Jess Weiner and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign: Selling Feminism for Profit or Social Change?

Emma Allen
Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Abstract: Dove Beauty launched their Real Beauty Campaign in 2004, becoming one of the first brands to base their identity on 'femvertisements.' Jess Weiner, CEO of Talk to Jess, a consulting firm that helps companies engage in more inclusive marketing, became an architect of the campaign and spearheaded the Dove Self-Esteem Project as part of the Real Beauty Campaign. The Real Beauty Campaign started national conversations around beauty ideals and kickstarted trends of employing socially relevant issues in marketing. It also faced its share of criticism, ranging from performative activism to instances of racism in its marketing. The Real Beauty Campaign set a precedent for a new age of Corporate Social Responsibility and made Dove Beauty one of the most socially and financially successful beauty brands in the world.

Introduction

The patent for the cleaning agent that set Dove Beauty apart from other personal care brands expired in 1990, leaving the brand vulnerable to competition. By 2004, Dove Beauty needed a makeover. Its Beauty Bar was the leading body soap on the market, but sales were plateauing. They needed a way to reach more women and convince them to buy their products. They needed a brand change. At the same time, Jess Weiner, a theatre major from The Pennsylvania State University was in Los Angeles, finishing up her first book and looking for the next stage in her career journey. Their paths collided in 2006.

Jess Weiner graduated from the Pennsylvania State University in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in theatre, classics, and women's studies. Her education gave her the vocabulary to express the frustrations and passions she had cultivated throughout her life. "When I was 11 years old, I'd pray extra hard that when I woke up in the morning I'd look like Barbie. Every morning I was disappointed," Weiner writes in her 2003 memoir, *A Very Hungry Girl* (Pasante 2020, 37). In her senior year of college, Weiner helped create a play about her battle with an eating disorder. From there, she helped organize various protests on campus, including a "kiss-in" on Valentine's Day, when heterosexual and same-sex couples surrounded a monument on campus to make a "love is love" statement (Pasante 2020, 38).

Throughout college, Weiner participated in many protests with fellow students, but her biggest opportunity came from an annual misogynistic tradition amongst hundreds of undergraduate boys dubbed 'The Mifflin Mob'. The men would swarm the women's dormitories yelling for the female residents to flash the crowd. On the night the mob was supposed to take place, Weiner and her friends led a candlelight vigil outside the women's dorms. The mob never

came, but opportunities did. The Mifflin Mob protest was highly publicized and caught the attention of *MTV: Unfiltered* (Pasante 2020, 38).

After graduation, Weiner faced a dilemma common among college graduates: what now? She took a grant writing class at a local community college and, at 21, won a grant to fund her first passion project, a traveling theater company focused on writing and performing pieces about social justice. Her group traveled the country for six years, performing skits on everything from teen pregnancy to AIDS to mass shootings (Pasante 2020).

Once she sold her company and moved to Los Angeles, Weiner faced the dilemma again: what now? How could she use her passions, education, and skills to create a career? "You have to sit down and figure that out and listen to your life a little bit. Listen to what you care about. Listen to what you oftentimes think about," Weiner said about the initial steps she used to start her mission (Piña 2017, n.p.). "I think I've always been interested in what makes women and girls in particular feel more confident or more powerful, right? And I came to that curiosity as a girl myself" (Piña 2017, n.p.).

Weiner's expertise in resonating with young girls caught the attention of Diane Reichenberger, CEO of Dualstar Entertainment Group, at a marketing conference. Reichenberger hired Weiner to write an advice column for actresses-turned-fashion designers Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's website targeted towards teen girls. Reichenberger recommended Weiner to Dove when she heard the brand was looking for a strategist to help with its new campaign (Pasante 2020, 39). The call from Dove gave Weiner an answer to what she should do to incorporate her interests and strengths in the next stage of her career: the answer was to use her passion for social activism and women's empowerment to found her second company. "'I kept getting calls from companies who would say, 'Oh, we have *x* business problem with our marketing. Or we have *y* challenges with our products. And my friend told me to call you. They said I should, 'Talk to Jess.' And so it inspired me to create a consulting and strategy firm where I could help advise brands and businesses on the issues impacting women and girls'" ("Jess Weiner Champions" 2017, n.p.). Talk to Jess, a consulting firm that works with companies to help better reflect everyday people in their media, marketing, workforce, and advertising, was born (Weiner n.d.).

