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Time's Up/Advertising Meets *Red Books*: Hard Data and Women's Experiences Underscore the Pivotal Nature of 2018

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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary work provides insight into why 2018 was a pivotal year for women in American advertising. Specifically, the study uses quantitative and qualitative methodology to explore the number of women in advertising creative departments across the United States from 2012 to 2018, juxtaposed to interviews with women executives who signed on to launch Time's Up/Advertising in 2018. Quantitative data are drawn from the Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies, also known as Red Books, the advertising industry's leading database and represent 19,933 individuals across 3,154 agencies. They demonstrate that just 27.9% of all people within advertising creative departments are women and only 22.7% of all creative directors are women. Qualitative in-depth interview data are based on interviews with 25 executive advertising women who helped launch Time's Up/Advertising. They demonstrate five key findings including the need for systemic accountability, measurable change-oriented outcomes, a more diverse workforce, safe and equitable work environments and a commitment from men at the top to support these changes. Overall, the advertising industry's own data paint a less than optimal picture of the women's employment in U.S. advertising creative departments, while the voices of the women advertising executives add texture to this challenging portrait of American advertising.

On March 12, 2018, harnessing the momentum of the Time's Up movement, 180 c-suite women advertising executives joined forces to bring attention to sexual harassment within the advertising industry and spark systemic change across the industry. To launch Time's Up/Advertising (TU/A), these executive women purchased industry media space and published a declaration taking the advertising industry to task. They stated, "We've agreed that we have the power to change this business we love until it looks more like the industry we want to lead" (Stein 2018). The goal of TU/A was, and remains, to make "gender equality the new normal" (Time's Up Foundation 2020). This study, which is based on seven years of data from the Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies (Red Books) ending in 2018, the year TU/A launches, as well as interviews with some of the original TU/A signatories, demonstrates an industry-wide scarcity of creative women, while exploring some reasons behind these numbers.

The challenges women face, in the United States and abroad, in creative departments are many. They include, but are not limited to, preferential treatment of men and men's creative work, lagging compensation and promotion of women, lack of flexible work environments, inadequate parental leave, along with social exclusion, microaggressions and sexual harassment targeting women (Arnberg and Svanlund 2017; Boulton 2013; Crewe and Wang 2018; Gregory 2009;

Grow and Broyles 2011; Grow, Roca, and Broyles 2012; Mallia 2016; Mensa and Bittner 2020; Mensa and Grow 2019; Windels and Lee 2012). A number of studies have qualitatively explored the environmental difficulties creative women experience, citing a "boys' club" (Grow and Broyles 2011). Others look at how to prepare young creative women for success amid this difficult environment. These studies have noted that creative departments are structured around stereotypically masculine social and behavioral norms, which dictate behaviors that often privilege men while undermining women. The devaluing of soft skills, which women tend to excel at, is a prime example (Windels and Mallia 2015; Windels 2011; Windels, Mallia, and Broyles 2013). This, despite the fact that soft skills are a hallmark of creative acumen (Windels et al. 2013).

On the quantitative side, some studies have articulated the gap between the larger number of men and the smaller number of women who work in creative departments, including within creative leadership (Dodd 2012; Mallia 2014). A recent study by Mallia and Windels (2018) also articulated a distinct lack of women award winners across four decades. A study by Deng and Grow (2018) looks at global data on the number of women in creative departments across a five-year period and it indicates that women make up just 23.5% of those working within creative departments and they account for only 16.1% of creative directors worldwide. These studies add rich quantitative texture to our understanding of creative women's experiences in advertising creative departments. As a body of work, they illustrate how the gender imbalance within creative departments has "stifled career progression for women in the (advertising) industry (and) are a result of social, structural and institutional factors rather than individual choice, lack of 'talent' or the absence of mentors or appropriate role models" (Crewe and Wang 2018, 671).

When TU/A launched, hard data on American women in creative remained scattered, suggesting that the TU/A movement may have created momentum for building a better understanding of the issues that shaped it. Given this, the current study seeks to offer a deeper understanding of the number of women working in creative departments across the United States over a seven-year period ending in 2018, the exact year that TU/A was launched, while pairing these data with qualitative, insight-based interviews that focus on the lived experiences of the women who signed-on to launch TU/A. The overarching research question that frames this study is this: How is gender preference quantitively exemplified within advertising creative departments and how is that preference qualitatively experienced, by women, within the American advertising industry? In short, this interdisciplinary study provides insight into why 2018 was a pivotal year for women, particularly creative women, in American advertising.

Signaling gender preference

The social, structural and institutional factors that signal who is welcome within advertising creative departments, and who is not, are powerfully embedded within the institutional structure of the advertising industry. Signaling theory helps us make sense of the effect of this phenomenon. Spence (1974) suggests that seeing yourself, or not seeing yourself, has a powerful impact on an individual's perception of belonging and their ability to activate actions, based on belonging, that lead to future success. A contemporary iteration of this is "See it. Be it." which evolved into a program at Cannes in 2018, the same year TU/A launched.

