New Approaches for Teaching Advertising: Looking through the Lens of Social Justice to Affect Career Behaviors and Choices

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Increasing Student Consciousness:
Teaching Advertising through a Social Justice Lens

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Abstract

This exploratory study reviewed how teaching advertising and strategic communication through the lens of social justice and as an active agent to impact society influenced student perspectives. Using engagement of hope and engaged scholarship as the conceptual framework for challenging unjust structures, working for the common good, and being community-centered, an introductory advertising course was designed to incorporate topics related to social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Students were interviewed about their learnings and feelings during and after class. Students' reflections on class and assignments were collected through interviews and examined for ideas of social justice and pedagogical approaches. Findings indicate students gained knowledge of the power and influence of advertising, sensitivity to social justice and DEI issues, and understanding of the role of brands advocating these ideas. A structure for emphasizing social justice in introductory advertising and other courses is offered.

Introduction

Advertising education is primarily focused on teaching industry practices based on current processes. A review of articles from *Journal of Advertising Education* (*JAE*) and *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* found inquiries for international and multicultural advertising, leadership, account executive and creative collaboration, online advertising pedagogy, student-run agencies, synchronous and asynchronous approaches to teaching campaigns, teaching analytics, and learning through brand storytelling to name just some *JAE* examples.[1] Popular advertising textbooks, such as Belch & Belch's *Advertising and Promotion*, now in its twelfth edition as of 2021, and newer offerings, like *Principles of Integrated Strategic Communication*, provide students with guides for producing advertising, from situation analysis and consumer research to creating objectives and strategies, and from creative and media planning and development to implementation and evaluation.[2] This content has remained much the same with adjustments for emerging media and communication technologies

and different platforms of teaching for the past couple of decades.

While advertising is known for its flashy business, insightful cultural knowledge, and cutting-edge creativity, as represented in the hit series *Mad Men*, the industry has not been free from criticism, such as the lack of ethnic diversity and women and minorities in leadership roles, and is assessed low in ethics as a profession. Is delivering the same content to students in courses part of the problem? Can the advertising industry be helped if we pivot from an approach of teaching industry practices and move it to consider advertising pedagogy as a social good and critical learning experience? How can we reframe advertising through the lens of education to support advocacy? As educator\s, can we build a social justice orientation to ponder advertising education?

Boyer wrote that higher education had lost its direction and focus on public good purposes.[3] Does status-quo advertising education reflect this? How can we teach advertising so our students, the

next practitioners, see the powerful force communication is and challenge current industry practices? Through the hope and imagination that engaged learning can facilitate, we can bring students' attention to and garner their interests in cultural demand for social justice, concerns for society, and passion for the environment, and guide them to use their knowledge of new media platforms as tools to achieve social good.

The purpose of this research is to consider how to structure a way of teaching advertising and strategic communication through the lens of social justice and as an active agent able to impact society. Students' perspectives of their learnings, feelings, and their approach to future careers as well as assignment materials they created are studied. Engagement of hope and engaged learning scholarship are perspectives that guided this approach to teaching with a new viewpoint on advertising communication and understanding the outcomes gained from learning environments. Specifically, this research is based on an undergraduate advertising principles class that presented material through a social justice lens.

Literature Review

This provides background on theories and concepts, including engagement of hope, engaged learning scholarship, social justice and advertising perspectives, and related ideas, that were used for course development and research.

Engagement of Hope. Hope is taking action to "challenge oneself to believe in what one does not know or see."[4] It is thinking the future is better than the past and one has a role in making it better.[5] In his Ted Talk, Hellman declares imagination is the instrument of hope. [6]

As a process that can be learned and measured, scholars identify three ingredients of hope: goals, pathways, and willpower. Goals can be short-term, mundane daily responsibilities, or future-oriented big dreams. Either way, goals need to be desirable enough to motivate one to focus and make plans. Pathways are the plans created and adjusted as needed to reach goals. Willpower is the agency, mental focus, and efforts used to accomplish the goals in hope. As willpower is a limited resource, support, motivation, and help from mentors,

friends, teachers, and others is required to recharge and find direction.