Companies started turning to firms such as Talk to Jess when diversity and inclusion became an expensive issue. Throughout the 1990's and early 2000s, big name companies were hit with a slew of class action discrimination lawsuits, or lawsuits that permit one or more persons to file a lawsuit on behalf of a larger group (Cornell Law School 2021). Morgan Stanley paid $54 million to settle sex discrimination claims (Dobbin and Kalev 2020, n.p.). In 2007, Morgan faced a new class action, costing the company $46 million. Then, in 2013, Bank of America Merrill Lynch paid $160 million to settle a race discrimination lawsuit. Additionally, Smith Barney and Merrill Lynch each agreed to $100 million in settlements. These and similar cases brought Merrill's total 15-year payout to nearly half a billion dollars (Dobbin and Kalev 2020, n.p.). As a result, firms expanded their diversity training as a way to avoid costly litigation.

Corporate antibias training was driven by civil rights movement throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Dobbin and Kalev 2018, n.p.). It expanded to diversity training in the 1980s and by 2005, 65% of big businesses offered diversity training (Dobbin and Kalev 2018, n.p.). Today, consultants regard diversity training as essential and corporate lawyers advise its vitality to avoid lawsuits, yet human resource specialists testify its ineffectiveness (Dobbin and Kalev 2018, n.p.). Instead of boosting diversity and creating more inclusive environments, diversity training led to no change, and sometimes even a decrease in women and minority group employees (Dobbin and Kalev 2020,

n.p.). Research has produced several theories to explain this phenomenon. The first is the fact that one day trainings are not long or in depth enough to effect long term change of attitudes and biases (Dobbin and Kalev 2018). The second reason is the argument that diversity training reinforces stereotypes by trying to suppress them. This makes them "more cognitively accessible to people" (Dobbin and Kalev 2018, n.p.). The final theory is that firms that employ diversity training tend to become complacent in their own biases and believe the workplace is free of discrimination. This leads to hostility when claims of discrimination are brought up (Dobbin and Kalev 2018, n.p.) Rather than revolutionize the methods diversity training is taught and invest the time and money to create effective programs, companies doubled down on methods pioneered in the 1960s, just with more fanfare for the public's sake (Dobbin and Kalev 2020). This method had the unfortunate consequence of making things worse instead of better.

Although nearly half of midsize companies and all Fortune 500 companies employ mandated diversity training as a means to combat discrimination in the corporate world, the diversity training has little to no effect (Zelevansky 2019). Diversity training teaches managers and employees the correct answers to tests and questionnaires about diversity, but the positive effects and education rarely last. Traditional sensitivity training is ineffectual and can even breed resentment against minority groups. This mismatch creates a market for experts who can help address and correct issues like unconscious bias (Zelevansky 2019).

It has been shown, time and time again, that boasting a diverse corporation boosts productivity and output. According to McKinsey and Company, "businesses in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are more likely to be more successful financially; executive teams with gender diversity are 21 percent more likely to outperform their peers" (Zelevansky 2019, n.p.). Additionally, employees and consumers both want companies who share their values, and consumers are willing to pay to prove it. Chief diversity officer at Microsoft Lindsay-Rae McIntyre states, "'Consumers are willing to spend more money on a product that they believe is doing good...they're willing to spend an average of 6.1% more on a product just because of its connection to a cause'" (Morel 2009, 53). Products and companies with a socially conscious message make more money. On the employee side, the trend of younger generations' interest in social issues is driving the need of companies to comply or lose money and talent. "D & I [diversity and inclusion] has transformed from a compliance function to a cultural transformation accelerator for companies who want to establish themselves as relevant," (Zelevansky 2019, n.p.). Simply put, brands that do not evolve will fall behind.

Diversity consultants are called in after negative publicity or in response to backlash, but the demand for companies to avoid mistakes in the first place has grown into an industry of its own (Zelevansky 2019, n.p.). Talk to Jess was a pioneer in this field, pushing Jess Weiner to the forefront of the movement and onto Dove's radar.

The Campaign

The Dove Real Beauty Campaign is a self-proclaimed "agent of change to educate and inspire girls on a wider definition of beauty and to make them feel more confident about themselves" (Harris 2020, n.p.). To prepare for the campaign, Dove sponsored "The Real Truths About Beauty: A Global Study," to "understand how women define beauty; how satisfied they are with their beauty; how they feel about female beauty's portrayal in society; and, how beauty affects their well-being" (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, and D'Agostino 2004, 3). The White Paper surveyed 3,200 women aged 18-64 from February to March of 2004 (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, and D'Agostino

2004, 2). The study found that 75% of women wanted to see more diversity in what constituted 'beauty.' The definition was too narrow; the bar so high it was unreachable. Real women wanted to see varying shapes, sizes, races, and ages. Real women wanted to see themselves reflected in what was considered beautiful (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, and D'Agostino 2004, 5). With this, it came as no surprise when research uncovered that only 2% of women around the world considered themselves beautiful. Dove launched their Real Beauty Campaign in 2004 as a response (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, and D'Agostino 2004, 2).

