SWP 17/98 WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE PORTRAYALS IN PRINT ADVERTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Women's Perceptions of their Role Portrayals in Print Adverts: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study compared British and Portuguese women's perceptions of women's role portrayals in print adverts, the two countries were used to represent modern and traditional societies respectively. Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology theory (1955) was used alongside the Repertory Grid technique. Portuguese students and secretaries were found to prefer traditional to contemporary role portrayals. The British secretaries shared these preferences, in contrast, the British students were positive about contemporary role portrayals of women.

This study found that individuals can subscribe to a contemporary gender ideology and yet talk about traditional role portrayals in a positive fashion. Respondents can

rate women's portrayal in advertisements as 'appealing', even though it does not correspond with their 'self-image'. This study also finds that while people may subscribe to a contemporary gender ideology this does not mean to say that they will not appreciate traditional portrayals or will not feel threatened by contemporary portrayals. Finally different groups of women will vary in terms of the homogeneity of their opinions. These findings have implications for advertisers developing pan-European campaigns, they should focus on actual perceptions of target audiences towards specific images, rather than take self-reported attitudes at face value.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the women's movement in the 1970s, women's portrayal in advertising has been the focus of close attention (Sengupta 1995). Women for many years, were often portrayed in a narrow and disparaging manner, particularly as 'sexual objects' or simple housewives, who were overly dependent on men (Courtney and Whipple 1983). This study focuses on women's perception of female role portrayal. The findings from this research should have implications for advertisers since previous studies have revealed that generally contemporary female role portrayals are more effective than traditional role portrayals and women react more favourably to contemporary images, than traditional ones (Jaffe and Berger 1994; Leigh, Rethans and Whitney 1987).

This study compares British and Portuguese women's perceptions of the portrayal of women in advertising. These two countries are chosen since one is considered to be a country with generally contemporary values while individuals in the other generally have a traditional outlook. A priori, we would expect British respondents to prefer contemporary portrayals of women and for the Portuguese respondents to prefer traditional portrayals. Furthermore, the discussion of the literature will show we would expect there to be differences between individuals on the basis of professional status and age for example. The respondents within each country comprised equal numbers of students and secretaries and this allowed us to see whether there were any 'within-country' differences in perceptions.

2. CROSS CULTURAL STUDIES

The development of the portrayal of women's roles in adverts has occurred at different rates in different countries, this is a reflection of different cultures and societies. Cross-cultural studies have endeavoured to research the differences between countries (Wiles and Tjernlund 1991; Gilly 1988; Sengupta 1995; Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund, 1995). However the number of studies comparing European countries has been limited e.g. Whitelock and Jackson (1996).

The specific focus of this study is the comparison of Portuguese and British respondents' perceptions of the portrayal of women in print adverts. There have been previous cross-cultural studies that have examined women's role portrayals in advertising within different countries (Commission of the European Communities 1987; Gilly 1988; Wiles and Tjernlund 1991; Sengupta 1995; Whitelock and Jackson 1996; Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund 1995). These studies show that 'cultural values' have a significant influence on perception of advertising. As with Gilly (1988), one of the countries chosen here for analysis (Portugal), is perceived as being more traditional than the other (UK). All of the studies discussed, in this section, undertook a content analysis approach, but as Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund (1995) and Ford and LaTour (1993) have suggested, a more detailed analysis of role portrayal and how it is perceived by women in different countries is needed. A subsequent section of this paper explains why the use of Kelly's Repertory Grid will provide the depth of insight into womens' perceptions which previous writers have recommended.

3. COMPARISON OF UK & PORTUGAL

There are key differences between the situation of women in the UK and Portugal, which would lead us to consider that Portugal represents a more traditional society, with the UK being representative of a contemporary society. Such an analysis is important because Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia (1977) have demonstrated that women's status within society has a direct impact on how women react to women's role portrayals.