Advertising creative departments are often said to be defined by "hegemonic masculinity" (Gregory 2009) framed by sports, humor and clubbing; places akin to men's "locker rooms" (Gregory 2009). This is not unlike the 'boys' club' described by Grow and Broyles (2011). Further, environments such as this signal powerful masculine codes. These masculine codes define how women are expected to present themselves and their work, as well as whether or not they will be invited into the crucial social circles that can make or break careers (Grow and Broyles 2011). Thus, "how one bonds and to whom one bonds can, and often does, define one's creative career" (Grow et al. 2012, 662). In fact, Crewe and Wang suggest that "advertising agency

works is heavily dependent on this network sociality" (2018, 677). Further, "the identified connection between masculinity and management is always interpreted as detrimental to women because of their difference from the norm (men) and the contradiction they experience when constructing themselves as manager and as female" (Lewis 2014, 1847). In that sense masculinity signals the social, structural and institutional factors that shape creative departments. It could be argued that, within advertising culture, women's gender inhibits their ability to bond and, thus, successfully move into creative departments and, ultimately, upward into management.

As a whole, the patriarchal advertising "industry and organizational culture replicates itself" (Mallia 2016, 107); despite the fact that women drive virtually 80% of all consumption decisions (Brennan 2018; Pyle 2019). The focus on replication signals that advertising creative is not a place for women. They are not seen as an essential part of the social and structural forms of advertising and, thus, are not see as essential to the institution. This is born out as the further up the ladder women go, the harder it is for them to see themselves (Crewe and Wang 2018; Dodd 2012; Mallia 2016; Windels and Mallia 2015). Thus, "women were unable to develop identities as full members of the community of practice" (Windels and Mallia 2015, 122). The exclusion of women leaders, and this exclusion is not specific to creative departments, often leads to gender specific creative teams that further marginalizes creative women. Recent data suggest that women "represent only a sliver of the leadership," within the advertising industry, while more than half say "their gender makes them feel vulnerable at work" (Pyle 2019, online). It could be argued that "patriarchy with its codes of masculine honor and feminine goodness dims our ethical intelligence" (Gilligan and Richards 2018, 66).

The phenomenon of gender-based exclusion is further articulated by preference theory. Hakim's (1998) work in this area suggests that women have historically sought work opportunities and, at the same time, occupational segregation tends to be universal. It also suggests that women tend to look holistically and make decisions based on "work-lifestyle choices more broadly" (Hakim 1998, 141). Theoretically, this suggests that as much as women may be driven away by structural forces, so too do they choose to walk away, rather than working within unwelcoming environments. At its essence, preference theory specifies that "core values become important predictors of behavior" (Hakim 2003, 355). If we then flip the lens and look at creative men through the lens of preference theory it may articulate how their behaviors, in many advertising creative departments, actually reflect systemic values. In that sense, we can use preference theory to "make visible the darkness of patriarchy" (Gilligan and Richards 2018, 66) within advertising.

Yet, Lewis and Simpson (2017) take aspects of Hakim's preference theory to task. They argue that there is a new "agentic feminine subject, who knowingly and deliberately makes choices around work, home and motherhood in a context of assumed equality of opportunity and the equivalence of choices" (Lewis and Simpson 2017, 129). They would likely argue that the systemic structure that props up the "boys' club" (Grow and Broyles 2011) environment within advertising creative departments thwarts "equality of opportunity." Through this lens women working in advertising creative departments have rather stark choices, which may not reflect agentic preference. For as Mallia says, "You can't change an industry culture when the only people who recognize that there's a problem are those who've seen or felt exclusion themselves" (2016, 107).

Creative women by the numbers

Signaling and preference theories help explain some of the tension creative women experience. However, they also suggest that creative women students may be having similar experiences, as these theories suggest systemic trajectories. Consider our classrooms, which have nearly twice as many women as men (Fullerton and Kendrick 2014; Grow and Broyles 2011). Yet, upon entering portfolio school, where faculty are predominately men just as it is in the advertising industry, the number of women and men drop to about even (Grow et al. 2012; Windels, Lee, and Yeh 2010).

As women enter the creative workforce the numbers continue to drop, with men having a slight edge at the entry level (Grow and Broyles 2011). As women move into their career they see fewer and fewer women. Additionally, preference for men is also signaled by industry creative awards where men vastly outnumber women as award winners (Grow et al. 2012). Thus, while both women and men seek to becomes creative professionals, the industry's preference for men sends a very gender specific signal.

