered perspectives on the entrepreneurial process. Previous research has highlighted the differences between personality traits for men and women entrepreneurs, with women noted to be more risk adverse (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1990). Additionally, the literature highlights that women possess lower levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Kickul, et al., 2008), indicating that women have less belief that they are capable of performing entrepreneurial activity. Rudman and Phelan (2008) refer to gender stereotypes indicating women are expected to demonstrate a concern for others rather than themselves, presenting; modesty, submissiveness, warmth and selflessness. In contrast, men are expected to present more agentic behaviours communicating; self-confidence, assertiveness and self-reliance. These supposedly male leadership qualities are seen as less desirable and atypical for women, resulting in, a "women's impression-management dilemma" (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Women presenting these attributes are seen to be subverting prevailing gender stereotypes and consequently are viewed as less likeable or hireable (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Gurrieri and Cherrier (2013) similarly highlight the restrictions that the accepted norms of "feminine" can present when women construct their identities. Expectations of gender appear to put women at a disadvantage when it comes to using assertive IM behaviours in the workplace, unless, they are employing these behaviours on behalf of another party (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010). Hence, unsurprisingly perhaps, women in business settings are seen as more passive, using relatively low levels of IM behaviours (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Smith and Huntoon, (2014) found that women are also reluctant to promote themselves and break what they term the "modesty norm" for their gender. Women are more often inclined to let their work speak for itself and believe this to be enough to achieve success and recognition (Singh et al., 2002).

If however, the contribution of female entrepreneurs to the economy is to be realised then an exploration of female IM behaviours, particularly self-promotion, is long overdue. The literature suggests that for many entrepreneurial ventures the owner-manager comes to personify the marketing of their business with many engaging in personal marketing or branding in order to promote their business. However, self-promotion is identified as a challenge for women within the IM literature. This paper will therefore explore the EM activities undertaken by female entrepreneurs focusing on IM behaviours and tactics.

Methodology

Henry et al. (2013, p.9) found a prevalence of large-scale quantitative surveys relating to female entrepreneurial research despite, "repeated calls for research methods that acknowledge the complexities of the female entrepreneurial endeavour". Our aim was to explore female entrepreneurs' perceptions using a phenomenological approach to examine their experiences, acknowledging that there is more than one way to view an event (Willig, 2013). Within phenomenology there are differing approaches namely descriptive and *interpretive.* The descriptive view would enable us to analyse the participants' accounts of their experiences as entrepreneurs, whilst an interpretative approach seeks to develop a greater understanding of the quality and meaning of the experience, facilitating interpretation of their perceptions (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

To explore those complexities and highlight the, "more silent feminine personal end" (Bird & Brush, 2002, p.57) of female entrepreneurship, a qualitative research method utilising an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) was adopted (Smith, 2015). IPA provides the opportunity to bring together phenomenology and hermeneutics, enabling the data to be interpreted and acknowledging the idiographic approach to explore every single case study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p.8). The population of interest comprises female

entrepreneurs who work for themselves and are engaged in building a personal brand. Their businesses span a range of specialist service sectors and include entrepreneurs who variously described themselves as a doula, a story archaeologist, confidence coaches, elite performance coach, sugar addiction specialist, story party host, a business guide for introverts, coach for creative and a TEDx public speaking coach. Each of the businesses are based at home, are small-scale with few or no employees, with their marketing and personal branding efforts directed by the founding entrepreneur and their personal resources (Anwar & Daniel, 2016).

In order to enable an appreciation of the participants' experiences, the sample for IPA is typically small with publication samples of one to fifteen (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). It was considered that female entrepreneurs who had participated in an innovative public speaking course, designed to help them communicate a personal message, would provide an appropriate sample for this study. This research aims to explore the experiences of female entrepreneurs as they employ IM behaviours to communicate an authentic personal brand.

A purposive sampling strategy was initially employed (Saunders et al., 2016) via a known gatekeeper, the owner of the company that delivered the public speaking course, who held the database used to access the population and invite participants. Five participants were identified who matched the study's requirements and were willing to be interviewed. Subsequently, a snowballing approach (Saunders et al., 2016) was adopted whereby the initial participants were asked to identify others who would fit the requirements of this study. Adopting this strategy, a further ten participants were identified. We approached these potential participants by email to invite them to be part of the study. Six additional participants were recruited providing a total sample of 11 key informants. We are precluded from providing additional demographic or descriptive data about the participants to protect their anonymity.

Data collection

Data collection took the form of eleven semi-structured interviews which lasted approximately one hour and provided the in-depth data that this study sought to capture in order to explore IM behaviours of female entrepreneurs. This number was considered acceptable to allow for initial conclusions to be drawn from this exploratory study and small enough to allow for a substantial amount of qualitative data to be compared (Eisenhardt, 1989; Crick & Chaudhry, 2013). Some structure was provided by preparing an interview guide which enhanced reliability as it ensured that the same topic areas were covered with each of the research participants (Patton, 2002; Robson, 2011). However, the format of the semi-structured interview still allowed for a degree of spontaneity and enabled the interviewer to probe and explore responses (Bryman, 2012). The questions were drawn from the underpinning literature but kept purposely broad, for example, "What marketing activities do you undertake for your business?" and the order of topic areas was not fixed to facilitate the narrative flow of the interviewee (Hamilton, 2006). This encouraged participants to tell their story in their own way, consistent with a narrative interviewing approach (Bryman, 2012; Anwar & Daniel, 2016). Member checking was implemented by sending transcribed data back to participants to enhance accuracy and credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Harper & Cole, 2012).

Data analysis

The interview transcripts and field notes were then subjected to separate interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2015) by two researchers to increase reliability (Fielden & Hunt, 2011). Both looked for broader patterns, themes and concepts across the data set (Silverman, 2013) and commonalities in responses through manual coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Themes from the literature review suggested initial codes with additional themes coming from the challenges and issues discussed by the research

participants with the researchers playing an active part in constructing an interpretation of the data (Lee & Lings, 2011; Smith, 2015). The research team identified the following core themes: experimental; risk; authenticity and supplication.

Findings and Discussion

Consistent with previous research which indicated entrepreneurs personified their business (Resnick et al., 2016), these women saw little separation between themselves and their businesses (Shepherd, 2005). They rely extensively on their own backgrounds, skills, qualifications and experiences as a basis for their personal branding and their marketing (Resnick et al., 2016). For one woman, this meant developing her brand around being from Lapland, for another using her experiences of mental health to explain her insights into addiction. With no employees, our participants demonstrated IM behaviours to create an image both of themselves and their businesses with one impacting the other. As one interviewee says, *"I think my business is me, I think it's just an expression of me"* thus highlighting the challenges of business growth and scale, these issues were recognised by all the respondents. Another participant commented, *"I am the core of my business, and I can't leave this business and leave anything in it because I am it"*. As a consequence of this interdependence between the personal and the professional, all of the women recognised that they need to engage in self-promotion in order to market their business. This is consistent with previous literature which found that people may be even more motivated to engage in IM strategies when their behaviours are public and their image is seen as important in achieving their goals (Bolino et al., 2016). This was not however, without its challenges and risks. In what follows, the IM behaviours and challenges encountered by the respondents as they develop and communicate a personal brand will be outlined through the themes emerging from the data.

Experimental

Consistent with previous research, all the participants were taking an experimental approach to their online marketing activities (Anwar & Daniel, 2016). This was partly attributed to a lack of skill or "know-how" about how to effectively use these tools, with three participants reporting having websites and social media accounts that they never touch, *"my website designer …designed me this beautiful website and I haven't really developed it properly, and I don't quite know how to do that"*. However, this experimental approach is also attributed to a commitment to only do those things that *"feel right"* and are true to themselves. As one respondent reported, her website, *"doesn't quite suit"* her anymore and she spoke of needing, *"re-branding"* while another said she was tired of her marketing and spoke not of re-branding but of *"de-branding"*. Seven of the participants also discussed the importance of offline marketing activities particularly in relation to credibility. They cited public speaking, TED talks and networking, with writing a book seen as, *"an important thing to do if you want to be perceived as an expert"*. Additionally, two of the participants mentioned clothing as an important part of their personal brand with one saying, *"I like clothes a lot and I like a kooky style ….so if anything comes up about that people will send me a message, they see it as part of my brand"*.

Risk

All participants commented that self-promotion through any media means being, *"out there"* which they saw as posing a particular challenge for women, *"any time a woman puts her head above the parapet she's in danger of receiving negative, unpleasant... feedback"*. All participants recognised the risk of social media. Concerns about engaging in self-promotion and being, *"out-there"* were attributed to fears of rejection, a desire to be liked and a resistance to being seen as, *"pushy"*. Perfectionism is also blamed for procrastination

around marketing and personal branding activity. Eight commented on fears of judgement and rejection to the point that three knew of other female entrepreneurs who were thinking of giving up and going back to employment. All but one of the women spoke of the need for emotional resilience and a network, even a, *"health-team"* around them as potential coping strategies. They saw these issues to be of particular relevance to female entrepreneurs, with the negotiating of these challenges appearing to lead to an experimental and reflexive approach to their marketing communications. Nine of the women described typical IM behaviours including being, *"direct", "proactive", "action-oriented"* and *"single-minded"* as male, and reported finding these uncomfortable, while four of the respondents described these behaviours as, *"inappropriate"* for women.

In addition, these same women highlighted the gendered nature of entrepreneurs, *"being an entrepreneur, you just see that as a very male dominated role".* All reported not identifying themselves as entrepreneurs which six attributed to the size of their ventures, with five of the women expressing reluctance to even use the term. The majority also described much of the marketing training available to entrepreneurs as male-oriented and based on what they saw as a conventional way of doing business. Additionally, all of the participants mentioned networks as important sources of support.

Authenticity

How best to engage in self-promotion while remaining authentic was a key consideration for all. All but one of the participants identified a tension between wanting to appear professional, competent and credible, while at the same time being real, genuine and authentic for their audience. Managing the tension between the two emerges as a central theme. Seven of the participants reported that social media and in particular, blogging, allows female entrepreneurs to test and experiment with the line between competency and

authenticity in order to find what one respondent terms, *"appropriate balance"*. The majority reported that more authenticity in their posts results in bigger responses, noting this as, *"one of the really amazing things I learnt"*. The women are testing the boundaries of authenticity while still wanting to be seen as credible and attractive to clients. The participants were aware that too much authenticity might be seen as "over-sharing". As one female entrepreneur reported, *"If I share a little bit and the sky doesn't fall, then I can maybe share a little bit more"*.

Supplication

This study finds that all female entrepreneurs are experimenting with the IM behaviours of supplication – sharing their weaknesses and imperfections with their audiences- to mitigate the fears and risks they associate with self-promotion. This is also consistent with a desire to remain authentic. This tactic allows them to promote themselves and their business whilst at the same time avoiding being seen as pushy or unlikeable. This builds on the findings of Parhankangas & Ehrlich (2014), with respondents reporting the benefits of showing the *"messiness"* and *"imperfection"* of themselves and their businesses. They report a conviction that when they say, *"here's the crazy"*, it can be a key part of attracting their audience, building trust and rapport. Another sums this up by saying, *"if somebody is prepared to show the underbelly then they're just immediately more trustworthy"* Another reported, *"I need to be vulnerable, I think that's really important because …, it's part of your brand I guess, it makes it honest about the human condition"*.

Instead of wishing to control every element of their personal brand, they also indicated that they seek collaboration with their audiences akin to the improvised theatre approach described by Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) and suggested by Morris et al., (2002). Here brand owner and audience are engaged in co-creation. The collaborative nature of their

relationship with clients is highlighted by one of the women when she commented, *"we're all developing, and actually I don't want clients who just want the answers, they need something different".* Again, this mitigates the risk of self-promotion and the associated fears that the entrepreneur is pushing themselves forward as someone who has all the answers because of their abilities, accomplishments or experience.

However, all the women reported feelings of vulnerability associated with this tactic as they feel that they are taking risks when sharing their weaknesses and imperfections with their audiences. Although, an authentic approach appears to build trust and rapport with their audience, this study also finds that this tactic is associated with vulnerability and risks to reputation.

Conclusions

Four key themes emerge from the data to explain how female entrepreneurs engage in managing their brand. In particular, it can be concluded that the tactic of supplication, which is associated with sharing limitations and weaknesses, is being used by female entrepreneurs in combination with self-promotion to communicate an authentic personal brand. While the literature suggests that negative images are generally avoided (Gardner & Martinko, 1988), we contribute to the IM literature by suggesting that supplication, which risks creating a negative image, is being deliberately employed by female entrepreneurs to enhance authenticity.

Female entrepreneurs are not simply using self-promotion tools and behaviours to communicate competency, but are instead inviting their audience 'back stage' to share their imperfections and weaknesses (Goffman, 1959). In contrast to Sezer et al., (2015) who found self-promotion combined with supplication to be inauthentic, our findings suggest female

entrepreneurs are using this combination as a strategy to establish greater levels of trust and engagement with their audience.

The study also concludes that supplication is used by female entrepreneurs to inspire collaboration and co-creation with their audience. Rather than seeking to tightly control a personal brand and fear feedback from the audience, supplication effectively invites the audience back-stage. By adopting this strategy, these female entrepreneurs are engaging in what Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) described as improvised theatre. It is not necessary to have all the answers, instead supplication used in this way offers the opportunity to build rapport and collaborate with clients, thereby co-creating not just solutions but also the entrepreneur's personal brand.

This study found the sharing of personal fears and weaknesses to be commonplace among female entrepreneurs and even expected when communicating an authentic personal brand. Rather than simply replicating EM behaviours, which may be more reflective of 'male-norms' of entrepreneurship and uncomfortable or inappropriate for women, our findings support the conclusion that these women are developing their own set of EM behaviours to attract an audience and build a trusted business. Although how best to combine self-promotion and supplication is still a matter of individual experimentation. Morris et al., (2002) highlight greater collaboration and in particular, working with lead customers as a means to share risk. While the findings suggest that female entrepreneurs are managing risk in this way, this study also highlights the additional risks inherent in adopting this strategy. Allowing your customers 'back-stage' raises concerns for female entrepreneurs about reputation and credibility in conjunction with fears of judgement and rejection, demonstrating their vulnerability. Self-promotion tools, in particular social media platforms, allow feedback to be freely given and this study indicates that female entrepreneurs who

develop and communicate an authentic personal brand are faced with an 'impression-management dilemma' (Rudman & Phelan, 2008) of their own. They are presented with the choice of either censoring themselves or having the courage to put themselves, *"out there"* and risk not being liked or harshly judged by their audience. Emotional resilience and a supportive network are indicated as important coping strategies.

Our research supports the notion that these female owner-managers are being innovative, managing the risks of self-promotion by putting what Goffman, (1959) saw as the hidden back stage, firmly front stage. They are using the IM behaviours of self-promotion together with supplication to communicate an authentic personal brand for themselves which is seen as a vital contribution to the marketing of an SME (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Franco et al., 2014; Merillees, 2007; Resnick et al., 2016) and is consistent with the creativity and intuition, driven by deeply felt convictions and passions, which characterise EM (Morris et al., 2002).

Implications

The study highlights a number of important implications for entrepreneurial practice and policy. In particular, the findings reveal the complex challenges faced by female entrepreneurs as they engage in self-promotion and IM to market their businesses. Using the four key themes of: experimental; risk; authenticity and supplication which emerge from the study, female entrepreneurs can audit their current IM behaviours to shape their entrepreneurial practice. Becoming aware of their IM behaviours could help them achieve a balance of EM activities which more effectively support greater authenticity and enhance trust and engagement with their audiences.

However, providing more targeted support for female entrepreneurs would be useful in helping them manage the challenges they face in achieving the balance between self-

promotion and supplication. As such, the findings of this study should be of interest to the many business support agencies acting on behalf of public policy makers who are keen to support the growth of female-led businesses. Government-funded agencies are in a position to offer this support to female entrepreneurs at a lower cost than private sector providers, making this support more widely accessible to small-scale entrepreneurs. In particular, the study has highlighted the gendered norms associated with entrepreneurial practice.

Challenging women's existing perceptions of "an entrepreneur" and associated marketing behaviours are necessary first steps. Support agencies and business schools should seek to develop new styles of marketing education and training based on the valued qualities of authenticity, empathy and rapport as found in this study. These could provide an alternative to more conventional marketing training which these women currently see as dominated by male-norms. Within this training, recognition must be given to the perceived and felt risks of authentic communication and self-promotion for women. In particular, marketing training in social media and public speaking are recommended with networks and mentors seen as key to providing on-going support.

- For many female entrepreneurs, the notion of a personal and a professional life are increasingly blurred. Training which considers how to develop a holistic online media presence consistent with their personal brand is recommended. Whilst the use of social media is pervasive, there are still gaps in knowledge and experience. Understanding the differing styles of individual social media platforms including for example; Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, may help female entrepreneurs develop their tone-of-voice and online personality. In addition, they may gain greater confidence in developing an authentic brand online and finding their audience to build

an online brand community. In particular, the risks of being "*out there*" and possible backlash should be openly considered and discussed.

- Support for female entrepreneurs to develop their brand offline is also warranted. Public speaking has emerged as a surprising alternative to more traditional means of marketing, and focussed training in this area could provide the means to both develop confidence and hone a message or idea.

- Networks and mentors can be particularly useful in allowing women to share experience and knowledge. Additional opportunities and encouragement for female entrepreneurs to engage in these activities are needed. This could also be embedded into marketing education curricula with women encouraged to seek a marketing mentor that does not necessarily have to come from their own sector. In any case, care should be taken to provide safe and supportive relationships to help manage reported issues of confidence and vulnerability and to help develop on-going emotional resilience.

Limitations and future research

This paper has provided rich insights into how female entrepreneurs develop and communicate an authentic personal brand employing a combination of self-promotion and IM behaviours to market themselves and their businesses. Future studies could consider using a larger sample size to overcome the limitations of small sample sizes and examine the generalisability of the current findings. Additionally, a longitudinal study to investigate whether IM strategies for entrepreneurs change over time would be beneficial. Furthermore, research could be undertaken with the consumers and audiences of female entrepreneurs to see which behaviours, tactics, and combinations of these, they judge to be effective in establishing authenticity, credibility, trust and rapport.

The combination of IM tactics and behaviours used by entrepreneurs from different market sectors and different countries is also warranted to identify the transferability of these findings. A cross- cultural study would provide rich insights into the dynamic of culture when developing a personal brand. For example, research undertaken in male dominated cultures such as the Middle East, would provide insight into how female entrepreneurs manage their personal brand and utilise IM behaviours to market their business in a patriarchal society.

4 Paper 2: How women in the UAE enact entrepreneurial identities to build legitimacy

4.1 Foreword

Recent work from Nadin et al., (2020, p.569) highlighted the emergence of an increasingly popular media discourse which portrays women as "heroines of enterprise". Entrepreneurship is being presented as a route to greater equality with men, offering opportunities for emancipation and an an egalitarian 'space' away from sexist corporate environments. However, as Paper 1 highlighted, some women still perceive the identity of "entrepreneur" as male (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018), with much of the prevailing literature considering entrepreneurship a masculine domain (Henry et al., 2015; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Nadin et al., 2020). This renders women "other" and can make the process of securing legitimacy for female entrepreneurial activity far from gender neutral (Swail & Marlow, 2018).

Paper 1 identifies some of the challenges female entrepreneurs experience as they undertake identity work to promote themselves and their businesses within the UK. Even within the context of the UK, where equality is apparently valued, the gendered nature of society and of entrepreneurialism itself, are still experienced as risks which women seek to manage through IM behaviours. However, the challenges for women seeking legitimacy for themselves and their entrepreneurial activity within strongly patriarchal societies, may be even greater. Paper two therefore, responds to a call for greater emphasis on both gender and context in entrepreneurial research (Shirokova et al., 2018; Stead, 2017; Welter, 2011). It explores how the growing number of female entrepreneurs in United Arab Emirates (UAE) are undertaking identity work to secure legitimacy for themselves and their business ventures, within a highly-gendered society, typical of an Arab culture and a Muslim country.

Changes in the Arab Middle East suggest there has been some change in the position of women within these societies. In the UAE, as part of a wider commitment to grow entrepreneurialism, a range of initiatives are being implemented to support women to engage in entrepreneurial activity (El-Sokari et al., 2020). Yet, despite these positive steps, many informal restrictions still limit the economic activity of women (Hattab, 2012; Hunt & Ortiz-Hunt, 2018; Tlaiss, 2015a). These have a profound influence on female career choices (Goby & Erogul, 2011; Howe-Walsh et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2013) and make female employment outside the home still something of a "modern concept" (Itani et al., 2011, p.412). Emirati women working away from the family are seen to be challenging social expectations, which may invoke unfavourable attitudes towards them and their work (Zeidan & Bahrami, 2011). Female entrepreneurs may even find that family support, networks and finance are withdrawn from them (Tlaiss, 2015b), making female entrepreneurialism a risky business for many women. Therefore, this paper responds to the call for more consideration of the entrepreneurial activity of women in the Middle East (Bastian et al., 2018; Tlaiss, 2015a). It develops our understanding of how women are enacting an entrepreneurial identity through the media to promote themselves, secure legitimacy for their business ventures and increase the public role of women.

In line with the constructivist ontology and interpretative epistemology previously outlined, media interviews with 25 female entrepreneurs in the online version of a leading regional magazine, were used as discursive resource to further our knowledge of how women are developing an entrepreneurial identity in the UAE. Specifically, netnography (Kozinets, 2019) was employed as an innovative method to analyse how female entrepreneurship is being constructed and enacted through the media. Kozinets's (1998; 2002; 2019) compendium of netnographic studies highlight the value of this qualitative research methodology which adapts traditional ethnographic techniques and applies them to the study

of cultures and communities in the 'online world'. This methodological approach makes a contribution to the field by responding to a call for more imaginative in-depth qualitative methodologies in exploring female entrepreneurship (Henry et al., 2016).

Drawing on both identity and institutional theory, the findings of this study also contribute to the female entrepreneurial literature, by highlighting how women seek legitimacy within an institutional setting by constructing and enacting an entrepreneurial identity. The results show that women substantiate claims of who they are by highlighting *micro identities*, *personal and external sources of evidence,* and demonstrating their engagement with *institutional pluralism*, by presenting their adherence to potentially conflicting institutional logics. By exploring entrepreneurial identity construction within a strongly-gendered institutional setting, this paper provides both a gendered and contextual view to add theoretical depth to contemporary conceptualisations of female entrepreneurial legitimacy. Despite a tendency in the entrepreneurial literature to view female entrepreneurship as somehow inferior when compared to male business activity (Foss et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2016; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Leitch et al., 2018), the findings of this study indicate that female entrepreneurs in the UAE are simply "doing" entrepreneurship differently.

Rather than being passive, women are actively constructing and enacting an entrepreneurial identity through the media to negotiate a greater public role for themselves, and other women in the UAE. The acceptance and dissemination of a female entrepreneurial identity through the media, suggests that this challenge to existing institutional arrangements, is being afforded some legitimacy (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020; Pollock & Rindova, 2003). These findings usefully add to knowledge of how entrepreneurship may give women increased agency and disrupt existing institutional arrangements, in a culture in which women

face a number of societal constraints (Elliott & Orser, 2018; Orser & Elliott, 2015,; Erogul et al., 2019; Hattab, 2012; Tlaiss, 2013).

4.2 **Published paper**

How women in the UAE enact entrepreneurial identities to build legitimacy

Helen Thompson-Whiteside
Dr Sarah Turnbull
Judith Fletcher-Brown

Abstract

This article examines *how* women construct an entrepreneurial identity as a means to secure legitimacy for their entrepreneurial activity. Using a netnographic analysis of media interviews with women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), we identify how women construct an entrepreneurial identity. Findings indicate that women highlight micro aspects of their identity, provide both personal and external sources of evidence to substantiate their claims, and adhere to potentially conflicting institutional logics. The findings contribute to knowledge of how entrepreneurship is legitimised and can disrupt institutional arrangements which constrain women. This article provides both a gendered and novel contextual view, adding theoretical depth to contemporary conceptualisations of entrepreneurial legitimacy.

How women in the UAE enact entrepreneurial identities to build legitimacy

The challenge for any entrepreneur in setting up their nascent venture is to overcome the, "liability of newness" (Stinchcombe, 1965, p. 148) and secure legitimacy for themselves and their business activity (Navis & Glynn, 2011; van Werven et al., 2015). Legitimacy is considered to be, 'a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs, and definitions' (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Once secured, it can attract material support and enhance the credibility, social approval, and desirability of a business and its owner (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). While prior research has detailed some of the strategies used by entrepreneurs to legitimise their venture (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2017; Überbacher, 2014), the role of the entrepreneur's identity in securing legitimacy remains underexplored (Leitch & Harrison, 2016; Swail & Marlow, 2018). The process of developing this identity has also received little attention (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) with a tendency within the extant literature to focus on the male, rather than the female, experience of producing an entrepreneurial identity (Hamilton, 2013, 2014; Swail & Marlow, 2018), which has further limited our understanding.

This research seeks to address these gaps and respond to the call for articles in this Special Issue to engage with the rich diversity of female entrepreneurialism. We ask *how* female entrepreneurs produce an entrepreneurial identity to secure legitimacy. A more detailed examination of the female experience is particularly worthwhile as securing legitimacy may be far from gender neutral (Swail & Marlow, 2018). Instead, entrepreneurship is embedded within institutional biases (Ahl & Marlow, 2012) which constrain ideas of who can claim entrepreneurial legitimacy (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). *Entrepreneur*, and *entrepreneurship* are still considered to be male domains (Jennings &

Brush, 2013; Henry et al., 2016), to which women might seek belonging (Stead, 2017).
Women will often encounter questions of credibility even before they begin (Swail &
Marlow, 2018), facing the "dual detriment" of being both new entrants to the field and female
(Swail and Marlow, 2018, p.461), leading to a tendency to view women's entrepreneurship as
a lesser form when compared to that of men (Foss et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2016).

To address our research question, we draw on aspects of institutional theory which are
related to the legitimatisation of new business ventures (Garud et al., 2014; Rutherford et al.,
2009), and identity theory as it relates to entrepreneurship (Leitch & Harrison, 2016; Swail &
Marlow, 2018). We undertake a netnographic study, a methodological approach related to
ethnography, in which data collection is achieved through observations of participants in
digital communication contexts (Kozinets, 1998). Specifically, we explore how women enact
an entrepreneurial identity through media interviews.

Exploring this research question enables us to make three key contributions to enrich
the female entrepreneurial literature. Firstly, we provide greater insight into how women
construct an entrepreneurial identity as a means to secure legitimacy. We identify how
women present a coherent identity by drawing on a number of micro-identities. This identity
then derives its legitimacy from sources of evidence taken from differing institutional settings
each with their own institutional logics. By highlighting women's engagement with
institutional pluralism, we add a new perspective to prevailing debates regarding the
relationship between entrepreneurial identity and legitimacy and add to the growing interest
in the processes of identity construction (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Secondly, the extant
literature, with some notable exceptions (Swail & Marlow, 2018), has not taken sufficient
account of either gender, or gender-in-context, with the underlying assumption that these are
neutral. Failing to acknowledge these, risks reproducing only partial understanding of the

processes of entrepreneurial legitimacy. By exploring entrepreneurial identity construction within a strongly-gendered institutional setting, we provide a gendered and contextual view which adds theoretical depth to contemporary conceptualisations of entrepreneurial legitimacy. Thirdly, we identify how women negotiate a greater role in the public space within strongly-gendered societies (Bastian et al., 2018) and highlight the role of the media in this process. We therefore usefully add to knowledge of how entrepreneurship may give women increased agency and disrupt existing institutional arrangements.

This article is now structured as follows. We provide a review of relevant literature on legitimacy and entrepreneurial identity to position our article and subsequently provide some detail of the context of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to inform our study. We outline our research methodology and provide discussion of our findings, highlight limitations and provide suggestions for future research. We conclude with a summary of our contributions and provide managerial implications.

Legitimacy and entrepreneurial identity

Scholars have highlighted how nascent business ventures must overcome their lack of history or track record (Stinchcombe, 1965; Navis & Glynn, 2011) to establish legitimacy and attract finance. Beyond material support, legitimacy encompasses ideas of credibility, social approval, and desirability (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). What is considered legitimate, within an institutional setting will stem from its accepted customs or prevailing logics (Converse, 1987; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Once established these prescribe appropriate behaviour (Greenwood et al., 2011; Harmon et al., 2015) and exert a form of social control (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). Legitimacy is therefore, a social construct, formed in relation to feedback or affirmation from a wider social group (Suchman, 1995), becoming, in effect, a social judgement (Fisher et al., 2017).

The extant literature portrays the challenge for the entrepreneur seeking legitimacy, as paradoxical. While they may be required to fit in to the culture and norms which prevail within a given context, the logics of entrepreneurialism also require them to stand out (Navis & Glynn, 2011; Swail & Marlow, 2018). They must be different but not appear radical and establish an identity that is at once both unique and familiar (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). In short, they must frame the unknown in a believable way (Middleton, 2013) and, "engineer consent, using powers of persuasion and influence to overcome the scepticism and resistance of guardians of the status quo" (Dees & Starr, 1992, p. 96). Prior research has highlighted some of the strategies used by entrepreneurs to secure and manage this legitimacy. These include providing evidence of sales or finance (Orser et al., 2020; Tornikoski & Newbert, 2007), attaining certification (Rao, 2008), impression management (Nagy et al., 2016; Rutherford et al., 2009), storytelling (Garud et al., 2014; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), or building social capital by highlighting associations with key figures or networks (Alsos & Ljunggren, 2017). However, the identity of the entrepreneurial actor can also act as proxy for the nascent venture (Fisher et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2016; Überbacher, 2014), with the construction of an appropriate identity seen by some to be central to the process of securing legitimacy (Fisher et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2013; Swail & Marlow, 2018). Yet, the literature has had less to say about how identity is produced (Gioia et al., 2013a; Leitch & Harrison, 2016), with the male experience still dominant (Hamilton, 2014; Swail & Marlow, 2018). To address this and contribute to the debate, we focus on how the identities of entrepreneurs are enacted, in order to secure legitimacy for women's business activity.