Although the role of women has changed in many European countries since the two world wars, this has not been the case in Portugal. The way women are perceived in society still has strong elements of tradition and this means that gender roles are kept within their traditional boundaries. A reason for the lack of impetus for change may be the national psyche which sees the state as responsible for guiding social change (Grunell and Kas 1995: 540). Broadly speaking, women's development within society has occurred at a faster rate in the UK than in Portugal. This is illustrated by the fact that out of the thirteen significant dates, for example in women's development, the first woman doctor, first women's vote, first woman member of parliament, and first woman Minister, the UK was significantly earlier than Portugal, sometimes as much fifty years earlier, but typically around twenty years. Only two dates occur earlier in Portugal than the UK, permission to lecture at University and the first woman solicitor and these occurred by no more than ten years before the UK. The details are provided in Table 1.

Table 1- Important dates for women's development in the UK and Portugal.

Important dates	The UK	Portugal
Act gives votes to women	1918, over 30 years of age.	1931, graduates only.
First woman doctor	1859	1889
First foundation of women's movements	1874 (Women's protective and provident league)	1909 (Women's republican foundation)
First women's congress	1875	1924
World War I (1914/18)	Women workers recruitment	Women were not affecte
First woman Member of Parliament	1919	1935
Admission to lecture at University's	1919	1911
First woman solicitor	1923 with a practising certificate;	1913, but could not practice by law, only in 1918;
First woman Minister	1929	1974
First woman Prime Minister	1979	-
World War II (1939/45)	Compulsory registration of women for war work.	Again, women were not affected,
Equal pay act passed	1970	1979
Sex discrimination act passed	1975	1976

Source:- Equal Opportunities Commission, Portugal, 1994; Williams, 1991.

There are also clear differences in the employment of women in the UK and Portugal with the latter showing the characteristics of a more traditional society. In Portugal women are more likely to be employed in agriculture (52.7% of the agricultural workforce compared to 28.7% in the UK) than their UK counterparts, furthermore the positions they hold within firms are less likely to be managerial, 33% of such posts are held by women in the UK versus 11% in Portugal (Equal Opportunities Commission, Portugal, 1994).

4. RESEARCH METHOD

Kelly devised the Repertory Grid technique as a method for exploring personal construct systems. "It is an attempt to stand in others' shoes, to see their world as they see it, to understand their situation, their concerns" (Fransella and Bannister 1977:5). It allows people to develop their own perceptual encoding schemes with verbal constructs, descriptions of similarities or differences, views and opinions. The theory is a cognitive approach that determines the way a person perceives the world, through their repertoire of constructs and how these are used. A cognitive approach is based on the premise that all psychological phenomena rest on symbolic representations in the mind including not only perceiving, learning, thinking, and remembering, but also desire and feeling (Jahoda 1982).

Zuber-Skerrit (1987) argues that within a questionnaire or interview, the criteria for effectiveness and the language used are provided and established by the researcher. This language or criteria might be unfamiliar to the respondent's own personal construct systems, which can lead to misinterpretation, resulting in inaccurate and invalid responses. It was felt that the Repertory Grid technique, in addition to in-depth interviews, would provide a method that would allow an easy understanding of women's perceptions, but would also enable firm conclusions to be drawn about the deeper meaning of their perceptions. With the Repertory Grid method the language used is generated by the respondent, allowing them to express constructs familiar to them and therefore, results in less misinterpretation. This provides a more valid response and a clearer indication of the respondent's own interpretation of the role

portrayals being examined. This approach allowed the respondent's personal theories or constructs to be determined and the approach thereby provided a better understanding of how they felt about the different role portrayals. In-depth interviews have significant merit in their own right because they allow a true examination of an individual's perception (Mishler 1986; McCracken 1988).

4.1. Selection of advertisements

The selection of advertisements for study is based upon the methods used by Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund (1995) and Jaffe and Berger (1994). The method used by Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund (1995) to select magazines as sources for their advertisements was also used in this study. However, only one category of publication, entitled, 'women's magazines' was chosen for this research. Firstly, because these magazines target women across different socio-economic groups and secondly because role portrayals have been found to vary across product categories (Sexton and Haberman 1974; Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham 1990), this particular range of magazines would provide advertising for a variety of product categories. Magazines from this category were selected in both the UK and Portugal.