Data on the number of women in creative, though universally low, remains conflictual. A 2018 global study, using industry data from Red Books showed that worldwide women make up just 23.5% of all creative practitioners and just 16.1% of creative directors (Deng and Grow 2018). Kat Gordon, founder of the 3% Conference, recently confirmed that according to their data, since the inception of 3%, in 2011, the number of women creative directors in the United States rose to 11%, in 2017, and then to 29%, in 2019 (email conversation, March 5, 2020). An explanation for the data gap between 16.1% and 29% may, in part, be explained by the data sets. The 3% data comes from agencies and/or networks the organization works with. Thus, 29% is both encouraging and a bit deceptive. Agencies that are committed to change would likely see their numbers increase with programmatic help from organizations like 3%; thus 3%'s numbers do not likely reflect the industry as a whole. Red Books, an industry-wide database with a nearly 100-year history would likely provide a more realistic reading. Thus, this study, focusing specifically on the United States, provides important data to resolve conflicting reports of women's participation.

However, it is important to note that the entire advertising industry does not look like creative departments. According to a December 2018 report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women make us 49.2% of the advertising, public relations and related services workforce, while an *Ad Week* (Pyle 2019) article suggest women make up 46% of the advertising workforce. Despite more robust numbers for overall advertising employment, women are still clustered predominantly within low level positions across all departments. And, as previously stated, women "represent only a sliver of the leadership" across the industry (Pyle 2019, online). Yet, on the client side, in 2018 women held 46% of "senior level" marketing jobs (Duggan 2018). The gap in gender employment equity, between the advertising industry and the clients that employ them, suggests a dire need for change, as well as the importance of industry-wide data.

Signaling and preferences theories provide a strong base to reflect on this study's outcome. However, it is also important to bring in proportional representation theory (Kanter 1977). Kanter (1977) suggests that for any group to have agency, that is to begin to effect change, that group must reach at least 35% within the organization. At this point, that underrepresented group can begin to exert influence over the systemic culture. Kanter's (1977) theory, further, suggests that when a group of people represent less than 15% of the entire population, their power is so diminished that they become mere tokens. Signaling (Spence 1974), preference (Hakim 1998; Hakim 2003; Lewis and Simpson 2017) and proportional representation (Kanter 1977) theories lay a strong foundation for this study at this pivotal moment in time. The devastating impact of sexual harassment, which TU/A has made visible further amplify the power of this time and place. For creative women aspiring toward successful careers in advertising, the consequences of a structural environment that excludes, intimidates, and/or harms them will likely be devastating for the women themselves. Further, allowing these structures, and the people who support them, to go unchecked will also have a devastating impact on the advertising industry and the clients it supports.

The evolution of Time's Up/Advertising

The evolution of TU/A has a long history, perhaps as long as the industry has been in existence. However, October 2005 provided a moment of clarity. That day Neil French, then Worldwide Creative Director at WPP, celebrated his retirement at a public event in Toronto (Leonard 2005).

As he sat on the stage, in an environment framed by gendered displays of sexism, he uttered words, likely fueled by alcohol, that set the advertising industry aflame: "Women wimp out and go suckle something … Women don't make it to the top because they don't deserve to. They're crap" (Leonard 2005). For three weeks the industry press ruminated about his comments, covering his ultimate departure from Ogilvy. His former c-suite partners, Nancy Vonk and Janet Kestin spoke publicly about their disappointment and horror (Leonard 2005). They were among the few to do so. And then the furor died. But the seeds that led to March 12, 2018, and the launch of TU/A, had been planted.

It took a decade before women again began speaking out about inappropriate behaviors that they endured. In late 2015 Gustavo Martinez, Global CEO at JWT, was accused of harassment and ultimately dismissed in March 2016 (Coffee 2016). In August 2016, Kevin Roberts, Executive Chairman at Saatchi & Saatchi, was fired for inappropriate comments and behavior (Davis and Jackson 2016). Then, in February 2018, Ted Royer, Chief Creative Officer at Droga5, was accused of inappropriate behavior and also released. There were others, of course. However, the removal of Martinez, Roberts and Royer laid the groundwork for industry-wide resistance to the harassment and gender bias that had become normalized within the advertising industry. Yet, it was the confluence of Ted Royer's downfall, months after Harvey Weinstein's outing which led to the launch of Time's Up/Hollywood, that created the perfect storm. A storm that secretly brought 14 women executives together at a small boutique hotel in New York City to develop a plan to take a stand. That stand was Time's Up/Advertising.

That meeting was spearheaded by Colleen DeCourcy, now President of Wieden + Kennedy. The fact that DeCourcy, was part of an independent agency, free from the constraints of a multinational holding company, and an agency whose founder encouraged her to negotiate "both a cultural mind-shift and structural changes to accommodate nontraditional talent pools" (Patwardhan, Habib, and Patwardhan 2019, 3), made all the difference. DeCourcy knew she had the freedom to take a stand without repercussions from within her agency. On March 12, 2018 TU/A launched because those 14 women agreed that "we have the power to change this business we love until it looks more like the industry we want to lead" (Stein 2018). Today, there is Time's Up/Hollywood, Time's Up/Advertising, Time's Up/Health Care and, soon, Time's Up/Tech.