Entrepreneurial identity is defined by Navis and Glynn (2011, p. 480) as, "the constellation of claims around the founders, organisation, and market opportunity of an entrepreneurial entity that gives meaning to questions of "who we are" and "what we do"". Such claims might be made by individuals but identity is produced in negotiation with others

(Leitch & Harrison, 2016; Stets & Burke, 2000), embedded in social conditions (Granovetter, 2000; Middleton, 2013), and created in dialogue between the internal self and the wider discourses encountered within the social context (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Lewis, 2015). In effect, identity is developed and redeveloped over time, through social and relational processes (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hsu & Hannan, 2005), with the favourable judgements of others serving to legitimise this identity (De Clerq & Voronov, 2009).

However, an entrepreneurial identity must be reconciled with existing social and role identities (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Navis & Glynn, 2011), including wife or mother. Women may seek to overcome any possible tensions between the identities ascribed to them by society and gender, and the desired identity of entrepreneur. Stets and Burke (2000) overcome possible antagonism between these by allowing for the concepts of group, role and person to be considered together. Rather than view self or social identity separately, Down (2006) also sees them as different aspects of one holistic identity, while Newbery et al. (2018) draw on the work of Shepherd and Haynie (2009) to argue for the existence of micro-identities which taken together comprise one "super-ordinate" identity. We similarly propose that individuals might draw on various micro-identities, emphasising different aspects of their persona to construct a legitimate entrepreneurial identity in response to their social conditions. Individuals might choose to highlight certain aspects of their identity whilst downplaying others, regulating the information they make available through impression management, (Nagy et al., 2012; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018, 2020; Uberbacher, 2014). In this way, as Anderson and Warren (2011, p.605) argue, "an entrepreneurial identity is sufficiently malleable to allow practising entrepreneurs to employ it to build their own individualised identity", yet the construction of its identity remains underexplored.

Prior literature also recognises the role of media attention in helping to secure legitimacy (Lamin & Zaheer, 2012; Vaara & Monin, 2010). In particular, scholars have highlighted the role of the media in reflecting both what is already considered legitimate, and in influencing what might be considered legitimate in the future (Deephouse, 1996; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Pollock & Rindova, 2003), but few studies have explored its role in legitimising entrepreneurial identity.

Summary

Although there is recognition that the identity of "entrepreneur" is embedded in social conditions (Granovetter, 2000; Middleton, 2013), with legitimacy considered a social judgement (Fisher et al., 2017), the social formation of the entrepreneurial self, is still an under-developed area of research (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Whilst we recognise the value of the extant literature which explores legitimacy for entrepreneurs, we argue that many of these studies presume gender and context to be neutral, with the influence of both still insufficiently recognised. Instead, we argue that these factors are important to a richer understanding of female entrepreneurship. We theorise that women will engage in specific tactics to overcome any tensions or gaps between the identities ascribed to them by society and gender, and the identity of entrepreneur which they seek to produce (Swail & Marlow, 2018). Therefore, understanding *how* female entrepreneurs negotiate institutional arrangements to construct an entrepreneurial identity as a means to secure legitimacy, will develop our theoretical understanding of how female entrepreneurs become legitimate entrepreneurial actors. We propose that a legitimate female entrepreneurial identity will emerge from the convergence of three theoretical concepts as shown in Figure 3.
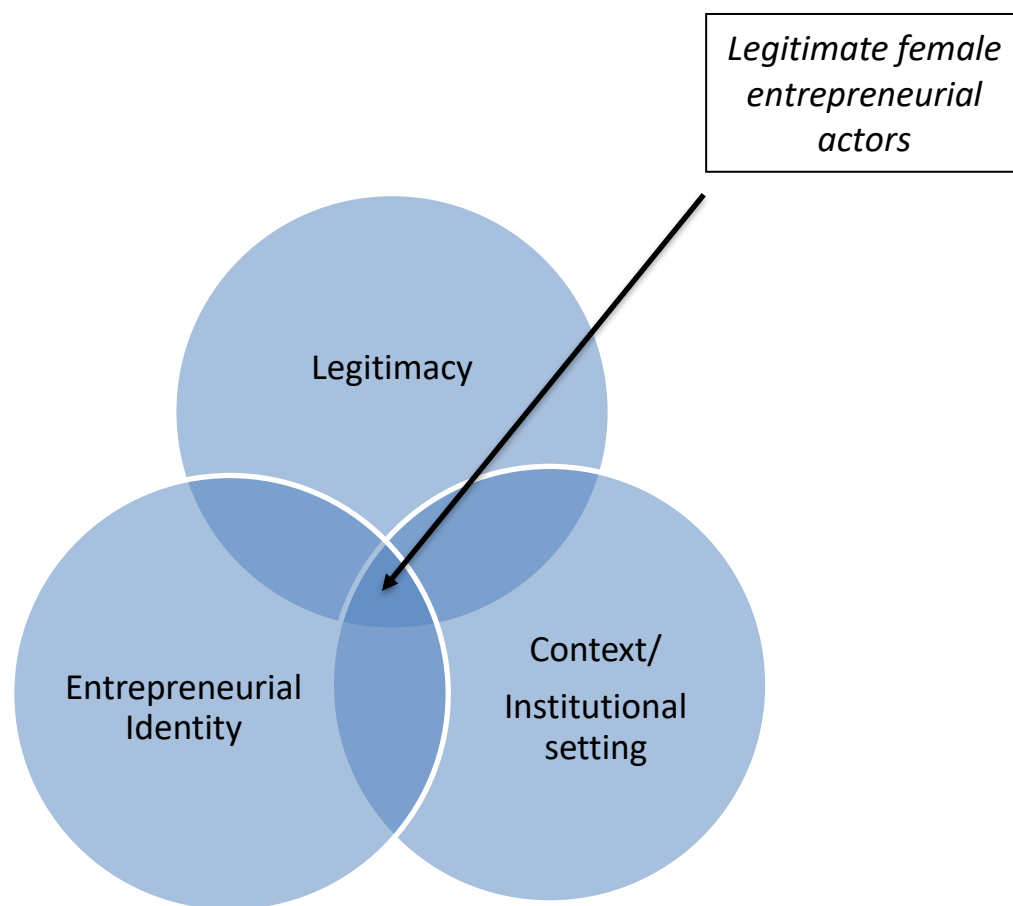
Figure 3*: The theoretical concepts which give rise to the emergence of a legitimate female entrepreneurial identity.*

Context

To explore our research question, we undertake exploratory research within the institutional setting of the UAE. This allows us to develop our theoretical understanding of the role of cultural forces in shaping the entrepreneurial process (Welter, 2011; Welter et al, 2017). It also responds to the call for greater emphasis on context in entrepreneurial research (Shirokova et al., 2018; Stead, 2017; Welter, 2011), particularly of the MENA region, where understanding of how women negotiate a greater public role remains underexplored (Bastian et al., 2018; Kiss et al., 2012; Tlaiss, 2015a). Within the UAE, the National Agenda 2021 sets ambitious goals around entrepreneurship, stating an intention for, "the UAE to be among the

best in the world in entrepreneurship" (Vision 2021, 2020, p. 1). With women considered less likely to engage in entrepreneurial activity (Erogul et al., 2019; El-Sokari et al., 2020), initiatives to encourage female entrepreneurship in the country have now been introduced. A businesswomen's council has been established across the seven Emirates that constitute the UAE, and new funding sources set up to support women's business ventures (Goby & Erogul, 2011). As a result, women's engagement in entrepreneurial activity has increased in recent years (Goby & Erogul, 2011; Itani et al., 2011; Tlaiss, 2015b), with the levels of women participating in entrepreneurial activities climbing from 0.2 to 1.4% between 2006 and 2016 (El-Sokari et al., 2020).

However, in considering how female entrepreneurs construct and enact identity within the institutional setting of the Arab Middle East, a paradox soon becomes clear. Women clearly face pluralistic institutional expectations. Despite government support for the growing number of female entrepreneurs in the Middle East (El-Sokari et al., 2020; Erogul et al., 2019) and increased freedom of movement (BBC, 2019; Kirdar, 2010), persistent institutional logics mean women still face many informal restrictions in the UAE which limit their entrepreneurial activity (Erogul et al., 2019; Hattab, 2012; Tlaiss, 2013, 2015b). Despite the legal freedom to travel, many Emirati women are not free to travel abroad for work unless accompanied by their husband or a male family member (Kirdar, 2010) with patriarchal values strongly influencing female career choices (Goby & Erogul, 2011; Williams et al., 2013). Women are still ascribed roles as mother and homemaker (Goby & Erogul, 2011; Tlaiss, 2013) making female employment outside the home still unusual (Itani et al., 2011). Consequently, women's independent economic activity challenges social expectations, and can invoke unfavourable attitudes towards them (Zeidan & Bahrami, 2011). Women's career decisions will often be the result of careful negotiations with family (Howe-Walsh et al., 2020). Fathers in particular appear to have a strong influence on female career choice and

Emirati women are often required to enter into a 'patriarchal bargain' to allow them to enter the workplace at all (Williams et al., 2013). They are also encouraged to work in organisations, usually within the public sector, that are seen to be respectable with a good reputation (Howe-Walsh et al., 2020). We therefore seek to understand *how* women construct an entrepreneurial identity to secure legitimacy, in a context where their professional identities are constrained by societal norms.

Methodology

Using an exploratory approach, the purpose of this study is to examine how women produce an entrepreneurial identity to secure legitimacy in the UAE. Women in the Middle East are noted to be particularly hard to access, often requiring access to gatekeepers (Howe-Walsh et al., 2020). To overcome this potential barrier, the researchers chose to use netnographic research methods (Fletcher-Brown et al., 2020; Kozinets, 1998) to gain a rich understanding of how women in the UAE are constructing and enacting an entrepreneurial identity. Online media interviews with female entrepreneurs in the UAE were examined as interview dialogues are seen to provide a rich understanding of a particular community (Hamman, 2007; Laverty, 2003). Interviews were analysed using a three-tiered coding system as suggested by Gioia et al. (2013b) to enable key concepts to be identified within the data. These concepts were further analysed to identify patterns or themes within the data and then a set of aggregated dimensions. These aggregated dimensions allowed the researchers to identify and describe commonalities which were shared by the women (Orser et al., 2019). Exploring the commonalities within the data in this qualitative manner allowed for new conceptualisations of female entrepreneurship to be identified.

Data and sample

We purposely selected online interviews with female entrepreneurs operating in the UAE from the Middle East's leading weekly business title published during 2018-2020. The journal provides a multi-platform news source and focuses on the English and Arabic speaking communities. Previous research on female entrepreneurship has established valuable contributions to theory using a purposive sample of participants (Orser et al., 2011). This approach allowed us to focus on participants who self-identified as female entrepreneurs active in the UAE (See Table 3). The transcripts of these interviews provided rich textual data with data saturation reached after analysis of 25 interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

Participant identification	Occupation	Expertise	Education	Location
1	Entrepreneur/ practitioner	Neurolinguistic Programming coach	Certified counsellor	Dubai
2	Entrepreneur	PR/Fashion	Digital Marketer	Middle East
3	Entrepreneur	Online discount shopping site	Finance	UAE
4	Entrepreneur/social enterprise	Creating cultural experiences for those in isolation	MA degree, UK.	UAE
5	Entrepreneur	Dream wedding dresses hire	Unknown	UAE
6	E-commerce Entrepreneur	Activities for children	BA, UK. Finance	UAE
7	E-commerce brand Entrepreneur	On line influencer	Unknown	UAE and USA

8	CEO and Co-Founder	Luxury Hair and beauty salons	Unknown	Dubai
9	CEO and Co-Founder	Learning design initiatives	MA degree, USA,	UAE
10	Entrepreneur/Founder	Personal styling, luxury occasion wear	Unknown	Dubai
11	Entrepreneur	Fashion, technology and marketing	Unknown	UAE
12	CEO /consultant	Corporate luxury brand strategies	Unknown	Middle East
13	Human resources consultant	Family manufacturing	Unknown	UAE
14	Entrepreneur	Online discount shopping site	Finance	Middle East
15	Entrepreneur/ inventor	Robotic technology	Unknown	UAE
16	Founder/entrepreneur	Online marketplace, baby and children's products	Unknown	Middle East
17	Entrepreneur and Co-Founder	Children's craft products	MBA, USA.	
18	Entrepreneur and Co-Founder	Children's craft products	MBA, UK. MA, France.	
19	Entrepreneur/event manager	Change maker for female entrepreneurs	Unknown	Middle East
20	Founder and CEO	Online provider stock images and digital content	IT	Middle East/USA
21	Founder and CEO	Online Video recipe site	Unknown	Middle East
22	Founder and joint CEO	Exclusive Fashion Boutique,	Unknown	Dubai

23	Founder and CEO	Price comparison website	MBA, UK	Middle East/India
24	Film Director	Free-lance film director	Unknown	UAE
25	Founder and CEO	Chocolate manufacturer and Luxury restaurants	Finance	Bahrain Middle East

Table 3*: Characteristics of participants*

Data analysis

The data was analysed using the Gioia method (Gioia et al, 2013b). This interpretive approach requires the researcher to track back and forth from the data to the literature to allow for 'sensemaking' of the phenomenon (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Following Gioia et al. (2013b), a three stage process was used to examine the data which identifies: 1st- order concepts, 2nd-order themes; and 3rd- order aggregate dimensions. Rather than be restricted by *a priori* constructs, the researchers used this style of thematic analysis to explore how female entrepreneurs construct an entrepreneurial identity as a means to secure legitimacy.

To begin with, the researchers read and re-read the interviews, immersing themselves in the data and making a list of 1st order concepts. This allowed the key terms and codes to emerge from the female entrepreneurs' own words, without any attempt to organise concepts into broader categories. During the next stage, all the researchers met to discuss similarities and differences between the 1st-order concepts. Any disagreements were discussed between members of the research team until agreement was reached. In line with Gioia et al. (2013b), we concentrated on reviewing new concepts that have not been explored previously in the literature, enabling us to highlight new theoretical viewpoints about identity work being undertaken by these entrepreneurs. We identified forty-four 1st-order concepts from the data which highlighted the sources of evidence the female entrepreneurs draw upon when

constructing their identity in the media. At this stage it was very clear that female entrepreneurs drew upon both personal and external sources of legitimacy. Therefore, the researchers separated the sources into personal and external to allow for further data reduction.

Following this separation of sources, the data relating to both personal and external sources was reduced again into 2nd-order themes. These themes represented a higher order of data reduction and resulted in the creation of nine themes for personal sources and six themes for external sources. Each of these themes were discussed among the research team and following agreement on each theme, the data was summarised into seven final 3rd- order aggregate dimensions. For *Personal Sources*, there were three final aggregate dimensions*; Personal narratives, Personal accomplishments* and *Personal characteristics. F*or *External Sources,* there were four aggregate dimensions; *External endorsement, External funding, External support* and *External impact.* The results of the analysis were presented in two tables (Table 4 and Table 5) and were discussed with all members of the research team to confirm agreement of the final aggregated dimensions. The results of the data analysis are discussed in the Findings section presented below.

Findings

The data was examined to explore how female entrepreneurs are constructing and enacting entrepreneurial identity. In particular, we questioned what sources the women draw upon in their interviews to construct their identity and seek legitimacy. Tables 4 and 5 present an inventory of responses. While some of the sources are consistent with the resources reported in the literature, such as stories and personal characteristics, we are able to identify how a combination of specific factors are highlighted by the female entrepreneurs in their efforts to construct an entrepreneurial identity.

Women have overcome poverty		
Women have overcome stigma to build success	Personal Challenges	
Many of the women entrepreneurs draw strength from crucible experiences		
The women explain how they overcome cultural restrictions to succeed		
Interviews reveal how women want to emphasise their past accomplishments within the arts	Cultural Pursuits	*Personal narratives*
Women include anecdotes to showcase how they have travelled regularly in the west for business		
Interviews with the women draw on their personal international travel and experiences		
Women have worked for top financial institutions	Personal Accreditation	
Women draw on prior international career experience		
Most of the women speak several languages fluently including English for business		
Female entrepreneurs are keen to discuss their western education		
Women have achieved higher level Masters Degrees		
Interviews frequently include women's achievement of an International MBA		
Technical ability is revealed through their digital marketing skills	Business and Technical Acumen	*Personal accomplishments*
Women have digital analytical skills and competency with different platforms		
Women have e-commerce expertise	Visionary	
Women want to be viewed as international entrepreneurs and inspirational to others		
They are willing to be creative and plan for future expansion of their business	Hard working	
Women want to be seen to be able to scale ventures and show resilience to challenges		
Women want to be appreciated as hard-working and equal to others in their business sector		
Women operate as entrepreneurs with more than one interest		
Respect of others is crucial for female entrepreneurs	Passion	
Passion for their business was demonstrated		*Personal characteristics*
Women display an appetite to succeed and grow their own skills as their business develops		
The conversations with the women show they are able to finance using bootstrapping	Self-sufficient	
Conviction to succeed in their chosen business sector	Conviction	

Table 4: *Results of thematic analysis*

1st-order concepts	2nd-order themes	Aggregate dimensions External Sources
Women talk about their success and winning national business awards Many women draw on their international recognition Women showcase their international celebrity connections during the conversation International government department support of their business is noted	National and international endorsement	*External endorsement*
Women publically discuss their financing Female entrepreneurs revealed how they financed their business activity using investors from UAE and Europe Many women finance using family and friends investment Women get financing from their husbands	National and internal finance	*External funding*
Women want to show they have support from their family Women were keen to espouse the support received from friends Conversations revealed how male family members gave their full support to the women	Support from family and friends	*External support*
Women want to impact wider society with their business Women want to break down cultural stereotypes and misconceptions Offering training to others to encourage development is important for women	Impact on wider society	*External impact*
All women want to be seen as employers, enhancing the careers of others.	Developing others	
Women want to be seen as changing expectations of women in business Women reference their encouragement of young aspiring entrepreneurs	Role Models	

Table 5: *Results of thematic analysis*

Personal Narratives

Stories were commonly used within the interviews. Some of the women used the interview to share how they had overcome personal adversity in their lives. These personal narratives often contained a 'crucible experience' which was used to provide a rationale for starting the entrepreneurial adventure. However, they also provide a compelling 'backstory' to the entrepreneur, and give insight into their character.

> *"I read about the famous path in Spain, Camino de Santiago, in a Paulo Coelho book, and one day I decided to hike it. I did the hike for seven days and then did another in Austria – by myself – that was very hard, I hiked in the forest alone for the first time, and then I did Switzerland too. It was very rich and I thought, why don't I bring women from our region to do something like this? So I started. I just wanted to try something new, because we don't have hiking [in our culture]. We're a desert country".*

Women often began interviews with personal stories about the hardship they had faced in their early lives and shared experiences of the stigmatisation and isolation they had encountered. Drawing on poverty and exclusion within the narratives helps to secure the role of heroine for the entrepreneur and provided a justification for the entrepreneurial activity, both emotionally and financially.

> *"I was born in the Gulf to a large family and parents of simple backgrounds and who, because of the war, were forced to move back to their home in the Levant empty-handed. My family and I tried hard to immerse ourselves into our new lives, the system, and engage with the community, but to little avail, as we were not welcomed. Our different accent and mannerisms and the way we conducted ourselves stood between us and the community. It was an unpleasant experience for all of us, and for*

a seven-year-old (me) it was difficult to understand the new dynamics and get a grasp over my family busily trying to secure food and manage education expenses…. I spent 15 years in cultural isolation…"

Cultural exclusion and challenges within society were evoked within the narratives, with women sharing how their entrepreneurial venture had enabled their personal development, as one woman says, *"I learnt how to face your fears and I overcame social restrictions"*. As part of their own personal story, women shared how they had overcome issues of confidence associated with being a female entrepreneur, *"I had to overcome many silent voices within me, telling me she can't do it and shouldn't go through with it"*, highlighting their own self-doubt about their prescribed role within society.

Using a personal narrative to build an identity not only for themselves but also for their business, was acknowledged by some women. In the case of a wedding dress retailer, the entrepreneur referred to the inclusion of the story on their website, *"I go into detail of my wedding story on the site and I think these small personal touches give our customers a trust in us"*.

Personal Accomplishments

The female entrepreneurs also used the interviews to showcase their accomplishments in the arts, education and business. Achievements outside their current entrepreneurial role were shared, providing a richer insight into the women's talents, *"I'm an artist so I used to paint"*. They also highlighted their educational achievements within the interview, particularly Masters Degrees or MBAs. Of particular interest, was the emphasis most women placed on the international nature of their qualifications. They also shared details of credentials and work experience, often highlighting the prestige of the companies they had

worked for prior to starting their venture, *"At Deloitte I came across a number of businesses in the e-commerce space",* and

> *"I did a Bachelor's in Computer and then a Masters in Business, followed by a profession in the consultancy industry. I then became a regional senior manager with one of the international consultancy companies, before I resigned and started [name of business]."*

Women chose to showcase their experiences of international travel for both leisure and business purposes. This featured heavily within the interviews with some of the women highlighting how many different languages they spoke. Women also highlighted their technical and digital skills. While some of the businesses were technical in nature, women more generally wanted to showcase their technical ability and referred frequently to their technical and analytical competence within the interviews. Digital marketing skills were just one type of competency communicated in the interviews.

> *"We additionally promote these deals through various online marketing techniques-like Search Engine Optimization (SEO), email marketing, social media and other streams to drive sales for our partners."*

Personal Characteristics

There were a number of personal characteristics which female entrepreneurs appeared keen to reveal in the interviews. It was clear that most women wanted to give the impression that they were hard-working, "*persistence is key for us*" and passionate about their business. The passion for their business was demonstrated in the interviews with declarations such as, "*I am doing what I love*". The combination of hard-work and passion for what they did was a central theme throughout many of the interviews.

"As with all things, a little luck and a lot of hard work went a long way for me. I hit a few roadblocks with my job and I had always felt I was yet to find my calling. In the process of reflecting on my core interests and passions."

A desire to communicate their dedication to the business, as well as revealing involvement in other business ventures was clearly discerned in the interviews. Women depict themselves as hard-working and passionate business owners. As one women highlights, this is clearly linked to a desire to earn respect,

"If you are passionate and are prepared to work incredibly hard, then that earns the respect of everyone you interact with; be it a potential business investor or your colleagues and peers."

The interviews were also used to communicate their vision and in many cases, a desire to achieve international business success, "*we aim to create a global presence for the site in the next 5 years, with the attention of working women*", with another woman sharing, "*we are also in discussions with community integration departments in Germany and Canada*". Many of the women not only provided a vision of their business venture, but also used the interview to showcase their conviction that the business would be successful.

Women illustrated their self-sufficiency, with some sharing how they financed their business through bootstrapping. This also appears to be consistent with their desire to gain respect as a legitimate female entrepreneur. While others had initially gained funding for the venture from family or friends, they were clear that the funds had been secured on merit.

"I approached my father to be an investor. He went through my plan and my feasibility study, which impressed him enough to decide to invest. But all the other branches and businesses that came afterwards were self-funded."

In summary, women present themselves as independent business women who had achieved success in their own right. Women showed they had a vision of the business and the conviction that they would be able to realise their goals through hard-work.

External Endorsement

Analysis of the interviews also showed that the women chose to highlight the endorsement they had received from external organisations and bodies. This included both national and international accolades that had been awarded to the entrepreneurs.

> *"We won the first prize at the Pitch Rising Pitch finale hosted by Mompreneurs Worldwide in December 2018 and reached the top three at the pitch competition hosted by Step Conference 2019, which had over 2,000 startups apply from the region."*

Endorsement from celebrities was highlighted, illustrating the entrepreneurs' associations with both industry and global celebrities.

> *"We were also the first to introduce master classes to the region, starting with Makeup by Mario in 2014, followed by the Master Class of Hair and Makeup with Khloe Kardashian, and Fouz Al Fahed as models for hair and makeup. The celebrity hairstylist and make-up artists for this class were again well-known celebrities. We also organised a master class with Olivia Culpo and this year we had the biggest master class in the region: Makeup by Mario with Kim Kardashian."*

External Funding

Although many were proud to have self-financed their business ventures, some women also shared how they had received funding from national and international investors, *"we've been incredibly fortunate to raise substantial sums from both here and Europe"*.

Funding was openly discussed by the women in the interviews as a means to communicate wider endorsement of both them, and their business ventures.

External Support

The women highlighted the support they had received from their families and friends. In particular, many women mentioned the support given by male members of their family, such as fathers or husbands, highlighting the significance of male endorsement in this highly patriarchal society. Both governmental support and the support of friends was also referred to within the interviews providing further evidence of how important it is for these women to be legitimised by the nation and their community.

> *"We have now been selected by Dubai Chamber of Commerce as one of the three startups that will be showcased under their education pillar to schools and universities in the city."*

External Impact

Additionally, the interviews revealed the apparent importance for these women to be seen as having an impact on the wider society. This external impact was evidenced in a number of ways. In some cases, the women communicated how they wanted to be seen as role models for other entrepreneurs.

> *"I'm going on the show determined to make a positive impact and to encourage other young, aspiring entrepreneurs to create something meaningful that positively impacts the future of humanity."*

The women also shared their desire to help their industry sector within the country by providing training for less experienced employees, "*I opened [name of academy] specifically to train not only our employees but also employees from other salons*". The interviews positioned the women as aspiring to impact society more broadly, "*our objective is to replace*

cultural misconceptions with empathy and understanding". By highlighting their goals to address cultural stereotypes and change expectations of women in business, these female entrepreneurs sought to create an impression of their businesses as having a higher purpose, and suggested they were driven by more than just financial rewards.

Discussion

Our findings highlight the dedicated identity work female entrepreneurs in the UAE undertake to secure and manage legitimacy for themselves and their business ventures. Although this identity makes a variety of claims, it appears to answer more of the questions about "who" the entrepreneur is, rather than answer questions about "what" they do (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Women build an entrepreneurial identity from a range of micro-identities including artist, student, business woman, daughter, mentor, visionary and public figure by drawing on differing parts, or "micro" aspects of women's identities. We therefore find evidence of how a coherent identity can be constructed which integrates person, role and social identities (Newbury et al., 2018; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2000), Women select personal narratives and characteristics and regulate the information they share in order to manage the impression they make (Nagy et al., 2012; Rutherford et al., 2009) as they seek legitimacy. We therefore, find further evidence of entrepreneurial identity acting as a proxy for the nascent venture (Fisher et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2016; Überbacher, 2014). However, in a strongly-patriarchal setting, questions of "who" women are, and can be, must be negotiated with a range of powerful actors.

We highlight the process by which women produce this identity to appear legitimate to an external audience. We find that women claim legitimacy for their entrepreneurial identity by drawing on those personal and external sources of evidence which are valued within differing institutional settings. By sharing details of their finances, their connections

and the recognition they have received, they appear to draw on the institutional logics of their immediate setting to demonstrate support from both government and family and claim socio-political legitimation (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994). We therefore find evidence of the social formation of an entrepreneurial identity which has been underexplored (Leitch & Harrison, 2016; Middleton, 2013). However, we also find that women seeking legitimacy as an entrepreneur, draw on logics from other institutional settings. They highlight their overseas work experience, their engagement with the private sector, their higher education and the international scope of their business. Such evidence appears to indicate their adherence to what might be described as Western ideals, such as personal development, global travel, international business experience and education.

An entrepreneurial identity constructed from such institutional pluralism, enables women and their business ventures to meet the threshold criteria for legitimacy, including the need to both fit in and stand out, to be both familiar and different (De Clerq & Voronov, 2009; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Middleton, 2013; Navis & Glynn, 2011; Swail & Marlow, 2018). This also provides evidence of how women are negotiating a bigger role in the public space than that which is usually afforded in the immediate institutional setting (Bastian et al., 2018). Female entrepreneurs appear to be deliberately regulating information to provide evidence that are not constrained by the gender roles usually ascribed to women in this patriarchal setting. They also explicitly claim to be having an impact on this public space and share their desire to inspire other women to similarly occupy and expand this space. We therefore offer Figure 4 as a more nuanced revision of our initial conceptual model. (See Figure 4 below) as a conceptualisation of how legitimate female entrepreneurial identities are enacted).