The basis for selecting specific advertisements draws upon Jaffe and Berger (1994) who used six independent female judges drawn from the marketing faculty, working women, and a housewife. However, in contrast to their choice of three portrayal categories ('traditional', 'egalitarian' and 'superwoman') in this research only two portrayal categories have been adopted, 'traditional' and 'contemporary', as this is in keeping with the categories adopted by other authors working in this area (Leigh,

Rethans and Whitney 1987; Lafky, Duffy, Steinmaus and Berkowitz 1996; Sengupta 1995). Examples of phrases used to express these categories are: 'woman appears to be a housewife' (Jaffe and Berger, 1994) for the traditional role portrayal, and 'woman appears to be a professional employee' (Leigh, Rethans and Whitney, 1987) for the contemporary role portrayal.

Twelve independent judges helped with the selection of the adverts. The six independent judges (Jaffe and Berger 1994), in each country, consisted of three students and three working women. They were asked to complete a small questionnaire and rate 25 different adverts. A six point differential scale was applied to try to obtain the judges' ability to capture each of the two categories. The scores from every judge were summed for each individual advert, and for an advert to be selected, it had to have the highest score in its category. The adverts that best represented each of these categories were then selected to be used in the in-depth interviews. Ten adverts were selected (5 contemporary and 5 traditional role portrayals).

4.2. Sample Selection

Previous studies have suggested that demographic variables such as income, employment status, gender ideology, self orientation, level of education, the degree of personal social awareness, and marital status are significantly correlated with women's perception of their role in advertising (Burns and Foxman, 1989; Ford and LaTour, 1993; Williams 1995; Widgery, Angur and Nataraajan 1997; Jaffe and Berger 1994). As a consequence we have used matching samples in both countries by

controlling for variables such as age, professional status, income and marital status. Eight married secretaries above the age of 40 and eight single students below the age of 25 were chosen. Age was used as a proxy for income since Jaffe and Berger (1994) found that income and gender ideology were the most important variables when looking at the effect of modern female role portrayals on advertising effectiveness and that other variables such as age and education positively correlated with income. This means that the division of labour and influence on household decision-making an individual regards to be appropriate for either gender (gender ideology) influences their perception of female role portrayal in advertising.

We also controlled for marital status and employment status because these have been found to be an important variable when considering womens' reactions to female role portrayals in advertising (Ford and LaTour 1993, Widgery, Angur and Nataraajan 1997).

4.3. Data collection

Data gathering consisted of two stages, the first stage consisted of in-depth interviews using Repertory Grids the interview comprised the following steps:

1. Introduction to the topic of interest (subjects were given a grid, in addition the meaning of constructs and elements (adverts), which are used to create a grid was explained to them).
2. Presentation of elements to subjects, in triads.
3. Subjects were asked to specify some important ways in which two of the adverts were alike, and thereby different from the third, in order to elicit constructs. They

were then asked to write down their own sets of bipolar constructs in the given grid, e.g. nice-nasty, here-there, ugly-beautiful, and so on.

4. They were requested to rate each advert on a scale of 1 to 7 according to their constructs.
5. Subjects were asked to rate themselves, according to their constructs on a scale of 1 to 10.
6. They were then asked to rate adverts in terms of appeal, on a scale of 1 to 10, to illustrate the ones they liked most and least.

The second stage involved asking the respondents to complete a questionnaire, in order to obtain their gender ideologies. This questionnaire comprised four statements taken from Pleck (1985). A five point Likert scale was used to obtain the respondents' preferences, an example of these statements for contemporary ideology was, 'a husband and wife should share household chores equally if they both work outside the home'. For traditional ideology an example of these statements was, 'the man of the house should make most of the important decisions'.

