Gender and Multicultural Issues in Advertising: Stages on the Research Highway

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Stern contextualizes the six articles in the special issue of Journal of Advertising *dedicated to the impact of gender and multicultural issues as on advertising. She presents an overview of the theoretical relationship between evolutionary stages of gender research, formerly called "feminist" or "women's studies," and multicultural research, an outgrowth of cultural studies. To situate the current trends in advertising research, she begins by addressing the nexus between feminist criticism, defined as the cross-disciplinary study of women, and multicultural criticism, defined as the cross-disciplinary study of marginalized populations including (but not limited to) women. Next, she turns to the historical development of gender studies in the modern and post-modern era—the generation from 1960 to the present — to address the interwoven themes of gender and multicultural research as they affect advertising research. Last, she draws implications from the intersection of gender and race to suggest directions for future multicultural research.*

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The articles in this special issue of *Journal of Advertising* dedicated to gender and multicultural issues provide insight on current thinking about the influence of diverse populations on advertising. To situate the research historically, we need to explore the theoretical relationship between three stages of what is now called "gender research," formerly called "feminist" or "women's studies," and multi-cultural research, an offshoot of cultural studies (Spivak 1987) and the New Historicism (see Thomas 1991; Veeser 1989). Let us begin with gender research, the older branch of inquiry, and use it as a springboard for posing three questions about multicultural research: first, what is the relationship between the feminist focus on gender as a category of analysis and the multicultural focus on a broader array of categories such as race, class, sexual orientation, and ethnicity (see McConnell-Ginet, Borker, and Furman 1980)? Second, how do the intersecting categories influence perceptions of commonalities versus differences in responses to advertising by various cultural groups? Third, what can the multicultural perspective contribute to advertising research?

The first question is addressed by examining the early stage of research on women, which focused on the commonalities among women that reified differences from men. In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* identified women as the "other" sex, automatically considered inferior by male-dominant culture—the patriarchal society. Stereotypical "images of women" were catalogued to support the contention that when the white male establishment studied or portrayed women, the frame of reference was a single universal norm (de Beauvoir 1952)—the male one. In contrast, feminist researchers claimed that a dichotomous model ("masculinist" vs. "feminist") was a more accurate description of reality. In this stage, researchers examined commonalities found in the depiction of women defined from the male perspective as unequal, deficient, or limited (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974). The second question is addressed by examining the current stage of gender research, in which the focus has shifted from interest in commonalities among women and differences from men to differences between various groups of women. Since the 1980s, gender research has been enriched by multicultural studies, which provided the impetus for incorporating vari-

ables other than biological sex—race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, education, and so forth—in the study of populations marginalized by the Western world's neglect of culture other than that of white males. The third question is addressed in terms of problems raised by multicultural theory that must be addressed by future advertising research.

"Multiculturalism" in Advertising Research

In this special issue, "multiculturalism" is used broadly, applying to the study of nonmajority populations within, between, and across cultures. That is, the term is used in its popular sense as a descriptor of the study of populations other than white, European, heterosexual, educated men. Within-culture it includes not only racially determined minority populations (African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and so forth), but also minority populations determined by sexual orientation (gay males, lesbians, transvestites, and so forth). Between and across cultures it includes comparisons of same-sex populations in different countries. The broad definition allows for study of the complex bundle of issues related to race, sex, and sexual orientation that converge in contemporary research. Let us now turn to the historical context that affords a backdrop for the emergence of these ideas.

Early Research: Universals and "Otherness"

The opening stage in feminist criticism (Bristor and Fischer 1993)—a scholarly discipline that set out to critique "the derogatory stereotypes of women in literature written by men" and to present "the alternative and subversive points of view in some writings by women" (Abrams 1993, p. 234)—shows a striking parallel to early advertising research on women's issues (Stern 1989). This stage has been labeled "thematic" (see Culler 1982), for it focuses on the commonality of themes expressed in media images of women viewed as a homogeneous group in contrast to men. In this early stage (Culler 1982), interest in women's issues took the form of tracing the history of women's experiences and mapping their current condition (Gilligan 1982). The research produced in the 1960s and 1970s records a plethora of media images clustering around the ideological concept of separate and unequal cultural spheres or "places" for men and for women (Welter 1966). Women were found to be relegated to roles relating to their "place" in the domestic sphere (Welter 1966)—wife, mother, sex object, and housekeeper—whereas men were found to be free to roam everywhere else. The point of view that governed the production of the images was so automatically male-dominant that women were seen through men's eyes as generic nonmen who behaved in stereotypical ways.