Our findings also suggest an entrepreneurial identity is being produced by women through media dialogue and therefore highlight the role of the media in conferring legitimacy on this identity. While prior literature has brought this to our attention (Pollock & Rindova, 2003), we highlight its role in legitimating female claims on an entrepreneurial identity. Such media dialogue also reflects the iterative process of identity construction and supports previous notions that identities are living entities (Goia et al., 2013a).
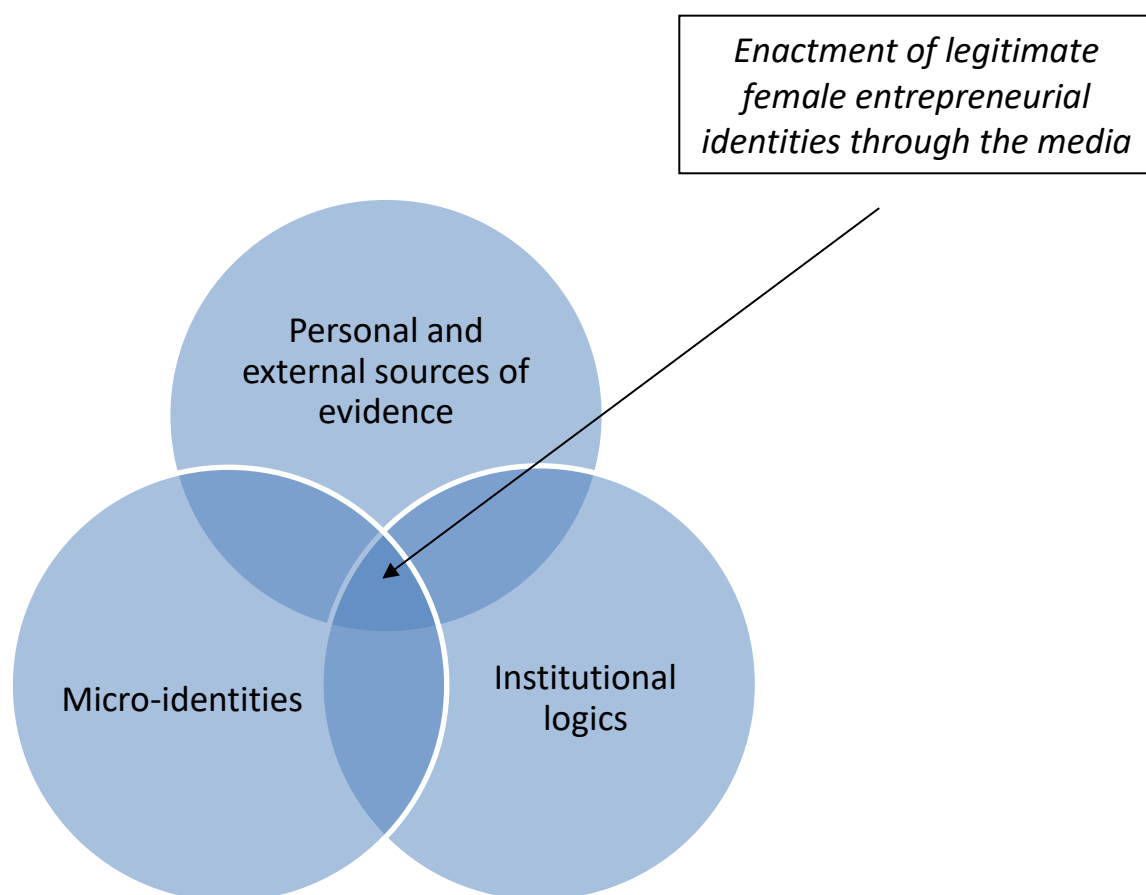

Figure 4: *The enactment of legitimate female entrepreneurial identities through the media*

Limitations and future research

While our study has made a valuable contribution to knowledge of female entrepreneur identity, we acknowledge the limitations of this study and the scope for future investigations to advance identity research. As previously acknowledged, this research article is interpretive in nature which limits its generalisability. We have identified how women

entrepreneurs are challenging gendered expectations and disrupting existing institutional logics in the UAE. Future research might adopt institutional theory to explore how identity is being used to legitimate female entrepreneurialism and disrupt institutional logics in other settings. We particularly encourage further investigation of the construction of female entrepreneurial identity in other patriarchal societies to develop a richer understanding of how context influences this process. Additionally, future research might explore whether the identity dimensions identified in this study, similarly apply in contexts where women have greater autonomy. Researchers might also observe a fuller range of the on and offline marketing strategies and practices female entrepreneurs adopt, to negotiate a greater role in the public space, including, blogs, podcasts and public speaking, and the pursuit of accreditations and industry awards. It would be valuable to gain more perspectives of female entrepreneurship by examining attitudes towards its legitimacy from a wider set of stakeholders. We believe that research that takes these ideas forward is important, as the field still lacks a full understanding of when, why, and how female entrepreneurs construct and enact identity to secure legitimacy.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore *how* women produce an entrepreneurial identity to secure legitimacy within the highly-gendered culture of the Middle East. Through a netnographic study, we find that these identities are constructed and legitimated through the careful curation and presentation of micro aspects of identity, personal and external sources of evidence, and adherence to the institutional logics of differing institutional settings. Such institutional pluralism enables female entrepreneurs to claim legitimacy by appearing familiar, fitting in within their own institutional setting, and acknowledging the support and endorsement of family and government. Yet, also appearing different, by providing evidence

of their engagement with Western ideals to demonstrate that they are also unconstrained by their institutional setting.

Our study makes three key contributions to enrich the female entrepreneurial literature. Firstly, we highlight how women construct an entrepreneurial identity as a means to secure legitimacy. We identify how women present a coherent entrepreneurial identity which draws on a range of evidence from to claim legitimacy. Such evidence includes both personal and external sources of evidence which borrow from differing institutional settings. By highlighting the role of institutional pluralism, we add to the growing interest in the processes of identity construction.

Secondly, by exploring entrepreneurial identity construction within a strongly-gendered institutional setting, we provide a gendered and novel contextual view to add theoretical depth to contemporary conceptualisations of entrepreneurial legitimacy.

Thirdly, we identify how women negotiate a greater role for themselves in the public space. We identify how female entrepreneurialism in the UAE is legitimised by the media, which also helps to secure socio-political legitimation for female entrepreneurial activity within a highly-gendered society; a process which has previously been seen as problematic for women. Therefore, we add to knowledge of how entrepreneurship can give women increased agency and disrupt existing institutional arrangements which might constrain women.

This study has a number of important implications for policy makers and regional development bodies. The UAE has set ambitious targets for entrepreneurship with a stated intention to increase numbers of female entrepreneurs by 2021. However, women in these societies still face a number of informal constraints on their independent economic activity, making the legitimation of their entrepreneurial activity an important priority. While the UAE

Government has established generous funding for female start-ups, it is important that further support is given to increase its social acceptance. This study provides evidence of how female entrepreneurs use the media to create legitimacy for themselves. Policy makers might now consider how the media may be harnessed to increase public awareness of the value and contribution female entrepreneurs are making to society. Although our findings suggest that international business education is valued, domestic business education and entrepreneurial training might be further boosted. Colleges and universities might also offer female entrepreneurs media training to provide women with the skills to undertake media interviews. Additionally, female entrepreneurs may benefit from access to training in other forms of marketing communications such as public relations, social media and public speaking. Such interventions might allow women to take up a greater role in the public space and help shape public perceptions about what is legitimate for women.

5 Paper 3: Advertising: Should creative women be expected to 'Fake it?

5.1 Foreword

While papers 1 and 2 considered how female entrepreneurs are marketing themselves within two different country contexts, Paper 3 marks a shift of focus away from entrepreneurialism to consider how women are undertaking self-promotion within an organisational context. This shift in focus was prompted by the increasing visibility of gender issues within society (Rubery, 2019) and a pressing need to understand the role people and organisations in the marketing sector might be playing in what has been referred to as a new wave of sexism (Maclaran, 2015). Furthermore, it seems that despite a wide range of initiatives designed to address gender imbalance in public life, the lack of women, particularly in leadership positions, remains a pervasive problem for business scholars to address (Gloor et al., 2018).

A shift in focus was also prompted by the increasing popularity of female empowerment as a theme within marketing activity, particularly advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017; Drake, 2017). Such apparent enthusiasm for the empowerment of female consumers begged the question of whether the advertising industry was engaging in some impression management of its own, or similarly advocating for female empowerment and gender equality in the departments where the ads are made? A recent trend for *femvertising* (Champlin et al., 2019) might suggest that advertising is a sector in which gender equality is flourishing, but advertising, like finance (Boateng, 2018), politics (Fawcett Society, 2018) and STEM (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016), is still dominated by men.

Gender imbalance is problematic for any industry, but is considered a particular problem for advertising which is credited with the power and responsibility to influence and reflect society (Shabbir et al., 2019). Yet, despite persistent calls for the industry to move towards more progressive values (Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, 2015), and improve its reputation for social

responsibility (Štumberger & Golob, 2016), women still account for only 14.6% of all creative directors worldwide (Grow & Deng, 2014), with 12% of female creatives now considering leaving the industry altogether over the next two years (Hanan, 2019).

Prior research has identified that advertising agencies are characterised by distinct gender dynamics (Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, 2015) with the creative department in particular, recognised as a discrete culture (Nixon & Crewe, 2004), dominated by male norms (Windels & Lee, 2012; Mensa & Grow, 2019). Characterised by masculine hedonism and homosociability (Gregory, 2009; Nixon & Crewe, 2004), the creative department is seen to have its own codes (Stuhlfaut, 2011) and collectively shared ideas (Alvesson, 1994; Mallia, 2009). Personality factors more commonly associated with men, such as toughness, competitiveness and a thick skin, are seen as important factors for success (Grow & Broyles, 2011), with active self-promotion considered necessary for progression to creative leadership (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Windels & Lee, 2012).

Therefore, to provide new insight into the persistent gender problem within advertising, this paper set out to explore how IM strategies and behaviours are being employed by women in creative roles. Twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted with female creative directors working in advertising agencies. A thematic analysis approach, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), was then undertaken.

The findings indicate that in contrast to prior research, women are far from passive. Female creative directors are responding to the gendered-context in which they work, employing a range of IM behaviours and tactics in a bid to meet the paradoxical demands of both *fitting in* and *standing out*. While Paper 1 found that employing IM strategies both effectively and authentically is a particular challenge for women (Thompson-Whiteside et al.,2018), women in this organisational context appear to experience similar tensions. However, driven by a desire to

fit in, women are engaging in inauthentic or 'faking' behaviours in order to gain acceptance. Yet, abiding by male codes of behaviour leads women to sense a misalignment between a projected self, and what they feel is their "true" self. This feels uncomfortable for women, maintains the status quo within creative departments, and can lead to women experiencing disillusionment, or even plotting their exit from the industry. Engaging in more authentic behaviours and expressing emotions similar to men however, may also provoke a negative response from the community of practice, bringing women into contact with double standards, generating backlash and criticism.

Therefore, this paper contributes to our understanding of how engagement in certain IM behaviours impacts upon the individual and addresses the gap identified by Bolino et al., (2016). The findings indicate that 'faking' IM behaviours in order to both *fit in* and *stand out* within the strongly-gendered environment of advertising, causes women to experience internal conflict and stress. Its findings also provide new insight into the gender problem in advertising. They indicate that the inauthentic behaviours women adopt to *fit in* to the existing male culture and practices, might be driving women to leave agencies, and crucially does little to bring about much-needed change in the industry.

5.2 **Published paper**

Advertising: Should creative women be expected to 'Fake it?'

Helen Thompson-Whiteside
Dr Sarah Turnbull
Dr Liza Howe-Walsh

Abstract

The gender imbalance in the advertising industry continues to give cause for concern. A lack of senior women hinders advertising's ability to reflect diversity in society, leading some to question whether the industry is now even fit for purpose. The paper explores the experiences of women working in advertising using the lens of Impression management (IM). The study draws upon twenty-five semi-structured interviews with female creative directors working in advertising agencies. We used thematic analysis to identify major themes and the IM strategies women deploy.

Contrary to previous literature which found that women engage in lower levels of IM behaviours, our findings suggest that women within creative departments are actively employing IM strategies and behaviours. However, our research also finds women are engaging in inauthentic IM strategies; 'faking' behaviours in order to both *fit in* and *stand out* within the strongly-gendered environment of advertising. These coping strategies are causing internal conflict and stress, driving some women to leave, or become disillusioned with the industry. We provide managerial implications to suggest how advertising agencies, clients and female creatives can work together to facilitate the retention and progression of more women within creative departments, and increase their influence over the ads that get made.

Keywords: Impression Management, Advertising industry, Women.

Contribution statement

This study extends our understanding of the persistent problems of gender imbalance within creative advertising departments. Our findings contribute to knowledge by identifying the inauthentic behaviours women employ which are doing little to affect much-needed change, or close the gender-gap. The findings of this study also contribute to our understanding of the internal impact on women when engaging in these behaviours. Additionally, we provide managerial implications for advertising agencies, their clients and female creatives; suggesting actions that could help address gender inequality in light of growing concerns about the reputation of the industry and its current practices.

Introduction

The lack of women in leadership positions remains a pervasive problem for business scholars to address (Gloor et al., 2018). Despite initiatives to tackle gender inequality, women still only account for 7% of board chairs and presidents, 6% of chief executives in the largest companies in the EU (Boffey, 2017) and less than 10% of executive roles in business in the UK (Fawcett Society, 2018). Many professional fields, including finance (Boateng, 2018), politics (Fawcett Society, 2018) and STEM (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016) are still dominated by men. However, the gender imbalance at the top of creative professions, such as advertising, presents an additional cause for concern as advertising is considered to have the power to influence society and shape cultural meaning (Alexander et al., 2011; Shabbir et al., 2018; Windels, 2016). Therefore, beyond moral arguments for equity, the dominance of men is having a profound influence on the culture of creative departments, the progression of women to the top of the creative career ladder, and ultimately the adverts that are made (Mallia & Windels, 2011; Mallia & Windels, 2018; Windels, 2016). This raises important questions about the composition of agencies and the messaging they produce, and even whether the advertising industry is now fit for purpose.

Despite the continued efforts of the advertising sector to legitimise its status and adopt professional practices (Nyilasy et al., 2012), recent research recognises advertising as one of the most ethically challenging aspects of marketing (Shabbir et al., 2018). The issue of harmful gender stereotypes (Advertising Standards Authority, 2018) and the objectification of women in advertising (Stein, 2017) are just two of the areas currently under scrutiny, with women feeling that advertising does not understand them (Coffee, 2014) or even reflect them (JWT Intelligence/ Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2017). The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (2017) highlights that despite some notable exceptions, including campaigns such as

#likeagirl or This Girl Can, little is changing in the everyday portrayal of women and not enough is being done to show more women in a range of diverse roles. Their research identifies that women are still more likely to be seen in domestic settings, rather than in sporting roles, or at work. The institute calls for marketers to be more progressive and inclusive in their representation of women. As Maclaran (2015) asserts, there is now a pressing need to understand the role both people and organisations in the marketing sector might be playing, in what is identified as a new wave of sexism (Walter, 2011). Women now influence 80-85% of purchase decisions (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009) and are responsible for 60% of social media sharing (3% Conference, 2019). However, decades after women first argued for their employment in the advertising industry, as effective advocates for female consumers (Tadajewski & Maclaran, 2013), they continue to be underrepresented in the creative departments where the ads are made.

Supporting the progression of more women to creative leadership roles is now an important and urgent step to take in ensuring gender diversity within advertising and addressing criticisms of current practice. Yet, if growing concerns about the output of the advertising industry are to be addressed, their numbers should not be simply increased; women must also play a bigger role in creative messaging (Mensa Torra & Grow, 2015).

Persistent calls for industry action and a range of initiatives have failed to address gender imbalance. Over 20 years ago, the marketing departments of organisations (Catterall et al., 1999), and indeed marketing itself (Desmond, 1997) were starting to become feminised; by embracing more female values. However, years later scholars agree that the advertising workplace continues to be challenging for women (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011; Windels & Lee, 2012), with hegemonic masculinity still largely in place (Klein, 2000; Gregory, 2009; Windels, 2016). In fact, advertising appears to be one of those

puzzling sectors outlined by Fischer (2015); a sector in which gender equality might be expected to flourish, yet little discernible progress is being made. Within advertising agencies worldwide, women still only account for 14.6% of all creative directors (Grow & Deng, 2014), with figures for BAME far worse at 7.4% in the UK (see O'Brien et al., 2016). Previous literature in this area has outlined both the structural and cultural issues which appear to put women at a disadvantage. This article considers the interplay between these macro factors and more micro factors, in particular the behaviours of the relatively few women who have become creative directors. We explore the behaviours of women within these wider institutional forces to provide new insight into the persistent problem of gender imbalance. Scott (2006) highlights the great contributions and indeed the power of what she calls 'corporate feminists' (p.13) such as Charlotte Beers at O&M, who under "imperfect conditions" (p.13) have furthered the cause of feminism from within the marketing workplace. In this study, we consider that despite the minority position of female creatives, or even perhaps because of it, those with resources and a sense of agency could still offer the advertising sector the "critical promise for change" (Grow & Deng, 2015, p. 7), making their behaviours of particular interest.

Previous literature has identified behaviours such as interpersonal communication and presentation skills as crucial for progression to leadership roles in advertising (Windels et al., 2013). Self-promotion is particularly recommended within the competitive environment of the creative department (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Windels & Lee, 2012) making Impression management (IM) a useful lens through which to examine this issue. IM is a process which considers individuals as social actors who are motivated to engage in a range of behaviours including self-promotion, to manage the impressions they convey to others (Bolino et al., 2016; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Schütz, 1998; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). Although the external impact of using IM within organisations has been widely explored (Bolino et al., 2016; Goffman, 1959;

Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Schütz, 1998; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981), there remains a gap in the literature around our understanding of the internal impact of employing IM strategies and behaviours .

To-date, the IM literature has identified that women are reluctant to promote themselves and break expectations of their gender (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Smith & Huntoon, 2014); are more passive, using relatively low levels of IM behaviours (Bolino et al., 2016); and resistant to playing the, "organisational game", preferring to let their work speak for itself (Singh et al., 2002, p. 77). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how IM strategies and behaviours are being employed by women in creative roles, addressing the gap in our understanding of how engaging in these behaviours impacts upon the individual.

This paper makes two key contributions. Firstly, it explores how IM strategies are being used by female creatives to survive, and thrive within this gender-bound environment. Secondly, it addresses the gap in our understanding of the internal, rather than simply the external, impact of IM strategies and behaviours identified by Bolino et al. (2016). Therefore, this paper contributes to our understanding of the effects of IM on not just the audience, but on the individual.

The findings also extend our understanding of how women might play a greater part in closing the gender-gap within creative departments; using IM behaviours to gain leverage from their minority position and increase the number of women progressing to the role of creative director. Managerial implications for advertising agencies, clients and female creatives, are offered to address the persistent issue of gender inequality in light of growing concerns over the current practices within creative departments.

Literature Review

Women in advertising

Many structural and cultural reasons are cited for the lack of women at the top of creative departments (Gregory, 2009; Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011; Windels & Lee, 2012). These include having children (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009), long hours and inflexible work arrangements (Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011), a lack of recognition from peers, exclusion from certain accounts and a tendency for senior creative men in post to hire in their own image (Broyles & Grow, 2008). Agencies are characterised by distinct gender dynamics (Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, 2015) with the creative department characterised by male norms (Windels & Lee, 2012), masculine hedonism and homosociability (Gregory, 2009; Nixon & Crewe, 2004). It is recognised as a discrete culture (Nixon & Crewe, 2004), distinguished by its own codes (Stuhlfaut, 2011) and collectively shared ideas (Alvesson, 1994; Mallia, 2009) within which, personality factors such as perseverance, toughness, competitiveness, and a thick skin are seen as important factors for success (Grow & Broyles, 2011). The net result of these factors is a gender-bound working environment in which few women advance or thrive, making female creative directors a rarity in a man's world; a world which may even be hostile to them (Grow & Deng, 2015, p. 21). Women in advertising, like many women in applied creative fields, are under-represented and therefore, form a minority within a male majority. Windels (2011) found these conditions to be detrimental to the creativity of those individuals in the minority, when compared to those who enjoy a majority position. It appears then, that a gendered creative environment might also be limiting women's contribution to the creative process itself. Many women feel defeated by the challenges they face as they seek advancement and greater influence, with many feeling that it is easier to leave the industry than to change it (Bronwin, 2018). Retaining women in creative departments is now an urgent

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necessity requiring fresh thinking and significant change in both agency cultures and practices (Magee, 2016).

Impression Management in organisations

The IM which takes place in organisations is usually referred to by researchers as the process by which employees attempt to control the impressions that others (the target) i.e. managers or co-workers, form of them (Bolino et al., 2016; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Schütz, 1998; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). It is attributed to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical view of social interactions whereby individuals are conceived of as social actors interested in generating positive external impressions (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Previous contributions have noted that individuals are more motivated to engage in IM strategies when their behaviours are public and their image is seen as important in achieving their goals (Bolino et al., 2016). In particular, Capezio et al., (2017) recognise that employees are not passive within organisations. They point to the extensive research which has developed our understanding of how employees may seek to positively influence their managers and directors throughout their career (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989; McFarland et al., 2005).

Although a range of self-presentation behaviours are discussed in the literature, there is a widely accepted distinction between assertive and defensive strategies (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Schütz, 1989). Assertive strategies might be initiated by the individual seeking to create a particular image or identity in the eyes of others. A recent review of the IM literature conducted by Bolino et al. (2016), notes an emphasis on the use of self-promotion and ingratiation behaviours. In contrast, defensive strategies might include behaviours such as excuses, justifications and apologies, employed if an undesirable image has been formed (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984), or to protect an image against perceived threats (Tetlock & Manstead, 1985).

These two strategies broadly correlate to both acquisitive/proactive styles of behaviour which are designed to seek social approval, and the protective/reactive/control-protective impression management strategies, which seek to avoid disapproval, and might include modest self-description, uncertain expression and reduced social interaction (Arkin, 1981; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schütz, 1998; Stanton et al., 2004). Further distinction is made between direct and indirect techniques. Direct techniques are employed to present information about an individual's traits, abilities and achievements (Cialdini, 1989), whilst indirect techniques might include promoting a favourable association with another individual or social grouping who are already highly regarded (Cialdini, 1989).

Some critics question the authenticity of IM, seeing it as manipulative or deceptive (Bolino et al., 2016); perceiving behaviours shaped to meet external expectations, as simply elevating image over substance (Lair et al., 2005), and risking inauthenticity (Shepherd, 2005). Whilst others argue that engaging in IM behaviours does not necessarily mean that employees are creating false impressions (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, Rosenfeld, 1997), but merely selecting their best attributes to communicate in any given situation.

Authenticity has become an increasingly popular topic in management literature, with researchers interested in its implications for employees and leaders. Scholars appear to broadly agree that authenticity relates to what is 'true' or 'real' but vary widely in their interpretation of the concept (see Lehman et al., (2019) for further discussion). However, in their review of the authenticity literature, Lehman et al. (2019) identity a strong research theme of *authenticity as consistency*, drawing on the relationship between what Goffman (1959) called the projected image or "front stage", and the "back stage" which is seen to represent the true self. This strand of the literature considers authenticity as clear alignment between the two (Cable et al., 2013; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010) as felt by the individual. Here individuals considered to be acting

authentically are acting in accordance with their, "own sense of self, emotions and values" (Gino et al., 2015, p.984) which is the interpretation of authenticity adopted by this study. Goffman (1959) warns against any discrepancy between front and back stage, fearing it might result in damage to an individual's reputation, with the risk they might be judged inauthentic by an external audience, yet he pays less attention to the impact on the individual.

Other researchers have addressed this gap, linking a feeling of misalignment between front and back stage, to inauthenticity and a range of negative outcomes for the individual. These include, lower task performance (Roberts, 2005); psychological distress, tension and stress (Hewlin, 2009); a decreased sense of well-being including stress and depression and reduced job satisfaction (Ibarra, 1999); and even feelings of impurity or immorality (Gino et al., 2010). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) similarly consider the experience for individuals who sense a discrepancy between what they really feel, and the image they feel compelled to convey in a social context, highlighting the potential problem of emotional dissonance. Whilst in contrast, other studies link authenticity, and the freedom to act in line with one's true self, with a range of positive outcomes for individuals. These include a greater sense of well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014); higher self-esteem (Heppner et al., 2008); high-quality relationships (Roberts, 2005) and a better sense of belonging (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Authenticity has also been identified as a central concern for female entrepreneurs when engaging in self-promotion (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018), making the question of authenticity in self-presentation of relevance to a study of women who are similarly seeking to succeed in a social context already shaped by male norms. Yet, despite these contributions to date, there is still more to be understood about the implications of IM and authenticity (Bolino et al., 2016); and little has been explored about the impact of inauthentic IM on the individual.

However, being both authentic and credible is considered challenging (Roberts, 2005). Leary and Kowalski (1990) argue that the process of image construction itself is influenced by five primary factors including desired/undesired identity images, the values held by the target, constraints of the role, and the current self and social image of the individual. In an attempt to fit in to an organisational context (Hewlin, 2003), or appear more credible (Ibarra, 1999), individuals may suppress the desire to be authentic and mask personality characteristics that are otherwise important to them. This creates what Hewlin (2003) terms, facades of conformity, which cause individuals tension and stress, making self-presentation through IM costly, in terms of personal resources (Vohs et al., 2005). However, individuals who are able to manage impressions of themselves which are both authentic and credible, will have a greater sense of well-being than those who sacrifice authenticity for the sake of credibility (Roberts, 2005).

While engaging in IM may have a personal cost, it is also not without risk. IM behaviours employed to create a particular desired image, can equally risk creating an undesired image (Goffman, 1959). Attempts to ingratiate oneself with a target audience in order to be liked, might also be seen as sycophantic; whilst promoting oneself in order to be seen as competent, may equally be seen as bragging (Bolino et al., 2016; Smith & Huntoon, 2014) giving rise to the "self-promoter's paradox" (Bolino et al., 2016., p.385). Parhankangas and Ehrlich (2014) similarly found that both excessively low and excessively high levels of self-promotion should be avoided. Capezio et al. (2017) also refer to the hard (assertive, usually self-promotion) and soft (ingratiation) tactics and behaviours used to upwardly influence managers, in particular Machiavellian leaders of the type often found in advertising. They find that compared to men, women are less likely to use hard or assertive tactics and behaviours when managing upwards and conclude that the gendered behaviours elicited by these Machiavellian leaders, are arguably disadvantaging women and limiting their career progress.

Utilising IM strategies effectively and authentically is also noted as particularly challenging for women (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). Women are seen as less self-promoting than men (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009) and more likely to engage in ingratiation than assertive behaviours (Capezio et al., 2017). Rudman and Phelan (2008) refer to prevailing gender stereotypes which indicate that women are expected to demonstrate a concern for others rather than themselves, presenting; modesty, submissiveness, warmth and selflessness. In contrast, men are expected to present more agentic behaviours communicating; self-confidence, assertiveness and self-reliance. Women presenting the more agentic attributes required for leadership are seen to be subverting prevailing gender stereotypes and consequently are viewed as less likeable or hireable (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Hence, expectations of gender appear to put women at a disadvantage when it comes to using assertive IM behaviours in the workplace, unless, they are employing these behaviours on behalf of another party (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010).

This study explores the IM strategies and associated behaviours employed by female creative directors working within the advertising industry. Guided by IM theory, the research examines the experiences and internal impact of their gendered work environments on women within advertising agencies.

Therefore, guided by IM theory, we ask:

RQ1 How are IM strategies being employed by females within the creative department?

RQ2 What is the internal impact of using the IM strategies employed by women in creative departments?

Methods

Data Collection

The researchers were interested in exploring the IM strategies deployed by the participants to try and understand why women continue to be underrepresented in creative departments. Accordingly, we adopted a narrative approach to allow our participants to express their views through interviews (Willig, 2013). Interviews lasted up to 90 minutes and were undertaken face-to-face, via Skype and telephone.

Spradley's (2016) guide for interviewing was used to explore an individual's experience of organisational culture from the participants or 'native' perspective. Such a technique has been used effectively in studies which have examined challenges in a range of contextual settings (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018; Howe-Walsh et al., 2018). The interviews explored each participant's perspectives on their use of IM within the advertising sector, allowing the participants to reflect upon their experience of working within creativity. Following Spradley (2016), we structured the interview around three types of questions to examine descriptive, structural and contrast aspects of the investigation:

- Descriptive questions: These were asked to help build rapport with the participants and to provide an understanding of the context of the women's work environment within the agency. Questions such as, 'How long have you worked as a Creative Director?'

- Structural questions: These allowed the researchers to explore the nature of the working environment for women in creative departments. Questions such as, 'Are there challenges for women working in agencies?'

- Contrast questions: These were asked to allow the researchers to examine how women use different Impression management strategies within agencies. Questions such as, 'Do

you consciously promote yourself within the agency, or not?' and, 'Do you feel confident

when making pitch presentations, or not?'

The sample

Respondents	Country	Role	Years in role	Age
Annabel	UK	Creative Director	6	45-49
Betty	Belgium	Creative Director	2	35-39
Claudia	Netherlands	Creative Director	4	35-39
Donna	US	Creative Director	11	45-49
Eva	US	Executive Creative Director	12	45-49
Farica	Germany	Creative Content Director	2	35-39
Gina	UK	Creative Director	5	40-44
Harri	US	Creative Director	9	50-54
Isabel	US	Creative Director	13	45-49
Jo	UK	Creative Director	13	40-44
Kathy	UK	Creative Director	7	45-49
Laura	Singapore	Creative Director	4	35-39
Mariella	UK	Creative Director	5	45-49
Nina	New Zealand	Creative Director/CEO	11	35-39
Odette	UK	CEO	12	45-49
Petra	UK/Global	Creative Director	13	50-54
Queeny	UK	Executive Creative Director	10	45-49
Rahela	Romania	Creative Director	3	40-445
Sophia	Romania	Creative Director	2	35-39
Talia	Spain	Creative Director	4	40-44
Uma	Spain	Creative Director	3	35-39
Vida	Dominican Republic	Creative Director	2	35-39
Wendy	Colombia	Creative Director (Digital)	3	35-39
Yvonne	US	Creative Director	8	45-49
Zena	UK	Creative Director	9	40-44

Table 6*: Demographic of participants.*

The study draws on 25 in-depth interviews with female creative directors (see Table 6).

Our sample reflects an 'elite' or 'expert' group of individuals (Harvey, 2011; Howe-Walsh et al.,

2019), which is particularly apposite for exploring IM strategies within the higher levels of

creative departments in the advertising sector. Using only creative directors within the study was

purposive (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While limiting the generalisability of the study, it allows for

key themes and concepts identified to be examined further in future studies with other levels of female creatives.

A snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gioia et al., 2013b). Advertising creatives are seen to be a hard to access population (Stuhlfaut & Windels, 2012) and access to samples from elite populations is acknowledged to be challenging (Mikecz, 2012), hence a snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants for the study. Participants were identified by other women working in advertising and were recruited using an email or telephone introduction to the study, together with an information sheet and consent form to meet ethical obligations of informed consent.