A program called Repertory Grid provided cluster analysis (through the SOCIOGRID and the FOCUS analysis). SOCIOGRID analysis allows researchers to compare the grids generated by different respondents, the program links with arrows those individuals who have similar grids.

5. RESULTS

5.1. British students

All of this group recorded contemporary gender ideologies and all of them favoured the contemporary images when asked which adverts they liked the most. Visual examination of the SOCIOGRID suggests that there is a strong linkage between the UK group of students i.e. they share similar views. However, while there are links between the respondents some do not have close correspondence of constructs, this is because although they had similar perceptions of both traditional and contemporary role portrayals, these perceptions were expressed differently by each of the respondents according to the meaning that these adverts had for them, as individuals. The two respondents who corresponded least with the rest of the group both rated traditional images more positively than the others. The respondent who had the strongest links with the rest of the group rated both traditional and contemporary images positively. This demonstrates that the central constructs of the group were ones that rated both traditional and contemporary images positively. Overall, however, the British group of students, although sometimes critical of contemporary images, preferred and related more to the contemporary images than the traditional ones.

The table below shows the words the British students used to describe the two groups of advertisements.

Table 2

Words used to describe contemporary role portrayals in advertising (British Students)	Words used to describe traditional role portrayals in advertising (British Students)
arrogant - image conscious - hard image - challenging - strong - - liberal - aggressive - sexy - ambitious - businesswoman	content - nice - natural - approachable - lovely - friendly - genuine - elegant - innocent - housewife
distant - harsh - loud - demanding - extrovert - demonic - self-absorbed - blatant - passionate - focused - independent - striving	friendly - conservative - dependent - interested - stable passive - mellow
loud - dynamic - cosmopolitan - not approachable - panic - aggressive - in pursuit - sexy - ambitious - striving - sharper	soft - image - gentle - old-fashion - angelic - friendly person serene - calm - mellow - harmonious - warm - warm - domestic
blatant - extrovert - concerned with image - unusual - nasty - image - conscious - messy - rebellious - wild - cheap - ambitious - determined	classy - calm - not concerned with image - restrained - elegant - pleasant - natural - genuine - approachable - pure - innocent - laid-back
in pursuit - blatant - chaotic - dynamic - modern - focused - assertive - sharper	friendly - approachable - interested - classical - dreamy - and - has - everything - soft - calm - content - domestic
impure - image conscious - unpleasant - nasty - panic - fake - false - cheap	content - pure - shy - genuine - natural - approachable - warm - friendly - person - calm - old-fashion - domestic

5.2. British secretaries

The British secretaries recorded contemporary gender ideologies and perceived their self-image to be in line with contemporary constructs. However, they chose the traditional images as their favourites and they were more positive about traditional images, than about contemporary images. Only one of the secretaries chose only contemporary portrayals as her favourite, but at the same time she was positive about traditional images. Like the British students the correspondence of constructs between the secretaries was relatively weak.

Table 3

Words used to describe contemporary role portrayals in advertising (British Secretaries)	Words used to describe traditional role portrayals in advertising (British Secretaries)
agitated - angry - outgoing - aloofness - fiery - hoity - stern raunchy - professional - younger - contrived	pleasant - nice - homely - mature - placid - plain peaceful - softer - passive - covered
overt - confident - power - tense - carefree - dowdy energetic - frenetic - lusty - alluring - worldly-wise	naive - accepting - innocence - homely meek - disciplined - demure - motherly
hoity - carefree - serious - stern - overt - hard - wild - seductive - sexy - alluring - arranged	plain - natural - pleasant - content - happy - passive - meek - placid - demure - covered - innocence - naive - homely
angry - confident - passive - serious - energetic sexy - provocative - arranged	pleasant - plain - natural - happy - softer - dowdy - placid - laid-back - covered - shy
aggressive - aloofness - outgoing - overt - carefree - energetic - frenetic - wild - raunchy - sexy - alluring -	softer - old-fashioned - disciplined - calm - quiet - innocent - shy - demure
outgoing - aggressive - agitated - angry - raunchy - contrived	calm - peaceful - - natural - old-fashioned - innocent

When the two UK samples are considered together we find that both have similar perceptions of the role portrayals being studied, generally the students had a greater appreciation for contemporary portrayals and the secretaries for traditional images. The extent to which contemporary gender ideologies were recorded was expected, however we had not expected the extent to which these groups would appreciate traditional role portrayals.