Engagement of hope offers a structure to guide inspiration, creativity, and optimism for problem-solving. It is an equity-focused theory of action rooted in faith-based efforts to effect change and, in that way, along with imagination, closely aligns with Ignatian Pedagogy and Jesuit education. [7]

Equity, collaboration, and inclusivity are central tenets for the engagement of hope frameworks. Characteristics commonly found in practical endeavors of this model include community engagement, addressing inequity and injustice, incorporating multiple voices and lived experiences, and prioritizing relationships over mere transactions. Five common themes found in reviewing of work employing engagement of hope are challenging unjust structures, common good, collaborative courage, community-centered, and individual goodness.[8]

Our goal is to apply this framework in the design of an advertising class to engage students in three components of the theory: challenging unjust structures, supporting the common good, and facilitating collaborative work. In this context we directed students to think critically about current practices of the advertising industry and to view advertising as a resource for building a better future for society. Assignments, lectures, and discussions provide students with language and guidelines they can use to create their own roadmap for hope. In the classroom's supporting environment, instructors encourage students' enthusiasm for culture, technology, and media, help them hone skills, and fuel the motivation, imagination and energy needed to achieve their goals of bettering society. The model provides a way to channel efforts and ideas, learn together, and develop a shared understanding of social justice issues and how advertising can help improve current issues. Applying an engagement of hope approach can lead to a structure and theory of change and be a model for advertising education, especially in Jesuit institutions.

Engaged Learning Scholarship

An engaged learning approach can facilitate the engagement of hope.[9] Engaged scholarship is rigorous research and development to critique, reflect on, and make plans for engagement efforts. More formalized scholarship activities can be called *engagement*.[10] Engagement is defined based on context and purpose. Blanchard and Furco write "faculty engagement could be in the form of teaching, research, and/or service" and engagement attributes can be "differentiated between *engaged scholarship* and *engaged activities*." The *scholarship* line of inquiry is described as "(s)cholarly efforts to expand multifaceted intellectual endeavor with a commitment to public practices and public consequences."[11] Blanchard and Furco provide a model of engaged scholarship consisting of four frames: civically-, critically-, community-, and publicity-engaged, with new perspectives as the field evolves.[12] The current research focuses on critically-engaged scholarship which is different from the others as it centers on issues of power and questions structures in society. Here we focus on the different methods to help students challenge unjust structures, find imagination, and develop ways to use their skills in service to better public good.

Critically-engaged scholarship addresses underlying structures of inequities and is focused on justice and change. Social justice and anti-racism are the foundations of this perspective. The goal is to make an impact on social issues, as well as "the scholars' perspectives and the prevailing systems that perpetuate the issues."[13] The Principles of Advertising course attempted to incorporate the critically-engage scholarship framework in designing the course, by introducing examples and strategies of how advertising practices can make an impact on social issues, and changes. These kinds of efforts are underway in the areas of business and marketing.[14]

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has an initiative to make changes, calling for a new business philosophy that balances profit with purpose. It asks for creating models where measures of success include sustainability and purpose in addition to profit. They call out for "business leaders and business educators worldwide to rethink the mindsets, competencies, and skills needed for future leaders to have a positive impact on society."[15] Similarly, the United Nations Global Compact launched the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). This program is to "inspire and champion responsible management education, research and thought leadership globally."[16] The organization calls for academic institutions to advance social responsibilities and develop business leaders able to manage the complex challenges businesses face in today's globalized marketplace.

While there is a movement to bring social justice and DEI into businesses, this kind of work of encouraging commercial for-profit organizations to embrace efforts for the public good is still in an early stage and not well established. The value and contribution of the current study is to build on this movement as well as bring advertising and communication businesses and leaders into the fold. These fields are the drivers for content creation, programming, and distribution that lead to influential messaging on a wide variety of channels from social media, streaming services, and films to out-of-home, print, and video. The demand for content is growing as brands, entertainment, and other organizations embrace the persuasive nature of effective communication. The creation and strategy to develop relevant and effective messaging is the niche of communication schools. As they balance theory and practice, it is an especially ripe place where students can learn to integrate social justice issues and ethics into strategic development, research, creativity, and implementation. In that sense, integrating social justice into advertising classes in the early stage of college education can greatly help infuse the critically-engaged scholarship into training the next generation of future practitioners.

Social Justice and Advertising

Social justice is the concept of treating all people, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or economic level, with dignity and respect. It embraces social issues and their different perspectives to tackle these and related problems.[17]

Advertising can support social justice. Marketers and advertisers can include social justice ideals in messaging and campaigns to make an impact.[18] Marketing expert and author Seth Godin argues the very practice of advertising is the opportunity to serve and change the culture for the better. He calls it the labor of positive change.[19] Likewise, PepsiCo's CEO suggests corporations operate with a license from society and therefore owe society a duty to care. Advertising and brand executives, including those from J. Walter Thompson, Johnson & Johnson, and Dannon, have described how companies need to be more responsible, take a stand, and do better in the world. According to at least one survey, consumers want brands to play a bigger role in their lives and 80% want companies to take part in solving social issues.[20] The private sector, rather than the government, is now seen as the driver of the social justice agenda.[21]

Kolster confronted the issue with his text *Goodvertising.* The book's subtitle, *Creative advertising that cares*, summarizes Kolster's thesis. As consumers are more attracted to messages that show relevance, including issues of concern, "advertising for good" is a way to create dialogue about something of note shared by both the brand and consumer, as compared to just pushing products. This is a salient point as brands have lost support. In one survey of 30,000, 67% reported ambivalence about whether brands survive or not.[22] This lack of confidence reflects the disconnect between consumers and brands. Why should consumers care about brands?