The study of constrained images of women in advertising harks back to Goffman's 1976 book, *Gender Advertisements*, a landmark in content analysis of pictorial "gender display" themes. Identification of themes such as "the ritualization of subordination" and "licensed withdrawal" replicates identification of similar themes found by the first wave of feminist literary critics (Baym 1981; Fetterley 1978; Millett 1971; Russ 1972). The critics assigned causality to a triad of assumptions underlying the production of images of women: (1) most images occur in text produced by men, (2) the images apply to women as a generic group, and (3) images are perceived in the same way by all readers. The major task of early feminist researchers across disciplines was to document the assertion that images of women in Western culture have generally been created from the male perspective (Firestone 1971; Lakoff 1975), that this perspective has as its object a generically identifiable "woman," and that the view of women through men's eyes is assumed to be the universal one for *both* men and women (Russ 1972).

In advertising research, the decade after Goffman's (1976) work produced content analyses of gender role portrayals (Courtney and Whipple 1983; Gilly 1988) that illustrated women's roles in advertising as well as gender stereotyping of products and services (Iyer and Debevec 1986; Stern 1988). At this point, the object of research was generic "woman," no matter her race, national origin, sexual preference, or class membership, and inquiry was driven by interest in the essential "womanness" that supported the man/woman binary. Though the universalism of male-normed culture was challenged, its assumptions were carried over into the study of women viewed as a relatively homogeneous group. The reigning distinction was that of androcentric (male-dominant) themes versus gynocentric (female-dominant) ones (see Hirschman 1991), and the dominance of masculine/agentic themes (Bakan 1967) was found to be pervasive across media. In the marketing literature, themes such as control and power over others, conflict and aggression, competition, and dominance and separation were shown to be reinforced by the language of war ("marketing warfare"), sexual domination ("penetrating the target market"), and machine/computer

images ("information processing") (Hirschman 1991). The androcentric bias in marketing and advertising was made explicit by the discipline's imagery ("marketing thrusts," "advertising tools," "cash cow"), which reinforced the notion of androcentric text as the normal vehicle for business ideas.

The central distinction between the sexes was assumed to be biological, a consequence of the Freudian dictum that anatomy is destiny. Further, the behavior of the two sexes was assumed to be readily comprehended as different by all observers. As a counterpoint to the exploration of dominant androcentric themes, early feminist researchers also aimed at the discovery, codification, and publication of gynocentric text, usually defined as works written for and about women, often (but not always) by women as well (see Kolodny 1980). The recovery of a women's tradition (Allen 1987) focused on images of women in gynocentric writings, analyzed in terms of women's responses to texts in which they are featured prominently and in which their concerns are paramount (Poovey 1984). Recovery of the gynocentric textual canon enabled Culler (1982) to frame a question about reading that is applicable to advertising as well as to literature (Stern 1993a,b): What does it mean for a woman, reading as a woman, to read text written for women? Gynocentric text (Bleich 1988) was identified as a category of work in any media devoted to themes and values more relevant to women's biological nature and cultural experiences than to men's (Holland and Sherman 1988; Segal 1988). Typically feminine themes such as communality, cooperation, and nurturance were studied in cultural products (MacKinnon 1983), including advertising. However, even though feminine themes were identified as distinct from masculine themes, this stage of research was fixated on similarities among women in terms of differences from men.