5.3. Portuguese students

Half of the Portuguese students recorded contemporary gender ideologies. The same split was apparent in their generation of constructs, perception of the pictures, rating of the respective constructs and their choice of favourite adverts. However, their choice of constructs and language was more inclined towards traditional images and they were generally more critical when referring to contemporary images. Words used to describe contemporary images included: 'aggressive'; 'parasite'; 'artificial' and 'annoyed'. In contrast, the words used to describe traditional images include: 'normal', 'amusing' 'affectionate' and 'active'. This was confirmed by their choice of traditional adverts as their favourites. As with the previous two groups of respondents there was a relatively weak correspondence within this group. Overall it is interesting to note that while these individuals perceived themselves to have contemporary values, their reactions to advertising suggested adherence to traditional values. The table below lists the words they used to describe the two groups of advertisements.

Table 4

Contemporary Role Portrayals in Advertising (Portuguese Students)	**Contemporary Role Portrayals in Advertising (Portuguese Students)**
authoritative - bold - look - likes to go out - extroverted exuberant - provocative - produced	not worried - sympathetic - discrete - affectionate - natural - proximal - reserved - familiar - grey - reserved - modest
frustrated - big head - single - parasite - artificial - irreverent -	normal - amusing - affectionate - familiar - cheerful - maternal

experienced - insensitive - annoyed - aggressive - independent	- serene - active - housewife - married
eccentric - authoritative - arrogant - concerned with image. likes to go out - produced look	natural look - sympathetic - affectionate - reserved innocent - mother - married
single - attractive - sophisticated - unbalanced - concerned with image - solitary - resting - scary - authoritative - sensual	simple - sensible - conventional - less - appealing - practical - not worried - sociable - working - homely - married
single - solitary - stagnated - distant - irreverent sporty - resting - student	sociable - serene - antiquated - sensible - affectionate - proximal - working - married - dynamic
thoughtful - attractive - bold - exuberant - unbalanced seductive - sexy	relaxed - natural - conservative - normal - not worried - familiar - sensible - discrete - serene

5.4. Portuguese secretaries

A similar dichotomy was observed with the Portuguese group of secretaries, who were more positive when referring to traditional images ('sweet', 'frolicsome' and 'sympathetic') compared to contemporary ones ('expectant', 'fiery' and 'distant'), indeed they favoured the traditional images. As with the Portuguese students, this set of opinions appears to clash with their stated contemporary gender ideologies, Furthermore, when asked for their 'self-image', most of the respondents placed themselves somewhere between contemporary and traditional. Unlike the previous three groups the Portuguese secretaries had a relatively high correspondence of constructs i.e. they were relatively homogeneous in their opinions.

In general, both Portuguese groups had an equal split between contemporary and traditional ideologies, however, both groups used positive language to describe traditional images and chose traditional adverts as their favourites.

Table 5

Contemporary Role Portrayals in Advertising (Portuguese Secretaries)	**Traditional Role Portrayals in Advertising (Portuguese Secretaries)**
expectant - serious - fiery - distant - - stressed - sporty - sexy - sophisticated - appealing	without fire frolicsome fiery amusing smiling daring maternal sweet sympathetic
serious - apprehensive - aggressive extravagant - scowling - arrogant - authoritative - - strong - personality - - fresh - sport - relaxing - sensual - provocative sexy - naïve - modern - sophisticated - holidays - pretty attractive	frolicsome - happy - natural - normal - sympathetic - satisfied - sweet - smiling - relaxing - - work - common - naïve - fresh - relaxed - vulgar - look - daring - simple - domesticated - personality domestic - domestic - antiquated - less appealing - classic
arrogant - extravagant - insinuating - serious - authoritative pretty - - sporty - intense - aggressive - provocative - sexy - sensual - daring - modern - sophisticated - elegant	natural - sympathetic - smooth - sweet - bucolic - smiling - common - funny - amusing - unpleasant - normal - clever - astute - frolicsome - daring - vulgar - homely - domestic - simple - antiquated - classic