The tremendous knowledge and insights marketers and advertisers have about consumers, brands, and the marketplace is unmatched by any other industry. The power of advertising enables it to take the challenge and make a difference. Everyday individuals, brands, and organizations can fight for causes they are passionate about. Kolster lists eleven criteria for *Goodvertising*: transparency, connection, simplicity, collaboration, compassion, creativity, contagiousness, generosity, insight, positivity, and commitment.[23]

There are many benefits for businesses to embrace and fold social justice into their strategies. Marketing and communication efforts that are diverse and inclusive allow all people to feel like they can be represented. Social justice ideals, by their very nature, are inclusive and of interest to a wider audience, not just those who fit into societal norms. Social justice attracts a wide variety of consumers while creating a positive image. Furthermore, ethical behavior and social justice appeals can help reputation loss, brand image problems, and negative backlash and facilitate better and longer relationships with customers and consumers.[24]

People look to leaders for messages that acknowledge their situations. When emotions are heightened, like in times of crisis, communication can reassure, provide hope, and start a conversation on how to heal. Powerful messages can connect and resonate with deep feelings and provide ideas for how to feel and what to do to "overcome the darkness."[25]

Several campaigns have successfully promoted social justice and Catholic social thought. Amnesty International's support for the global refugee crisis, created in 2016 by Ogilvy New York, created a team of refugees from around the world and supported them through branding and communication. The efforts gave a tangible shape, identity, and voice to the bigger cause. Rights and responsibilities, human dignity, solidarity, community and the common good, and participation were highlighted. The Ad Council's 2015 "Love has No Labels" work encouraged people to become aware of their own biases and to start a conversation. Pimental identifies solidarity, human dignity, community, and the promotion of peace as Catholic social thought in the campaign.[26]

Whirlpool used insights to create powerful marketing and advertising focused on combating chronic absenteeism in schools that re-energized the brand. Researchers discovered missing school and dropping out resulted in the higher likelihood of unemployment, use of welfare, and imprisonment. They also found that one in five children struggle to access clean clothes and that thousands miss school every day because they are embarrassed to attend school in dirty clothes. Whirlpool donated washer machines to 17 schools and saw attendance increase and students more motivated and engaged.[27] The efforts demonstrate

care, human dignity, and common good. Pimental emphasizes making social justice messages relevant to audiences through shared values and fulfillment by supporting the cause. Identifying

consumers, their media use, and platforms for messaging are major considerations.[28]

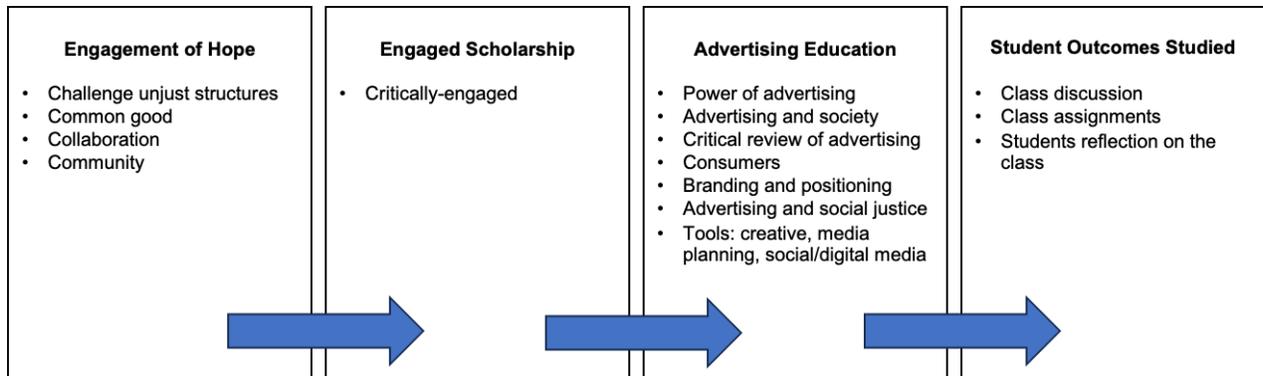| Engagement of Hope	Engaged Scholarship	Advertising Education	Student Outcomes Studied
• Challenge unjust structures • Common good • Collaboration • Community	• Critically-engaged	• Power of advertising • Advertising and society • Critical review of advertising • Consumers • Branding and positioning • Advertising and social justice • Tools: creative, media planning, social/digital media	• Class discussion • Class assignments • Students reflection on the class

Figure 1: Model for Developing Advertising Education through the Lens of Social Justice Investigation Focus

Although there has been a long-standing call for higher education to direct more effort toward providing training to address changing societal needs and proactively tackle dire issues at hand, such as racism, environmental issues, poverty, and more, higher education institutions have been slow to respond to the call.[29] Emphasizing social justice within an engagement of hope framework can demonstrate a new way of teaching advertising that can result in different learning outcomes and perspectives of advertising practices which later can be incorporated into industry. This exploratory investigation asks: What are student outcomes when emphasizing social justice in teaching advertising principles? Figure 1 illustrates the focus of the study.