The sample size was determined at the point data saturation was reached (Patton, 2015). The researchers made notes of new information following each interview and after 25 interviews it was determined that no new themes or concepts had arisen, hence further data would be redundant (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were from 11 different countries and predominantly worked for large advertising agencies (See Table 6). The cultural differences and variation in industry structure between countries is recognised as a limitation.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim to retain the richness of data (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and generated 168 pages of text. The researchers then adopted an approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) involving thematic analysis. Firstly, two of the researchers read and re-read the transcripts to familiarise themselves with the data, noting ideas to generate initial codes, such as: working life balance; motherhood; criticism; reluctance to self-promote etc. From an exploration of the codes we grouped together our common codes. The researchers then embarked on a review process of the codes re-reading all the data extracts to fit into possible themes. We identified two common core themes: *'fitting in'* and *'standing out'* (see Figure 5).
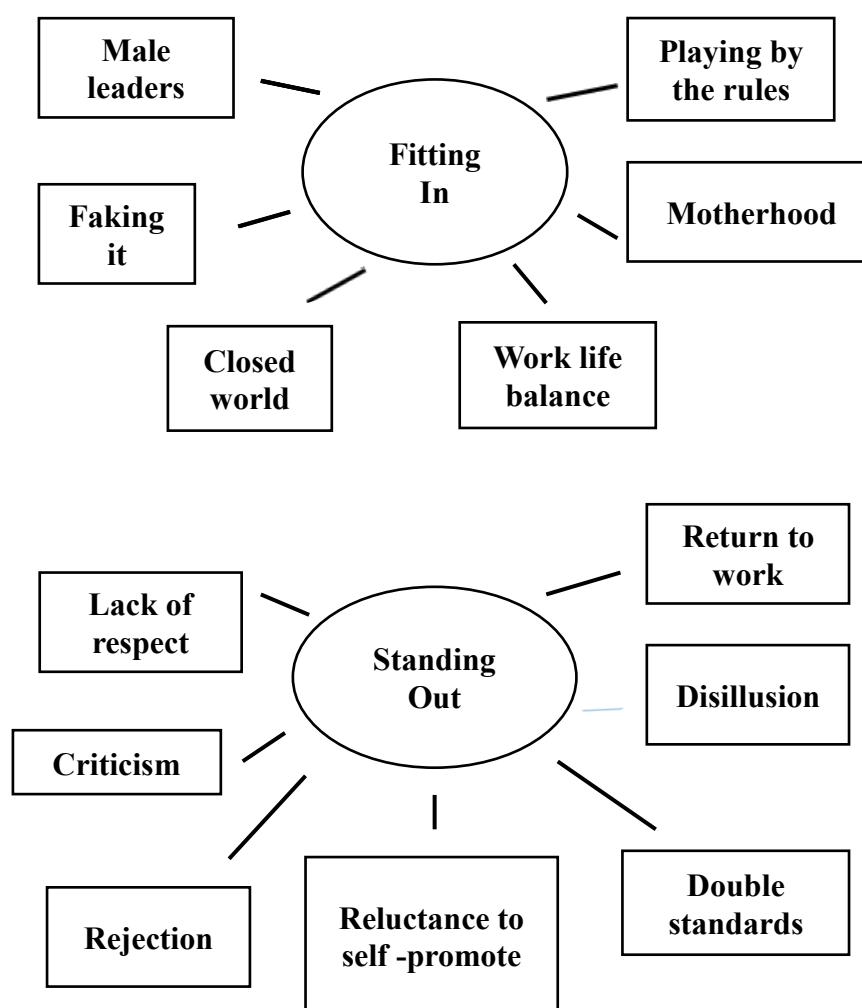
Figure 5: *Developed thematic map (highlighting two main themes).*
Source: Interview data

These represent the two key themes experienced and identified by the women

interviewed as they employed IM strategies within creative departments of advertising agencies.

The coding was validated using an inter-coder reliability test (Neuendorf, 2002). The inter-coder

agreement was used to check the extent to which the codes developed from the data were agreed

by different members of the research team. To undertake the agreement, one member of the

research team took 10% of the data and coded it. Next, a second member of the team was asked

to code the same data independently. Finally, both researchers met to compare the coding they

had undertaken and determine the number of codes they had agreed upon. They also discussed

the codes which had not been agreed. This resulted in 96% agreement between the coders and

the remaining disagreements (4%) were resolved by reviewing the transcripts and researchers

reaching agreement on the themes. (See Table 7 and Table 8 below).

A priori themes IM strategies	A priori themes IM behaviours/tactics	Description of IM behaviours used	Illustrative quotes	Emergent theme
Assertive	Ingratiation	Seeking to fit in, be likeable, showing oneself to be of benefit to others	*"The paradigm is so set, you had to conform to that or you didn't do well." (Isabel)*	Fitting In
			"I'm the kind of person that ... would go to the pub and have a laugh with male friends, so I was more accepted, but there's a heck of a lot of people who wouldn't." (Petra)	Fitting In
			"Fitting in means getting your 'code on', playing by their rules and hiding your secret girl side."(Eva).	Fitting In
	Exemplification	Doing more than necessary, staying late, appear going beyond call of duty	*"Essentially the hours tend to be 10 until seven, and then very, very, very often it's much later than seven. I was working nine until 10 every day for a very long time, in fact I did six months without a full weekend off and then collapsed with exhaustion at the end of it." (Donna)*	Fitting In
			"It's a really difficult culture and you have to be incredibly resilient, but also you have to be a grafter, you have to work so hard, and it's not conducive to work / life balance… Men don't do the lion's share of the childcare or the household duties, so I think that's a massive enablement for the men to be able to progress really, because everyone does so many hours." (Mariella)	Fitting In
Defensive	Justifications	Justifying/Explaining self and actions	*"The Ad industry and motherhood - I just don't think it's conducive, the ones [women] that do have kids, some of them manage to claw their way back in, but they really have to claw." (Betty)*	Fitting In
	Apologies	Apologising for self and actions	*"One of the biggest problems is how we project ourselves when we come back, like I think we're very apologetic; I know a women who started a new job right after she'd had a baby, and she didn't tell anybody at work, because it was a very creative agency and she didn't want them to judge her and think she wasn't going to deliver."(Nina)*	Fitting In

Table 7: *Findings –Theme 1 with illustrative quotes*

A priori themes IM strategies	A priori themes IM behaviours/tactics	Description of IM behaviours used	Illustrative quotes	Emergent theme
Assertive	Self-promotion	Mention of abilities/ accomplishments	"[Pitching] is a 'break culture.'"(Annabel)	Standing out
			"You go in to present some work to them and you're already feeling quite nervous because [of] the body language and atmosphere and all that sort of stuff, and then you can get quite quickly attacked, or you feel like it, because you're probably quite sensitive because of the atmosphere already, they're very exclusive and it doesn't feel like a very safe space." (Gina)	Standing out
			"Few women do [self-promotion] themselves at all…feeling self-conscious, so embarrassed and mortified."(Laura)	Standing out
			"So much of our job is being told this isn't good enough, this is wrong, and I think men are better at telling themselves that they're good and they don't suck, and I think women are already acutely aware of all our shortcomings and then amplifying them." (Donna)	Standing out
			"The best leaders are those that have a diverse and really wide network. So it's not just people within the industry, but its people outside the industry also knowing your personal brand that's really important." (Odette).	Standing out
	Intimidation	Use of aggression and power	"Creative male directors in advertising are allowed to be so difficult and violent, I've been in meetings where people have thrown chairs, thrown phones, screamed, sworn at people, got people fired, all of that stuff. Now if a woman was to do it, if I literally raise my voice to somebody who isn't doing their job, I'm the biggest bitch in town, and it's got nothing to do with my creativity .. or 'cos I want perfection, just that I'm a bitch. So you're living in a strange world." (Donna)	Standing out
Defensive	Justifications	Justifying/Explaining self and actions	"I don't want to do it like this" (Eva).	Standing out
			"I think the factors are still against women so that's why we have to keep banging the drum, we have to keep talking about diversity..we have to keep making people think even if it's a bit boring to keep saying it, it's boring for me to keep saying it, but we have to, because only by repeating it again and again until we're bored, will anything change." (Jo)	Standing out

Table 8*: Findings –Theme 2 with illustrative quotes*

Distinct from previous literature which identified that women were more passive, using low levels of IM behaviours (Bolino et al., 2016), our data shows female creatives are instead actively employing IM behaviours in response to the strongly gendered-environment of advertising agencies. However, as they seek career progression, these women are experiencing a paradoxical tension: on the one hand, they wish to fit in and be accepted within these environments; on the other, they must stand out to be recognised. This creates tension for female creatives and gives rise to the two themes we identified in the data; *Fitting in and, Standing Out.* While female creatives are employing IM behaviours to meet these requirements, striving to both fit and stand out within advertising agencies drives women to engage in behaviours which are not aligned with their "own sense of self, emotions and values" (Gino et al., 2015, p. 984). If authenticity is consistency (Lehman et al., 2019) requiring alignment between the external and internal (Cable et al., 2013; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010); then we find that women are engaging in inauthentic IM behaviours and strategies to both survive and thrive. However, this has an internal impact on female creatives, causing them and other female colleagues to experience stress. They believe that in some cases it drives women to leave the industry, might help explain why many women fail to thrive and progress, and ultimately might be limiting the influence of women on the advertisements that get made.

Theme 1) Fitting in: By employing IM behaviours of Ingratiation, Exemplification and Supplication.

The paradigm [within advertising departments] is so set, you had to conform to that or you didn't do well" (Isabel, US).

Previous literature recognises the creative department as a discrete culture (Nixon & Crewe, 2004), with its own codes (Stuhlfaut, 2011) and collectively shared ideas (Alvesson, 1994), characterised by masculine norms (Mallia, 2009; Windels & Lee, 2012). We also found

the distinct gender dynamics highlighted by Tuncay Zayer and Coleman (2015) to still be very much in evidence. Gaining acceptance and fitting in within these strongly-gendered environments requires women to display and emulate male behaviours which often feel inappropriate or uncomfortable for them.

"You play by their rules, it's all about what interests them, what they think is cool. Even the kinds of ads that they like.... men are cliquey, they have their cliques of men and you know if you want to survive and do well you make sure you're part of that clique, and you're the weird odd girl in the clique. But that means catering to their clique versus like what your clique would be." (Harri, US)

Similar to the findings of Windels and Lee (2012) and Windels (2016), women are seen as the interlopers in a space that feels predominantly male.

"There isn't much diversity within that culture, that sort of small microcosmic culture and therefore, the men are very like-minded, they have the same sort of sense of humour so they really revel in that and they become like themselves. But anyone that's not directly part of that culture can feel really alienated by that." (Gina, UK)

Thriving, or at least surviving in this space, means adopting assertive strategies involving both direct and indirect behaviours; in effect learning to be one of the boys, Eva, from the US, says, *"fitting in means getting your 'code on', playing by their rules and hiding your secret girl side",* recalling the facades of conformity described by Hewlin (2009). The requirement for women to fit in also extends beyond the office into more informal settings such as the pub, private clubs or the golf course. Although respondents from both the US and UK (Annabel, Eva, Isabel, Yvonne) considered male codes of behaviour to be stronger in the UK with "an old boy network" still very much in operation, there was consensus from both sides of the Atlantic, that

informal settings are important for bonding and influenced the allocation of briefs. As two respondents put it,

> *"I think the culture of having bonding experiences in the pub that then follow through into the office, that's a real barrier to women, that's a real problem."* (Annabel, UK)
>
> *"I'm the kind of person that ... would go to the pub and have a laugh with male friends, so I was more accepted, but there's a heck of a lot of women who wouldn't."* (Petra, Global)

Consistent with the findings of Capezio et al. (2017) who found that women were more likely to ingratiate themselves with Machiavellian leaders, our findings indicate that the women are using IM behaviours associated with ingratiation, such as acting in a manner which is consistent with the preferences of a target audience (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). They are displaying opinion conformity (Hewlin, 2009) to fit in, which requires them to hide in part, their true nature and interests, using inauthentic impression management behaviours to play by the rules and secure acceptance.

Furthermore, women also report striving to fit in by demonstrating their commitment. To survive and even thrive, women are engaging in IM behaviours associated with exemplification which emphasises doing more than necessary, staying late and appearing to go beyond the call of duty, often at personal cost. The hours expected were highlighted as overly long and not conducive to work/life balance, for those with or without children. Respondents report a lack of flexibility and trust in agencies. There is still a tendency to work through the night before deadlines, and to value people being in the office at their desks, which encourages 'presenteism', another form of exemplification.

> *"Essentially the hours tend to be 10 until seven, and then very, very, very often it's much later than seven. I was working nine until 10 every day for a very long time, in fact I did*

six months without a full weekend off and then collapsed with exhaustion at the end of it." (Donna, U.S)

Another respondent from the UK similarly comments,

"Yes 100%, it's a really difficult culture and you have to be incredibly resilient, but also you have to be a grafter, you have to work so hard, and it's not conducive to work / life balance… Men don't do the lion's share of the childcare or the household duties, so I think that's a massive enablement for the men to be able to progress really, because everyone in the department is expected to do so many hours." (Mariella, UK)

For women returning from maternity leave, the problem of fitting in to the prevailing culture is amplified, summed up here by one participant,

"The Ad industry and motherhood - I just don't think it's conducive, the ones [women] that do have kids, some of them manage to claw their way back in, but they really have to claw." (Betty, Belgium)

On return to the workplace, our data shows that women are not just engaging in ingratiation, but also in defensive IM behaviours. They are engaging in supplication to establish themselves; with one participant describing how a colleague appeared to apologise for their time away from the workplace in response to the expectations of the culture. This seems to weaken their position and cause them psychological distress. Nina from New Zealand, outlines the issue:

"One of the biggest problems is how we project ourselves when we come back, like I think we're very apologetic; I know a woman who started a new job right after she'd had a baby, and she didn't tell anybody at work, because it was a very creative agency and she didn't want them to judge her and think she wasn't going to deliver. That's like to hide a baby because you're worried about what the perception is, she should be saying, yeah I had a baby, I had this amazing life experience, I now have this experience that you

don't have which is super valuable. I mean this is what we do, we try to understand

what's happening in human's lives and try and figure out how to talk to them, and I can

imagine that having a baby would probably be one of the biggest life experiences. It's

funny [because] I've known men that have gone off and gone surfing around the world

for two years, and they come back to like fanfare and it's like nothing happened and they

pick up right where they left off cos they had this amazing experience. Whereas women

come back when they've taken two years off for having a kid, and it's like they just fell in

a hole somewhere." (Nina, New Zealand)

Women reported an environment currently experiencing a number of tensions. Advertising and creative direction are coming under increasing pressure with clients taking work in-house, greater numbers of specialist shops being set up, and a significant number of women leaving the industry or going freelance. As one respondent says *"the industry is on its knees, it's going to hit rock bottom, and it will fall apart and they'll have to change the way they do everything, I really think so,"* (Laura, Singapore) while another reports *"we're not constructing something new, and that's the danger right now."* (Donna, U.S).

Theme 2) Standing out: By employing IM behaviours of Self-promotion, Justifications and Supplication.

> **"Fake it [confidence] 'til you make it…You're not going to be confident about this stuff, but pretend to be confident and it will come."** (Eva, U.S)

In order to secure progression within the current environment, women must not only fit in but also stand out. Historically, the process of creative direction has been as more than one respondent termed it, a "*break culture*" (Annabel, UK), in which ideas are put forward and are tested until the point at which they are broken, or not. This requires women to engage in self-promotion on behalf of themselves and their ideas, a theme the participants returned to again and

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again. Yet, *"few women do it themselves at all…feeling self-conscious, so embarrassed and mortified"* (Laura, Singapore), with the strongly-gendered nature of the environment seen as an additional challenge. As Talia, now working in Spain, explains

> *"If you go into a meeting, and of course almost everyone else in the room is a man, there is kind of like a sit-back-arms-crossed-prove-yourself thing, where you go into a room and everyone is very cocksure, and kind of almost a little bit threatening. You go in to present some work to them and you're already feeling quite nervous because [of] the body language and atmosphere and all that sort of stuff, and then you can get quite quickly attacked, or you feel like it, because you're probably quite sensitive because of the atmosphere already, they're very exclusive and it doesn't feel like a very safe space."*
> (Talia, Spain)

Although the female creatives recognised that up to 90%-95% of their output might be rejected, one of the respondents from the US, described how this affected her.

> *"I went through Ad school and I was pretty confident [there], I was kind of like one of the better people in my Ad school and I left feeling pretty cocky and then I started my first job and I was like a deer in the headlights, I just changed, and I think it was because, like so much of our job is being told this isn't good enough, this is wrong, and I think men are better at telling themselves that they're good and they don't suck, and I think women are already acutely aware of all our shortcomings and then amplifying them."* (Yvonne, US)

Roberts (2005) found that individuals who are able to establish credibility whilst remaining authentic will enjoy a greater sense of well-being. However, in order to cope with this competitive and often hostile environment; younger colleagues are advised by senior female Creative Directors, to "*fake it [confidence] 'til you make it*" (Yvonne and Eva).

"You're not going to be confident about this stuff, but pretend to be confident and it will come…quit beating yourself up about when people say no to you…like that's the job. I mean even now at my level I get told 'no' a lot, and until you build up that kind of core level of confidence, it's pretty brutal." (Eva)

In part, this is attributed to multiple teams all pitching internally for the same brief, resulting in *"uncomfortable"* (Queeny, UK) levels of competition in which assertive and defensive IM strategies and behaviours are employed by both men and women. Assertive strategies however, are not without risk for women. As one woman from Colombia asks,

"W*hy can't we make the agency a nurturing place for women to hone their skills, instead of feeling like you are going to be eaten alive?*" (Wendy, Colombia)

Women use self-promotion to put forward their ideas, pointing to previous accomplishments and a track record. Yet, the data shows that women report either having their ideas and opinions dismissed, or being considered too opinionated. In these cases, women describe how they employ defensive IM strategies to justify or defend their ideas. In doing so however, they are not perceived to be strong and confident. Instead they are described as disruptive, difficult and aggressive. One British respondent said,

"So actually one of my old bosses literally came up to me in the office and said, 'I hear that you're a bitch'." (Petra, UK/Global)

In this charged atmosphere and consistent with prior research (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), the reactions and emotions of both men and women are perceived differently. Women report themselves and other women sometimes becoming frustrated in the creative process and as a result becoming emotional or teary. This, albeit authentic, reaction is considered a form of supplication behaviour and perceived as weak or as more than one respondent recalled, attributed to "*having their period*" (Nina, New Zealand). Pointing to an emotional reaction is also seen as a

weapon and an "*instant way to kill a woman's career*" (Farica, Germany). Yet an emotional reaction from men which might come out as anger or aggression is tolerated. The respondents questioned why one set of emotions is seen as more valid than the other. Even authentic anger from women is not well received, a type of backlash well documented by Rudman and Phelan, (2008), while from men, it is not only permissible, but seen as a hallmark of their creativity. This leaves women working within creative departments with a distinct impression management dilemma, leaving them to question whether they should engage in authentic IM behaviours at all. These apparent double standards are summed up by one US respondent who says:

> "C*reative male directors in advertising are allowed to be so difficult and violent, I've been in meetings where people have thrown chairs, thrown phones, screamed, sworn at people, got people fired, all of that stuff. Now, if a woman was to do it, instantly you're a bitch, and it's like wow did you just see this guy, wasn't he amazing he just threw the chair across the room, his difficultness makes his genius possible, it's all part of it. But if I literally raise my voice to somebody who isn't doing their job, I'm the biggest bitch in town, and it's got nothing to do with my creativity or all of that, or cos I want perfection, just that I'm a bitch. So you're living in a strange world.*" (Donna, US)

Frustration with the status quo was widely reported, with women reporting the urgent need for change before more women are able to exert greater influence. As one female creative director working out of the US explains:

> *"If you are going to build empathetic communication plans it would make absolute business sense to have some people that really understand how to build empathy with your target audience."* (Isabel, US)

Our data indicates the desire for change from creative women and their acute awareness of the work that is still to be done.

> *"I think the factors are still against women so that's why we have to keep banging the*
>
> *drum, we have to keep talking about diversity, we have to keep making people think even*
>
> *if it's a bit boring to keep saying it, it's boring for me to keep saying it, but we have to*
>
> *because only by repeating it again and again until we're bored, will anything change."*

(Jo, UK)

Discussion and Conclusions

The impact of using IM within organisations has been widely explored from an external perspective (Bolino et al., 2016; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Schütz, 1998; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). However, this paper is one of the first to address the gap, identified by Bolino et al. (2016), in our understanding of the internal impact on the individual and the implications for authenticity. The IM literature has previously considered women to be more passive in the workplace; using relatively low levels of IM behaviours (Bolino et al., 2016), as reluctant to promote themselves and break expectations of their gender (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Smith & Huntoon, 2014) preferring instead, to let their work speak for itself (Singh et al., 2002). In contrast, through in-depth interviews with 25 female creative directors, we have found that women are indeed active in employing IM strategies and behaviours. However, they are using these behaviours to respond to the strongly gendered-environment of advertising agencies which appear to be making contradictory demands of the women. We find that female creatives are actively employing assertive and defensive IM strategies, engaging in behaviours needed for both *fitting in* and *standing out* within these cultures.

The data also shows that meeting these apparently contradictory demands is often an uncomfortable experience for women. Previous research has highlighted the importance of consistency between the projected self as conveyed through IM, and the private self, for

individuals wanting to feel authentic (Cable et al., 2013). Authenticity has also been shown to be important for women (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). This study finds that female creatives are experiencing a misalignment between their perception of their true selves and the public face they feel the creative department is expecting them to convey. Our data shows that this is causing stress and tensions for women. Participants also report that these tensions drive some women to leave the industry, or even go freelance, and may help explain the persistently low numbers of women in senior creative roles.

Women are combining assertive and defensive strategies and behaviours to resolve the seemingly paradoxical tension between *fitting in* and *standing out.* In an attempt to secure belonging, women are employing ingratiation and exemplification behaviours as part of an assertive strategy. They are engaging in IM behaviours both in and out of the office which do not feel authentic. Hiding their true selves is causing tension and frustration. This is consistent with previous literature, (Gino et al., 2010; Hewlin, 2009; Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Roberts, 2005) which links any misalignment between what feels true to the individual, and an impression they are required to convey, with a range of negative outcomes.

Although costly in terms of personal resources as highlighted by Vohs et al. (2005), it is not an effective strategy; not sufficient to guarantee success or progression, and does little to change current practice. Instead, it appears to be a hygiene factor. Whilst these assertive IM behaviours may secure initial belonging, *fitting in* and hiding one's true self to abide by the current rules and codes through ingratiation and exemplification, ultimately only serves to perpetuate the status quo of these gender-bound environments and limits the contribution of women.

If *fitting in* does little to bring change, then women must also ensure that they and their ideas are *standing out.* Our data shows that women, unlike men, are not granted automatic

respect or gravitas, and must instead earn it. Current practice requires them to engage in assertive IM strategies, employing the behaviours of self-promotion to advocate for themselves and their creative ideas. Self-promotion can feel uncomfortable and inauthentic for the women and is often perceived as inconsistent with their gender. This presents both tensions and risks for female creatives and often results in an all-too-familiar backlash. Current practice also dictates that this often takes place in a competitive, even combative environment in which rejection and criticism are both commonplace. It is currently recommended that female creatives who struggle with this should engage in inauthentic behaviours and "*fake it,' til they make it*". Possible alternative and more authentic IM behaviours are deemed inappropriate. Defensive behaviours such as supplication is deemed weak, while the assertive behaviours of intimidation, commonly used by men, are seen as inappropriate for women. Similarly, when women engage in authentic defensive IM strategies to justify or defend their ideas, they are often perceived as emotional, aggressive or difficult. Therefore, many female creatives employ inauthentic IM strategies to survive in creative departments that are already coded as male. These inauthentic IM strategies and behaviours cause tension and fatigue for women, leaving many to become disillusioned with the industry and current practices, while driving other female creatives to leave.

Whilst the risks of some IM behaviours have been previously acknowledged, the contribution here is the risk to self when employing inauthentic IM behaviours in response to an organisational setting. Our findings suggest that engaging in inauthentic IM behaviours as a means to ensure that they are both simultaneously *fitting in,* and *standing out* within these strongly-gendered cultures, causes women psychological stress, limits their contribution to creative messaging and causes many women to ultimately leave the industry or go freelance. Although some of the tension they describe can be seen as common to the female experience in many strongly male-gendered environments (Gloor et al., 2018), it is also clearly linked to the culture and practice of advertising agencies.

The authors have developed a model which summarises these conclusions (See Figure 6). It illustrates key influences on the organisational context. Within this working environment female creative directors are actively employing a range of IM behaviours and tactics in a bid to meet the paradoxical demands of both *fitting in* and *standing out*. Doing so leads them to engage in inauthentic behaviours in order to gain acceptance. Abiding by male codes of behaviour however, can make women sense a misalignment between a projected self and what they feel is their true self. This feels uncomfortable for women, maintains the status quo and can lead to disillusionment or even their exit from the industry. Engaging in authentic behaviours however, brings women into contact with double standards, and can generate backlash and criticism. The real opportunity for change lies in developing working environments in which female creatives can fully participate and communicate, not just their ideas, but their true selves. In this way, authenticity for female creatives is not a risk, or a choice that few dare make, but an accepted way to stand out within an industry that must seize the opportunity for change.
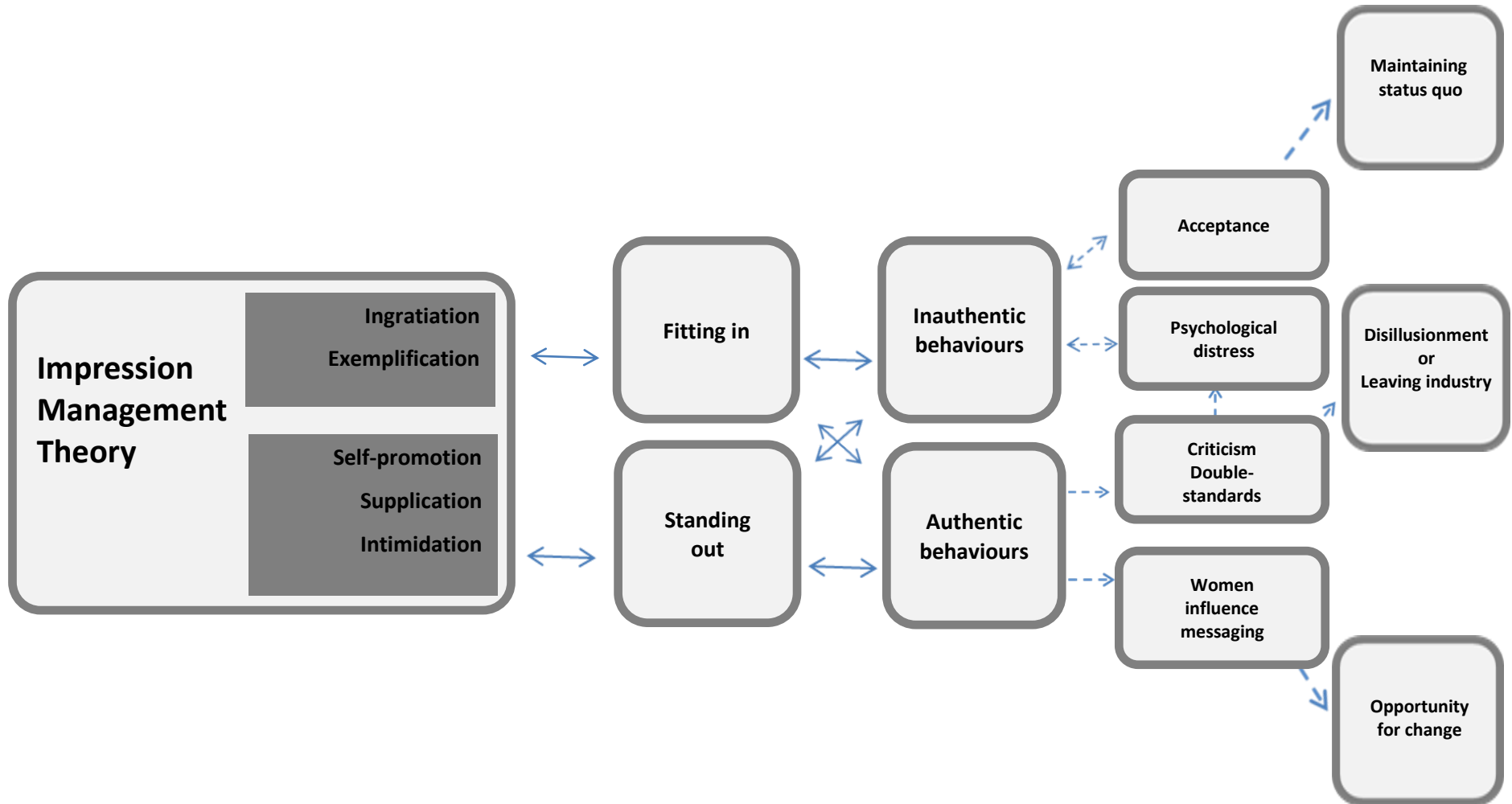
Figure 6: *Illustrates the range of outcomes which result from the IM behaviours employed by women to both fit in and stand out within advertising's gendered creative departments (Authors' Own)*

Managerial implications

The findings of our study have important implications for management practice. Advertising, like so many creative industries, is operating under a "cloud of masculinity" (Grow & Deng, 2015, p.10). Women feel that advertising doesn't understand them or reflect them and despite increased efforts towards professionalism and legitimisation (Nyilasy et al., 2012), questions continue to be asked about how responsibly the industry uses its power to influence society and shape cultural meaning. Increasing the numbers of women in creative roles; allowing them to have a greater influence over creative messaging will go some way to address current concerns, as women may well now offer the critical promise of change (Grow & Deng, 2015) that the advertising industry needs. Surely female creatives are better placed than their male colleagues to understand and reflect the increasingly powerful female consumers, who currently influence 80-85% of consumer purchases (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009) and dominate social media sharing (3% Conference).

