

<b>Institution: UCL Institute of Education</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA 23 Education</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Diversity Matters: Creating equitable, inclusive and positive representations of girls and women in the UK</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012–2020</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Jessica Ringrose	Professor, Sociology of Gender and Education	September 2006 to present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017–2020</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Ringrose's research has focused attention on the consequences of gender inequality and lack of diversity in representations of girls and women in media and society, influencing changes in nation-wide policy and educational practice. Through research she led for the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL), she provided the evidence and insight to underpin a high-profile competition process that has: galvanised innovation in the marketing sector and in business; triggered concrete changes in advertising policy; stimulated millions of conversations about body image across the UK; and delivered significant economic impact, prompting the award of over £1m of advertising space and increasing the market share of competition winners.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p><b>Context and background:</b> There has been much public concern about sexism and sexualisation in the media and advertising. But attempts to challenge gender inequalities in representation have often failed to attend to intersecting inequalities around class, race and culture, which work together to create homogenous and exclusionary imagery. Ringrose's research documents how young people experience and navigate sexual imagery (<b>R1, R2, R3</b>) and a lack of diversity in representations of girls and women (<b>R3</b>). Her work on digital feminist activism (<b>R4</b>) explores how media and technology can be harnessed for positive change, documenting how women and girls fight back online against sexism and create new messages of change that are spread through the connective medium of social media (<b>R4, R6</b>). A mass online protest in 2015 'calling out' a body shaming advertisement running in TfL sparked the Mayor of London to commission Ringrose to undertake research on women's experiences of gender and advertising, due to her profile and expertise in these areas (<b>R5, R6</b>).</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> Across her research, Ringrose has used a range of creative participatory methodologies to document how young people use new media technologies to represent themselves (<b>R1-3</b>) and also how marginalised groups harness technological tools to transform society (<b>R4</b>). She has used documentary methods like filming interviews with participants while on their daily commute to capture women and girls' experiences of advertising in public spaces (<b>R5, R6</b>), as well as arts-based methods, such as collaging, to create artefacts that illuminate the concerns of diverse, marginalised groups of girls and women about how they are represented and treated in society (<b>R5, R6</b>). For instance, in <b>R5</b> the girls created 'talk-back' collages by cutting and pasting the advertising content that was discussed as part of the research together with alterations, - 'craftbacks' - that they made to the images.</p>		

Research outputs and programme:

- Multiple studies on sexism and sexualisation of girls (**R1, R2**), including pioneering work (2012) funded by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children on gender inequalities and sexual behaviour in youth-produced sexual imagery.
- Qualitative interviews on how ethnically diverse girls navigate sexist, sexualised and racialised media and how it shapes their body image. This research was funded in 2014 by the Society of Research on Adolescence (**R3**).
- Analysis of media content and interviews with 82 diverse women and girls to study their resistance to sexism and sexual violence through online feminist activism; funded in 2015 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (**R4**).
- Quantitative survey of 2,012 women's and men's views on gender, diversity and advertising in London's public spaces; travelling interviews with 16 women (aged 21-65) on public transport, using audio, video and images to record responses to advertisements; and focus group and participatory art practices with 22 teen girls in schools, writing upon and altering advertising content and creating their own images and slogans in arts-based collages. Ringrose was commissioned to lead this study in 2018 by the Mayor of London (sponsored by TfL's advertising sales agents, Exterior Media and JCDecaux), culminating in the research report: *"The Women We See: Women and Girls' Experiences of Gender and Diversity in Advertising"* (**R5**).

**Key findings from "The Women We See" (WWS) study (R5, R6):**

Advertising in London does not reflect the city's diverse population with some groups feeling much less represented than others. Only one in three Londoners feel adverts are relevant to them. Specifically:

- Just over half of BAME Londoners surveyed stated their ethnicity is not well represented in advertising – compared to a fifth of white respondents.
- In failing to fully represent London's ethnic and cultural diversity, participants felt advertising promoted ideals of white beauty as normal.
- Older women felt the most invisible and least represented in advertisements, whilst girls felt the most sexualised.
- Women of all ages were concerned about sexualised uses of women's bodies and slogans to sell unrelated products, and about the use of Photoshopping.