Designing Principles of Advertising Course Emphasizing Social Justice

The following provides details of the planning, implementation, and assessment of the Principles of Advertising course using a social justice emphasis through the engagement of hope offered in the School of Communication at a private urban Midwestern university. In designing the course, our intention was to build a class with emphasis not only on the practices of advertising but also on the understanding of the ethics of the vocation. Although advertising is a very familiar topic as average Americans are exposed to a few thousand advertisements on a daily basis, creating

a persuasive yet ethically sound and socially just communication campaign is difficult to achieve.

Recent industry reports discussed that brands and corporations are no longer seen as mere profit-seeking entities but are demanded to be more active in engaging in and solving social justice issues.[30] This shows that future practitioners in advertising must be equipped with a keen understanding of evolving expectations for corporations and their social and ethical responsibilities. Therefore, the fundamental goal of this class was to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of communication strategies, while also setting the right attitudes and ethical standards that will serve them well in their future career paths.

Course Content

Principles of Advertising is an introductory advertising course required by students majoring in advertising. The course is designed to establish a basic understanding of the workflow of the advertising and marketing industry. With this still in mind, the course was structured slightly differently than typically taught to incorporate the idea of social justice. In terms of class content, during the 16-week semester, the first five weeks provided an overview, history, and evolution of advertising in society; critical thinking about the advertising industry; and basics of branding and positioning, and consumers. Once students have

established a basic understanding of advertising, the middle three weeks were dedicated to covering topics of advertising and social justice.

During those weeks, the lecture introduced the societal and economic background of changing roles and expectations for corporations and how the advertising industry is responding to this change. The class also discussed successful and failing cases of brand activism and social justice marketing. The remainder of the semester reviewed tools of the industry, including: creatives, media planning, and social and digital media.

Although the class covered specific topics related to social justice in depth in Weeks 5, 6, and 7, class assignments, which were designed to be completed in sequence over the course of the semester, asked students to develop an advertising campaign to communicate a social justice related issue with its target audience. Further, class discussion revolved around social justice issues, reinforcing the theme of social justice through the entire course, rather than treated as a standalone module.

Course Assignments

Class assignments were designed to provide students with opportunities to reflect on the topics covered: advertising and social justice. Specifically, the class included one individual presentation and a group project. For the individual presentation, students had two options to choose from. The first option asked students to perform a case study of a successful brand campaign that promotes prosocial values, such as environmental sustainability, social or political issues, and compare the successful case with one that failed. The second option was oriented around advertising creatives and was not centered around advertising and social justice. Students were asked to do a case study of successful advertising creatives that they found worth sharing.

The group project asked students to come up with an idea for a social justice marketing campaign. It was designed for students to incrementally work toward creating an advertising campaign for a brand of their choice. Students were asked to consider and include brand and consumer

research, focus group interviews (FGI), and write a creative brief. The project aimed for students to think critically about how to develop an effective, socially responsible, and ethical brand communication strategy that suits the identity of the chosen brand, to give them an opportunity to think about advertising, particularly from a social justice lens.

Table 1. Principles of Advertising Course Schedule

Week	Topics
Week 1	**Intro to the Class** The role of advertising and marketing in our society. Critical thinking about the ad industry.
Week 2	**Advertising and Society** The history and evolution of the advertising and marketing industry.
Week 3	**Brand and Brand Communication** What is brand and brand communication? Branding and positioning.
Week 4	**We, as Consumers** Consumer behaviors and market segmentation, how to do consumer research?
Week 5	**Advertising and Social Justice** Let's talk about "Goodvertising" Ethical and social justice perspectives on advertising: • Socio-economic and cultural background of the emergence of social justice marketing and brand activism. • Corporate social responsibility (CSR) vs. social justice marketing vs. brand activism. • Case studies: Success and failures of social justice marketing.
Week 6	**Advertising and Social Justice** Individual Presentations "Good vs. bad advertising."