Minority Research Themes

The emphasis on commonalities carried over into research on minority populations in the United States—primarily blacks, but also Hispanics, Asians, and any other consumers not white, male, middle class, and so forth. Early studies of minority groups were also based on the assumption of homogeneity and the biological determination of race and ethnicity. In advertising research, this stage can be said to have begun in the late 1960s, with Kassarjian's (1969) study of blacks in American advertising from 1946-1965— the post-war period in which disciplines such as black studies and women's studies arose. Kassarjian's con-

clusion was that "the ads that treat the Negro as an equal are so few that neither can the civil rights groups be acclaimed succesful nor can the advertising industry take particular pride in their supposedly newly found social responsibility" (in Wilkes and Valencia 1989, p. 20).

By the 1970s, research on minorities, most notably African-Americans, paralleled feminist research on women by focusing on descriptive differences between black and white consumers (Sturdivant 1973), especially in terms of unequal treatment. However, images of African-Americans were found to reveal not simply homogeneity based on race, but also more negative stereotyping (Kassarjian 1969) than was found in images of women.

Blacks featured centrally were cast predominantly in negative roles such as menial worker, poor recipient of charity, and social problem. The few exceptions were one-in-a-million figures such as athletes, musicians, and entertainers. For the most part, when commercials did feature blacks in non-stereotypical roles, they were not central figures. Rather, the few mixed-race advertisements in print and on television (Bush, Resnick, and Stern 1980) featured blacks as token faces in a crowd, frequently children, rather than as major characters. One interesting finding (Wilkes and Valencia 1989) prescient for future research was that black coders evaluated members of their own minority group as occupying more important roles in the advertisements than did white coders. That finding is consistent with previous ones on mass media selective perception (Faber, O'Guinn, and Meyer 1987), suggesting that an "insider's perspective" on the black experience might differ from the majority perspective just as a woman's perspective differs from a man's.

The societal implications of negative stereotyping and invisibility are profound, for media portrayal of minorities plays a significant role in their acculturation (Faber, O'Guinn, and Meyer 1987). Some researchers claimed that the exclusion of racial minorities in positive roles in ads had a detrimental effect on minority youths, making them feel unconnected to society (Kern-Foxworth 1993). The problem of low self-esteem widespread among young blacks was associated with the images they saw of themselves in the media (Dominick and Greenberg 1970; Pieterse 1992)—"either negative, offensive, or not there" (Kern-Foxworth 1993, p. 1). Repeated depiction of African-Americans as athletes and musicians—the most prominent positive stereotypes—reinforced sports and entertainment as the most acceptable areas of black achievement in America. Not surprisingly, repeated portrayals of African-Americans as objects of philan-

thropy and social concern in PSAs and corporate message ads reinforced the image of a population group dependent on government assistance and incapable of conforming to the mainstream Puritan work ethic. Researchers condemned the negative images of minorities (Colfax and Sternberg 1972) in advertising as powerful reinforcers of socially damaging attitudes toward minorities that influenced majority and minority groups alike.

Though the study of women and minorities was introduced into advertising research a generation ago (see Artz and Venkatesh 1991 and Venkatesh 1991 for review), the assumption of within-group homogeneity prevented further theory development for several reasons. First, single-sex or single-group emphasis did not fully take into account the complexity of gender/race interactions in the real world. Second, the single-theme emphasis on biologically determined stereotypical roles led to what Artz and Venkatesh (1991, p. 619) call "analytical exhaustion," for there is little left to say if heredity is assumed to be the major driving force in human development. Last, the absence of a theoretical framework for incorporating gender and minority themes in advertising limited the scope of future research by failing to locate consumption within a broader societal context. A second research stage was necessary to investigate why particular images occur and how the category of gender relates to other salient human categories such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Current Research: Particularisms and Culture

The early research stage peaked in the 1970s, when feminist research on purportedly innate "otherness" was replaced by research on the role of cultural construction in determining within-group differences. When feminist research refocused on differences *among* women rather than differences *between* men and women (Lorde 1983), earlier scholarship was criticized as a replication of past monoculturalism, with the first wave of feminism again dominated by white, middle class, heterosexual discourse. Exhaustive analysis of women's "otherness" was now viewed as but an innovative way of reinforcing the experience of white Westernized women (the "other" under consideration) and continuing the marginalization of any other others. The new emphasis on pluralism rather than on biological dichotomization can be seen in the transformation of "women's studies" — a term that references biological sex—into "gender studies"—a newer designation that references culturally pre-

scribed psychosexual traits associated with "masculinity" and "femininity."