Main recommendations:

- A more equitable and inclusive standard of advertising, showcasing all forms of diversity.
- The minimisation of sexualised and sexually degrading images of women.
- Advertisers should carefully consider the use of Photoshop and use more diverse body types.
- Advertisements should be based on the product with realistic, useful and interesting information.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1** Ringrose, J., Gill, R., Livingstone, S. & Harvey, L. (2012) *A Qualitative Study of Children, Young People and 'Sexting'*. London: NSPCC. [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44216/1/Libfile\\_repository\\_Content\\_Livingstone%2C%20S\\_A%20qualitative%20study%20of%20children%2C%20young%20people%20and%20%27sexting%27%20%28LSE%20RO%29.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44216/1/Libfile_repository_Content_Livingstone%2C%20S_A%20qualitative%20study%20of%20children%2C%20young%20people%20and%20%27sexting%27%20%28LSE%20RO%29.pdf)
- R2** Renold, E., Ringrose, J. & Egan, D. (editors, 2015) *Children, Sexuality, and Sexualisation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137353399> Book available on request.
- R3** Ringrose, J. Tolman, D. & Ragonese, M. (2018) Hot right now: Diverse girls' navigating technologies of racialised sexy femininity, *Feminism and Psychology* 29(1),76–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353518806324>

**R4** Mendes, K., Ringrose, J. & Keller, J. (2019) *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back against Rape Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190697846.001.0001> Book available on request.

**R5** Ringrose, J. & Regehr, K. (2018) *Women we see: Diverse girls and women's experiences of gender and advertising in London's Public Spaces*, Mayor of London

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018\\_women\\_we\\_see.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_women_we_see.pdf)

**R6** Ringrose, J. & Regehr, K. (2020) Feminist Counterpublics and Public Feminisms: Advancing a Critique of Racialized Sexualization in London's Public Advertising, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 46(1), 229–257.

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/709362#>

**Quality indicator:** Research outputs have been through a rigorous peer-review process.

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

**Reach and significance:** Ringrose has influenced youth policy initiatives on body image and her research has informed Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) lessons plans and resources delivered to 31,000 school children in the UK. The 'Women We See' (WWS) research she led has influenced the UK advertising sector and policies, and underpinned advertising campaigns, which earned approximately 1,500,000,000 impressions on social media, generating a national conversation about the representation of women.

##### Principal Beneficiaries:

Young people; women experiencing menopause; mothers; the UK advertising industry, its providers and regulators (i.e. TfL, Advertising Standards Authority) and the viewing public who use the TfL network (approx. 5,000,000 passengers per day in 2018, [tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/what-we-do](https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/what-we-do)).

##### Instrumental impact on educational and youth policy

In 2017, Ringrose gave live testimony in Parliament for the British Youth Council Select Committee's review on *Body Confidence* (**S1**). Her oral testimony at Parliament on gendered, sexualised and racialised norms of the body was cited throughout the Committee's report (12 times in total) highlighting the negative sexist effects of advertising and the need for schools to understand and support diversity of size and shape and attend to young people's well-being. The report received extensive coverage in the mainstream UK media, and consolidated Ringrose's public profile in the area of sexualisation, body image and youth voice in leading social change; contributing to her being commissioned to undertake research on gender inequality, body image and advertising for the Mayor of London (**R5, R6**).

##### Conceptual impact in education sector and with young people

Ringrose' innovative methodologies such as the arts-based collages used in the WWS research, addressing inequality and lack of diversity in advertising, were designed to enable marginalised girls and women to create authentic and empowering representations of themselves (**R5, R6**). These methods have gone on to directly shape educational resources. Ringrose has been advising the charity School of Sexuality Education since 2017, which has adopted her arts-based activism methods to create RSE lesson plans for schools on inequality issues around media and gender. Lessons delivered to date have involved 31,000 young people in the UK (**S2**). These research-informed sessions include running workshops on cyberbullying, digital feminist activism, and positive uses of social media. The lesson on 'Body Positivity' includes the collaging art activism participatory methodology. An evaluation survey of 229 participants found: 90% strongly agree or agree that they have a better understanding of how to make their social media a more body positive space; 86% strongly agree or agree that they have a better understanding of digital activism and how people speak online about the issues that matter to them, and 60% strongly agree they feel happier in, or more confident about their body because of the School of Sexuality Education workshops (**S2**).

**Instrumental impact on advertising policy**

In 2018, Ringrose was commissioned as part of the Mayor of London's year-long women's equality campaign #BehindEveryGreatCity to undertake research on gender in advertising in response to public outcry over sexism in TfL advertising. The research report '*Women we see: Diverse girls and women's experiences of gender and advertising in London's Public Spaces*' (R5) prompted the launch of a competition by TfL and the GLA which called on creative agencies and brands to respond to 'What Women See' recommendations to challenge gender stereotypes, increase diversity and create more positive and inclusive campaigns (S3). The research directly informed the creative brief and judging criteria for two GLA and TfL UK-wide competitions (S3) challenging brands to produce more equitable, socially responsible advertising campaigns, with the report referenced on the Competition landing page (S4). The winning entries included:

- 2019: Holland and Barrett 'Me.No.Pause' campaign (winner, created by Pablo) responded to research findings of lack of representation of ageing women in ads, with a 'taboo' breaking campaign on diverse women's experiences of menopause (S5).
- 2019 Mothercare's 'Body Proud Mums' campaign (runner-up, created by McGarrybowen) responded to the findings Londoners want to see more diverse body shapes and sizes with a campaign on diverse postpartum bodies (S6).
- 2020: "A Different type of Nude" Nubian Skin (winner, created in-house by brand). The success of the 2019 campaign led to it being run again in 2020 with a focus on the underrepresentation of BAME Londoners (S7).