Week 7	**Advertising and Social Justice** Class discussion on Advertising and Social Justice.
Week 8	Spring Break
Week 9	**The Creative Side** Advertising creative, the art of science? Message factors and communication processes, psychology of persuasion
Week 10	**The Creative and Media** Individual Presentations "Learning from Award-winning Examples"
Week 11	**The Media Side** Fundamentals of media planning, paid-earned-owned media approach, how to plan an effective media strategy
Week 12	**Digital Media** Social media content strategy, social media influencers, native advertising and sponsored content
Week 13	**Other Types of Digital Media** Other types of media: OOH, games, AR& VR, AIs, and more
Week 14	**Project Week**
Week 15	**Final Presentations Week**

Methods

With the goal of understanding student experience in the Principles of Advertising course taught with a social justice emphasis, a grounded theory approach was taken. In this way, researchers prioritized student thoughts of social justice, advertising as a tool for social justice, their view on future careers, and approaches to teaching the subjects, rather than using preconceived ideas about their experiences. Grounded theory uses a cyclical and contemplative method that continuously shifts between data and categories to ensure that the conclusions are rooted in the data itself.[31]

With regard to the specific methods of data collection used for this study, we conducted semi-structured interviews in groups about halfway through the semester to study students' reception and understanding of the course materials related to advertising and social justice. Further, textual

analysis of class assignments and review of end-of-semester reflections were additional methods of data collection. As applied research within the scholarship of teaching and learning, this study is about making observations, exploring, and explaining. While it may not be generalizable to all classes in advertising or related fields, this line of inquiry creates more questions to be pursued.

Study Site and Participants

The study took place at a private Jesuit university located in a major city in the Midwest. The Principles of Advertising course is within the School of Communication. Nine participants were those students enrolled in the spring 2023 semester. Except for one student, all were female, as is reflective of the advertising and public relations major which is 77% female. The study was granted an exemption from the university's Institutional Review Board.

Data Collection

Interviews. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants in small groups took place during two regularly scheduled 50-minute class sections via Zoom that were planned in the schedule and published in the syllabus. Students volunteered to divide themselves into two sections to make the groups smaller and conversations easier. In the end, a few more joined in the first section making that group consisting of six and the second group composed of three. Students needed only to attend one discussion and had the time to work on assignments the day they were not participating.

Students were provided with discussion questions the week before the session. Prompts were grouped into categories: (1) general questions about the effects of ads, (2) your take on brand activism (BA) and social justice marketing (SJM), (3) questions about BA & SJM and consumers, and (4) questions about pedagogical approach and outcomes. Providing multiple questions for each area allowed students to pick those they wanted to talk about. The instructor of the course introduced the primary researcher and together the faculty reviewed the objectives of the study and asked for consent for data collection and recording of the session. The instructor led the

discussion and probed students for their insights based on lectures, assignments, and materials covered. Researchers took notes during discussions and reviewed recordings for data analysis. Video files were destroyed afterward.

Reflections. An end-of-the-semester reflection assignment probed students for their thoughts of the teaching approach and learning of advertising and social justice, including how it may have influenced their future career behaviors and choices. Students completed the assignment online on the university's learning platform.

Data Analysis

Researchers examined the participants' words in interviews and written reflections explaining their opinions and experiences with advertising and social justice concepts and course approach and materials as well as assignment content.

Findings

Student interviews, the end-of-semester reflections, and assignments from the Principles of Advertising course were reviewed and analyzed for indications of social justice ideas as related to advertising communication and the overall teaching approach. Highlights of the qualitative exploratory study follow.

Social Justice and Advertising

The fundamental goal of this class was to enhance students' understanding and knowledge of social justice issues in advertising. In written reflections collected at the end of the semester, the students were asked to write candidly on how much they felt they had learned about advertising and social justice through this class. Comments suggested they gained knowledge about advertising and social justice. Related statements include: "I have developed a strong understanding of the way that social justice issues can be tied to advertising through this course;" "this class has given me the tools to understand that the idea of social justice recognizes the value of using many viewpoints and methods to address societal issues. It entails treating everyone with respect and decency regardless of their gender, color, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic

status;" and "I learned a lot more about how much consumers do truly care about the mission statement of a company and how in some cases now, it is more important to take a stand for something than to say nothing."

Some students mentioned how the class improved their understanding of the advertising industry and the evolution of consumer culture in the broader context of society. For example, one student mentioned that

> During Week 5 the breakdown of advertising and social justice element of our class was helpful as we began to lay out a background in understanding of the social problems that we currently face as a society and the ways in which we also have a corporate social responsibility which is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stake holders.

In a similar vein, another commented that

> We were able to take a step back and really evaluate the ways in which our society has made us believe certain things. It has shifted the mindset of people in terms of what people value as most important in today's world in terms of what used to be important about ten years ago and we are able to notice how as times change so does society […] We have been able to see the consumer culture that dominates society as we know it today and the ways in which technology is able to highlight those differences and really mass stream them to the audiences. The ability to have catering of advertising to specific audiences continues to drive support for brands and increase overall profits.