Gender and the Subcultural Approach

In current gender research, the approach known as the *difference* or subcultural approach (Coates 1988) is anchored by the assumption that different cultural expectations, life experiences, and interpretive habits determine the way people construe meanings of incoming media messages (Register 1975). In terms of maleness/femaleness, any text true to the female experience is likely to differ from one true to the male experience not only in subject matter and style, but also in perceived meaning (Schumacher 1975). Text can thus be categorized as androcentric or gynocentric on the basis of gender differences in language, themes, rituals (Goffman 1976), and values that affect not only *what* each sex reads, but also how each one reads. This reveals that neither text nor language is sex-neutral, but instead acts as a vehicle for conveying different cultural expectations and value systems for men and for women (Allen 1987). When text-active analysis (see Culler 1982) dismantles text, it exposes the oppositions (Abrams 1993) that illustrate the way norms for each sex are determined by specific cultural conditioning, rather than by universal laws inscribed in one's DNA. A key point is that the difference between male and female interpretive strategies based on childhood learning (Crawford and Chaffin 1988) and subsequent experiences can be extended to any differences that separate one group of people from another.

The parallel in advertising research is a winding down of the early stage (Venkatesh 1991), with study of common themes replaced by study of different meanings (see Bristor and Fischer 1993; Hirschman 1993; Stern 1993b). In this special issue, three articles demonstrate the second stage of gender research. Brown, Stevens, and Maclaren's article extends Holbrook and Stern's (1997; Stern and Holbrook 1994) demonstration of gender differences in ad interpretations, itself based on previous examination of different male and female reading styles (Stern 1993b). Differences in terms of responses to an ad made by one man and two women are considered, and the findings indicate that there are more and subtler differences than those accounted for by the assumption of binary sex-based oppositional interpretations. Kates's article introduces "queer theory" to describe the tension between heterosexual dominance and homosexual subversiveness in an ad interpretation, exploring the possibilities of a deconstructive reading that replaces sexual duality

with pansexual diversity. Maynard and Taylor's article analyzes the portrayals of teen girls in Japan and the United States, identifying differences in "girlishness" related to culturally desirable behaviors. The researchers challenge the assumption of universal meaning and provide provocative glimpses of the instability of universal and fixed norms, the variability of interpretation, and the displacement of biological imperatives by cultural conditioning.

Race and Multiculturalism

Just as gender research challenges the notion of sex as a fixed biological category, multicultural research challenges the notion of race as a clear-cut observable physical fact rather than an ideological construct (Fields 1982). Multicultural research addresses race/ethnicity as a bundle of meanings determined by individuals who have had varied life experiences. In that way, the universalist barrier of biological imperatives is breached, allowing for greater understanding of differences based on sex, age, country of origin, education, occupation, income, sexual orientation, and so forth. Current scholarship rejects the category of race as a biological fact, even questioning its position as a physical attribute of individuals immediately obvious to observers. Black people "do not look alike; they came originally from different countries, spoke different languages, and had different cultures" (Fields 1982, p. 143). That is, blacks are now considered no more a racial group than Hispanics or Asians, and the descriptor "African-Americans," which references diverse national origins, has replaced "blacks," which references a single skin color—in itself not accurate. Even though perceived similarities among "blacks" have shaped popular opinion about race, scholars now consider it fallacious to regard race as a physical fact.