However, simply increasing the numbers of women is not sufficient without further structural and cultural change. Female creatives must be allowed to play a bigger role in shaping creative messaging (Mensa Torra & Grow, 2015); yet, our data indicates that the creative department can be a hostile environment for women. Therefore, facilitating a 'safer' environment in which female creatives can engage in authentic promotion of their ideas and, indeed themselves, is now a pressing need and will help support women to make a bigger contribution to the creative process. This will also go some way towards legitimising the advertising industry and improve its ability to reflect gender diversity in society. We believe it is not just female creatives who offer the promise of change (Grow & Deng, 2015). By working together agencies, clients and female creatives can all play a part in addressing the implications of our findings, and unlocking the persistent and pervasive gender gap.

Firstly, advertising agency practices must be urgently reviewed. The set paradigm of creative departments presents many barriers and challenges to women. Factors such as working hours and the choice and timings of social activities (where networking takes place and access to pitches is often secured), all need to be addressed. Agency management should certainly heed the findings of a recent study conducted by Campaign magazine (Tylee, 2019) which explores the views of agency staff about what makes an agency a great place to work. It appears that employees are now seeking the opportunities to feel authentic at work; looking for more than simply material rewards and wanting to work for companies with values which align with their own. Rather than simply accepting or conforming to a 'work hard, play hard' culture, they are looking to embrace the arguably softer values of flexibility, trust and autonomy at work. If arguments for equity are not compelling enough, agencies interested in winning the war for talent, should be looking to develop their own employer brand.

Particular attention should also be paid, to the pitching process itself, which we found to be often prejudicial and bruising for female creatives. We suggest that in order to increase the influence women may have over the messaging and creative development of ads, the process might be re-framed as the co-creation of ideas. Teams working together; helping each other to reach a better client solution rather than directly competing, could start to change the combative and often ego-led culture that has prevailed. The development of ideas and client solutions is a core process and is key to the advertising industry's ability to reflect the powerful female consumer. Therefore, agencies should take a more gender-intelligent approach, giving female creatives every opportunity to practice presenting their ideas and receiving feedback in a 'safe' environment. The feminisation of advertising is not simply about head-line grabbing campaigns but requires lasting change in the day-to-day portrayal of women. Female creatives are crucial in making this change. The marketing landscape is changing with disruptive technologies fundamentally changing the industry. If agencies wish to retain the very female talent that can

help make advertising more relevant and representative of consumers, then they must be willing to disrupt their own set paradigm.

Secondly, if the industry cannot heal itself, then clients can have a stronger influence on current agency practices. Paying for the advertising places clients in a particularly strong position to drive change in the industry. P&G are already leading the way, seeing it not just as a move for the social good, but also as a driver for growth. Unilever have formed the Unstereotype Alliance and are working with Facebook, Google, Alibaba, Mars and WPP, as well as key advertising industry bodies including the IPA in the UK and the US-based ANA to challenge persistent stereotypical gender portrayals. Other clients will now surely follow. Clients can also seek to ensure equal representation of women and men in their own creative supply chain.

Finally, to the female creatives themselves. Scott (2006) highlights the contributions of women working in marketing, who over the years have sought and affected change through the first, second and third wave of feminism. She argues that "it is sometimes necessary to act under imperfect conditions" (p.13). Now in the much discussed fourth wave of feminism, women still find themselves working in far from perfect conditions, within a paradigm which although shaken is often not stirred to meaningful action. Our data reveals that women are still struggling to fit in and stand out within the current environment. However, they may now choose to leverage their minority position to provide alternative viewpoints and join other women who are already *standing up.* Like the women of the 1950's recalled by Tadajewski and Maclaran (2013), who first argued for their ability to advocate for the female consumer, it is female creatives who can best represent the female consumer and address concerns about gender portrayal.

Female creatives are in a unique position to challenge stereotypes, disrupt business-as-usual, and provide much-needed alternative narratives. To do this however, they must not only

be willing but more importantly supported, to drive their ideas forward. If not by agency management, then by each other. However, despite female creatives recognising the need to engage in self-promotion for themselves and their ideas, the term itself remains challenging for many women. Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2013) propose that focussing on a higher purpose, outside of themselves, helps women to overcome their reluctance in putting themselves forward. They argue a sense of purpose allows women to look beyond the current situation and argue for different possibilities in the future. Considering this activity as *advocacy* rather than self-promotion, might provide a refreshing and more authentic alternative. Female creatives already advocate for their clients, with Smith and Huntoon (2014) finding women to be willing advocates for other women. Now, female creatives can be powerful advocates for an alternative set of ideas, values and practices. They are already powerful storytellers for their clients; it is vital now that they tell their own story.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study provide direction for future research. The focus of the current qualitative study was limited to examining women working as creative directors within advertising agencies, precluding wider generalisation of the findings. To develop our understanding of the challenges and experiences of creative women, future studies might interview women across the creative employee life-cycle, including those who are newly employed as creatives, those in mid-career who have not yet achieved the position of creative director, and those who have chosen to leave the industry.

Future studies could also consider the perspective of male creatives on why there are so few women in these roles. Are men actively trying to keep women out, or simply unaware of the impact of the current male-dominated culture and its practices on women? Studies which consider how men feel about female creatives, including an exploration of what they see as the

challenges and barriers for women, could be very interesting and may uncover previous unacknowledged unconscious biases.

Through our research we also encountered the work of Creative Equals and the 3% Movement Conference, working in the UK and USA respectively, providing accreditation for those agencies working towards greater equality in creativity. Research is needed to track the experience of these agencies in increasing gender diversity. It would also be interesting to see explorations of agencies developing more 'feminine' or gender-neutral cultures.

Furthermore, exploring the IM strategies and tactics used by women within strongly-gendered environments found in other industries, particularly those such as the media, which play a powerful role in reflecting and influencing society would be valuable. Gender diversity and representation on and off-camera continue to be an issue in both television and cinema. Exploring how women could have a greater share of voice and influence makes film and TV production departments of considerable interest for further research.

Additionally, the research has some methodological limitations. The sample was pre-dominantly drawn from Western Europe and the US while representation from South America, Middle East and Asia was limited. This highlights the gap for future research from developing countries, where differences in attitudes, beliefs and values provide a novel setting for the exploration of women's IM strategies. Research to focus on the cultural differences in IM behaviours for example, would also be of great interest.

6   Paper 4: Something in Adland doesn't add up: Time to make female creatives really count

6.1 Foreword

The findings of Paper 3 indicate that when women abide by male codes of behaviour it does little to challenge the status quo within advertising's creative departments. Paper 3 contends that the real opportunity for change in advertising lies in developing working environments in which female creatives can fully participate and communicate by being their true selves. However, acknowledging the problem is only the start, further insight is still needed (Windels & Mallia, 2015), affirming women as current and future leaders is then the crucial next step. Paper 4 takes up this idea and explores the extent to which the immediate community of practice within the working environment allows women to fully participate and communicate. Specifically, this paper adopts the lens of identity theory to consider whether the persistent gender imbalance within creative departments might indeed stem from women's thwarted attempts to negotiate a leadership identity within these strongly-gendered cultures. For example, an individual might experiment with the actions and behaviours required of Creative Director, but these can either be affirmed, or equally resisted by management and colleagues (Ibarra et al., 2013). In response to this feedback, the individual may choose to retain some aspects of this self, while other aspects may be discarded (Epitropaki et al., 2017). When the community of practice either affirms or rejects the provisional identity of a potential leader, they can initiate what DeRue and Ashford (2010) describe as positive or negative spirals. Affirmation from management and colleagues can boost self-confidence starting a positive spiral, potentially leading to further endorsements, such as key projects, or even formal leadership roles. Over time, this helps an individual to incorporate leadership into their sense of self and encourage them to seek new leadership opportunities (Day & Harrison, 2007). If however, this provisional self and leadership-style

actions are resisted by the community, it can start a negative spiral in which self-confidence and further motivation to seize opportunities or display further leadership action, is reduced, therefore weakening a sense of self as a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). In this way, continued participation, interaction and positive feedback from the community are key to female creatives being accepted in a leadership role, and crucial in allowing them to see themselves as a creative leader.

Paper 4 is also an empirical paper with a theoretical underpinning, but gives more consideration to managerial implications to align with the editorial focus of US-based journal *Business Horizons*. The experience of negotiating a leadership identity is explored through interviews with 30 female creatives from the US, UK, and mainland Europe. The findings indicate that creative women are still struggling to negotiate a leadership identity within gendered creative departments, which limits their influence over the industry and the ads that get made.

Based on the findings, the paper presents three over-arching themes: *vision; voice;* and *visibility.* Taken together these represent the challenges women experience in developing a leadership identity, but also suggest opportunities for agencies to increase the influence of female creatives. If the advertising industry wants its pro-female advertising to be taken seriously and avoid accusations of hypocrisy, then it must now similarly empower its female creatives. If emphasis was given to developing these areas, authenticity for female creatives may no longer be a risk as indicated in Paper 3, or a choice that few women dare make, but an accepted way to stand out within an industry that must now seize the opportunity for change. While the findings might describe the female experience in many male-dominated environments, advertising's gender imbalance is also clearly linked to its current culture and practices.

6.2 **Published paper**

Something in Adland doesn't add up: It's time to make female creatives really count.

Helen Thompson-Whiteside

Abstract

The increased visibility of gender issues in society has inspired a trend amongst marketing companies for female empowerment. Marketers are working with clients, developing advertising which advocates equality for female consumers. Yet despite this trend for *femvertising*, a closer inspection of the departments where ads are made reveals little progress has been made towards gender equality for the women working inside creative advertising. Clearly, something in Adland doesn't add up. This study considers whether this stems from women's thwarted attempts to establish a leadership identity within strongly-gendered cultures where they are subject to established practices. This is explored through interviews with 30 female creatives from the US, UK, and mainland Europe. Based on the findings, the paper presents three over-arching themes: vision; voice; and visibility, which together represent the challenges women experience in developing a leadership identity, but also suggest the opportunities for agencies to increase the influence of female creatives. If the advertising industry's claims to represent society are to be taken seriously, it must move beyond empowering female consumers, to similarly empower its female creatives and achieve greater gender equality in the industry.

Keywords: Advertising, Femvertising; Female empowerment, gendered-environment, creative directors

The gender problem at the heart of advertising

In response to the increased visibility of gender issues within society (Rubery, 2019), female empowerment has become a prevalent theme in marketing (Drake, 2017). Brands such as Always and Pantene are producing advertising campaigns such as #LikeAGirl and #ShineStrong to advocate equality for women. This new style of advertising termed '*femvertising*' (Champlin et al., 2019) has proved popular among brands and agencies alike (Akestam et al., 2017), and given rise to new award schemes and categories, such as the Athena awards and the Glass Lion from Cannes Lions. The pro-female stance of these adverts has also been welcomed as a counterpoint to the widespread use of gender stereotypes which have characterised advertising to-date (see Eisend, 2019; Middleton et al., 2019).

Yet closer inspection of the departments where ads are made, reveals little progress towards gender equality has been made in the past 30 years (Mallia & Windels, 2018). Why is it that despite advertising's recent interest in empowering female consumers, it has been much slower to achieve equality for women working inside the industry, with only a small minority of women progressing to creative leadership? As part of an on-going exploration of women and marketing, this study sought to understand more about this apparent disconnect.

Why do we need more female leaders in creative advertising?

Female representation in leadership is an important issue for any business (Spencer et al., 2019), with diversity positively linked to business success (McKinsey & Co, 2015) and the value of a company (Isidro & Sobral, 2015). Yet, a lack of women in creative leadership raises additional concerns for advertising which is credited with the power and the responsibility to not only influence, but also reflect society (Shabbir et al., 2018). While female consumers are exerting unprecedented levels of influence on the marketplace, their female representatives working within advertising remain a small minority. With women driving over 60% of social

media sharing (3% Movement, 2019) and up to 85% of consumer decisions (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009), why do females still account for only 14.6% of all creative directors worldwide (Grow & Deng, 2015)? Clearly, something in Adland doesn't add up.

Not surprisingly, the advertising industry is being criticised for being out of touch, and seen as needing to improve its reputation by developing more socially responsible practices (Štumberger & Golob, 2016). Although there are notable exceptions, such as Susan Credle and Vicki Maguire who are seen as two of the most influential women in advertising today, the lack of senior female creatives may help explain why women feel that advertising does not reflect them (JWT Intelligence, 2017) or even understand them (Coffee, 2014). Urgent industry change is now needed (Kemp, 2019) to not only legitimise advertising's claims to reflect society, but also address concerns that the ad industry is becoming increasingly irrelevant (Pattissal, 2019).

Why don't more women reach positions of creative leadership?

It would appear that the number of women in the pipeline isn't the problem. Women make up around half of the advertising workforce in the UK, US, and Spain (Windels & Mallia, 2015), but few of these women make it to leadership positions. Prior research into advertising in the USA, UK, Mexico, Peru, and Spain has identified a number of barriers which prevent women from getting to the top of male-dominated departments (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011; Mensa & Grow, 2015; Mensa & Grow, 2019; Windels & Lee, 2012). Various reasons have been cited by previous research including: motherhood (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009), a lack of flexible work arrangements and long working hours (Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011), insufficient recognition from peers, limited access or even exclusion from key accounts, and a tendency for male creative directors to hire people just like them (Broyles & Grow, 2008). The creative department of ad agencies is described as a stand-alone and strongly gendered environment built on a machismo culture (Mensa & Grow, 2019) and a

male paradigm (Nixon & Crewe, 2004; Stuhlfaut, 2011). Here, personality factors more often associated with men, such as perseverance, toughness, competitiveness, and even a 'thick skin', are seen as important factors for organisational success (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009, Windels & Lee, 2012). Even military language which is seen to perpetuate cultures of masculinity (Brands, 2014), is embedded into the creative process (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). The net result is that few women advance, or thrive in these departments. Instead, female creative directors have become "tokens in a man's world" (Grow & Deng, 2015, p. 21) with 12% of female creatives now considering leaving the industry altogether over the next two years (Hanan, 2019).

Time to take a different view?

Despite the insights provided by research, the lack of progress towards increasing the numbers of women in creative leadership, suggests that there is still more to understand about this persistent problem (Windels & Mallia, 2015). Therefore, this study explores whether the lack of women at the top of creative departments can be attributed to the thwarted attempts of women to be affirmed and supported as potential leaders within these gendered environments.

More men at the top of creative departments necessarily means fewer role models for women, and a tendency for those in the organisation to equate leadership with male stories and behaviours (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2016). These institutional biases present significant challenges for women seeking progression and have a profound impact on how women understand and communicate themselves as potential female leaders (Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra et al., 2014).

With advertising offering little, or no, formal leadership development training, it remains a largely unstructured industry (Mallia et al., 2013), in which self-promotion is considered necessary for progression to creative leadership (Grow & Broyles, 2011). Yet, women who

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engage in self-promotion and display the expected agentic behaviours required of leadership, such as assertiveness and confidence, might be seen as acting outside of the characteristics ascribed to their gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002), and will often encounter criticism and backlash from male colleagues (Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). This backlash can take different forms but might include a woman being seen as less likeable, or even excluded from certain activities by the community.

If, as CEO Karen Kaplan notes, real inclusivity goes beyond simply increasing the numbers of women, to allow women to influence the strategic direction and leadership of the industry, how can this be achieved? This study explores the experiences of female creatives as they seek career progression. The findings have implications for advertising practice, but they may equally resonate with the experiences of women in other male-dominated industries.

Revisiting the research

Identity formation

Individuals might reach the position of Creative Director (CD) due to their social and cultural capital, including their ability to engage in effective personal promotion (Mallia et al., 2013). The role of CD presents a possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Ibarra, 1999) and is a desired identity for many female creatives. Yet assuming the identity of a creative leader will involve an on-going negotiation between the individual and their community. Identity is socially constructed through social and relational processes (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Wenger, 1998), becoming a living entity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that is developed and redeveloped over time, based on feedback from a community (Paechter, 2003). In this way, the community of practice plays a vital role in developing the identity of a potential leader.

A possible self can become a provisional self when an individual emulates the behaviours associated with the possible self on offer (Ibarra, 1999). For example, an individual might experiment with the leadership-style actions and behaviours required of CD, but these can either be affirmed, or equally resisted by management and colleagues (Ibarra et al, 2013). In response to this feedback, the individual may choose to retain some aspects of the provisional or experimental self, while other aspects may be discarded (Epitropaki et al. 2017). When the community of practice either affirms or rejects the provisional identity of a potential leader, they can initiate what DeRue and Ashford (2010) describe as positive or negative spirals. Affirmation from management and colleagues can boost self-confidence starting a positive spiral, potentially leading to further endorsements, such as key projects, or even formal leadership roles, helping an individual over time to incorporate leadership into their sense of self and encouraging them to seek new leadership opportunities (Day & Harrison, 2007). If, however this provisional self and leadership-style actions are resisted by the community, it can start a negative spiral in which self-confidence and further motivation to seize opportunities or display further leadership action is reduced, therefore weakening a sense of self as a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). In this way, continued participation, interaction and positive feedback from the community are key to female creatives being accepted in a leadership role, and crucial in allowing them to see themselves as a creative leader.

However, in the highly competitive creative departments of advertising agencies, this unfolding process may be particularly problematic for women. Firstly, effective self-presentation in formal settings such as meetings and pitches is considered necessary for progression to leadership, but prior research shows that women engage in lower levels of self-presentation and are more reluctant to promote themselves (Bolino et al., 2016; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018). Secondly, management and colleagues may view any self-promotion and leadership-style actions from women as going against the prevailing norms for their gender. In this case, women

may be struggling to develop as a leader not just within a strongly gendered work culture, but also within a society which is still, "deeply conflicted about her authority" (Ely & Rhode, 2010, cited in Ibarra, et al., 2013, p.16). To contribute to our understanding of these issues, this study explores women's experience of negotiating a leadership identity in advertising's strongly gendered creative departments.

Exploring the experiences of female creatives

Collecting the data

The researcher explored these issues during 2018 and 2019 with 30 female creatives in interviews undertaken face-to-face, via Skype, or telephone, lasting between 20 and 90 minutes. Initial contacts made at the International Festival of Creativity in Cannes, France were supplemented through a snowballing method (Saunders et al., 2016). The women wished to remain anonymous, but work in a wide selection of leading ad agencies in the UK, USA, and mainland Europe, ranging in age from late 20's to mid-50's (see Table 9 for details of participants).

Participant Numbers (P)	Country of work	Age range	Participant Numbers (P)	Country of work	Age range
1	USA	40-49	16	UK	40-49
2	France	30-39	17	USA	50+
3	UK/Global	30-39	18	UK	50+
4	USA	40-49	19	Belgium	40-49
5	USA	45-49	20	USA/Global	30-39
6	UK	35-39	21	Spain	40-49
7	UK/Global	40-44	22	Spain	30-39
8	USA	50+	23	Netherlands	30-39
9	USA/Global	40-49	24	France	30-39
10	UK	20-29	25	US	40-49
11	UK	40-49	26	UK	40-49
12	Spain	30-39	27	Netherlands	20-29
13	UK/Global	40-49	28	Germany	30-39
14	Spain	30-39	29	USA	30-39
15	USA	30-39	30	USA/Global	40-49

Table 9*: Detail of Participants (Numbers allocated to provide anonymity).*

To explore the leadership identity work of female creatives working in advertising, the researcher adopted a narrative approach to interviews allowing participants to better express their views (Willig, 2013) and reflect upon their experience of working within creativity (Gioia et al., 2013b). The interview started with questions at a more general level including questions about why they felt women were still in a minority, and then narrowed to explore their personal experiences of seeking leadership in advertising's creative departments. Such a technique has been used effectively in studies which have examined challenges in a range of contextual settings (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018, Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). After 30 interviews, the researcher determined that the same themes were being discussed and that data saturation had been reached (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Analysing the data

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, recording and transcribing these verbatim to retain the richness of the data for further analysis. Thematic analysis was undertaken (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the researcher reading and re-reading the transcripts to familiarise themselves with the data, noting initial ideas for themes. Another researcher worked independently so that the researchers could then compare and agree themes to enhance inter-coder reliability. Following the methods suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), the data was then coded manually. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and to aid the discussion, the actual words of participants are included here, quoted verbatim to illustrate the points under discussion. The differences in industry structure between countries and the range of age of participants is recognised as a limitation of this study but despite these, the interviews revealed a number of common experiences.

Findings and discussion

The findings of this study indicate that although women may seek to claim a leadership identity, it is not always accepted or affirmed within the gendered environment and current practices of the creative department. Resistance and even aggression from the community leads some women to become tired of the struggle, and even withdraw from the field.

Data analysis identified many themes which have been explored elsewhere (See Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020), such as the need for women to conform to a strongly-gendered culture. However, the data also reveals some new insights. These themes were then brought together into three overarching themes (see Figure 7):
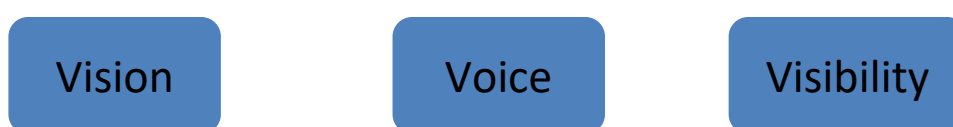
Vision	Voice	Visibility

Figure 7: *Three themes which reflect both the challenges and the opportunities to increase the impact of women on creative advertising.*

These reflect the key areas of challenge experienced by women in creative departments as they seek leadership, but also suggest recommendations for agencies seeking to address gender imbalance in creative departments.

Vision

One of the requirements of a creative director is to shape the creative identity of the department and share a vision for its future. Having a vision means being able to not only highlight problems with current approaches, but to also generate and communicate new ideas and opportunities for future practice (Ely et al., 2011). Yet, in departments dominated by men which offer little or no formal training in how to be a creative director, it is not surprising that male

norms continue to shape both current practice and future thinking. There is still a strong association between male characteristics and leadership with a mythological male figure representing success. As one participant says,

> *"I think there's a false perception of what it means to be a leader, like there's this myth of a creative God who's like a guy who has this idea and it's like, this is what we're going to do, 'everybody run'"* (P10). Another participant adds, "He's *a certain kind of guy, has a certain kind of personality, and does a certain kind of work"* (P24).

Emulating a male leadership identity is seen as difficult or inappropriate for women. Women displaying the supposed male behaviours associated with leadership are often seen to be subverting prevailing gender stereotypes and accordingly suffer backlash or criticism (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). One British participant from a major global agency said,

> *"They thought that I had too many opinions and shouldn't have opinions at all, and the way that I said things was wrong even though I think it was very much similar to how a man would say things"* (P7).

A lack of affirmation from the community then impacts their ability to see themselves as a creative leader and can initiate a negative spiral. As one US participant from independent agency notes,

> *"I think as a woman in advertising you're always thinking I don't really belong here, you kind of speak to yourself, like wow I'm so lucky to have a job and would anybody else give me this job, and you almost feel like a work experience person who's just had their contract extended, even when you're a major player"(*P1).

Constructing a leadership identity in an organization is a complex process of both claiming the desired identity, and having that identity validated through social interactions. Creative women might well seek to claim a leadership identity, but it is not always accepted or endorsed within

the gendered environment of the creative department, and without affirmation, a women's leadership journey may stall. However, the women who participated in this study believe that the advertising industry is showing a distinct lack of vision for an industry built on imagination.

> *"Everybody always talks about great change or whatever, but it really hasn't changed for 50 years"* (P16).
>
> *"They think the way of fixing the situation is literally to put women inside an existing male system, we need a new system"* (P14).

Seeking recognition in the existing system means that women keep their head down and get on with the job. Yet, participants acknowledge that beyond competence in the day job, a well-articulated vision for the future of the department and even the ad industry itself, can help an employee stand out and suggest their leadership potential. Envisioning an alternative style of leadership could also mobilise others to make change a reality. However, if women are currently expending energy in trying to emulate a male leadership identity and adopting the practices of a strongly-gendered culture, developing a vision for a different future might seem a luxury, rather than an essential part of leadership development.

Voice

Participants acknowledged the on-going discussions around the need to see more women in senior creative roles, but argue that there is an additional need to amplify the voices and creative ideas of women. Voice is defined by the World Bank (2020) as the capacity to speak up and be heard, to participate in discussions, discourse, and decisions. As one of the participants argues,

> *"We want a system where we are equal in telling those stories about women"* (P29).

Indeed, the data indicates that women increasingly recognise that being heard; giving voice to vision is critical in establishing presence and credibility and in being seen as a leader. At the

heart of the creative process is the need to sell ideas to win accounts and creative awards. However, women describe this competitive process as brutal, one in which ideas and their proponents are often interrogated and pulled apart to breaking point. The participants in this study also feel their voices are evaluated differently to men.

> *"Guys will just go up and present stuff, two seconds later everyone will go, yeah, round of applause, high fives…Women have to work a lot harder to get that kind of respect"* (P27).

They report the more *'muscular'* language used by men to assert their authority. In contrast, women report having their voice interrupted and being spoken over in meetings usually by men, and ultimately being judged by different standards. Even if they do speak up in meetings, they can often be belittled or find that their idea is attributed to a man.

> *"You can really feel the tension, [in a pitch] like it's palpable, there's just a general dismissiveness around your opinions, when what is needed is encouragement, encouragement, encouragement"* (P23).
> *"Women get crushed in many ways, and derided, and sometimes it's a little bit like the straw that broke the camel's back and then they won't choose to continue their career in advertising"* (P30).

A French participant based in Paris adds,

> *"So if you have some hideous guy who makes you feel like an idiot it can set you back, and I've had that before where men have turned on you, and you may have given an opinion or viewpoint and it's different to the other person's and they make you feel like a total idiot, that doesn't help with your confidence"* (P2).

In this environment, women report that they can be hesitant to articulate their ideas and opinions, often preferring to wait until they are more certain of the facts. In short, they might not take the

opportunity to express their leadership, or it might be taken from them initiating a negative spiral which undermines self-confidence, weakening a sense of self as a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

There was a belief among the women that in a high-stakes client pitch, there is still a persistent belief that men do a better job of articulating and selling the idea. Yet, participating, interacting, and gaining feedback from the community of practice are activities considered crucial to being accepted in a leadership role (Ibarra et al., 2013; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). The difficulties women experience in getting their voices heard limit their ability to express themselves. Consistent with the findings of DeRue and Ashford (2010), when women do not receive sufficient affirmation of their leadership identity it can inject doubt into their sense of self as leader.

Visibility

American activist Marian White Edelman famously said, "You can't be what you can't see" (2015, p.1) so it is little wonder that the predominance of men in leadership does little to encourage women in progressing to leadership positions. Instead, their minority status appears to give rise to what Faulkner (2009) in a study of female engineers, described as 'in/visibility paradox' whereby women are at the same time both highly visible as women, yet invisible as engineers. Female creatives would appear to suffer from a similar paradox. Their minority status within creative advertising brings greater visibility to them as women, but renders them less visible as creative leaders. As a consequence, participants report being highly visible as women and highlight issues of sexual harassment. Older participants however, reported that younger colleagues were less likely to acknowledge it when they are still finding their feet in the industry. It seems as if the reverence paid to some male creative leaders has perpetuated a culture which facilitates, or at least turns a blind eye, to abuses of power. Participants describe how this has

made both the reporting and the handling of any misconduct difficult. A culture persists in which some men have been seen as a cash, or indeed, sacred cow, that cannot be challenged for fear of any impact on the bottom line or client relationships. A woman from the UK (P14) reports that she struggled to have issues of sexual harassment taken seriously, instead she was told to *"lighten up"* and even *"enjoy the attention".* Another US woman (P15) was told by HR that links with an important client made one particular male creative director *"untouchable".* However, as one woman reports, now she is older she is less visible as a woman and no longer a target, as she describes,

> *"when you walk into a meeting if you're older and you're not attractive anymore, you get more shit done, it's worked for me since 40, but it's a damn shame that I had to wait till 40 for somebody to take me seriously and leave me alone"* (P9).

The problems of workplace sexism are also not limited to staff, as one woman reported,

> *"Casting is a big thing, because I used to work in the production side so I know a lot about casting, and I tell you any feminist will be horrified, it is an unbelievable issue… the discussion of women's looks and the passing around of casting tapes for 'recreational' purposes"* (P15).

There was some mention of #Metoo and the ad industry's #TimesUp campaign which is seen to acknowledge the industry's culture of inequality and sexual harassment. However, this may be having unintended consequences, even driving some male behaviours underground making them less visible. It appears that despite men being more conscious of their behaviour in the office, they now appeared to view out-of-hours activity as a way to be their "true" selves, away from the constraints of the workplace. These activities can feel exclusive and can also strengthen men's opportunities to forge ties with leadership and develop their own leadership identity.

Despite the acknowledged risks, participants recognise that without any formal leadership training, women need to make themselves more, not less visible in order to be seen as potential creative leaders. Career progression is linked to self-presentation and promotion but as the women acknowledge, *"no one will do it for you".* Therefore, increased visibility and developing a personal brand both on and off-line is an important part of being seen, heard, and most crucially, considered for leadership. Yet, consistent with previous research which recognises that women are more reluctant to promote themselves (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018) and more passive, using relatively low levels of self-promotion (Bolino et al., 2016), participants recognise that increased visibility and the associated self-promotion can be uncomfortable.

> *"Self-promotion is really, really important, and women just don't do that themselves at all. I think the way that they might be able to do it themselves is if they see more women do it"* (P6).

Even if women achieve greater visibility through self-promotion, it can increase the scrutiny to which they are subjected. Ironically, this can make women more risk-averse and more likely to step away from their vision and sense of purpose. Women report how the risks associated with visibility drive some female creatives to shift to less front-line roles in either planning or account management. Others withdraw from traditional agencies and move to digital agencies and smaller shops, whilst many more leave to work for themselves. All of which, may help explain their low numbers in positions of advertising leadership and help us understand why more of their number are considering leaving in the next two years.

Time for action

The findings of this paper suggest that advertising agencies are guilty of hypocrisy. While they appear to have embraced equality and empowerment for female consumers, they have been much slower to achieve equality for their female creatives. Beyond moral arguments for female

empowerment and equality, there is a compelling business case for agencies to change. The industry is coming under increasing pressure with clients taking work in-house. Agencies face intense competition from Facebook, Google, and the management consultancies who are coming into the sector, and are experiencing growing difficulties in connecting with consumers (Hsu, 2019). A recent report from research group Forrester (2019) suggests it is time for advertising to stop talking and take urgent action to deconstruct and rebuild its current model, or risk becoming increasingly irrelevant.