Two students identified how the course's approach was different from traditional ways to look at advertising indicating the source expanded their perspective on the role of advertising. As one wrote, "I have never really looked into advertising from the perspective of social justice before this. Usually, people my age just pay attention to the creativity of an ad." Similarly, another noted how

they learned about "good and bad advertisements through a social justice lens."

Impact on Career Behavior and Choice

A reflection question specifically asked students to consider the impact the course had on their future careers and professional choices. A comment from an end-of-the-semester reflection question suggested that this approach of teaching an introductory advertising course can successfully establish the critical lens through which students perceive advertising: "Personally, I think my approach to the advertising and marketing industry has changed since taking this class. In my everyday life when I see some form of advertising whether it be traditional or digital, I constantly find myself constructively criticizing or trying to decode the intention and messaging of an ad."

More specific to their career choices in the future, students responded with: "I want to do stuff we learned about in my future career" and "will help me in being able to apply the concept to whatever career path I choose to take." Others were a little more specific: "I want to be able to use my communication degree to be able to make a difference and help people in the world. … The ability to use social justice will happen in any role that I end up in the future," and "I do feel that I learned a lot about corporate social responsibility through the lens of advertising which I enjoyed equally as much and plan to put into action once I start my career."

Some students reflected on the impact of their future careers and suggested that they will want to create positive impact on the society through their work: "I think that learning about advertising in conjunction with further education on social justice through the marketing and advertising lens, will help me in being able to apply the concept to whatever career path I choose to take […] so I believe I would want to be part of the process of ad creation and messaging that makes a wide range of people feel seen, heard, and acknowledged," "In this class we frequently touched on where to find the line when it comes to social justice in marketing/advertising. Knowing where that line is can be really helpful in making sure you spread media that is respectful to all people and inclusive," and "Yes! I feel like

initially I was scared about how I would feel going into the advertising world but after taking this class I learned that I can make a change in the advertising world with my ideas."

Advertising's Power

One of the goals of this class was to increase students' understanding of advertising's power and role in driving positive changes in our society and the potential harm it can create when inappropriate messages are disseminated. With this in mind, the first set of interview questions aimed to learn students' general understanding of the effects of ads and students were asked to contemplate the effects of advertising. They seemed to agree that advertising was a powerful force because of its "reach" and because it is "everywhere." Notably, students acknowledged advertising was influential and talked about how messages "can affect" or have been influencing them. For example, one student mentioned that "when we see something trending we want to fill a cart with stuff" we want at the time but don't necessarily need. They articulated how their viewing behavior on different digital media platforms resulted in advertisements being served to them even days later.

In end-of-the-semester reflections, students noted how their world is set up in terms of "corporate America," the "consumer culture that dominates society" along with technology allows campaigns "continual changes and adaptions … to keep the consumers wanting more," and "ways in which our society has made us believe certain things."

Students claimed they better comprehended the core elements of advertising based on the course. Evident is their writing about their ability to discern communication's role in marketing, ideas of corporate social responsibility, and how they have more consideration and understanding of people and how people are influenced by messages.

Stereotypes. Students were well-versed and had examples of stereotypes in advertising. Given that the class was primarily made up of female students, they were especially focused on the negative implications for women, but men as well. Students talked about typical stereotypes, such as

how clothing ads can perpetuate stereotypical images of women and reinforce certain expectations and norms about certain genders. They also acknowledged it was not just clothing brands, but across industries. One student cited a Dove chocolate commercial as an example of how women needed to be "small and dainty" in food product advertising. This student summarized how women are "targeted in toxic ways" while another said ads were "very detrimental on women both positive and negative." They were sympathetic to how stereotypes could "trigger" self-image concerns.

Students considered how it was not just about women, but also about men. "If you don't look like the girl or the guy in the ads, no guy wants you." Another student talked about Pampers advertisements and how men, or dads, were shown as if they don't know how to parent or "be a father to their own kid." Despite good intentions, the student pointed out that the ad series could reinforce the notion that women are naturally better at parenting, while men are not, which she considered unfair.

Changes. On the positive side, some students reflected that there have been changes even in their short lives and "as we get older." Students cited the work of Victoria's Secret and how the company is more inclusive with handicapped and models of different body types. They talked about how social justice, in terms of marketing, had evolved even in their lifetime. Throughout the conversation the students were knowledgeable about how a company has to not only show social justice in their messaging, but how it has to be company-wide to really be believable. "Performative" was used multiple times and how that was more detrimental to a brand because it comes across as fake.