An apocryphal story about Papa Doc Duvalier provides a telling illustration (Fields 1982, p. 146):

> An American journalist once asked the late Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti what percentage of the Haitian population was white. Duvalier's answer, astonishingly enough, was "Ninety-eight percent." The startled American journalist was sure he had either misheard or been misunderstood, and put his question again. Duvalier assured him that he had heard and understood the question perfectly well, and had given the correct answer. Struggling to make sense of this incredible piece of information, the American finally asked Duvalier: "How do you define white?" Duvalier answered the question with a question: "How do you define black in your country?" Receiving the explanation that in the United States anyone with black blood was considered black, Duvalier nodded and said, "Well, that's the way we define white in my country."

In the marketing literature of the 1980s, multicultural research set out to reexamine issues of ethnicity from a more pluralistic point of view. Complex interweavings of gender, race, and ethnicity replaced scholarly reliance on single status indicators (see Laroche et al. 1991), now evaluated as simplistic (Hirschman 1981). Researchers (O'Guinn and Faber 1985; Valencia 1985) pointed out that the failure to treat ethnicity as a complex multidimensional construct in previous studies followed from a reductive blurring of two schools of thought—the "objective" and "subjective." The two schools bring different perspectives to research in terms of different ways of categorizing populations into subcultural groupings. The subjectivists view ethnicity as a matter of individual belief, and accept an individual's self-definition into one ethnic group or another as operational (Barth 1969). In contrast, the objectivists require researchers to measure ethnicity in terms of an objective cultural attribute such as religion, language, traditions, values, and so forth. By the mid-1980s, even though objectivists were using multidimensional operationalization (Valencia 1985) to synthesize variables such as country of origin, language preference, and demographic profiles, subjective self-identification was also becoming popular in advertising research.

The current trend often blends subjective and objective measurement, for a subject's self-perception is sought, and ethnicity is conceived as a multidimensional construct based on country of origin, language use, social interaction, and media communication, as well as on self-categorization (see Laroche et al. 1991). The research presumes some overlap between subjective and objective categorizations. The articles in this issue provide evidence of such overlap, framing questions about gendered images and assumptions and reframing issues of ethnic interpretations, target market responses, and cultural norms from new angles. Maynard and Taylor's article addresses women not in Western societies, demonstrating the intersection of gender and culture by incorporating knowledge from overlapping cultural particularisms (gender, cultural origin, and age). Three articles explore distinctions in ethnic evaluations of ads based on intra-ethnic group variables (Green) and responses to ads by targeted versus nontargeted consumers (Holland and Gentry; Grier and Brumbaugh). Green's article introduces the concept of ethnic identification as yet another variable of interest, and Grier and Brumbaugh's article explores ad meanings created

by target and nontarget market viewers of advertising targeted to white, black, and gay/lesbian consumers. These articles, along with Kates's, reveal the synergy between the problematics of multiculturalism and those of feminism, for the restructuring of meaning that marks this research stage flows from the displacement of monoculturalism as the guiding force in scholarship.

The finding that language use and self-identification are valid means of capturing ethnicity (Laroche et al. 1991) is substantiated by Green's article examining the effects of ethnic identification among African-American women. Ethnic identification is a subjective determination, based on the assumption that race is an ideological construct and that ethnic identity as a member of a culture is influenced as much by acculturation as by physical attributes. Holland and Gentry's article addresses ethnic identification in terms of potential responses to an advertiser's attempts to "accommodate" communication to members of an ethnic group.

Grier and Brumbaugh consider self-identification in terms of target marketing, presenting a study that examines responses of viewers who perceive themselves to be targets versus nontargets of advertisements. Their work illustrates the shift in multicultural research away from an interest in hierarchical binaries and toward a more pluralistic view of men and women as members of different races, classes, and sexual orientations who experience the world in different ways. That perspective led to the radical readjustment of the notion of received meaning, now set loose from what were considered biases of singularity and male dominance and reconceptualized as pluralistic and context-bound. The identification of socially constructed meanings in interpretations of and attitudes toward advertising shows that different cultural groups bring different interpretive styles to the media and that verbal/visual cues are decoded differently by various individuals. In sum, the current research stage is characterized by the view of demographic variables — race, age, class, status—as ideological constructs rather than biological imperatives and of advertising responses as a set of culturally constructed meanings.