A number of collectives and individual campaigners are actively campaigning for equal gender representation in creative director roles, including Cindy Gallup, Madonna Badger, the *3% Conference* in the USA, *Creative Equals* and *WACL* in the UK, and *See it Be it* from Cannes Lions and Spotify. Yet, these activists and their current audiences are mostly women, who have taken on the responsibility for change (Pashley, 2018). However, they cannot, nor should they, do it alone. Global clients such as P&G and Unilever have recognised the appetite for change, and are combining growth with social responsibility to improve on their representations of women. However, participants in this study feel that ad agencies have been slower to take action. Yet, allowing women to exert more influence over agency leadership and creative messaging is now both a pressing issue and a commercial imperative. Based on current debate and insights from 30 interviews, recommendations are outlined below to suggest how advertising agencies can take opportunities to affirm the vision, voice, and visibility of female creatives.

Recommendations

Vision

The answer to advertising's gender imbalance is not to simply put more women into the existing system. Advertising is an industry founded on imagination and creativity, now it must envision a different system for itself. Agencies can:

- Set out a vision for gender equality with buy-in at the senior level. Set a target and clearly communicate this to employees. Report and be accountable for progression. Provide unconscious bias training for everyone to help people see their role in the problem, e.g. Creative Equals in the UK run a number of diversity and inclusion courses for ad agencies.

- Create new communities of practice. Experiment with women-only creative teams to better represent the powerful female consumer.

- Envision new models of leadership. Re-design the identity of a CD as a gender neutral role, fit for 2020 and beyond. Provide and promote formal, gender-intelligent leadership training. See the work of Barbara Annis and the Gender Intelligence Group in the US.

- Change the gendered workspace. Stop making women feel 'other', take out the bar, the pool tables and the baby football. Redesign the space with everyone in mind. First steps might include asking employees to create mood boards, or experiment by designing pop-up spaces.

Voice

Gendered cultures and accepted practice mean that women struggle to be heard, yet articulating a vision and selling creative ideas is a crucial part of developing a creative leadership identity. Agencies can:

- Apply a zero-tolerance approach to men interrupting women or speaking over them, even perhaps introducing gamification into the workplace to raise awareness of effective communication in a way that is engaging to employees (Robson et al. 2019);

- Provide public speaking training for women based not on technique but focussed on articulating and defending their perspective. Be seen as a first mover in getting women's

voices heard. Sponsor an industry-wide initiative to develop the voices of future female leaders, see the work of EG and Ginger Public Speaking in the UK.

● Redesign the pitching process to allow women to be heard. Offer positive affirmation alongside constructive criticism. Replace head-to-head competition with the iterative development of ideas.

● Change the narrative. The language of conflict is currently embedded into creative departments with references to war rooms, battles, penetration, and territories. Remove stereotypical male language from job descriptions, replace language such as "drive, competitive, aggressive" which can deter female candidates, with more gender neutral language.

Visibility

Women at all levels perceive visibility to be an important opportunity, but also a significant risk. To help women manage these, agencies can:

- Provide and promote clear reporting systems for sexual misconduct and deal with these reports promptly and thoroughly.

- Make female talent more visible. Women cannot be what they cannot see, thus this is a crucial step in inspiring a new generation of leaders. Increase the visibility of successful senior women through available platforms. Consider developing on-line profiles, recorded interviews, or using Facebook Live to facilitate them in sharing their experience of negotiating a leadership identity.

- Be seen as an employer brand that is serious about female progression and influence. Use existing marketing channels to leverage initiatives to support women. This will not only help increase the visibility of female creatives, but can also boost agency profile.

Conclusion

Something in Adland doesn't add up. Despite widespread discussion of equality and the recent trend for *femvertising*, advertising still has a gender problem. If the advertising industry wants its pro-female advertising to be taken seriously and avoid accusations of hypocrisy, then it must now similarly empower its female creatives. Creative women are still struggling to negotiate a leadership identity within gendered creative departments which limits their influence over the industry and the ads that get made. While the findings might describe the female experience in many male-dominated environments, advertising's gender imbalance is also clearly linked to its current culture and practices. Acknowledging the problem is only the start, affirming women as current and future leaders is the crucial next step.

7 Paper 5: Battle-Weary Women: The Female Creatives Fighting for Leadership in Advertising Management

7.1 Foreword

Advertising clearly has a persistent gender problem, Papers 3 and 4 found that female creatives are still operating under the, "cloud of masculinity" described by Grow and Deng (2015, p. 10). No one issue or barrier has been isolated as the main problem, instead a number of factors appear to conspire to impede women's progress. To date, a number of theories have been brought to bear on advertising's gender issues including; situated learning theory (Windels & Mallia, 2015), creativity (Grow & Broyles, 2011), IM (Thompson-Whiteside et al. 2020) and identity (Thompson-Whiteside, 2020a). While this has drawn a number of valuable insights, Paper 5 contends that this type of theory-led research might be precluding other insights (Belk & Sobh, 2019). It is acknowledged that there are still gaps in our understanding of this persistent issue (Windels & Mallia, 2015). Therefore, this study sought to explore the experiences of female creatives by taking an open approach, capturing both "retrospective and real-time accounts" (Gioia et al., 2013b, p. 19) of female creatives' experiences, guided by just one broad question: *What has been your experience of seeking career progression in a creative advertising department?*

Rather than the researcher imposing *a priori* constructs at the data collection stage, an inductive approach (Gioia et al. 2013) is adopted. This allows the researcher to follow wherever participants take the conversation as they respond to this broad guiding question. In this way, the researcher can be open to much-needed fresh insights and interpretations of the persistent problem of gender inequality in creative advertising. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative methodology was employed to learn more about women's own constructions of their

experiences through in-depth interviews with 25 female creatives from a range of agencies in the USA, UK and mainland Europe.

Consistent with previous research, the women in this study describe a number of the familiar cultural and structural barriers they encounter as they work and seek career progression within advertising's strongly gendered creative departments. However, this study additionally finds that female creatives consistently use metaphors to describe their experience of advertising's strongly-gendered workplaces, likening their struggle for recognition and career progression to warfare. One over-arching metaphor with four related sub-themes was identified in the data: *Rules of engagement*; *At the front line*, *Battle-weary women*; and; *New model army.*

Metaphors allow two unrelated concepts to be connected to produce a new understanding of reality (Morgan, 1980). Using metaphors appears to allow women to more effectively convey their experiences by drawing on familiar images of war. Perhaps their choice of metaphor is not surprising, given that since the 1980's comparisons between marketing and warfare have been made by both academics and practitioners alike (Cornelissen 2003; Delbaere & Slobodzian, 2019; Kotler & Singh, 1981; Ries & Trout, 1986; Rindfleisch, 1996). The widespread use of military-style language within the marketing sphere is both commonplace, and a widely accepted metaphor. References are often made to the planning, launching, implementation and control of offensive and defensive strategies, tactics and campaigns, positioning, targets, the entering and penetrating of territories and markets, all with the ultimate aim of winning customers, beating, and even destroying competitors (Rindfleisch, 1996; Saren, 2007). In this way, metaphor has been used to map a familiar domain, such as warfare, on to the less-familiar domain (Morgan, 1980) of marketing, making concepts easier to understand, communicate and recall (Delbaere & Slobodzian, 2019). Indeed, the conception of marketing as war has proved to be enduring, has successfully popularised marketing and advertising concepts, and even been used to describe

elements of the creative advertising process (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017). Alarmingly, the findings of this study suggest it might also have come to describe the workplace itself.

While prior research highlighted the use of metaphor as a form of identity work (Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Nyberg & Svenningsson, 2014) and as a cognitive coping strategy (Carollo & Guerci, 2018), to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first to highlight the role of metaphor in shaping the workplace. It therefore contributes to our understanding of advertising's gender problem. The findings of this study suggest that the prevalence of war-like metaphors to describe both marketing activity and elements of advertising's creative process, has had unintended consequences for female creatives by suggesting and even legitimising combative behaviours and attitudes in the workplace.

7.2 **Published paper**

Battle-Weary Women: The female creatives fighting for leadership in advertising management

Helen Thompson-Whiteside

The gender problem

Advertising still has a gender problem. Practitioners such as Kevin Roberts, the executive chairman of Saatchi and Saatchi, might argue that the debate about gender is "over" and chief creative officer of M&C, and Justin Tindall may well claim to be "bored of diversity", but despite on-going discussions, women are still under-represented at the top of creative departments in all countries (Grow et al., 2012), accounting for less than 15% of all creative directors worldwide (Grow & Deng, 2014; Wohl & Stein, 2016). So, who is bored now?

Women continue to fight for equality but the problem remains. Many women feel defeated by the challenges they face as they seek advancement, with some feeling that it is easier to leave the industry than to change it (Bronwin, 2018). Women face on-going sexual harassment, now considered one of the biggest problems facing the industry (Kemp, 2018). They appear to be losing the battle for equal representation in creative leadership (Mallia & Windels 2018) which severely limits the influence they can have on the adverts that are made. Unsurprisingly perhaps, advertising is criticised for its representation of women (JWT Intelligence, 2017), in particular for its use of harmful gender stereotypes (Advertising Standards Authority, 2018), and the ways in which it objectifies women (Stein, 2017). Advertising is credited with the power and responsibility to reflect society (Shabbir et al., 2018; Windels, 2016), yet the industry appears to be out of touch with the changing role of the female consumer and the aspirations of its female creatives. Women may now exert unprecedented levels of influence on the market place (3% conference), but they still make up only 23.5 per cent of

creative teams globally (Deng & Grow, 2018) and account for an even smaller minority of creative directors worldwide, leaving advertising's claims to reflect the increasingly powerful female consumer seriously undermined.

Why does the gender problem persist?

The problem of female representation and gender inequality in creative advertising has been widely discussed by academics and practitioners alike. The progression of women to creative leadership is not due to insufficient numbers in the pipeline. Women make up around half of the advertising workforce in the US, UK and Spain (Windels & Mallia, 2015), but few make it to leadership positions (Grow et al., 2012; Grow & Deng, 2014). Speaking in 2016, Kevin Roberts implied that women lack the ambition for leadership, while advertising scholars have put forward a number of structural and cultural reasons for this stubborn problem. One of the much-cited barriers is the culture of advertising's creative departments, which have been built on a male paradigm and shaped by male norms (Nixon & Crewe, 2004; Stuhlfaut, 2011). In these departments, personality factors more often associated with men such as competitiveness, perseverance, toughness, and a thick skin are seen as important factors for success (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009, Windels & Lee, 2012). Even the language used to describe the creative process appears to be gendered, with reference to "war rooms" and "territories" (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017, pp. 185-186). The existing culture demands long working hours (Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011) and has traditionally been poor at providing flexible work arrangements (Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011) for employees, presenting particular difficulties for mothers (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009) when they return to the workplace. The identity of creative director is perceived to be male with many male creative directors hiring in their own image, often leaving women struggling for recognition, or even access to certain accounts (Broyles & Grow, 2008; Singh & Lepitak, 2018). The net result is that

women can often feel like outsiders in advertising's creative departments, feeling that they must emulate male behaviours in order to succeed, which can feel inauthentic or inappropriate for them, (Thompson-Whiteside, 2020a; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020).

There have been concerted efforts made by campaigning groups, such as 3% Conference in the US, Creative Equals in the UK and See it Be it from Cannes Lions, but change has been slow. No one issue or barrier has been isolated as the main problem. Instead, women are seen to be operating under a "cloud of masculinity" (Grow & Deng, 2015, p.10) with a number of factors conspiring to impede their progress. To date, a number of theories have been brought to bear on the gender issue including; situated learning theory (Windels & Mallia, 2015), creativity (Grow & Broyles, 2011) and impression management (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). While this has drawn a number of valuable insights, this type of theory-led research might be precluding other insights (Belk & Sobh, 2019). It is acknowledged that there are still gaps in our understanding of this persistent issue (Windels & Mallia, 2015). Therefore, this study sought to explore the experiences of female creatives by taking an open approach, capturing both "retrospective and real-time accounts" (Gioia et al., 2013b, p. 19) of female creatives' experiences, guided by just one broad question:

RQ: *What has been your experience of seeking career progression in a creative advertising department?*

Methods

An inductive approach to data collection (Gioia et al., 2013b) was adopted, allowing the researcher to follow wherever participants took the conversation as they responded to this guiding question. This approach allows the researcher to uncover experiences and interpretations of this gendered-environment as put forward by female participants, rather than the researcher imposing *a priori* constructs at the data collection stage. The researcher can therefore be open to

much-needed fresh insights and interpretations of the persistent problem of gender inequality in creative advertising. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative methodology was employed to learn more about women's own constructions of their experiences through in-depth interviews. Interviews lasted up to 60 minutes and were undertaken face-to-face and via telephone with 25 female creatives from a range of agencies in the USA, UK and mainland Europe.

Data analysis

Table 10 provides a graphic representation of how the data was structured by the researcher progressing from raw data to themes.

1st order themes	2nd Order themes	Aggregate dimensions
creative God army general clique of men. being like one of the lads socialising out of work being included humour banter	Leadership identity Uncomfortable Workplace culture Fitting in	Rules of engagement
willing to run the gauntlet pitching ideas under fire too many opinions putting your head above the parapet back lash Need for self-promotion Getting soul crushed Door is closed	Risk Criticism Standing out Exposure Double standards	At the front line
Tired of fighting Not the army Problems with system Working hours Nothing new Lack of equality Fight for recognition Return from maternity leave	Exploitative system Tired Motherhood No change	Battle-weary
Need for something new Army of change makers Fight for a new system Cooperation not competition New ways of working Banging the drum for equality Social media for recognition Breaking away	Desire for new system Equality Personal branding Opportunity Freedom	New-model army

Table 10: *Data structure*

These were identified through close analysis of how participants described their experience, staying true to the wording they used. This process also facilitates the researcher in starting to move from thinking of the data in terms of simply methodology, to developing a theoretical viewpoint (Gioia et al., 2013b).

Findings

Interviewees discussed their experience making extended use of military allusions to convey the struggle they, and other women, experience in being accepted, and granted authority by the community of practice in which they operate. One over-arching warfare metaphor with four related sub-themes were identified in the data: *Rules of engagement*; *At the front line*, *Battle-weary women*; and; *New model army.* Verbatim quotes are included to illustrate the themes and the dimensions that result from the aggregation of these.

Rules of engagement

Respondents described creative departments bound by codes or rules which dictate what is acceptable in creative departments. They describe the space as shaped by, "*a clique of men*", and led by men who they liken to "*creative gods*" or *"army generals".* Male behaviours are privileged in this space. As the minority coming into this space, women feel that they must conform to be granted access, or accorded the right to participate in the community. To comply with the established *rules of engagement,* women emulate male behaviours *"to be one of the lads"* and participate in humour and social activities which can often feel inappropriate and uncomfortable. Some participants describe making a conscious decision to abide by these rules or codes of conduct, while they noted that other female colleagues struggled, or had left agencies after finding they could not conform in the ways that the male culture demands.

At the front line

Participants describe the process of pitching and defending their creative ideas as akin to being *at the front line*. They recognise the need to put themselves forward, and engage in self-promotion but use the language of warfare to describe their experience. They speak of, "*running the gauntlet*" or putting their, "*head above the parapet*" when they share their ideas and opinions. They often feel attacked and describe the experience as coming, "*under fire*". One woman describes the behaviour of men saying, "*creative male directors in advertising are allowed to be so difficult and violent*". Current practice requires creatives to not only advance, but also defend their ideas. However, women describe receiving harsh criticism from men, with defensive action considered to be equally unwelcome. Assertive women appear to experience a backlash, being seen as, "*disruptive…difficult and aggressive*". Many participants spoke of an, "*on-going fight*" for inclusion and recognition.

Battle-weary women

For some women, front-line experience has honed their skills, brought affirmation and led to career progress. While for others constant criticism and resistance injects self-doubt and brings fatigue. Women report being tired of the struggle, "*I don't want to go to work and fight, I'm not at war here, like I didn't join the army*". Others question the wisdom of the current fight, "*why are we looking for equality in an exploitive system, we need to be saying something totally different*". This leads many to not only question but reject the culture of traditional ad agencies. Some keep fighting, and in their words, "*banging the drum*", while others shift to less front-line roles in planning and account management. Some female creatives simply leave, choosing to move to smaller independent agencies or to work for themselves.

New model army

There were signs however of a new tribe of women emerging, a *new model army,* who are creating new cultures outside of traditional agencies or moving for change within them. There is, *"a massive army of women right now who want things to change", "who want to be a part a system where [we] are equal in telling those stories about women"*. Rather than continuing to struggle for verification within an existing system, women with a sense of agency are taking opportunities to shape new cultures and experiment with new styles of creative production, *"things are starting to loosen up a bit on the edges".* They are rejecting the existing practices, and replacing these with the co-creation of ideas and business solutions. This *new model army* of women recognise the need for female creatives to engage in personal narrative building, leveraged through self-promotion, social media and networks.

Discussion

Consistent with previous research, the women in this study describe a number of cultural and structural barriers they have encountered as they work and seek career progression within advertising's strongly gendered creative departments. However, this study additionally finds that female creatives consistently use metaphor to describe their experience of advertising's strongly-gendered workplaces, likening their struggle for recognition and career progression to war.

Metaphors allow two unrelated concepts to be connected to produce a new understanding of reality (Morgan 1980). Using war metaphors appears to allow women to more effectively convey their experiences by drawing on a more familiar image, such as war. Perhaps their choice of metaphor is not surprising, given that since the 1980's comparisons between marketing and warfare have been made by both academics and practitioners alike (Cornelissen, 2003; Delbaere & Slobodzian, 2019; Kotler & Singh, 1981; Ries & Trout, 1986; Rindfleisch, 1996). The widespread use of military-style language within the marketing sphere is both commonplace and

a widely accepted metaphor. References are often made to the planning, launching, implementation and control of offensive and defensive strategies, tactics and campaigns, positioning, targets, the entering and penetrating of territories and markets, all with the ultimate aim of winning customers, beating, and even destroying competitors (Rindfleisch, 1996; Saren, 2007). In this way, metaphor has been used to map a familiar domain, such as warfare on to another, perhaps less-familiar domain (Morgan, 1980) such as marketing, making concepts easier to understand, communicate and recall (Delbaere & Slobodzian, 2014, 2019). Indeed, the conception of marketing as war has proved to be an enduring metaphor, which has successfully popularised marketing and advertising concepts , and even been used to describe elements of the creative process (Turnbull & Wheeler, 2017), but the findings of this study suggest it might also have come to describe the workplace itself.

Conceiving of marketing as warfare has been successful in conveying urgency and action (Delbaere & Slobodzian, 2019). However, metaphor can also be limited or even problematic. Limited in that any metaphor can only ever provide partial understanding, as they can explain and highlight some aspects of a phenomenon, but obscure or downplay others (Brown, 2008; Rindfleisch, 1996). Problematic in that their application may go beyond initial intentions. For example, conceiving of marketing as war has been useful in communicating a range of marketing activities. Military language helps describe the launch of a campaign, the need to defend territory, win customers and beat the competition, but this language is seen as "highly gendered" (Saren, 2007 p. 12) and its prevalence problematic when it goes further to suggest, and even sanction, combative behaviours and attitudes (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) in the workplace.

Prior research has highlighted the use of metaphor as a form of identity work (Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Nyberg & Svenningsson, 2014) and as a cognitive coping strategy (Carollo & Guerci, 2018) but to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the role of metaphor in shaping the

workplace has not previously been identified. Therefore this study contributes to our understanding of a lack of female creative leaders by suggesting that the prevalence of war-like metaphors to describe both marketing activity and elements of advertising's creative process, has had unintended consequences for female creatives by suggesting and legitimising combative behaviours and attitudes in the workplace.

Conclusion

This study has found that the current norms within the creative departments require female creatives to convince others of the value of their work and their leadership abilities, within a community of practice which they find aggressive and even hostile. Women are fighting to participate in their community, but the acceptance and affirmation of these behaviours is limited, or at best inconsistent. Negative feedback and criticism, undermine women's confidence and even their future motivation to progress, leading many female creatives to withdraw, or even exit the field. The net result is that few women reach positions of creative leadership with female creative directors still a small minority of all creative directors worldwide. The challenges of women in advertising have been well documented in the literature, but this study also suggests that employees may be further impacted by marketing's most dominant metaphor. This paper therefore contributes to our understanding of the barriers women face within advertising's creative departments. It would appear that marketing-as-warfare is no longer simply a description. Instead it may have become a prescription by suggesting combative work-place behaviours and attitudes which negatively shape the experiences of women. If as Brown (2008) argues, it is only those metaphors which continue to fit the managerial environment which survive, then we should be deeply concerned that the metaphor of marketing appears to be intact, and is still proving useful in describing the experience of women within the field. As Delbaere

and Slobodzian (2019 p. 391) argue, marketing has a metaphor problem, and understanding it

may just help us better understand advertising's gender problem.

8   Paper 6: #Metoovertising: The Institutional Work of Creative Women looking to Change the Rules of the Advertising Game

8.1 Foreword

Viewed through the lens of institutional theory, Papers 1-5 identify women as institutional actors who are subject to a range of established practices and logics which exert a form of social control and limit their progress. Despite the growing popularity of female empowerment and the emergence of femvertising, creative advertising is still a hostile environment for women. Late nights and little, or no, separation between work and social activity, often create uncomfortable situations for women, and has given rise to a wide-spread culture of sexual harassment in the industry (Advertising Association, 2019; Kemp, 2018). So perhaps *femvertising* is simply impression management on the part of the ad industry after all, rather than a genuine commitment to gender equality? Despite the launch in 2018 of its own response to #Metoo, in the form of Time'sUp/Advertisng and the #Timeto campaign, the industry has been widely criticised for not doing enough, or fast enough, to bring about change (Lambiase & Bronstein, 2020; Rittenhouse, 2018).

To help us understand how actors may be involved in changing established dynamics, a growing number of marketing scholars are turning to institutional theory (see Slimane et al., 2019), and to institutional logics (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Hartman & Coslor, 2019; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2012). Paper 6 contributes to this emerging stream of literature and responds to a call for different theoretical perspectives in advertising research (Chang, 2017; Faber, 2015), and for greater emphasis to be given to communicative resources (Cornelissen et al., 2015).

Paper 5 highlighted the influence of language on the marketing workplace and paper 6 continues this exploration. It adopts institutional theory to consider how female creatives, as actors with less power, are subject to the language of men. However, this study also identifies

how this same language provides a discursive resource, reframed through advertising and used by women to challenge the legitimacy of established practices within creative departments.

The activity of Les Lionnes, https://www.instagram.com/leslionnesfrance/ , a French non-profit organisation set up to specifically address the gender inequality within the French advertising industry (Little Black Book, 2019a), provides a useful context to explore institutional work. Inspired by public debates in France over the unfair treatment of women and #Metoopub, (a French strand of the global #Mettoo debate), Les Lionnes set out to shine a light on, "the violent and iniquitous and unequal truth of an industry that makes women its main casualties over and over" (Smiley, 2019). This study analyses the language used in the posters of a campaign undertaken by Les Lionnes June 2019, considering these as a discursive resource. Through a process of triangulation, this study also considers the impact of this institutional work.

In response to calls for novel methodological approaches in advertising research (Chang, 2017), this study adopts critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the posters to reveal the power relations embedded in the language. Secondly, a semi-structured interview with the founder of les Lionnes together with netnography were undertaken to triangulate initial findings and consider the impact of the poster campaign.

The findings expose the language of sexual harassment which is still prevalent in advertising, which might otherwise remain invisible. Prior research has recognised that discursive strategies can oppress women (Lakoff, 1973), however, the central contribution of this study is in showing how gendered language can be reframed by women and used to subvert the male dominance. It therefore contributes to institutional theory, to show how actors with less power can overcome institutional constraints, by forming a boundary organisation adjacent to an institutional field, and using marketing tools to challenge institutional logics.

This study provides evidence that advertising can appropriate the sexist language of men, and reframe it to expose and challenge the inequities of institutional logics. This paper also identifies that the success of institutional work can be enhanced when it is aligned with social discourse, such as the #Metoo movement. This paper therefore conceptualises advertising which exposes sexist and established institutional logics as #Metoovertising.

8.2 **Published paper**

#Metoovertising: The Institutional Work of Creative Women looking to Change the Rules of the Advertising Game

Helen Thompson-Whiteside
Dr. Sarah Turnbull

Abstract

In the wake of #Metoo, the ad industry is coming to terms with its own issues of sexual harassment. While the industry has publicly committed to address this, recent surveys indicate that the problem persists. We therefore explore the institutional work of actors who are constrained by these gendered institutional arrangements. We consider how they might be involved in changing established dynamics and seek to erode the sexist attitudes and behaviours prevalent in ad agencies. We consider the work of Les Lionnes, a collective of women working in French advertising agencies, who form a boundary organisation to address sexual harassment in the French industry. By conducting critical discourse of their 2019 poster campaign, together with a netnographic study of their social media sites and an interview with its founder, we identify how communicative resources are used to expose the sexist attitudes and behaviours embedded in discourse. Our findings show actors can use advertising to challenge the continued legitimacy of institutional logics. The success of this work may be further enhanced when it is aligned with a wider social discourse, such as #Metoo. We therefore conceptualise the advertising undertaken by Les Lionnes as institutional work which seeks to expose sexual harassment and abuse within the ad industry. We call this novel form of advertising #Metoovertising.

Keywords: gender, advertising, critical discourse analysis, social networks, #Metoo, #Metoovertising

Contribution statement

We identify that the formation of a boundary organisation adjacent to an institutional field, enables actors to overcome institutional constraints.

We provide evidence of advertising which appropriates the sexist language of men, reframing it to expose and challenge the inequities of institutional logics.

We find that the success of institutional work is enhanced when it is aligned with social discourse.

We conceptualise advertising which exposes sexist and established institutional logics as #Metoovertising

"He fired me because I tweeted #MeToo" (Les Lionnes)
"I'll put you on the brief if you suck my d**k" (Les Lionnes)

#Metoo, the social-media hashtag, has been used to share experiences of sexual abuse and done much to increase the visibility of gender issues within society (Rubery, 2019). Few industries have been exempt from criticism but the two quotes above from women working inside advertising reveal something of advertising's own gendered power dynamics in which sexual harassment is described as, "a continuing blight on [the] industry with significant emotional and professional impact on the people in advertising" (Advertising Association, 2019). Over the last decade advertising has made strides to address its gender issues by looking at how women are portrayed in adverts, and tackled the often negative stereotypes which have been shown to reduce women's professional performance and their career aspirations (Eisend, 2019). However, it has been much slower to address the gendered nature of the industry itself, particularly the persistent sexist attitudes and behaviours still experienced by many of its female employees.

Women now make up almost fifty percent of the advertising workforce in the UK, US and Spain (Windels & Mallia, 2015), but as highlighted by Maclaran & Catterall (2000), increased feminisation of the marketing workplace does not necessarily lead to changes to existing structures or to the balance of power. Across the sector women hold only a third of all leadership roles, accounting for less than 15% of all creative directors worldwide (Grow & Deng, 2014; Wohl & Stein, 2016), while continuing to be less rewarded by the field for their work (Singh & Lepitak, 2018). A steady stream of literature has highlighted the institutionalised practices (Broyles & Grow, 2008; Grow & Broyles, 2011; Grow et al., 2012; Mallia, 2009; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020; Windels, 2018; Windels & Lee, 2012) which limit women's career progression, yet few studies have explored the issue of sexual harassment in the advertising industry. Recent surveys however, highlight both the persistence and scale of the

issue. A study, conducted in 2016 by the AAAA in the US, found that more than 50% of the women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment at least once (Hill, 2016), while another conducted in the UK by Credos, the ad industry think tank, indicates that the problem remains a clear and present danger. It found that 69% of those who have been sexually harassed have experienced it within the last 5 years, and 28% in the last 12 months (Mason, 2019). The results also show that ad agencies in the UK have not made women feel comfortable in coming forward about the issue. Over three-quarters of all those that had experienced sexual harassment had not reported the incident. Not surprisingly, almost half of those who participated in the UK survey said their company would benefit from very clear sexual harassment guidelines and policies, while a third called for training on how to deal with sexual harassment (Faull, 2019).

So, do advertising's interests in gender equality extend beyond the women in the ads to include the women who work in advertising? Prompted by the global #Metoo movement, the ad industry has at least now acknowledged its own problems of sexual harassment. Time's Up/Advertising in the US, supported by leading women in prominent positions, called for the transformation of an industry which has been, "mythologized for its misogyny" (Gordon, 2018, p. 1). In the UK, over 100 ad agencies signed up to the initiative TimeTo, which calls for wholesale cultural change to tackle systemic sexual harassment (Kemp, 2018). In France, Les Lionnes, a French non-profit organisation, formed to identify and address sexual harassment and gender inequality within the French advertising industry (Little Black Book, 2019b). Such initiatives have publicly acknowledged the widespread problems of gender equality, diversity and sexism in advertising (Lambiase & Bronstein, 2020). Yet, the industry has been widely criticised for not acting fast enough to bring about change (Rittenhouse, 2018). Time's Up/Advertising appears to have, "disappeared from the scene", leaving the fight to individuals (Lambiase & Bronstein, 2020, p.1), while in France, Les Lionnes have fought for the concerns of

advertising's women to be heard, in a culture in which #Metoo is seen by some as a puritanical affront to French values (Kantor, 2020; Lehrer, 2020.)