Brand Activism

Regarding the questions about the changing roles and expectations for corporations in addressing social and economic issues, students generally agreed that corporations are increasingly expected to take part in resolving the problems of our society. However, students also talked about how companies should "not take all the responsibility off government" for social issues. Instead, as

companies are "powerful and have a bigger and better voice to reach people" they should help "spread" awareness of social issues, and "not just be in the background."

Expectations for Brands. They suggested, "Gen Z wants companies to talk about social issues." And how companies, in the past, have not taken a stand, but now corporations are expected to take a stance and it is well accepted by most consumers, especially younger generations. One student stated that "people are more involved in the ethics of a company," similarly, "a lot of consumers are reactive, now people are more engaged, and lots of people have a lot to say… messages are more recognized, get traction, and now there is more talk about ads. Equity … more people being heard." Further, many students noted that corporations' activities and brand communications tapping into social issues must be authentic, and if that is not the case, audiences can quickly discern if a company's engagement with social issues is insincere or opportunistic. Moreover, students identified that companies needed to embrace social issues "company-wide" and "in business models, not just in advertising," to be "really believed."

Positive and Negative Consequences. However, they recognized that brand activism could have "consequences" for brands and could "make or break a company," increasing sales or become a public relations disaster as was the case of the Pepsi commercial with Kendal Jenner handing a can of Pepsi to a police officer during a Black Lives Matter protest. They thought consumers can "love or hate" social justice messages and "everyone will critique it in their own way."

Pedagogical Approach

When asked about the pedagogical approach in teaching introductory advertising courses with an emphasis on social justice, students highlighted that it is helpful for them to learn from existing examples. One student stated that they wanted instructors to "show more ads and discuss them and the different ethics in the ads" otherwise they "won't know." In the interview groups, they talked about wanting to view many ads and critique them for ethics, social justice, and other characteristics. In addition, a student commented

about the topics that could be strengthened in future iterations of this class, for example, how companies could respond to brand crisis related to social justice issues: "I feel like I could've gained a little bit more knowledge on like crisis management or something like that for if something went wrong through a social justice lens."

Examples were also highlighted as important for learning in the end-of-semester reflections. Students wrote: "It was really helpful when we saw different examples, and how they brought awareness of social justice in advertising. I think that examples can be the best source for understanding this topic better because it puts a final point on all the theory we learned." And, "I feel like this [social justice advertising] is something that is hard to actually learn about how to do because your kind of just need to learn through examples."

Other teaching methods students identified as effective in their understanding of the concepts included case studies, group projects/presentations, and slide show presentations. Students explained how these activities allowed them to see many perspectives that brought the concepts to life.

Students seemed to recognize the importance of advertising and social justice and for them to "effectively incorporate ethics and social justice to be well prepared in the world and be responsible." They acknowledged the merit of having higher standards and being honest at work. They suggested getting everyone's perspective could help make ads better.

Discussion

Understanding of the Industry

From the interviews and reflections, the researchers observed that students were able to articulate the power of advertising in technical terms and demonstrated they had a grasp of the process and mechanics of the industry. It seems the class structure may have enhanced students' interest and understanding of the industry functions and their effects and provided an opportunity to reflect on their individual experiences of how ads have influenced their understanding of themselves (e.g., self-image, body image, race, and gender roles) and how the ads have been changing as they grow up. By doing so, students were able to consider the context of advertising in our commercial society and how advertising worked, even identifying how their browsing behavior resulted in content being served to them days later. In this sense, students were not naive about how advertising affects the public and agreed that any potential negative influences of such brand communication campaigns should be addressed. The suggestion is that, as a class, it is important to critically examine and reflect on the messages conveyed by brand communications and to consider how these messages have influenced many aspects of our lives not only as a consumer but also as a person, whether we are consciously aware of them or not. This approach aligns with the principles of "critically-engaged scholarship", which emphasizes critical reflection on lived experiences and making efforts to create positive changes.[32]

As the course continued, interestingly, there was evidence of different student outcomes that align with the social justice content presented in class. For example, for the individual presentation assignments, students were given two options as described in the course design section. The instructor observed that even students who initially chose to research and critique award-winning advertising creatives (Option 2), most students selected social justice-oriented campaigns on their own. Some of the work included messages about gun violence and other public service spots. This was a promising finding because, in previous classes that had the same course requirement but did not incorporate the notion of advertising and social justice, students did not select social justice-oriented campaigns. This observation may indicate that students have gained an understanding that creative advertising campaigns can be used to address issues our society is facing, such as gun violence, and are able to trigger or drive conversation around social issues, which can eventually be a cornerstone of legal and systematic changes. In terms of the engagement of hope, it also seems to demonstrate how students were motivated about this topic and embraced examples that they can use as pathways

for developing their own efforts to better society in the future.