Future Research: Instabilities and Fragmentation

The authors in this issue accept the concept of advertising meanings as culturally constructed by the subjective self, continuing the early feminist challenge to the notion of universally received and correctly comprehended meaning. This stream of research shows responsiveness to the radical feminist call for the construction of racial ideology free from white middle class male dominance. It continues the work done by black feminists who studied the relationship between racial domination and sexuality (Evans 1984; Giddings 1984), viewing race as a category of otherness eradicated by (rather than supported by) theories that focus only on sexual difference. All of these differences frequently come together in critiques blending feminism, post modernism, and Marxism. Poovey's (1984) blend of feminism and Marxism analyzes women fiction writers in the context of women's social condition in bourgeois society, and thus contributes to a fuller understanding of capitalist influences on writers as well as on the characters they invent.

Characters in fiction resemble those in mass-media artifacts such as television, cinema, and music video, all of which have been taken as texts for examination from a multicultural perspective (Allen 1987). Advertising, too, benefits from the sort of close attention that Kates's article pays to queer theory and Brown, Stevens, and Maclaren's article pays to Bakhtinian theory. The multiplicative impact of, say, blackness plus homosexuality plus third-world heritage presents research complexities that are just beginning to be explored in terms of real responses to real advertisements in the complex real world. In breaking down the monolith of sex or class, the research assumption of a multiverse rather than a universe, a world in which each individual determines his/her own meaning based on numerous interwoven factors, brings sharpness and precision to the framing of questions. The introduction of new theoretical perspectives not only changes the way we look at the world, but also changes the world we look at.

Though the articles address different aspects of gender, race, and culture, they are unified by the assumption of instabilities of meaning that flow from uncontrollably subjective interpretations. In regard to gender, Kates's article advances the proposition that consumers produce a range of interpretations from the merely "nuanced" to the radically controversial and unintended. He questions whether a singular intended meaning can even be posited, arguing that consumers are likely to come up with a multitude of unique personalized meanings. Brown, Stevens, and Maclaran's article also claims that advertising texts are inherently unstable and that male and female consumers interpret texts on the basis of not only personal and sociocultural experiences but also gendered experiences. Maynard and Taylor's article points out that advertising to the "same" demographic target consumer in different cultures is not

at all the same, but rather reflects culture-specific concepts of the ideal self. Their article exposes the variability of cultural meanings associated with girlishness, implying that same sex target markets across cultures will not find the same gender images appealing.

The articles exploring racial/ethnic interpretations provide added information about targeting in an environment of destabilized meanings. Holland and Gentry propose a theoretical framework for research on ethnic target marketing that will hold across ethnic groups, rather than being limited to a single one. They comment on variability in consumer responses to the use of cultural symbols, and locate the degree of ethnic identification as a major factor influencing negative versus positive responses. Green also examines responses in terms of the influence of ethnic identification and media placement, and she points out that the African-American audience is a diverse one, not a racially homogeneous one. Grier and Brumbaugh investigate diversity in terms of meaning created by target and nontarget audiences, including white, black, heterosexual, and gay consumers. They demonstrate that the same cultural cues can elicit positive meanings that are in accord with the experiences of target audiences and negative meanings that bewilder or irritate nontarget consumers.

Notwithstanding the weight of research support for instability and fragmentation, we still must contend with the question, "Whither advertising research?" If we accept the likelihood of subjective interpretations and idiosyncratic meanings, are we left with advertising as the new Tower of Babel? The articles imply no such pessimism, instead providing useful suggestions for research as well as practical applications. Grier and Brumbaugh suggest that if advertisers understand the way cultural cues shape meaning, they will be able to create ads that are "purposely polysemic," in effect taking control of positive and negative meanings by manipulating textual cues and media placement. Holland and Gentry also point out that researchers and practitioners alike can benefit from understanding more about the potential for engendering negative responses on the part of audiences who resent blatant efforts at cultural accommodation. Green emphasizes the importance of media strategy in targeting ethnic audiences, suggesting the need for different strategies based on racially neutral versus race based products and audience demographics.