Given that the United States is the world's largest market in the world, as well as the country where the Time's Up movement emerged, the authors seek to create a deeper contextual understanding of this watershed year, 2018. This was the year that the advertising industry was called upon to become "the industry we want to lead" (Stein 2018). Creating a contextual understanding, this article explores the American advertising industry's own employment data quantitively analyzing Red Books data from 2012 through 2018; while qualitatively pairing it with interview data from a sampling of women advertising executives who signed-on to launch TU/A. Specifically, the authors seek to explore two research questions:

A. How is gender preference represented in American advertising creative departments across seven years, ending in 2018?
B. How do the experiences of the women who signed-on to launch TU/A, in 2018, help us understand the consequences of gender preference within American advertising?

Method

Data for this study relies on two sources: one quantitative, Red Books and the other qualitative, in-depth interviews.

Quantitative data source

Red Books is a self-reporting industry database that tracks data on over 14,000 advertising agencies and over 100,000 brands (Red Books 2019). It is used to identify agency clients, access agency directory data, gather competitive intelligence, and generally connect brands with agencies. It is considered to be a trusted source for the advertising industry, both advertisers and agencies, for nearly 100 years (Business Wire 2013). In academia, scholars have used Red Books as a sampling frame (e.g., de Gregorio, Cheong, and Kim 2014; Stuhlfaut and Windels 2012), and as a data source (e.g., Deng and Grow 2018; Tuncay Zayer, and Coleman 2015).

Red Books data processing

This study focuses on advertising creative departments. Data on three specific types of creative personnel were pulled from the Red Books agency database: Art Directors, and Copywriters, and Creative Directors who are the creative supervisors (hereafter referred to as ADs, CWs and CDs respectively). Personnel's full name, job title and agency affiliation were acquired from the fourth quarter of each year from 2012 to 2018. To maintain consistency, historical data were compiled with the assistance of the Red Books staff. This process generated an aggregated 19,979 creative personnel entries from 3,154 U.S. agencies across the seven-year period.

Next, we classified the creative personnel's gender based on their full name with the following three steps: (1) Gender was assigned to 18,818 personnel entries using a name-gender database compiled by Wise (2011). The same method was also used by a study conducted by the Guardian (Mansfield 2016). (2) The remaining 1,115 names were then analyzed via gender-api.com, an online commercial service specialized in gender determination. (3) The names that were unidentifiable via the above method had their gender manually verified by social media searches conducted by research assistants. Forty-six names with undetermined gender were removed at the end of the process, resulting in a final dataset of 19,933 entries in 3,154 U.S.-based agencies from 2012 to 2018.

Red Books data analysis

Data on gender distribution and creative position title was analyzed with SPSS to test statistical significance in relationships. Time series regression analyses were performed to test regression models using time as a predictor and the percentage of women creatives as the dependent variable. We focus our analysis on the percentages of women and men instead of the actual numbers of each because we are interested in the gender compositions rather than the fluctuating number of entries within the database, as factors outside of our scope could have contributed to the fluctuation. We used the weighted moving average (WMA) approach to predict creative women percentages in 2019 and 2020 based on previous years' data. Specifically, we used the following moving average formulas to predict two years ahead:

$$\text{WMA}(4)_{2019} = .4 \times D_{2018} + .3 \times D_{2017} + .2 \times D_{2016} + .1 \times D_{2015} \tag{1}$$

$$\text{WMA}(4)_{2020} = .4 \times D_{2018} + .3 \times D_{2017} + .2 \times D_{2016} + .1 \times D_{2015} \tag{2}$$

In the analysis, we focused on two main variables, the percentage of women in creative departments (CDs + ADs + CWs), and the percentage of women in management roles (CDs). Ultimately, we seek to identify the changes and trends in the status of women in advertising creative departments.

Qualitative data source

Qualitative approaches allow us to apply the "methodologies in their truest and most fundamental sense in order to gain valid insights" (Goulding 2005, 295). This study leans into both grounded theory, which is suitable to the study of behavioral observations, and phenomenology, which allows us to form a more critical reflection of conscious experiences; always with a focus on insight.

As grounded theory focuses on both society and the individual, it is a good fit for this research. It allows for a "delicate balancing act between drawing on prior knowledge while keeping a fresh and open mind to new concepts as they emerge from the data" (Goulding 2005, 296). That balancing act allows individuals' stories to help us understand the advertising society in which they work. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) work provides a sense of how grounded theory helps us build theoretical explanations for what has taken place over time, through their storytelling and are teased out across the in-depth interviews.

Phenomenology allows us to explore lifeworlds, or the systemic structure of the advertising industry, generally, and advertising agencies, specifically. Phenomenology encourages us to focus on relationships and experiences as we seek to understand the lived experiences of participants. Further we may find that these experiences encourage individuals to "take a stand with regard to what within that lifeworld influences people to act" (Goulding 2005, 302). The goal of phenomenology, thus, is to enlarge and deepen our understanding of participants' direct experiences. It provides a "critical reflection on conscious experience(s)" (Goulding 2005, 302).