The Complexity of Social Justice

The students' words reflect just how complex the concept of social justice is. It is abstract, varied, and can be applied to a number of different situations. Students appeared to use imagination in the discussion-oriented style of the course to couple social justice with advertising that made it a unit and where the natural goal is for the betterment of society. As discussed in the prior section, when combined in presenting and teaching the material, learner inclinations are to treat advertising as a social justice instrument. It will take time but presenting the interesting, positive, creative, and powerful virtues of advertising can help create a norm.

Increasing Demand for Social Justice in Teaching Advertising

Our findings from interviews and reflections indicate students desire more viewing of ads and discussion of their ethics; especially as the students' ethics course was journalism-oriented, and these are complicated concepts. They asked to have more time/training in this area for better understanding of messages in terms of ethics and social justice to help prepare for careers and responsibility in the world; values related to the civically-engaged scholarship perspective.

An engagement of hope framework is used to inspire creativity, imagination, and hope.[33] While students recognized the challenges and "consequences" of advertising being the messenger for social justice, they were excited about the changes and evolution of brand and communication in their lifetime already. The restructured Principles of Advertising course seemed to provide students the goals, pathways, and agency, ingredients of hope, and robust thinking of critically-engaged scholarship to consider advertising communication one method to better society.

While an exploratory study, findings show students taught advertising with an emphasis on social justice will produce assignments and ideas about advertising that are social justice in nature.

Limitations and Future Studies

The limitations to this investigation are that this is one study based on a single course with small enrollment. We recognize that the findings are not generalizable to advertising or other courses. Rather it is about exploring, explaining, and making observations as applied research within the scholarship of teaching and learning. In that context it solicits more inquiries. However, the paper provides a structure and foundation for both advertising courses incorporating social justice in an attempt to create *goodvertising* and research. It helps to build on the young movements that are especially sprouting up in business and fold in advertising communication, an important center for content creation.[34] An idea for further study is to teach introductory courses in the same semester, one as is usually taught and the other as proposed here to see and study any differences. For more advanced advertising courses, we could ask students how they would challenge industry practice to be in line with more equity.

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to investigate ways to teach advertising that would encourage the next generation of practitioners to use their enthusiasm, marketplace knowledge, and tools of persuasion for the betterment of society, thereby strengthening the industry. Engagement of hope and engaged learning scholarship provided the foundation; and when advertising and social justice were combined in the course approaches, it appears students responded by connecting the two. HJE

Appendix A
Interview Questions with Students

General questions about the effects of ads
• How do ads perpetuate stereotypes or dispel stereotypes? How might ads affect a person's life and self-image? What are the examples? Please share your personal experiences as well.
• What is the relationship between advertisements and fairness or justice? What role can you play in this relationship?
•Why do you think the advertising and marketing industry should be a force to create societal changes to resolve the problems and challenges we are facing? Can they be the force, why and why not?

Your take on brand activism (BA) and social justice marketing (SJM)
• According to the Edelman Trust Barometer report, more people distrust governments and other institutions in their ability to fix social and political problems. Do you think it makes sense that corporations take the responsibilities that were traditionally assigned to legal and political institutions?
• Can brand activism or social justice marketing make a meaningful and actual impact on our society as a whole?
• What are some potential consequences for companies that engage in brand activism, both positive and negative?

Your take on brand activism (BA) and social justice marketing (SJM)
• How can social media help get out advertisements and messages about social justice issues? Name one or two examples of this?
• How can companies ensure that their brand activism is authentic and not just performative?
• How can companies measure the impact of their brand activism efforts, both in terms of consumer perception and actual social change?

Questions about BA & SJM and consumers
• How have consumer attitudes toward brand activism changed in recent years? How have your attitudes toward brand activism changed?
• What is the role of the consumer in shaping a company's approach to brand activism and social justice marketing?

Questions about Pedagogical approach and outcomes
• How does that influence your approach to or understanding of the particular occupations?
• In your opinion, how can advertising and marketing classes effectively incorporate the idea of ethics and social responsibilities of the industry?

Appendix B
Reflection Questions

This final quiz is not meant to test your factual knowledge but to gather feedback on your overall experiences with this introductory class that emphasizes the social justice aspect of advertising. Please answer the following questions candidly. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. How much do you feel you learned about advertising and social justice through this class? Which parts of the class were particularly helpful in building your understanding of this topic?

2. Has your understanding of, or approach to, the advertising and marketing industry changed since taking this class? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

3. Do you think the lessons about social justice and marketing that you learned in this class will impact or inspire your future career choices and your approach to solving social problems?

4. What did you find most effective in learning about this topic? What areas do you think could be improved in future iterations of the class?

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