Turning to gender and culture, Maynard and Taylor suggest that global advertisers need to conduct experiments that measure different "match-ups" of images to projected target markets across cultures to ensure that targeting is culturally appropriate. Kates admonishes marketers to develop sensitivity to the diversity of gay and lesbian populations across cultures, races, and ethnicities, advocating attention to the "rainbow rhetoric." Like Green, Grier and Brumbaugh, and Holland and Gentry, he warns advertisers to avoid the appearance of market exploitation and bad faith. Brown, Stevens, and Maclaren propose Bakhtin's concept of the "carnivalesque" as a change agent—a means of revealing false ideology by "turning the upside-down upside-down." Their exposure of the hidden ideological positions resident in an "innocent" advertisement, like Kates's, explicates the multiple divergent meanings beneath the surface of text.

Thus, far from being stranded in chaos, we end with the sense that advertising research is becoming more sophisticated as it grows more multicultural. The integration of scholarship on race, class, and sexual orientation rounds out the implications of gender, often by adapting multidisciplinary theory to encourage sensitivity to pluralistic meanings.

However, in the long run, neither feminism nor multiculturalism pretends to be a neutral approach to the world, for both aim not merely at interpretation but at political action to redress past inequities. From the outset, the *praxis* of feminist criticism openly avowed a political agenda (Millett 1971; Schweickart 1988). Consciousness raising (Holly 1975) was but the first step in the creation of a new order of reality, followed by a movement from awareness of historical and contemporary female reality to a prescriptive mode. The call for change began with recognition of the fact that *neither men nor women* were treated without ideological "shoulds" in the standard sexual myths and stereotypes that dominate Western culture, including advertising. Similarly, multicultural studies often call for the overthrow of racial and classist ideologies at the root of social disturbances.

Multicultural pressure to free humanity from sexist and racist stereotyping is more pressing when advertising is the object than when "high" art is. As critics since Friedan (1963) have pointed out, advertising is much more influential than literature in spreading sexist, racist, and classist ideology because it is so much more accessible. The pervasive effects on daily life that flow from the depiction of role models and social interaction probably influence real-life power relationships (Holly 1975) at least as profoundly as the masterworks of Western culture. Feminists pointed out that understanding women as consumers (Register 1975) should not be an end in itself, but rather a means to spur change in the direction of a non-sexist world.

Advertising as the handmaiden of a nonsexist racially equitable society requires development of an

aesthetic other than that of the white male middle class heterosexual. The new aesthetic might begin with the question of whether a text presents an authentic experience. As the keystone of a feminist/minority aesthetic, critics have proposed a "truth criterion" based on judgments of the authenticity of women and minority characters, situations, and authorial perspectives. Some questions about the nature of the expanded vision that apply to advertising are: What is the female and the minority reality? What is the female and the minority experience? What is their alternative knowledge? How do women and minorities see, know, and relate to the world? The development of an enlarged aesthetic seems likely to grow out of interpretive approaches, and may very well rely more on personal or impressionistic criteria than on objective ones.

The multicultural agenda for nonsexist and nonracist advertising (like the agenda previously proposed for literature) condemns demeaning sexual and racial stereotypes ("sex kitten," "brainless housewives," "big butt black mama") and instead favors realistic portayals of multifaceted men and women characters of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds. Advertising that depicts the diversity of humankind in a multiplicity of social roles could serve as a genuine forum for a plurality of voices rather than as a forum for a narrowly defined consumer's voice that has been limited mostly to that of the white middle class.

In conclusion, the prognosis for multicultural criticism is promising. Advertising has now joined mass media artifacts such as television, cinema, and music video taken as texts for multidisciplinary examination (Allen 1987). Let us end by praising the radical restructuring of models and paradigms to express the diverse voices now included in scholarship (Cully 1991, p. 13): "To risk a move to what I will call the paradigm shift stage meant realizing that adding multicultural material, like adding white women to the men, entirely changed the questions we needed to ask and the conceptual framework of our enterprise."

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