Time's Up/Advertising interview process

In the summer of 2018, all 180 signatories were contacted, by the lead author, either via email or LinkedIn messaging. Initially 67 responded with interest. Ultimately, 25 agreed to be interviewed. After the lead author, who was the principal investigator on the larger project, secured approval from the university's internal review board the 25 interviews were conducted. They began in November 2018 and concluded in May 2019. Each interview was conducted via phone. All but one, because the participant declined to be recorded, were recorded and immediately transcribed through an electronic transcription service. Each interview was 30 to 60 minutes and all participants were offered anonymity. There were four main questions with a total of seven follow-up probes. This study uses data from just two of those questions: A) why they signed; B) what they hoped would come out of TU/A which had two follow-up probes about what was happening in the industry and initiatives at their agencies. A short series of demographic questions were also asked. Only the willingness to be included on the participates list, to which they all agreed, is relevant for this study, in that it demonstrates a commitment to having their voices heard.

Time's Up/Advertising interview analysis

To conduct the thematic analysis of the four questions, which include two main questions and two follow-up probes, "clear and concise guidelines" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 78) were used to train each coder. Three coders, two research assistants and the lead author, then individually analyzed the four individual data buckets and highlighted themes. Coders were trained by the lead author, and did a test analysis prior to the final analysis. Data was then bucketed by themes and a final thematic sense-making analysis was conducted by the lead author to condense and or combine themes and note call-out quotes. Once themes were determined, thematic buckets of data, for each theme were created. At this stage the thematic bucket of data were Word documents, into which each participant's answers were added by theme. Using grounded theory allows us to build theoretical explanations, based on the codes that emerge, from what has taken place;

while phenomenology allows us to more deeply understand the lifeworlds, or the systemic structures, that along with their experiences influence people to act.

Results

Red Books revealed

This section analyzes the quantitative data from Red Books and explores the following research question. How is gender preference represented in American advertising creative departments across seven years, ending in 2018?

On average, across this seven-year period, 2012-2018 women accounted for just 27.9% of all creatives (CDs + ADs + CWs) within advertising creative departments. In creative leadership (CDs), the number of women dropped to 22.7%. Thus, over 77% of CDs were men. See Table 1.

When looking at the gender distribution year-by-year, some noticeable patterns emerged. First, we find that from 2012 to 2018 the percentage of creative women generally hovers just below 30%, except in 2013 and 2014 when it dropped to nearly 20%. In 2012, 2016, 2017, and 2018 we saw women creatives percentages reached beyond 27%. This was partially due to the increased number of women ADs and CWs which in some cases hit more than 35%. The relatively high percentages of women in 2012 may be due to the small sample size collected in Red Books, which contains only 899 cases from 545 agencies. At the same time, the percentage of women in CD roles was lower than those of the AD and CW positions. Yet, since 2013, we saw women CDs percentages consistently increased year after year. Specifically, the percentage grew from 10.1% in 2013 to 27.0% in 2018. Still, women CDs have not quite reached the level of their CWs and ADs peers, percentage-wise. Overall, the average percentage of women in any position within creative departments, remained lower than the proportional representation threshold of 35%, with the exception of ADs which averaged 35.6% across these seven years.

Second, the yearly data revealed a relationship between gender and management, as articulated by CD roles within advertising creative departments. In all of the years except 2012, there are statistically significant, positive linkages between being a man and being a CD (2012: $X^2_1 = 1.05$, $p > .05$; 2013: $X^2_1 = 13.41$, $p < .001$; 2014: $X^2_1 = 15.36$, $p < .001$; 2015: $X^2_1 = 55.83$, $p < .001$; 2016: $X^2_1 = 163.10$, $p < .001$; 2017: $X^2_1 = 158.13$, $p < .001$; 2018: $X^2_1 = 159.72$, $p < .001$; all years combined: $X^2_1 = 317.50$, $p < .001$). This finding illustrates the underrepresentation of women in management within the creative department.

The third, and perhaps the most hopeful finding, points to an upward trend in the percentage of women in advertising creative departments from 2012 to 2018. Linear regression analyses showed some upward annual increases in the percentages of creative women across all three positions. Limited by the number of cases, only the regression model for the women CW percentages achieved statistical significance ($F^1_5 = 10.99$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .69$). Here, the R^2 tells us how well time serves as a predictor of the change of women CW percentages. The greater the R^2 indicates a better fit. The high women percentages in the year 2012 resulted in a poor fit for the linear regression models as demonstrated in the small R^2s. Looking forward to the trends in 2019 and 2020 using data from 2013 to 2018, the upward-looking linear model of women CD percentage reached statistical significance ($F^1_4 = 108.48$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .96$, see Figure 1), pointing to a highly likely increase of women CDs in the future.