So, how can the sexist institutionalised practices, which appear to particularly disadvantage the women working in advertising, be changed? There have been limited studies within the field of marketing which have considered the role marketing might play in addressing gender equality (Hein et al., 2016) and even less studies which consider any institutional work inspired by #Metoo. Furthermore, a number of scholars agree that the literature has tended to highlight the institutional work of those imbued with power and resource (Coskuner-Balli & Ertimur, 2017; Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Humphreys, 2010; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013; Weijo et al., 2018). Therefore, we set out to understand how actors constrained by institutional arrangements, might be involved in changing established dynamics. We also emphasise the role of communication in this institutional work in response to a call by Cornelissen et al. (2015). Therefore the objectives of our paper are to firstly explore how actors who are constrained by institutional arrangements can challenge existing logics, and secondly to identify the role of communicative resources in this institutional work. We explore the institutional work of Les Lionnes in two separate stages of data collection, firstly undertaking Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), then secondly undertaking netnography and an in-depth interview.

Our findings therefore, contribute to our understanding of institutional theory and advertising practice. Firstly, we add to an emerging stream of literature that considers the institutional work of actors who are constrained by institutional arrangements and may arguably have less power (Courpasson et al., 2017; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). We also identify how the formation of a boundary organisation adjacent to an institutional field (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008) can provide an effective means to overcome such institutional constraints.

Secondly, we contribute to knowledge by providing evidence of how women working in advertising in France are using the medium of advertising to challenge persistent institutional logics. While prior literature had recognised the potential of communicative resources within institutional theory (Cornelissen et al., 2015; Green & Li, 2011; Harmon et al., 2015; Hoefer & Green, 2016; Philips 2004; Moisander et al., 2016), we identify the role of advertising in not only exposing institutional logics, but also the role it can play in de-legitimising persistent practices. We also extend knowledge of the role of language in institutional work, providing evidence of how language might provide a discursive resource. We find that through a strategy of recontexualisation, the same language used by those in power to defend and maintain existing institutional logics, can be appropriated, repurposed and reframed, to expose and highlight the inequities of the workplace.

Thirdly, we add to the understanding of how the success of institutional work can be enhanced. We identify how institutional actors, constrained by institutional arrangements, can use a strategy of interdiscursivity (Wodak, 2015), to draw on discourse in the public domain (Fairclough, 1992), to provide context and legitimacy for their actions. The success of this strategy may be further enhanced when there is a strong alignment between the two.

The paper is structured as follows. To inform our study, we provide a review of the literature on women in advertising. An overview of relevant literature in institutional logics and institutional legitimacy is then undertaken to position our study. We outline our research approach and discuss the findings of our study. Finally, we provide a discussion and conclusion together with limitations, suggestions for future research, and managerial implications.

<u>Women in advertising</u>

While many professional fields including entrepreneurship (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018), politics (Fawcett Society, 2018), finance (Boateng, 2018), and STEM (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016) are similarly dominated by men, advertising agencies are seen to display their own particular rules and distinct gender dynamics (Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, 2015). A steady stream of literature has deepened our understanding of how these established rules within advertising limit the progress of women. The creative department in particular is considered a discrete culture (Nixon & Crewe, 2004), distinguished by particular rules, codes (Stuhlfaut, 2011), and collectively shared ideas (Alvesson, 1994; Mallia, 2009). The established rules of the advertising game privilege male norms (Windels & Lee, 2012), masculine hedonism, and homosociability (Gregory, 2009; Nixon & Crewe, 2004). Under these arrangements, women can struggle to gain recognition from their peers; are often excluded from certain accounts (Broyles & Grow, 2008), and less recognised for their work (Singh & Lepitak, 2018). Criteria considered important for success include personality factors more often associated with men, such as perseverance, toughness, competitiveness, and a thick skin (Grow & Broyles, 2011), with senior creative men tending to hire in their own image (Broyles & Grow, 2008). A culture of presenteism offers little flexibility in work arrangements, with staff expected to work extremely long hours (Mallia, 2009; Mallia & Windels, 2011), making motherhood a particular issue for women (Grow & Broyles, 2011; Mallia, 2009). These factors conspire to create a hostile and gender-bound working environment in which few women thrive (Grow & Deng, 2015), and are often forced to adopt inauthentic behaviours to secure belonging (Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2020). In addition, late nights and little, or no, separation between work and social activity, often create uncomfortable situations for women, and have given rise to a wide-spread culture of sexual harassment (Kemp, 2018). Many women feel it is easier to leave the industry than to try and change it (Bronwin, 2018), with recognition that retaining and developing female talent,

particularly in creative departments will require significant changes to agency culture and practices (Magee, 2016).

Theoretical Background

Institutional logics and institutional legitimacy

An institutional field, such as advertising, achieves stability through the adoption of similar practices by a range of actors (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012). Once established, accepted practices within an institutional field become the prevailing logic (Converse, 1987; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). These logics become institutionalised (Phillips et al., 2004; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and are given legitimacy (Harmon et al., 2015; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Legitimacy is defined by Suchman (1995, p. 574) as a, "generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially-constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions". Accepted logics then prescribe appropriate behaviour (Greenwood et al., 2011) and determine what is considered legitimate within an institutional field.

In recent years, there has also been growing interest in how the legitimacy of institutional arrangements are not only created, but changed or even transformed (Micelotta et al., 2017). The process by which existing practices are eroded, or even abandoned because they have lost their legitimacy, is termed deinstitutionalisation (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Oliver, 1992). If as Cornelissen et al. (2015, p.11) argue, communication is, "potentially formative of institutional reality", we might assume that it may equally be involved in eroding existing arrangements. Deinstitutionalisation may result from logics evolving over time (Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015), or stem from multiple, or potentially conflicting logics (Hartman & Coslor, 2019), which challenge existing notions of legitimacy. For example, what has come to be accepted as the legitimate *rules of the game* within male-dominated advertising agencies, may come into conflict with wider societal logics, which view gender equality as both legitimate and desirable.

The role of social environment in institutional legitimacy

A call for the cessation of certain practices may come from within an institutional field (Oliver, 1992), but may also come from outside (Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Calls for change may stem from technological or regulatory changes (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), from changes in the social environment, or even prompted by consumers who engage in diffuse, institutional work in the form of public opinion (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Maguire & Hardy, 2009). For example, Brunner and Partlow-Lefevre (2020) highlight the success of the #MeToo movement in raising awareness of sexual harassment and abuse, making the private very public and shaping social attitudes. This is key, as institutional theory indicates that the values of an institution or organisation are made legitimate by their links to the norms of wider societal structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008). When these norms shift, we might logically expect institutions to do the same. Changes in public opinion can be reflected, but also influenced by the media (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Media coverage sets an 'agenda' for public debate by framing issues in the way it selects, interprets and presents content (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020). Consequently, media discourse can exert external pressure, even social control (Noelle-Neumann, 1993), having a profound influence on perceptions of legitimacy (Pollock & Rindova, 2003), with influencers also known to have an impact on social media. Many influencers attract large numbers of followers on social media, forming associations between the influencers and the audience members (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Munnukka et al., 2019). While social media influencers have been widely studied within a brand context, influencers can also act as advocates on issues (Archer & Harrigan, 2016).

Institutional work and communicative resources to challenge institutional legitimacy

However influenced, shifts in public opinion may present opportunities for change (Cherrier et al., 2018). Institutional actors might engage in institutional work to, "shore up, tear down, tinker with, transform, or create anew the institutional structures within which they live, work, and play" (Lawrence et al., 2011, p. 53). Some will use the opportunity to engage in resistance, while others prefer to maintain the status quo (Battilana et al., 2009; Fiss et al., 2012).

The literature has tended to focus on the institutional work of 'hypermuscular' actors (Suddaby, 2010), but more recent studies have usefully highlighted the institutional work undertaken by those individuals with arguably less power due to institutional constraints (Courpasson et al., 2017; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) consider how marginalized consumers can gain greater inclusion in mainstream markets, while Courpasson et al. (2017) consider the role of place and space in offering sites of resistance for middle managers. Based on a shared desire for change (DiMaggio, 1982), individuals may come together in organised groups which exist on the boundaries of institutional fields (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008). Although some previous work found these groups to be disorganised micro-level practices (Ansari & Phillips, 2011), other studies have shown they can be successful (Dolbec & Fisher, 2015; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013), by disrupting accepted practices, and even renegotiating existing institutional logics (Rao, 2008). However, as Micelotta et al. (2017) remind us institutional work to bring about change may not always be successful.

The role of communicative resources in institutional legitimacy

Research has developed our understanding of how communication can be used to shape ideas of legitimacy (Harmon et al., 2015; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Suddaby, 2010). Yet, despite the resurgence of academic interest in resistance to inequities within the workplace, as charted by Mumby et al. (2017), less is understood about the role of communication in the de-legitimisation of practices (Cornelissen et al., 2015). To address this

gap, we therefore explore how actors may perform institutional work to render established practices socially, culturally and even politically unacceptable, (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Seo & Creed, 2002).

Language is given agency to produce and reproduce institutions (Philips et al., 2004). Texts and spoken word form discourse which, in turn, constructs reality by determining both acceptable and unacceptable ways to speak and behave (Hall, 2001). Discourse analysis can therefore involve the close examination of the use of language to reveal accepted assumptions within a community (Harmon et al., 2015). As Phillips et al. (2008) argue, social actors are placed in social spaces in positions from which they produce texts, with different positions offering different levels of agency, and differing rights to produce new texts and influence discourse. Analysis of discursive practices might reveal that some actors are granted a louder voice than others, whereas others may have no voice at all (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Scott (1990) additionally highlights the idea of a 'hidden transcript' to explain how the logics of domination can create two versions of discourse within the same context, one is public while the other is "hidden" and occurs backstage. Wodak (2015) similarly argues that power relations between parties might be hidden within discourse, in threats and promises used to obtain and maintain power. This discourse might create and reproduce social inequality, particularly when there is asymmetry between actors (Philips et al., 2004).

If however, institutions are discursive products (Phillips et al., 2004), then deinstitutionalisation may logically result from the discursive struggles between actors pressing for the abandonment of established practices, and those who prefer to maintain the status quo (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Greenwood et al., 2002; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Therefore, language expressed as ideas, norms and even *truths* could also provide discursive resources (Moisander et al., 2016) which might be harnessed to drive change. Actors pressing for change will need to deploy communicative resources to convince others (Hoefer & Green, 2016). Grow (2008)

highlights how women working on Nike's advertising within an agency developed a feminist antenarrative as a form of collective resistance to the masculine storytelling which had previously characterised the brand's advertising. Actors can also produce other texts in the form of statements, interviews and press releases (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) to disrupt 'everyday' uses of language, and manage language differently (Green & Li, 2011). However, their work may be more successful when their cause achieves a degree of *fit* with external conditions (Suddaby et al., 2017) and draws on the language of public discourse to amplify institutional tensions and contradictions and legitimate their calls for change (Lounsbury, 2002).

In this way, social actors seeking to disrupt the status quo can expose, and manipulate the institutional logics evidenced by language (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Even those with less power may recode public language, signs and symbols and rework them into an opposing-message (Greenhouse, 2005). Therefore, language can provide a discursive resource for those seeking to erode established practices. If such texts are then taken up by the media they can, "leave meaningful traces that become embedded in new or existing discourses" (Phillips et al., 2004, p. 640).

Summary

While the processes of institutionalisation and legitimacy have been widely explored (Converse, 1987; Powell & DiMaggio, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2011; Harmon et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2004; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), there is growing interest in how institutions and their legitimacy might equally be dismantled and eroded through processes of de-institutionalisation and de-legitimisation (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Hartman & Coslor, 2019; Micelotta et al., 2017). In contrast to prior literature which has focussed on the institutional work of those with power (Suddaby, 2010), we focus on the institutional work undertaken by individuals rendered less powerful due to the institutional constraints placed upon them (Courpasson et al., 2017; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). In particular,

we consider the role of communication and communicative resources in the de-legitimisation of practices (Cornelissen et al., 2015). We explore this in the context of a shift in public opinion which as Cherrier et al. (2018) argue, presents opportunities for change.

Our analytical framing therefore draws upon the constructs of institutional theory, legitimacy and communication enacted in the institutional setting of French advertising agencies in the wake of #Metoo. We theorise that women constrained by existing institutional arrangements might seize the opportunity presented by shifts in public opinion to challenge and question the continued legitimacy of the existing *rules of the game* by leveraging communicative resources. Furthermore, the formation of a boundary group, adjacent to existing institutions, may also play a role in the renegotiation of existing institutional logics. To develop our theoretical understanding of how those constrained by institutional arrangements might challenge their continued legitimacy, we are guided by the following research question:

How do females in French advertising use communicative resources to challenge the institutional logics of French advertising agencies?

Institutional setting

The French advertising industry

Two of the biggest players in global advertising are the French companies, The Publicis Groupe and Havas (Jones et al., 2018). In 2016, both groups very publicly signed up to the initiative 'Common Ground' in support of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed at a General Assembly in 2015. The fifth of these wide ranging goals which encompass environmental and social issues, was, 'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', while goal 10 refers to the reduction of all inequalities. Such commitments from these global players seemed, "to herald a new era. One that could see the marketing and advertising industry take a much more active and prominent role promoting the transition to a more sustainable future." (Jones et al., p. 1). In the sustainability reports that followed there is a

recognition from the The Publicis Groupe that it is the company's responsibility to cultivate the talents, uniqueness, and diversity of their staff. Agencies in Paris do appear to be more keen to make their workforce more representative of society (Swinton, 2018), and there is clear evidence that women can be successful in French advertising. Agathe Bousquet heads The Publicis Groupe in France, while Mercedes Erra is executive president of Havas Worldwide, and is seen as one of the most influential women in French advertising (Barrett, 2017). However, the sexism and sexual harassment which are both still considered rife in the French ad industry were made evident (Bouchez & Bougon, 2019) when women used #Metoopub, a strand of the wider #Metoo movement, to record their own experiences. Some men from advertising agencies, were also identified as members of the 'LOL League', a high profile group of male cyber bullies engaged in appalling sexist and victimising behaviour, spreading pornographic memes and doctored photos of women to humiliate their victims (Willsher, 2019). Saniye Gülser Corat, the Director of the Gender Equality division of UNESCO refers to, 'a dark core of sexism within the [French] industry' and the urgent need to communicate to agencies that their abusive patterns of behaviour are unacceptable (Little Black Book, 2019a, p.1).

Research approach

We consider the institutional work of Les Lionnes,

https://www.instagram.com/leslionnesfrance/ a French non-profit organisation set up by

Christelle Delarue, a self-identified feminist and agency CEO, to specifically address sexual

harassment and gender inequality within the French advertising industry (Little Black Book,

2019a,b; Stewart, 2019). Inspired by #Metoo, they set out to, "terminate women's invisibility"

(Stewart, 2019, p.1), and shine a light on, "the violent and iniquitous and unequal truth of an

industry that makes women its main casualties over and over" (Smiley, 2019, p.1).

We undertook differing methods of data collection in two stages. The authors conducted

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), combined with netnography and an interview with the

founder of Les Lionnes, Christelle Delarue. We conducted CDA (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) to

understand how discourse both constructs and maintains the gendered nature of creative

departments, and considered any role it might play in the de-legitimisation of current practices.

CDA is an appropriate methodological context to examine the consequences of current

marketing practices, revealing what might otherwise have remained hidden and unchallenged

(Fitchett & Caruana, 2015), and making the, "masculine visible" (Maclaran et al., 2009, p. 722).

In a second stage, we also engaged in netnography and interview methods to explore additional

perspectives of the same phenomenon. Such triangulation can enhance the validity of the study,

adding rigour, breadth, richness and depth to any inquiry (Denzin, 2007) and improves the ability

to draw conclusions from the data (Scandura & Williams, 2000).

Stage 1

Firstly, we analysed a guerrilla poster campaign (see https://lbbonline.com/news/french-

ad-industrys-lionesses-ready-to-roar-again-at-cannes-lions/ to see posters) undertaken by Les

Lionnes on the nights of June 5-6th 2019. As the posters were in French, the authors used the

published translations of the campaign posters as the source of data (see Table 11) as provided on

an industry website (Little Black Book, 2019a), which we acknowledge is a potential limitation of this study. These posters featured the language and sexist practices of men in advertising agencies, as reported to Les Lionnes by women, and some men, as evidence of sexism and sexual harassment. All 37 posters were used in the study and numerical ordering was added by the study's authors to aid identification.

Posters	Quotes on posters	The characterisation of these comments by Lionnes	Themes (identified by researchers)
1	"He rubbed his hands on my face and told me he'd be as soft as his dick"	HIS MOVES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX**
2	"She makes me want to shake her in every way"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
3	"She wears skirts cause she wants to get spanked"	HIS STANDARDS, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
4	"If you keep the baby you are dead"	HIS THREATS, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
5	"He pushed her on the wall to kiss her"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
6	"I want to take you doggy-style in the Bordeaux vineyard"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
7	"Come suck my dick, I can't take it any longer. And bring your girlfriend with you"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
8	"He fired me because I tweeted #MeToo"	HIS POWER, MY DIGNITY	**POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
9	"He would bet on the weight of my boobs"	HIS GAMES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX**
10	"He'd ask me to come over at midnight and greet me wearing a dressing gown"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX**
11	" I love it when you sit in front of me, I can see your little pussy"	HIS EYES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, JUSTIFICATIONS**
12	"Thanks to you I have to go all the way to Montreuil to get my dick sucked"	HIS BLAME, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, JUSTIFICATIONS**
13	"You really look slutty with these glasses"	HIS COMMENTS, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
14	"He'd send me dick pics during client meetings"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
15	"He locked me in his car"	HIS RULES, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
16	"If you say a word, you're dead"	HIS THREATS, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
17	"He took pics of my boobs while I was crying"	HIS MEMORIES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
18	"You thought I was going to be nice with you if I wasn't going to fuck you?"	HIS RULES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
19	"How wet are you when you hear the sound of my voice?"	HIS WORDS, MY DIGNITY	**SEX**

Table 11: (also continued overpage). *Thematic analysis of the data from the poster campaign of Les Lionnes (Study 1):*
Source: https://lbbonline.com/news/french-ad-industrys-lionesses-ready-to-roar-again-at-cannes-lions/

Posters	Quotes on posters	The characterisation of these comments by Lionnes	Themes (identified by researchers)
20	"If I touch your arm, are you gonna say I raped you again?"	HIS LAW, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
21	"I'll put you on the brief if you suck my dick"	HIS BLACKMAIL, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
22	"How am I supposed to focus when you're dressed like that?"	HIS ISSUES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
23	"He told me I wasn't pretty enough to get the job"	HIS STANDARDS, MY DIGNITY	**POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
24	"I'll go deep inside you, just like you want it"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, JUSTIFICATIONS**
25	"Sorry, the client doesn't like women"	HIS EXCUSES, MY DIGNITY	**POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
26	"He gave him my number so he would take care of me"	HIS INJUNCTIONS, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
27	"It's a good thing she's gone. She didn't want me to touch her boobs"	HIS STANDARDS, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
28	"I had my ass grabbed 3 times since 9 AM"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
29	"There's an envelope in case he fucks up"	HIS POWER, MY DIGNITY	*NOT CODED*
30	"If you don't fuck her, I will"	HIS NEEDS, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
31	"Your boobs are an issue, either we hate you or we want to fuck you"	HIS ISSUES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**
32	"He threw me on the couch, grabbed me, and pretended to sodomize me"	HIS MOVES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
33	"Hey, the lesbian, do you fuck your girlfriend like a dude?"	HIS WORDS, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, POWER**
34	"You really are ugly"	HIS STANDARDS, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
35	"She has the perfect space to pass hands between her thighs"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**SEX, JUSTIFICATIONS**
36	"You're cute, you have a beautiful smile, if you disappear, you'll not be missed by anyone"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**POWER**
37	"Put on more skirts, so you'll have a nice promotion"	HIS DESIRES, MY DIGNITY	**POWER, JUSTIFICATIONS**

Table 11 (cont.):*Thematic analysis of the data from the poster campaign of Les Lionnes (Study 1)*
Source: https://lbbonline.com/news/french-ad-industrys-lionesses-ready-to-roar-again-at-cannes-lions/

CDA allows for a close examination of language patterns in texts, together with wider discourses found within the social and cultural context (Paltridge, 2012). This holistic view of patterns of language, links the micro scale of everyday language with the discourses of macro scale social structures (Fairclough, 1992). CDA allows for consideration of how power dynamics and inequities are reproduced by group members through both spoken word and text (van Dijk, 1995, 2001). Discourse analysis uses a number of different approaches to analysing data (Štumberger & Golob, 2016). Here, we are guided by the notion that discourse can be analysed as a form of social action with a focus on not just the words themselves, but also on what is done with words (McGannon et al., 2016).

Actors may use discursive strategies (Wodak, 2015) to mobilise support and establish legitimacy for their institutional work. These include: *Referential/nomination* strategies used to label and categorise social actors; *Predication* which involves the discursive qualification of social actors and phenomena in more or less positive terms, *Argumentation* which involves justification and questioning claims of truth; *Perspectivation* which allows for the framing or positioning of the speaker and indicates involvement or distance from the issue; and *Intensification or Mitigation,* which modifies the, "epistemic status of a proposition" (Wodak, 2001a, p.73). Of particular interest however, is '*Recontexualization*' whereby elements of language are taken out of their original context and put into a new setting (Wodak, 2015), therefore providing new framing and possibly new understanding.

Stage 2

To obtain a richer contextualised understanding of the Les Lionnes poster campaign and its impact, the researchers also undertook a netnographic study of the movement's Instagram and Twitter accounts. Following protocols suggested by Kozinets (2019) and in line with agreed ethical procedures, interactions were traced through Les Lionnes' Instagram and Twitter accounts with 12,000 and 2,515 followers respectively. The accounts were used by Les Lionnes

to share the posters with followers to prompt the sharing of experiences and promote mutual support. Additionally, journalists were contributing to the discussion by posting and reposting which was also picked up within the netnographic study. This allowed the researchers to gain an etic understanding of the movement. To support this netnography, and to triangulate this data, we also interviewed the movement's founder, Christelle Delarue.

The netnographic study examined data from the launch of the poster campaign on social media sites on June 10, 2019 to April 30, 2020. Posts in English and French from Les Lionnes' Twitter and Instagram accounts were examined to explore interactions between the movement, social media viewers and media outlets. In the case of French posts, the language was translated by both authors which is recognised as be a potential limitation of the study. However, an in-depth interview with Les Lionnes Founder, Christelle Delarue allowed the researchers to confirm their interpretations of the data and through exploratory, open-ended questions, gain insight into the impact of the poster campaign on the French advertising industry.

A request for an interview with Christelle Delarue was made through an approach to the French movement via email and the interview lasted 70 minutes. Following agreement to share the quotes verbatim and having gained ethical clearance to do so, the interview quotes provided in the findings were attributed to Christelle Delarue.

The data from the netnographic study and interview was analysed thematically using a three stage approach recommended by Gioia et al. (2013b). Care was taken not to reveal the identity of the contributors with the exception of the interview with Christelle Delarue. In the first stage, the data was read and coded independently by each researcher to develop first order themes. Following this initial coding, the researchers met to discuss each of the themes and agreed a set of second order themes. Finally, the themes were reviewed and aggregated into third order themes; *Legitimacy; Exposing institutional logics, and Organised resistance* (See Table

12). This process of analysis allowed the researchers to discuss interpretations of the data and corroborate coding from across data sources (Kjeldgaard et al., 2017).

First Order Themes	Second Order Themes	Third Order Themes
Eat lion, again in 2020. #Rooar today begins the trial of the biggest monster of the #Metoo era. Our Women's liberation movement #timesup full support [Twitter,@ LesLionnesFR, January 6th 2020] *After the declarations of intention made in March by the agencies, where are we in the fight against sexism and harassment in advertising? .... #Metoopub [Twitter, @LesLionnesFR, November 6th 2019]* *The Lionesses, these women who want to put an end to sexism and sexist and sexual harassment in the Pub. "#MeTooPub #CannesLionnes #CannesLionesses and it's in@lobs [Twitter, @LesLionnesFR, June 12th 2019]*	*Les Lionnes signalling alignment with wider movements: #timesup;#Metoopub;#Metoo*	
To garner awareness, the group put up posters highlighting things that harassers have said to their victims.[Twitter @Adweek, June 14th 2019] *launching a guerrilla poster campaign that invited French advertising execs to share their #MeToo experiences [Twitter, @The Drum, June 25th 2019]* *The male-dominated French ad industry refuses to address sexism & sexual harassment. So on the night of June 5th, @LesLionnesFR wildposted victims' testimonies on Paris agency walls [Global industry influencer, Twitter , 76.3K followers, June 12th, 2019]*	*Media indicate the link between Les Lionnes narrative with #Metoopub;#Metoo*	**Legitimacy** *Drawing legitimacy from wider discourse around gender equality*
Last week @LesLionnesFR plastered women's testimonies of harassment on Paris ad agencies' walls [Twitter, @LLBOnline, 23.8K followers, June 10 2019]	*Boundary actors engage with and amplify campaign*	

Table 12 (also continued overpage)*: Thematic analysis of the data from the netnographic study and in-depth interview (Study 2)*

c First Order Themes	Second Order Themes	Third Order Themes
Reading all this reminds me of my life before and the revolting machismo of the construction industry [Instagram, May 19, 2019] *To garner awareness, the group put up posters highlighting things that harassers have said to their victims [Twitter, @Adweek, 638K followers, June 14th, 2019]* *Advertising what a decadence I liked but oh how hated especially those who had power and abused women [Instagram, June 6th, 2019]*	*Raise awareness of hostile and sexually aggressive actions*	***Exposing Institutional logics***
This proves that there is still work to change mentalities [Instagram, January 22nd, 2020] *In the industry, everybody is aware of the bad guy, everyone is aware but no one wants to talk about it. We make them talk about it."[Christelle Delarue, Interview, May 2020]* *With 89% of creative directors being male worldwide, there's no need to say more about the roles left for women. In order to condemn this iniquity and its "various sexist outcomes" [Twitter, @LLBOnline, 23.8K followers, June 11th 2019]* *To garner awareness, the group put up posters highlighting things that harassers have said to their victims [Twitter, @Adweek, 638K followers, June 14th, 2019]*	*Questioning the legitimacy of practice*	*Exposing the conflict between institutional logics and prevailing logics*
The Lionesses federate some 300 women working in advertising. They fight against sexism both in agencies and in campaigns and join the #MeToo movement [Twitter, @Le_Figaro, 3.3m followers, November 6th, 2019]	*Collective to challenge sexual harassment*	***Organised resistance***
My most memorable moment was being sexually harassed at @Cannes_Lions 2015. It really brought home to me the reality of what so many women in our industry go through at #CannesLions and every day at work.'[Instagram, global industry influencer, 76.3K followers, June 14th, 2019]	*Platform to share experiences of sexual harassment*	*Boundary organisation acts to empower women to share and challenge ongoing sexist discourse and harassment.*
Long live the Lionesses. I dissociate myself from men who do not dissociate themselves from the clumsy people of advertising [Instagram, June 13th, 2019] *Congratulations to you. 👍 How can we help you, solidly support you, in these battles which concern us All? [Instagram, January 17th, 2020].*	*Lending support to boundary organisation*	

Table 12 (cont.): *Thematic analysis of the data from the netnographic study and in-depth interview (Study 2)*

Findings and Analysis

Guided by the research question: *How do females in French advertising use communicative resources to challenge the institutional logics of French advertising agencies?* We present the findings of Stages 1 and 2 of the study.

Stage 1

Our findings reveal how language is used to construct, justify and maintain power within advertising agencies. CDA has enabled the researchers to identify the discursive strategies employed by Les Lionnes. Analysis of this language also reveals the unequal power relations between groups of actors within advertising and makes visible the language used by men to establish and maintain male oppression, which might otherwise have remained hidden and unchallenged (Fitchett & Caruana, 2015; Maclaran et al., 2009).

In the first stage of analysis, the researchers identified the discursive strategies women used to challenge the legitimacy of current practices, and raise awareness of the inequities within the advertising industry. Les Lionnes used strategies of Recontextualisation, Interdiscursivity, Referential/Nomination strategies and Perspectivation as outlined by Wodak (2015). In appropriating the words and phrases used by men and reframing this language alongside a characterisation of these comments, the posters provide evidence of recontexualisation. These posters make public the abusive comments which were originally made privately, and are then posted by Les Lionnes within the agencies where the abusers work. Such an "invasion" not only provides further evidence of recontexualisation, but represents a very direct challenge to the legitimacy of accepted practices within the gendered working environment. The inclusion of #Metoo within the posters is also evidence of further recontexualisation and of interdiscursivity, as the inclusion of the hashtag, clearly links the activity of Les Lionnes to wider discourses. By placing the language of the male perpetrators alongside the women's categorisation of these comments, Les Lionnes also create two groups of actors, and engage in referential/nomination

strategies. The use of "HIS" to indicate the male perpetrator, and "MY" to refer to the victim or witness, underlines the separation of these actors, e.g. HIS BLAME, MY DIGNITY; HIS BLACKMAIL, MY DIGNITY. The authors however, accept that there will be further actors in the institutional field, who are operating outside of the two groups of actors cast by this campaign. Those actors may include women who might not recognise, or wish to be associated with movements such as #Metoo, and men who would not wish to be associated with the language and practices of the male, as evidenced in these discourses. Perspectivation is also evident in the posters. The use of personal deixis such as "HIS" and "MY" clearly positions the women's relationship to the discourse. All the posters consistently use, "MY DIGNITY", signalling the women's response to their experience and providing personal framing, allowing for their point of view to be heard.

In the second stage of this study, we used CDA to reveal the power relations and institutional logics which are embedded in language. All of the posters were coded with the exception of Poster 29, which both coders found difficult to deconstruct without additional context. From topics including sex, dignity, games, threat, power, and dominance, three main themes emerge; *Sex, Power* and *Justifications* (see Table 11).