naïve - elegant - relaxing - sensual - clever - aggressive - sensitive - tedious - cheerful - intense - strong - personality extravagant - fresh - arrogant - serious - insinuating - apprehensive - sporty - daring - sexy - provocative - modern - sophisticated	clever - common - unpleasant - domesticated - personality - bucolic - natural - classic - simple - sympathetic - happy - amusing - relaxed - daring - look - homely - domestic - antiquated
holidays - relaxing - fiery - normal - aggressive - extravagant - stressed - scowling - appealing - strong - personality - expectant - serious - temporary - fresh - arrogant - apprehensive - sensual - sexy - naïve - modern - sophisticated	domestic - look - work - classic - common - natural - sympathetic - not - worried - radiant - daily - normal - sweet - domesticated - personality - less - attractive - simple - naïve - happy - without - fire - relaxed - satisfied
distant - expectant - normal - boring - sensitive - fiery - insinuating - extravagant - aggressive - appealing - stressed - holidays - tedious - cheerful - intense - sporty - sexy - provocative - modern - sophisticated	amusing - relaxed - funny - normal - astute - radiant - boring - sensitive - without - fire - bucolic - sweet - smooth - natural - less - attractive - tedious - cheerful - unpleasant - not - worried - work - homely - and - simple - antiquated

5.5. Comparisons of the two groups of students

The SOCIOGRID analysis comparing the Portuguese students and the British students showed that there were stronger links within the two groups than across the groups. There were two respondents who maintained links between the groups. If they were removed, then there would be no links across the groups. Closer analysis of the constructs used by both groups showed that the British students used more positive language to describe both contemporary images and traditional images, than the Portuguese students, who generally, used more positive language to describe *just* the traditional images. This pattern also arose when considering which images the groups liked most. The Portuguese students generally liked the traditional images, while the British students preferred the contemporary ones. This was to be expected, as the British students' gender ideologies were contemporary, while the Portuguese students' gender ideologies were split between traditional and contemporary.

5.6. Comparisons of the two groups of secretaries

The constructs identified by the respondents were mathematically more similar within the groups rather than across them. Closer analysis of the language used as constructs, by the two groups, revealed that both groups expressed more positive language for

traditional images than for the contemporary images. Both groups also said that they liked the traditional images more than the contemporary ones. This was surprising as there was a difference between the groups when answering the gender ideology questionnaire. The Portuguese secretaries had a split between contemporary and traditional ideologies while the British secretaries all expressed contemporary ideologies. This suggests, that although the sample groups' answers to the gender ideology questionnaire demonstrated an inclination towards a contemporary gender ideology, the way they provided their grids suggests they subscribed to a more traditional gender ideology. The latter could be argued to be a more realistic indication of their true gender ideology because the Repertory Grid method allows a deeper analysis of a person's perceptions, than a simple questionnaire. The above analysis has shown, that although there aren't strong links between the constructs of the two groups of secretaries, both groups discussed traditional images using positive language and also liked those images more than the contemporary ones.

An alternative explanation for the responses generated by the British secretaries lies in their repeated usage of the words, 'arranged' and 'contrived' to describe the contemporary role portrayals. In contrast the traditional role portrayals were repeatedly described as 'natural'. It could be that it was the *execution* of the contemporary advertising images which was at fault and not the role portrayal itself. This is an issue which needs further investigation.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Due to the nature of Personal Construct Psychology theory (Kelly 1955), it is important to recognise that the conclusions drawn from this study, do not represent a static picture of a group's perceptions. Most people have a core set of constructs or perceptions that remain central to a person's way of thinking but these constructs are continually changing. This means that if this study is replicated, with exactly the same respondents, the results are likely to be different (Zuber-Skerrit 1987). However, the conclusions, dealt with below, provide a snapshot of the respondents' perceptions which provides a focus and a starting point for further research.