Finally, we used length 4 WMA to get rough predictions of the gender distribution in the creative department with the existing time series data. We used data from 2015 to 2018 to predict two years ahead, as seen in Table 2. The WMA predictions showed slight increases among women CDs (+1.3% in 2019 to +1.8% in 2020) compared to the previous four years' averages; while there are very small changes in the total number of women creatives (-.2% to -.3%), women ADs (-.1%) and CWs' percentages (-.2% to -.3%). This result echoes the regression model

Table 1. Number of men and women in the creative departments from 2012 to 2018.

| Year	Women Creatives Number (percentage)	Women CDs Number (percentage)	Women ADs Number (percentage)	Women CWs Number (percentage)	Men Creatives Number (percentage)	Men CDs Number (percentage)	Men ADs Number (percentage)	Men CWs Number (percentage)
2012	249 (27.7%)	47 (24.7%)	51 (37.2%)	151 (26.4%)	650 (72.3%)	143 (75.3%)	86 (62.8%)	421 (73.6%)
2013	165 (22.3%)	13 (10.1%)	13 (25.0%)	139 (24.8%)	576 (77.7%)	116 (89.9%)	39 (75.0%)	421 (75.2%)
2014	216 (22.4%)	33 (13.4%)	32 (24.4%)	151 (25.7%)	748 (77.6%)	213 (86.6%)	99 (75.6%)	436 (74.3%)
2015	575 (30.6%)	111 (18.8%)	84 (32.4%)	380 (36.9%)	1304 (69.4%)	478 (81.2%)	175 (67.6%)	651 (63.1%)
2016	1235 (27.7%)	530 (20.5%)	427 (39.2%)	278 (35.9%)	3217 (72.3%)	2059 (79.5%)	661 (60.8%)	497 (64.1%)
2017	1443 (27.4%)	757 (21.8%)	440 (38.8%)	246 (36.9%)	3826 (72.6%)	2712 (78.2%)	693 (61.2%)	421 (63.1%)
2018	1684 (29.4%)	948 (27.0%)	462 (32.0%)	274 (35.4%)	4045 (70.6%)	2564 (73.0%)	982 (68.0%)	499 (64.6%)
Average	488 (27.9%)	147 (22.7%)	121 (35.6%)	220 (32.6%)	1299 (72.1%)	602 (77.3%)	212 (64.4)	485 (67.4%)
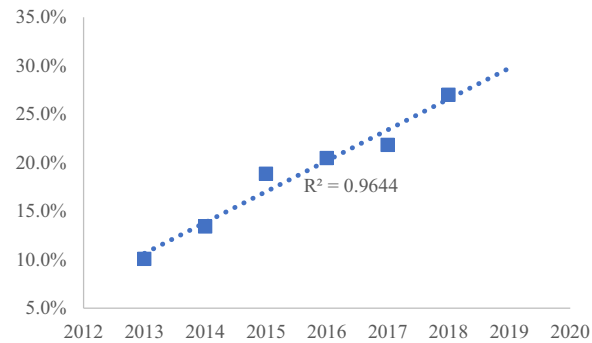
Figure 1 Time series linear regression model of the percentage of women CDs from 2013 to 2018.

Table 2. WMA(4) predictions of percentage of women creatives in 2019 and 2020.

%	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (prediction)	2020 (prediction)
Women Creatives	30.6%	27.7%	27.4%	29.4%	28.6%	28.5%
Women CDs	18.8%	20.5%	21.8%	27.0%	23.3%	23.8%
Women ADs	32.4%	39.2%	38.8%	32.0%	35.5%	35.5%
Women CWs	36.9%	35.9%	36.9%	35.4%	36.1%	36.0%

displayed in Figure 1, especially for the CD role where the regression model forecast growth of women CDs to around 28% in 2019.

Time's Up/Advertising interviews analyzed

The following section analyzes the qualitative interview data, exploring the following research question: How do the experiences of the women who signed-on to launch TU/A help us understand the consequences of gender preference within the American advertising industry?

The analysis is shaped by phenomenology and a desire to understand the lifeworlds, or systemic structure of the advertising industry, while grounded theory helped build theoretical explanations for what had taken place. The analysis focused on the experiences of the 25 participants, each who signed onto TU/A, and the relationships they had and/or have with colleagues in the industry, exploring what they hoped would come out of TU/A. The participants each had executive titles such as chief diversity officer, chief creative officer, senior vice president, president, or CEO, which they held for an average of 3.5 years. Their average age was 47, nearly 90% were parents and 76% were Caucasian. They represented a range of agencies from medium-size independent shops, such as Wieden + Kennedy and The Martin Agency, to agencies that are a part of major holding companies, such as Havas and TBWA; and their agencies were on the east and west coasts, as well as in the Midwest.

The results emerged in five thematic categories. Each category, in some fashion, reflects the need "draw the poison," as one participant stated. This is, of course, why participants ultimately agreed to sign onto TU/A and reflects what they hoped would come out of it, both across the industry and within their own agencies.