Sex

The language used by men to women in this context is highly sexualised (Posters 1, 3,5,6,7,10,11,12,13,14,18,19,21,22,24,27,28,30,31,32,33), and shows how discourse is constructed to reinforce male dominance and female oppression. References to male sexual organs e.g. 'dick' and acts of sex included in many of the posters, highlights how men are using language within agencies to construct their heterosexual masculine identity (Cameron, 1998), define their relationship to women, and reinforce their dominance in the social setting. To perpetuate this dominance, men use language to oppress women, making demeaning references to women's bodies. Examples such as, *"I love it when you sit in front of me, I can see your little*

pussy" (Poster 11), and, *"He would bet on the weight of my boobs"* (Poster 9), have the discursive effect of dehumanising women. Such discourse highlights how language is used to reduce women to sexual body parts in an attempt to maintain female oppression.

Power

The discursive approaches used by men however, extend beyond demeaning language and the objectification of women to a discourse of power often enacted through physical and sexual violence (Posters 2,3,4,8,14,16,20,21,26,30,31,32). Power is also communicated through the use of threatening language (Posters 4,16,20,21,26,30,31). Words and phrases such as, *"If you say a word, you're dead"* (Poster 16), provide evidence of how language is constructed to maintain existing power relations within agency settings. Many threats and opportunities were linked to sexual acts and inferred unequal power relationships, *"I'll put you on the brief if you suck my dick"* (Poster 21).

To maintain these power relations, language is also used to humiliate women and undermine women, e.g. *"Hey, lesbian, do you fuck your girlfriend like a dude?"* (Poster 33) and, *"You thought I was going to be nice with you if I wasn't going to fuck you?"* (Poster 18, see also Posters 6,7,13,18,20,22,23,25,27,28,30,31,34,37).

Justifications

Men also appear to blame women for sexual harassment (Posters 3,11,12,13,22,24, 25,27,31), and find justifications for their actions. The discourse places the responsibility of the sexual aggression on the women as the perpetrators of the sexual aggression, e.g. *"She makes me want to shake her in every way"* (Poster 2), and, *"She wears skirts because she wants to get spanked"* (Poster 3). Words are used to transfer the blame for the aggressive acts and language to women, inferring that it is women who are responsible for the culture of sexual harassment. Justifications for workplace inequalities and discrimination are also clearly embedded within the discourse, examples include, *"He told me I wasn't pretty enough to get the job"* (Poster 23),

"Sorry, the client doesn't like women" (Poster 25), and, *"Put on more skirts, so you'll have a nice promotion"* (Poster 37). #Metoo itself is also implicated and used as justification for male action, e.g. *"He fired me because I tweeted #MeToo"* (see Poster 8).

Stage 2

To obtain a richer contextualised understanding of the Les Lionnes poster campaign and its impact, the researchers undertook a netnographic study of the movement's Instagram and Twitter accounts, together with an interview with the founder of Les Lionnes. From our findings we identified three themes: *Legitimacy, Exposing institutional logics;* and *Organised resistance*.

Legitimacy

Prior studies suggested that institutional work may be more successful if the cause achieves a degree of fit with external conditions (Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017) and draws on the language of public discourse to amplify institutional tensions and contradictions and legitimate their calls for change (Lounsbury, 2002). Les Lionnes signalled their alignment with wider movements such as #Timesup, #Metoopub (Pub is the abbreviated form of Publicite-French for advertising) and #Metoo.

> *Les Lionnes, women who want to put an end to sexism and sexist and sexual harassment in the Pub. "#MeTooPub #CannesLionnes #CannesLionesses and its* in@*lobs [Twitter, LesLionnesFR, June 12th 2019]*

This enabled them to establish legitimacy for their activity, by positioning their institutional work within the context of wider debates around gender equality. Les Lionnes' founder describes how #Metoo prompted the formation of Les Lionnes. This link is also made by media. For example, the advertising industry journal, *The Drum,* connect Les Lionnes in their tweet to wider discourses, describing the work of les Lionnes as a, *"guerrilla poster campaign that invited French advertising execs to share their #MeToo experiences."*

The literature suggests that media coverage sets an 'agenda' for public debate, by framing issues (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020), and influencing public perceptions of legitimacy (Pollock & Rindova, 2003). The findings of Stage 2 suggest that both national media and international industry journals have helped to frame the debate around equality and amplify the institutional work of Les Lionnes. Leading French newspaper, *Le Monde,* describes the work of Les Lionnes on Twitter as the, "fight against sexism both in agencies and in campaigns". By identifying how the media pick up on the poster campaign and amplify the work of Les Lionnes, we extend the work of Cornelissen et al. (2015) by explaining how communications can play a role in the de-legitimisation of practices. Influencers were also engaged in the campaign, indicating their support for the issue (Archer & Harrigan, 2016), and leveraging their relationship with their audience (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Munnukka et al., 2019) to gain further support for the institutional work of Les Lionnes. This helped to further amplify the campaign message and lend it legitimacy. For example,

> *The male-dominated French ad industry refuses to address sexism & sexual harassment. So on the night of June 5, @LesLionnesFR wildposted victims' testimonies on Paris agency walls [Global Industry Influencer, Twitter, 76.3K followers, June 12, 2019]*

Exposing institutional logics

Prior literature has highlighted the existence of a 'hidden' discourse (Scott, 1990) in which power relations between parties might be embedded (Wodak, 2015). Les Lionnes' poster campaign is a direct challenge to the persistent power relations that characterise French advertising agencies, and is effective in exposing the social inequality and asymmetry between actors in this context (Philips et al., 2004). Delarue says the poster campaign was a deliberate attempt to expose the sexual abuse and harassment by using the language directed at women, thereby making what had been hidden and private very public,

> *"we chose to use the phrases that women hear all the time…to give women a voice, to tell the truth, using the same materials that are used every day in advertising"* [Christelle Delarue, May 2020]

The findings suggest that the campaign was successful in raising awareness of the hostility and sexually aggressive actions that occur inside French advertising agencies. In the view of Les Lionnes' founder, journalists were very supportive. In her words, they thought that their work in exposing how men behaved was, *"super cool, super, super right, and super just"*.

The comments on social media are also testament to how the campaign raised awareness, as one participant recorded on Instagram, *"I can't believe what I'm reading".* While another congratulates Les Lionnes on raising awareness of the, "*battles which concern us all"* [Instagram post, January 17, 2020]. Their founder, Christelle Delarue, also describes how Les Lionnes exposes persistent practices and questions their legitimacy, by bringing cases of sexual harassment and abuse to the attention of agencies.

> *"In the industry, everybody is aware of the bad guy, everyone is aware but no one wants to talk about it. We make them talk about it."*[Christelle Delarue, May 2020]

If agencies do not take responsibility for these practices and take action within two weeks, then Les Lionnes endeavour to put up posters around that particular agency to expose male behaviour. Alternatively, if they have a member of Les Lionnes who is inside that agency, they may put up posters in the elevators or toilets. Whether inside or outside the building, the message to men and their agency is the same, *"your territory will be our territory now"* [Christelle Delarue, founder of Les Lionnes]. The very act of placing abusive comments made in private spaces by advertising men onto advertising posters for all to see highlights how communicative resources are not merely linguistic. Using posters placed outside the agencies housing men who sexually harass women, turned the instruments of the industry against the abusers within it, and did this by invading "their" physical space.

Organised resistance

Les Lionnes is a boundary organisation (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008) which has been formed adjacent to the field of advertising. Its existence has enabled 360 women to come together, outside of their institutional arrangements, to collaborate in challenging existing practices and power arrangements. Far from the disorganised micro-level practices, identified by Ansari and Phillips (2011), this group is taking a strategic approach to its collective resistance. While prior literature has identified how women worked together within advertising departments to shape an antenarrative (Grow, 2008), we find that women in advertising are working outside of existing institutional arrangements as a form of organised resistance. Christelle describes how Les Lionnes grew from the emails she received from women prompted by #Metoo, to become a Sunday discussion club at her home for women from many different agencies, to its current form as a formal collective. She describes how she now has a core of seven leading female members working with her, and a number of working groups, undertaking differing aspects of their activity, including legal work (tackling 28 cases in 14 months), and the creative strategy. Delarue also says they have partnered with another organisation, Women Safe, to help women deal with the psychological effects of abuse. She acknowledges that the creative group have been instrumental in developing a strategy which included the design of the posters and the media strategy, to expose the truth of sexual harassment. Delarue describes the approach she made to leading French newspaper, *Le Monde* to share her own experiences. She also acknowledges that being stopped by the police when undertaking the guerrilla poster campaign, was likely to increase the newsworthiness of their actions, and amplify their message. The formation of Les Lionnes provides a platform to challenge ongoing sexist discourse and harassment within the industry. It allows women to share their experience,

> *"My most memorable moment was being sexually harassed at @Cannes_Lions 2015"*
>
> *[Global industry influencer, 76.3K followers, June 14, 2019]*

and provides a focus for those who wish to lend their support,

> *Congratulations to you.* 👍 *How can we help you, solidly support you, in these battles which concern us All? [Instagram post, January 17, 2020].*

<u>Discussion</u>

We set out to us understand how females in French advertising use communicative resources to challenge the institutional logics of French advertising agencies. Through the lens of institutional theory and institutional logics, we identify how actors placed in a position which gives them less voice (Philips et al. 2008), have successfully used advertising to expose institutional logics and revealed the previously hidden power relations embedded in discourse (Wodak, 2015). Institutional theory suggests that advertising maintains its legitimacy through its links to the norms of wider societal structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008), including wider discourse and public opinion (Clemente & Roulet, 2015; Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Slimane et al., 2019). Instead, we identify how public discourse, in the form of #Metoo, has been instrumental in eroding and disrupting the existing *rules of the game* within the institutional field of advertising, and presented an opportunity for change (Cherrier et al., 2018; Hartman & Coslor, 2019).

Our findings therefore, contribute to our understanding of institutional theory and advertising practice. The first objective of our study was to explore how actors with less power can challenge existing logics. We add to an emerging stream of literature that considers the institutional work of actors of those who are constrained by institutional arrangements (Courpasson et al., 2017; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013), and identify how the formation of a boundary organisation adjacent to an institutional field (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008) provides an effective means to overcome institutional constraints and offer organised resistance to the status quo. Speaking of the activity of Les Lionnes, gender equality campaigner, Cindy Gallop says, "When you can't find justice within the system, you have to deliver justice outside the system".

The second objective was to identify the role of communicative resources in this institutional work. We contribute to knowledge by providing evidence of how women inside the ad industry in France are using advertising to challenge persistent institutional logics. While prior literature had recognised communication and language as influential in the shaping of legitimacy (Harmon et al., 2015; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Suddaby, 2010), this study identifies the particular role of advertising in institutional work and of its contribution to processes of de-institutionalisation and de-legitimisation. We provide empirical evidence of the potential of communicative resources within institutional theory as suggested by scholars (Cornelissen et al., 2015; Green & Li, 2011; Harmon et al., 2015; Hoefer & Green, 2016; Philips 2004; Moisander et al., 2016). We identify that advertising can be a form of institutional work, as it exposes existing logics, and de-legitimises ongoing practices.

We also extend knowledge of the role of language in institutional work, providing evidence of how language might be used as a discursive resource (Greenhouse, 2005; Moisander et al., 2016). We find that through a strategy of recontexualision (Wodak, 2015), the same language used by those in power to defend and maintain existing institutional logics, is appropriated by those who are constrained by institutional arrangements. It is then recoded into an opposing-message (Greenhouse, 2005), repurposed and reframed, to expose the inequities of the workplace and erode institutional logics (Greenhouse, 2005).

Thirdly, we add to the understanding of how the success of institutional work can be enhanced. We identify how institutional actors rendered less powerful can use a strategy of interdiscursivity (Wodak, 2015) to draw on discourse in the public domain (Fairclough, 1992) to provide context and legitimacy for their actions. We provide evidence that the success of this strategy may be further enhanced when there is a strong alignment between the two as suggested by Suddaby et al., (2017). Furthermore, we identify how media coverage, which previous studies have suggested is instrumental in shaping public opinion (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2019; Munnukka et

al., 2019; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) and forming perceptions of legitimacy (Pollock & Rindova, 2003), can further amplify institutional work.

<u>Conclusion</u>

> *"If you want to be the best agency in the universe, then look at the universe, it's changing"* (Christelle Delarue, founder Les Lionnes May, 2020)

As the universe changes, women working in French advertising have seized the opportunity to launch their own response to #Metoo. They have formed a collective to engage in organised resistance and have leveraged communicative resources to amplify their institutional work. They have gained legitimacy for their campaign and amplified its message by connecting sexist discourse at the micro level, to wider public discourses around sexual harassment. The work of Christelle Delarue and Les Lionnes to expose and de-legitimise existing institutional logics has also drawn the attention of the French advertising industry body, the AACC. They are now "convinced" there is a "systematic problem to address" (Reeves, 2019, p.1), and Delarue is taking part in ongoing gender debates at UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020).

While work to address gender stereotypes suggests that the ad industry is serious about women's empowerment, our findings provide evidence that this sadly does not extend to women working inside the field. Instead, women in the French advertising industry are subject to on-going sexual harassment and abuse. Yet, there is hope. As Deuze (2016) identified, the power of advertising is increasingly being harnessed to create a better life for consumers, and we find that it is also being used by women working adjacent to the institutional field, to change persistent power dynamics. The founder of Les Lionnes, Christelle Delarue says that, *"As an ad woman, feminist and activist, I do believe that communication is a major tool to eradicate sexism"*. Although, we cannot yet determine whether significant cultural change has taken place within agencies, we can conclude that the guerrilla ad campaign undertaken by Les Lionnes successfully, "renders the masculine visible" (Maclaran et al., 2009, p. 722), which may have

otherwise remained invisible, as the perpetrators may indeed have preferred. Its legitimacy and impact also appear to be further enhanced by its fit with wider discourses around gender issues, particularly #Metoo.

Finally, it is deliberate, but somewhat ironic, that advertising is used to question the legitimacy of the persistent institutional logics of sexual harassment found within advertising agencies. Yet, in the work of Les Lionnes, we identity a new form of advertising linked to the #Metoo movement, which we call #*Metoovertisng*. We define #Metoovertising as, "*non-personal communication from an identified sponsor using mass media to raise awareness of sexual harassment*". This novel type of advertising promotes female empowerment, not just for the women in advertisements, but for those who make the ads. If the advertising industry cannot move more quickly to change the existing *rules of the game* and create a better life for its female employees, then it may find that more women in the field will use their creative skills and resources to take matters into their own hands.

Limitations, further research and managerial implications

The current study is however, not without its limitations. In particular, we acknowledge the use of data from a single empirical case. Although, the contribution here does not lie within the generalisability of the study, meaning the validity of our findings cannot be extended to other settings, they do suggest further areas for investigation in the future. In particular, further studies might examine how different genders and those with more power (e.g. influencers, mass media outlets and senior advertising management) engage with this campaign. Additionally, both the frequency of interaction and the nature of the responses on social media sites might be further considered. Future research might also be undertaken to consider the longer term influence of the campaign on the French advertising industry, using a longitudinal methodology.

It would also be interesting to explore if boundary organisations, such as Les Lionnes, which form adjacent to an institutional field to tackle an issue, achieve any degree of

permanence. Future studies could examine other contexts to explore how other actors similarly constrained by institutional arrangements, might also draw on wider discourses to legitimise their institutional work. Girls Who Code and the More Than Mean campaign for female journalists working in sports, are just two campaigns currently seeking to highlight inequity. It would be particularly interesting to explore if, and how, advertising has been used to address inequitable institutional logics in these and other contexts.

Finally, no longer willing to be silenced through harassment, threat or intimidation, advertising's women are finding new ways to get their voices heard. However, senior agency management and human resource departments can do much more to change the culture in which these institutional logics have become entrenched. Whilst working hours, late nights, and an overlap between business and pleasure all play their part, providing training around the use of both formal and informal language with colleagues would be a start. Yet, what emerges from this study as an urgent priority, is the need for more effective reporting mechanisms. These should allow women to not only report harassment and discrimination more easily, but to be confident these will be taken seriously and investigated. Above all, if fault is found then swift and meaningful sanctions must be imposed. After all, if advertising is actually serious about the empowerment of women, it should not only be advertising's women who are looking to change the *rules of the game*.

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9   Conclusions drawn from research questions

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the impact of the self-promotional work women undertake in the workplace. This was considered in six papers through varying theoretical lenses. While each paper had its own findings and contributions, this compilation captures the lived experiences of women and contributes a more holistic conceptualisation of their self-promotional work. It exposes the limitations of an economic discourse which emphasises individual agency, while concealing the many structural and cultural forces that still limit women's progress. It reveals the often hidden challenges which undermine the work women do to promote themselves, and illustrates how gendered contexts produce and reproduce attitudes and practices which are problematic for women.

Despite these barriers, women are not passive in their use of self-promotion, as was suggested in prior literature. Instead, women are active in seeking professional advancement through self-promotion, but this often invokes negative reactions from others. Prior literature has also identified a gap in the literature in our understanding of the internal impact for those who engage in IM behaviours. This thesis addresses this gap and finds that despite women's active engagement in self-promotion, women may experience this as inauthentic and uncomfortable. For these differing reasons it is therefore identified as a risk for women in both entrepreneurial and organisational settings, and is managed by women in a number of ways. The findings also indicate how women can use promotional tools to challenge the institutional arrangements that constrain them. This chapter now continues by providing an overview of how these conclusions relate to each research question.

RQ1: How do female entrepreneurs promote themselves and their businesses?

As female entrepreneurs engage in self-promotion they are both innovative and experimental. Women are experimenting with promoting themselves and their businesses

through both traditional and social media, but their experiences and the response with which they are met, are not always positive. Women experience a number of tensions which they seek to manage. These are are off-set in differing contexts by women combining self-promotion with other tactics; sharing their private fears and weaknesses in a bid to increase the authenticity of their public persona, or by providing evidence to support claims of legitimacy. Women in strongly-gendered contexts are also able to use the media to enact an entrepreneurial identity which not only legitimises their business activity, but enables a more public role for women.

RQ2: How do women in organisations promote themselves?

Women are responding to highly-gendered and often combative workplaces, using self-promotion to signal their desire for acceptance and professional advancement within their community of practice. To this end, they engage in both authentic and inauthentic behaviours. Yet, authentic self-promotion is often met with negative reactions and a lack of affirmation from the community, while inauthentic behaviours can feel uncomfortable for women and cause them psychological stress. Crucially, while these strategies and tactics can be effective in securing acceptance within the gendered workplace, these rewards do little to bring about change, and even risk driving women from organisations. Advocacy of alternative ideas and of each other, emerges as an alternative to self-promotion for women which off-sets the risks of self-promotion.

RQ3: How do women in organisations use promotion to bring about institutional change?

Women frustrated at the lack of change within gendered workplaces and with persistent sexual harassment, are using the tools of promotion to challenge institutional practices. While their minority status within gendered organisations appears to increase their visibility and expose them to a greater risk of harassment, communicative resources enable their voices to be heard. Women are leveraging these resources and engaging in promotional work to expose the sexist

attitudes and behaviours which are prevalent in the workplace. The success of this institutional work also appears to be enhanced when it is aligned with wider social discourse.

An exploration of these three research questions has shown the self-promotion undertaken by women to be a contested practice. As they engage in self-promotion as a means to secure professional advancement, they experience a number of tensions: between the potential rewards and risks of self-promotion; between their private and public persona; between authentic and inauthentic behaviours; and between desired role identities and the social identities ascribed to them by gender. Although there will be many variables which indicate how successfully women are able to navigate these tensions, four key factors appear to have a particularly strong influence. Firstly, communities of practice can limit and/or facilitate women's professional advancement, secondly wider discourses in the form of public opinion and media coverage can frame and legitimise not only women's self-promotional work, but their professional advancement, and their desire for institutional change. Communicative resources including language and promotional tools can also be used to establish, but also expose, unequal power relations. Finally, advocacy might be a possible alternative to self-promotion for women, encompassing advocating for the self, but also for other women and new ideas. A preliminary model which provides an initial conceptualisation for further exploration of these ideas is offered (see Figure 8).

As shown here through the lens of IM, identity and institutional theory, women can promote themselves and their ideas. Individually and collectively, they can conform with, or challenge the established rules and logics of gendered systems. They can even reach outside of these systems to draw upon wider media and social discourses to highlight their activity, and legitimise the need for change. In conclusion, they can indeed assume responsibility for their own and other women's professional advancement. Under imperfect conditions working women

can do much to promote themselves, but how many more women might be advanced if much more was done to address the imperfect conditions in which women are working?
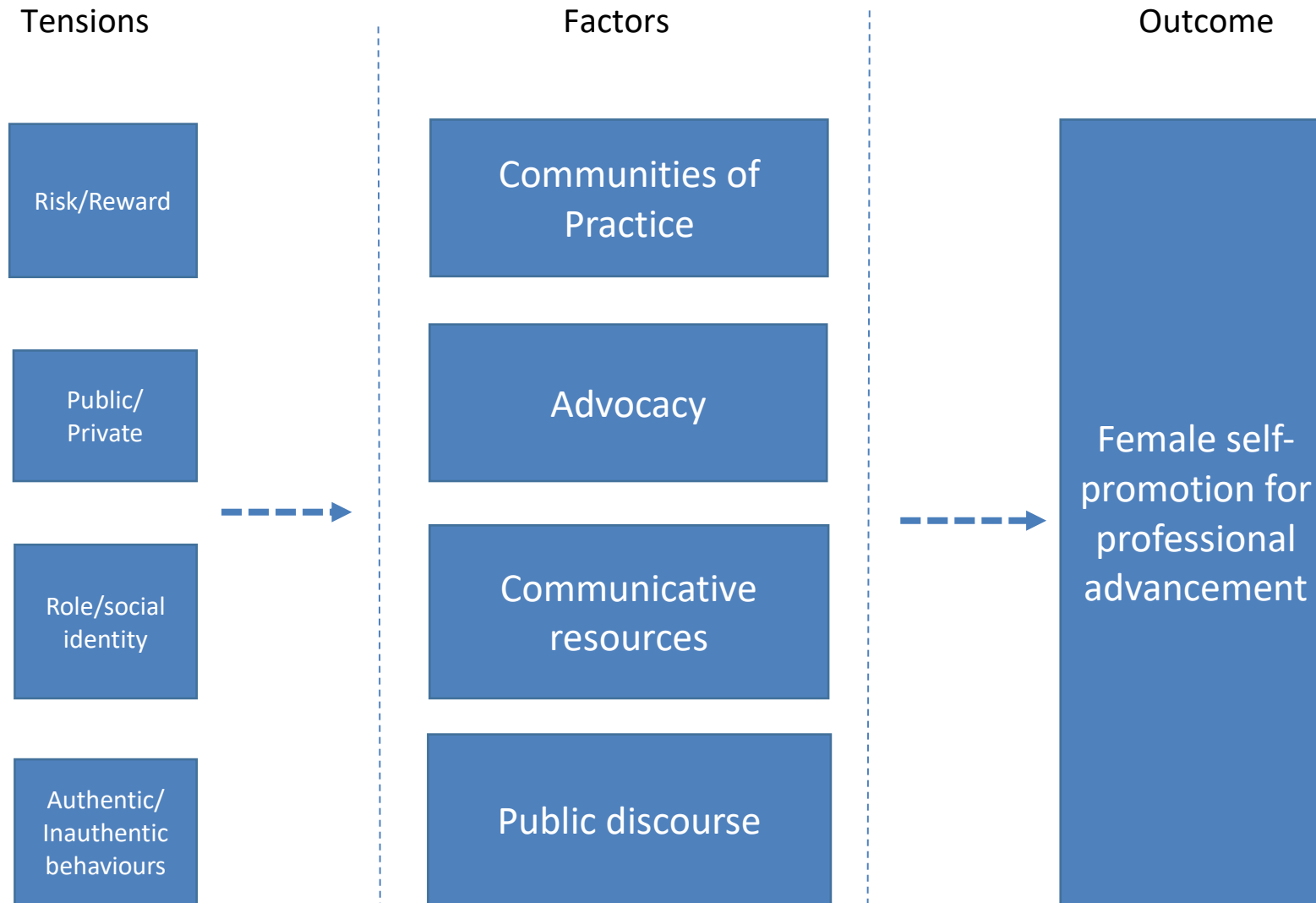
Figure 8: *A preliminary exploratory model of female self-promotion for professional advancement. Future research is required to identify further links and relationships between these elements.*

9.1 **Reflections**

Writing this overarching narrative has been an opportunity to develop my own reflexivity. The process of research, particularly collecting data and undertaking analysis, has allowed me to hear the voices of women from a wide range of contexts, including those that may not otherwise be heard. I consider it my privilege to bring those voices to the page and amplify them through the publication of my work. As a partial 'insider', learning of women's challenges and the opportunities they still see for change, has also given me greater perspective on my own experiences.

9.2 **Limitations**

While the findings of each paper identify common experiences, practices and processes which all appear to prevent women from greater advancement within the workplace, I recognise that these results cannot be generalised. Within each paper, I openly acknowledge the limitations of interpretive and qualitative research, which is further influenced by my own position as discussed in this narrative. Yet as a pragmatic researcher, I also wish to produce socially-useful research (Feizler, 2010) and have strived to disseminate my work. I detail some highlights below (see Table 13 below).

9.3 **Dissemination activities**

Date	Event / organisation	Activity
December 2019	Future Female Leaders in conjunction with Estates Gazette magazine	Provided communication training for women
November 2019	Game Changers Event, House of Commons	Facilitated communication workshop for women
June 2019	ICORIA: European Advertising Academy	Presentation of paper: *Battle-Weary Women: The Female Creatives Fighting For Leadership In Advertising Management*

April 2019	Portsmouth High School for Girls	Spoke to Years 12 and 13 on the need to promote yourself in the workplace.
November 2018	Game Changers Event, House of Commons	Facilitated communication workshop for women
November 2017	TEDx Covent Garden Women	Coached Brita Fernandez Schmidt, Executive Director at Women for Women International UK for her talk *"Fears to Fierce"*
June 2017	Self-promotion for Female entrepreneurs	Provided workshop for local female entrepreneurs at University of Portsmouth Business School. Fed into University's Small Business Charter.
October 2017-2019	Founded Southsea Storyparty	Hosted quarterly local storyparties. Invited individuals to promote themselves and their ideas through public storytelling. Coached all speakers 1-2-1.

Table 13: *Dissemination activities*

9.4 Future research

While suggested areas for future research are made in each paper, the outcomes of this thesis and a preliminary model (Figure 8) suggest further avenues for research. Firstly, the relationship between the factors shown in the preliminary model might be explored further within additional contexts, to investigate if these findings are generalizable to other settings. For example, while self-promotion is indicated for advancement within unstructured contexts, future research might consider how women engage in self-promotion within more structured environments, such as law or medicine. Alternative cultural settings might also be explored to understand how the perceived risks and rewards of female self-promotion, or tensions between role and social identities are off-set. In recognition that some men may similarly struggle with self-promotion, future research might also usefully explore the self-promotion behaviours of both men and women using personality traits such as introversion/extroversion as a basis for evaluation.

Furthermore, the role of public discourse in framing and legitimising women's self-promotional work suggests further research would be valuable. While debates around the pay

gap and #Metoo gave gender issues increased visibility, #BlackLivesMatter and COVID-19 have dominated public discourse in 2020. Do such shifts de-legitimise the work women undertake to seek professional advancement? Will the focus of organisations be on advancing ethnic rather than female minorities? Has COVID-19 made it harder for women to advance, or has it instead, brought issues which have impeded women's advancement such as flexible working, to the attention of more people?

In addressing the issue of gender imbalance in the workplace, this thesis concludes that working structures and practices, and not working women are the problem. I am therefore interested in adopting institutional theory to consider how women might leverage communicative resources and the tools and practices of promotion to challenge the established institutional logics of these structures. I am particularly keen to take forward the recommendations of Paper 4, to explore further how women might engage in rhetorical institutionalism, developing their vision and voice to challenge out-dated and established institutional structures and processes. While women's engagement with self-promotion gives rise to a number of tensions, these may be eased when women promote themselves and their ideas to serve a purpose which extends beyond personal concerns. Therefore, exploratory work could investigate the role of mediating factors such as advocacy, public discourse and communicative resources in the promotional work women undertake to challenge institutional logics. Such work would not only extend our understanding of women's self-promotion, but of their identity, and how women typically constrained by institutional arrangements, can leverage promotional practices and communicative resources to challenge persistent institutional logics.

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10 Contribution to co-authored papers

In all co-authored papers, I was the lead researcher, undertaking the majority of the management and writing; including the literature review, data collection, writing and analysis. However, I wish to acknowledge the invaluable role of my co-authors who have also contributed to four of the papers included here.

In Paper 1, Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull and Howe-Walsh (2018), the other authors contributed to the writing of the methodology section and conclusions. In Paper 2: Turnbull contributed her expertise on the Arab Middle East, wrote some of the contextual setting, and undertook the netnography with Fletcher-Brown. In Paper 3, Thompson-Whiteside et al., (2020), the other authors contributed to the methodology and undertook five of the twenty five interviews. In Paper 6, Turnbull contributed to the methodology and analysis of both studies 1 and 2. In each of these co-authored papers, my co-authors were also involved in discussions of theoretical positioning and structure, and helped to review papers before submission.

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Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Research Degrees Operational Handbook for more information

UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information	Student ID:	UP151502

PGRS Name:	Helen Mary Thompson-Whiteside		
Department:	Marketing	**First Supervisor:**	Dr Sarah Turnbull

Start Date: (or progression date for Prof Doc students)	September 2018

Study Mode and Route:	Part-time	X	MPhil	☐	MD	☐
	Full-time	☐	PhD	X	Professional Doctorate	☐

Title of Thesis:	Sisters are doing it for themselves: An exploration of the self-promotional work women undertake as they seek professional advancement
Thesis Word Count: (excluding ancillary data)	64,126

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:

(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)

a)	Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?	YES NO	X ☐
b)	Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?	YES NO	X ☐
c)	Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?	YES NO	X ☐
d)	Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?	YES NO	X ☐
e)	Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES NO	X ☐

Candidate Statement:

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):	E374; E440; BAL/2020/12/THOMPSON-WHITESIDE

If you have *not* submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:

Signed *(PGRS)*:	Helen TW	**Date:**	13 February 2021