6.1. Findings in context of existing research

These findings did not corroborate studies previously mentioned in the literature review, which argued that variables such as age, income, professional status and marital status are significantly correlated with women's perceptions of roles. In this study, the age variable was only pertinent for the British samples since the younger sample group was more favourable to contemporary images, than the older group of respondents. However, the same variable was considered irrelevant for the Portuguese age groups as both younger and older samples revealed similar perceptions.

Jaffe and Berger (1994) found that women who earn higher incomes are generally more favourable to contemporary than traditional images. However in this study, the opposite relationship was observed for the British sample, as the higher income group favoured the traditional images and the lower income group favoured the contemporary images. Moreover in the Portuguese groups both income groups

favoured the traditional images. These results indicate that income alone, cannot be used to predict whether a respondent will be more favourable to either contemporary or traditional images but the other variables of marital status, professional status and age have to be taken into account. These findings support Widgery, Angur, and Nataraajan (1997) who argue that besides income, professional status also influences women's perceptions. In this study professional status may help to explain the difference between the role portrayals preferred by the two British samples. However, for the Portuguese respondents, professional status did not appear to make a difference in their perceptions of role portrayals. This also indicates that the other variables of age and marital status need to be assessed, in conjunction with income and professional status, to provide an explanation of how women perceive women's role portrayals.

6.2. Implications for future research

The in-depth nature of this method means that it was possible to use only relatively limited numbers of advertisements and for this reason compare only limited types of portrayals of women. Specifically while we distinguished between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' portrayals it may well be possible for future researchers to distinguish between different types of contemporary role portrayals, for example. This may yield more sensitive results, it may be possible for respondents to like career portrayals of women but dislike overtly sexy images.

Finally, although different demographic variables were assessed, their exact significance, in relation to women's perception of role portrayals, was not clear

because they were not viewed in isolation. Future studies may test the importance of different variables, such as marital status, age, income and professional status, not together, but separately.

It should also be noted that the term 'traditional' is not static. Our images of traditional portrayals were quite different to those which appeared in the 1950's, whether in a domestic setting or in an 'appealing' portrayal. Given the changing nature of advertising over time, this makes it inherently difficult to compare results with studies which were conducted many years ago.

6.3. Implications for advertisers and their agencies

The practical implications from this research for advertisers are as follows:

1. Where advertisers want to consider the perceptions of their target audience the focus of their research should be on the images of women the advertisers intend to use rather than the gender ideologies or self-image per se of their target audiences. Subscription to a particular gender ideology need not correspond to liking particular types of advertising, for example individuals who subscribe to a contemporary gender ideology may appreciate traditional images.
2. When dealing with societies which are generally regarded as being traditional, advertisers may find that some women consider themselves to have contemporary attitudes or contemporary self-images. This may not be reflected in their attitudes towards the portrayal of women in advertising - their preferences may still be towards more traditional portrayals. Once more this emphasises the importance of

testing the advertising images themselves rather than the attitudes of the target audience.

3. Even within an otherwise contemporary society advertisers should not take for granted women's perceptions of their role portrayals. Depending on professional status and age for example, some groups of women may empathise with traditional role portrayals.
4. Women's perceptions of role portrayals even within particular age or professional status groups need not be homogeneous. When researching particular markets advertisers need to consider the strength of homogeneity of opinion - the stronger this is, the more important it may be to portray the 'right' image. However where opinions are heterogeneous different types of role portrayal may be equally acceptable.
5. It may be possible for women who have a contemporary gender ideology to dislike contemporary role portrayals if they consider these to be 'contrived' or 'arranged'. Agencies may wish to test alternative creative executions of the same role portrayal in order to overcome this.

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