First, there is a need to create systemic accountability. Second, there is a desire to create tangible action with measurable outcomes. Third, diversifying the advertising industry is seen as the key to change. Fourth, there is a belief that only by creating a safe and equitable culture will the systemic change take root. Finally, there is a strong conviction that solving the problems together with the men, who often hold the power, is the only way forward.

It is significant to note that beyond the five stand-alone themes, three undercurrents threaded their way across virtually every interview and many individual questions. First, human resources are broken. Second, diversity is crucial. Third, there is a generational gap. Across the five themes and three undercurrents there is a fervent desire that the industry stays committed to change. Finally, these qualitative themes and undercurrents will be illustrated further through the discussion section.

Discussion

To begin this discussion, we return to our two research questions. First, how is gender preference represented in American advertising creative departments across seven years, ending in 2018? Second, how do the experiences of the women who signed-on to launch TU/A, in 2018, help us understand the consequences of gender preference within American advertising? Considering both the quantitative Red Books data, representing 19,933 individuals from 3,154 agencies, and the qualitative data, representing the lived experiences or "lifeworlds" (Goulding 2005) of 25 executive advertising women, the findings drive home the pivotal nature of 2018. Together, these findings suggest that the advertising industry's own data point a suboptimal employment experience for creative women in U.S. advertising creative departments, while the voices of women advertising executives add texture to this challenging portrait of women's experiences in American advertising.

At the end of 2018, looking back across seven years, Red Books data articulate clear gender preference. Women averaged just 27.9% of all creatives. Even in the strongest year, 2015, women accounted for just 30.6% of the creative workforce. At no point do women reach proportional representation (Kanter 1977). As for women in creative leadership, women average just 22.7% of all CDs. Preference theory (Hakim 1998) suggests that core values predict behaviors. It is not surprising that the preference is for men and, thus, masculine behaviors. Further, while the Red Books data bear out the stark numeric reality women creatives face, the TU/A in-depth interview data articulate a clear need to create systemic accountability with measurable outcomes, a need foster a more diverse industry while creating an equitable and safe working environment and a dire need for support from men at the top. For as one woman executive stated, "Men feel as though they just have a place. Women feel as though they need to be invited in .... And, that needs to end." Another framed it this way, "We have normalized a system that was really built for them (men). And we just sort of adapted to it as women. Some of that adaptation has been painful."

Ignoring what are modest fluctuations across the years, the data clearly show that the advertising industry has achieved minimal, though sustained, increases in terms of the percentage of women in creative, beginning with 27.7% in 2012 and ending with 29.4% in 2018. Yet, the further creative women climb, the fewer of them there are, with an average of just 22.7% women CDs across all seven years. In all of the years, except in 2012, there are statistically significant positive linkages between being a man and being a CD. Of course, this comes as no surprise to scholars such as Dodd (2012) and Windels and Mallia (2015), whose work suggests that the higher women climb the harder it is for them to see themselves. Further, across all seven years, the number of women creative directors are barely above token levels (Kanter 1977). The thematic interview data articulate a strong need for support from men at the top to build a more diverse workforce. Yet, as one of the executive women stated, "We seem to make cookie-cutter people." While, as another simply stated, "we too often protect those with power."

Kanter's (1977) proportional representation theory is borne out by the Red Books data. In no year do creative women in the United States reach proportional representation. Only in one category, Art Directors, does the average across all seven years, tip past 35%. In this case, to just 35.6%. Preference theory (Hakim 1998), suggests something equally troubling, as highlighted by

the data on women in creative management. Besides the fact that across seven years just 22.7% of CDs are women; in every year, except 2012, there are statistically significant, positive linkages between being a man and being a CD. The numbers bear out a gender preference for men, signaling (Spence 1974) that women are not welcome. This is truly problematic, as one of the executive women made clear. "The lack of diversity is holding back the creativity in the industry." While another stated, "I feel like we have reached a breaking point."

These stagnant numbers suggest that there has been a significant lack of change, which exemplifies how "industry and organizational culture replicates itself" (Mallia 2016, 107). As Hakim (1998) suggests, this provides women little agentic opportunity to foment change within the organizational culture. This lack of agency allows the "boys' club" (Grow and Broyles 2011) environment to perpetuate the dearth of creative women. Yet, it is important to consider possible change trajectories. In 2018, the year TU/A launched, there were 29.4% women in creative, and 27.0% women CDs. The WMA predictions draw from the Red Books data indicate that there will be slight increases among women CDs in 2019 (+1.3%) as well as in 2020 (+1.8%). Further, if we look back on the conversation with Kat Gordon (email conversation, March 5, 2020), founder of the 3% Movement, it can be noted that agencies her organization works with now have an average of 29% women CDs. This is about on par with the Red Books data. Plus, the linear regression analyses indicate upward annual increases for women in creative across all three positions. Thus, there is some hope. But as one executive woman stated, "change can only be driven by the most powerful women pushing really hard within their (agency) systems." And to make that happen, said another, we need to "check our human desire to be comfortable."