Together these winning campaigns have been awarded GBP1,100,000 of advertising space (S3, S8).

The policy impact of the research extends beyond these competitions: The research influenced TfL's Advertising Steering Group who are '*building on these results and working with key stakeholders across the industry to embed the learnings in the work of agencies and brands*' (S3). The WWS report was also sent to the National Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), which updated their guidance on depicting gender stereotypes in December 2018. A GLA spokesperson said, '*the ASA's timely publication ... demonstrated the work we are collectively doing in this area is part of a movement driving forward change*' (S7).

**Instrumental impact within advertising sector and brands**

The WWS research has raised awareness around improving diversity in advertising, helping the GLA to begin '*the long-term change required*' in the advertising sector via the competitions (S3), which resulted in over 750 unique page views of the competition site by agencies and brands with 90 submissions (S3) and 2622 views of a film describing the research findings, hosted on this page (S4). The competition created extensive media coverage across regional, national, international TV, radio and print, illustrating the power to effect change (e.g. ITV news, The Guardian, Campaign, The Drum). A senior GLA spokesperson confirmed the vital contribution of the research to an industry wide change: '*Working so closely with yourselves at UCL, Exterior, JCDecaux and the brands and agencies we have shown the positive impact of bringing the whole industry together – creating campaigns that are more inclusive*' (S7). Pablo agency noted how '*thought-provoking*' the WWS report was for the advertising industry: who are '*becoming aware of diversity and equality issues yet they are often on the periphery*'. Pablo also noted: '*Shining a light onto the wider cultural context and social attitudes, [the research] affirmed our idea and gave a platform to springboard the campaign. The Me.No.Pause. campaign very successfully responded to the report's recommendations. More broadly, the learnings from the report are being taken on board across our work throughout our client base*' (S5). The McGarrybowen agency stated, '*We believe this campaign marks a step change in marketing to mothers and exemplifies the positive impact that can be achieved through this powerful medium*' (S6).

**Conceptual impact on viewing public**

The winning campaigns provided a unique opportunity for more diverse women across the UK to feel better represented and more positive about ageing and body image (**S6**), as explained by exposure and positive recognition of the winning brands, leading to the opportunity to be seen across over 31,000,000 journeys in 2019 (**S5**). A YouGov survey showed ‘...just 2 weeks after its launch, 11% of the female population - 2.9m women – had talked to friends, family or colleagues about Holland & Barrett’s campaign. To date, the campaign has achieved 495 million+ impressions’ (**S9**). Mothercare received global impact of 1 billion impressions on social media; nationwide and international publicity, winning multiple awards for its use of 10 unretouched portraits of real mums with post-birth bodies holding their babies (**S6, S10**). And, in a reflection of women’s own feelings of solidarity towards the campaign, mothers across the country posted powerful emotional testimonies and positive images of their own postpartum bodies on social media (**S6, S10**).

### Economic impact

As well as galvanising the investment of over GBP1,000,000 of advertising space, the uptake of the research findings also resulted in significant commercial impact for the successful entries, demonstrating that taking diversity seriously makes sound business sense. It also led to wider cultural shifts and capacity building: Holland and Barrett undertook nationwide in-store training for 6000 employees for supporting customers with managing menopause (**S5, S9**) and footfall increased by 17%. Core menopause product sales increased 171% during and immediately after the campaign and overall basket size was GBP1 higher. Overall brand health grew by 11% to reach its highest ever level: ‘Perhaps even more encouragingly, this increase was driven largely by infrequent shoppers, suggesting that the campaign challenged preconceptions about the store and lured back people who routinely shopped elsewhere’ (**S9**). In addition, Mothercare also saw a 2.8% market share increase versus the period immediately before the campaign (**S10**).

In recognition of the sustained impact of her research, advocacy and public engagement work, Ringrose won the 2020 Distinguished Contributions to Gender Equity in Education Research Award, from the American Educational Research Association.

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1** [A Body Confident Future](#) (British Youth Council, 2017).
- S2** Testimonial from School of Sexuality Education.
- S3** The GLA and TfL’s “Women we See” entry for Marketing Week Awards 2019.
- S4** [The Women We See Findings and Competition landing page](#).
- S5** Testimonial from Pablo.
- S6** Testimonial from MCGarrybowen.
- S7** Testimonial from Head of Marketing Campaigns, Greater London Authority.
- S8** Mayor of London [Press Release](#).
- S9** Pablo’s Holland and Barrett campaign entry for the Marketing Society’s Awards.
- S10** MCGarrybowen’s Internal Campaign Review report for Mothercare.