Still, even at 29%, women in creative leadership remain below proportional representation (Kanter 1977). This dearth of creative women in leadership may lead to men tending to take credit for work done by women, which further exacerbates the problem (Mallia 2016). Men's ability to own what is not theirs may be a marker of an environment defined by "hegemonic masculinity" (Gregory 2009). This propensity to own what is not one's own, magnifies the need for safe and equitable work environments, just as one of the themes suggests. As one executive woman stated, "The thing that drives me crazy about this whole thing, is this industry wants to think it's a meritocracy … Is it just that white men are far, far, far more talented than everybody else, right? Or is it that there's systematic bias. And I think, there's systematic bias." Or, as another multicultural woman executive said, "I want to bring us all back, to force us into reshaping many of the structures and cultures that we rejected or that rejected us."

Obviously, the situation is most urgent in creative management where women are virtually tokens, which is 15% (Kanter 1977). There women average just 22.7% of all CDs across the seven-year period. Furthermore, the percentages of women in AD and CW roles were almost twice as large as in CD roles. At the same time, men have a rather balanced presence across all three roles (see Table 1). In other words, creative women are not moving up the ladder at the same rate as creative men. Without upward mobility, which appears to be hindered by structural gendered norms (Gregory 2009), women seeking to climb the creative management ladder are undoubtedly discouraged. This harkens back to the need for safe and equity work environments, with accountability and measurable change-oriented outcomes. However, as one of the executive women suggests, it's not just about women. "To have a thriving creative industry you do have to have a culture where people can be themselves and be rewarded for that. If we don't have that – then we don't have an industry." While another woman noted that what holds women back is likely not their creativity or drive, but rather their gender. "If we just got a whole new generation of women that just don't feel like this is a place for them, the industry is over."

Complexity theory posits the need for "situating leadership and change management as inter-related concepts, viewing leaders as agents who foster conditions for change and act as catalysts for emergence of ideas" (Patwardhan et al. 2019, 3). Given this, it would seem that more women in advertising creative departments would foster conditions for change or act as a catalyst for

new ideas. Yet, the organizational structure that has led to these dismal data, has fostered conditions and are in opposition to change. As it is borne out in both Red Books data and the interviews with the women executives who signed on to TU/A. Without the ability to influence change, the structural "hegemonic masculinity" (Gregory 2009), that is articulated within advertising creative departments across the United States will remain entrenched. This imbedded "boys' club" (Grow and Broyles 2011) has far-reaching consequences. For as one woman executive stated, "our industry's a little broken … At the heart of this is that it's wrapped up in patriarchy." While another woman said, "we have to completely reimagine what the industry looks like."

Limitations and suggestions

This study, the first of its kind to amass Red Books data across seven consecutive years, while integrating it with rich in-depth interview data, has much to offer to our understanding about the women's experiences in advertising across the United States. However, it also has weaknesses. First, the Red Books database has its own limitations, such as the reliance on self-reporting and the snapshot nature of annual data collection. Second, errors in the gender screening process could introduce inaccuracies in our findings. Third, the prediction models rely on only seven years of data and some of the analyses are lacking in statistical significance due to low case numbers in some years. Fourth, the interview data represent just 25 of the 180 women who signed the TU/A launch; and further, these executive women represent a narrow generational slice of women working in advertising. Finally, more studies need to be done that consider the lack of family-friendly policies that impact women's continuing employment and advancement harder than it impacts men's.

Further, in reviewing our data, we suggest some changes that should be implemented across the American advertising industry. First, create systemic accountability through established codes of conduct that reduce gender and other biases in hiring and promotion, including blind hiring practices and family-friendly policies. Second, create measurable outcomes, such as annual pay audits that lead to pay equity and mentoring programs that move the people we want to see into management. Third, facilitate a more diverse workforce by requiring 50% diverse candidate pools, supporting employee resource groups, building pipelines to diverse communities, and fostering relationships at community colleges and high schools. Fourth, create safe harassment-free agencies, with particular focus on creative departments, by required unconscious bias training, sustained efforts to reshape internal cultural, and swift and decisive action when harassment does occur. Finally create more diverse c-suites, including gender, sexuality, racial and neurodiversity by formalizing mentoring programs and by fast-tracking those within these programs, and bring the men who currently dominate the c-suite with you.

In closing, in its inception, this study addressed gender. However, the intersectional nature of diversity "should be taken into account in projects that aim to change inequalities in organizations" (Benschop, Mills, Mills, and Tienari 2012, 3). Diversity, across a wide range of differences, matters. For as Sundar Pichai, Google CEO, said, "a diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone" (Rosenblum 2017). Finally, as the Time's Up Foundation has stated, it's time for "safe, fair and dignified work for all" because as one executive woman said, not having it "is fucking wrong and it's got to stop."

Funding

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