The Real Beauty Campaign was founded on three promises: "We always feature real women, never models. We portray women as they are in real life. We help girls build body confidence and self-esteem" (Dove 2021, n.p.). The promise of featuring every day, regular women, as opposed to models became a tentpole in the campaign because beauty and fashion industries rely on a cycle of thinness to perpetuate unattainable beauty. According to former Vogue Editor Kirstie Clements,

> When it comes to who should be blamed for the portrayal of overly thin models, magazine editors are in the direct line of fire, but it is more complex than that. The "fit" model begins the fashion process: designer outfits are created around a live, in-house skeleton. Few designers have a curvy or petite fit model…These collections are then sent to the runway, worn by tall, pin-thin models because that's the way the designer wants to see the clothes fall...After the shows, the collection is made available for the press to use for their shoots. These are the samples we all work with and they are obviously the size of the model who wore them on the runway. Thus, a stylist must cast a model who will fit into these tiny sizes. And they have become smaller since the early 90s (Clements 2013, n.p.).

In other words, the fashion and beauty industries are designed around one body type.

New Yorker writer Emily Nussbaum says the dominant theory as to why industries are structured this way is the aspirational aspect. "Fashion is aspirational. There's makeup; there's lighting; it is intended to be extreme, not realistic—to inspire envy, by providing a vision of an impossible life the audience member would love to live" (Nussbaum 2007, n.p.). Regular people, regular women, should aspire to be thin and to look a certain way, because insecurity feeds into product sales. The aspiration builds a hierarchy of power associated with thinness. "Being thin means control and, symbolically, that you are rich, that you are young, that you are beautiful, that you are powerful" (Nussbaum 2007, n.p.). Dove cast real women, as opposed to actors, to provide an alternative to this cycle.

Within Dove's Real Beauty Campaign advertisements, real women are introduced by name and reflect the diversity of the population, women's images are not distorted, and the women featured approve the images. The first stage of the campaign was a series of billboards showcasing photographs of regular women in place of professional models. The ads invited passers-by to vote on whether the woman was, "Fat or Fab" or "Wrinkled or Wonderful," with the results of the votes displayed on the billboard (See Appendix A) (Harris 2020, n.p.). The idea was to challenge societal beauty standards and showcase the beauty, rather than the insecurities, of women.

The next step was influential in more ways than one. Dove undertook a huge digital campaign as well as billboards and traditional modes of marketing and created an interactive campaign that put women in charge of advertisements, called the Dove Ad Makeover. Instead of body-shaming, or the practice of stigmatizing someone by making critical comments about their

body, women could replace the messages with positive ones designed by Dove (Oxford 2021, n.p.). Dove then overbid on popular search words such as 'diet', 'bikini', and 'weight loss' to become the top ad shown to women (Harris 2020, n.p.). "We just overbid against these words – so in the time of the campaign, none of the negative ads were shown to people, because instead of them there were positive Dove ads," a spokesperson for the campaign stated (Harris 2020, n.p.).

Along with ads, Dove created videos to post online to drive their message home. Three videos, 'Onslaught', 'Sketches', and 'Selfie' went on to win numerous awards (Sharadha 2020, n.p.). 'Onslaught' centered on a young girl shown the countless messages that society throws at young women to make them insecure. 'Sketches' was an experiment featuring a forensic sketch artist contrasting how women describe themselves with how others describe them. The result of the experiment showed that 80% of the participating women had distorted versions of themselves (Sharadha 2020). Finally, 'Selfie' was a short film shown at Sundance Film Festival that highlighted teenagers and their mothers rediscovering their beauty through self-portraits (Harris 2020, n.p.).

The first two vows of the Real Beauty Campaign were easy compared to the third, the vow pledging to aid girls develop self-esteem and confidence (Dove 2021). A message-focused marketing plan is one thing, but how does a brand do more than simply start conversations? How does a company change a way of thinking, a system of value? "We were thinking, we have to walk the talk. We can't just be getting people stirred up; awareness and conversation isn't enough. We actually have to do something to change what's happening" said Sharon MacLeod, vice president of Unilever North America Personal Care (Skene 2017, n.p.). Dove hired Jess Weiner as a strategist for their Global Self-Esteem project to figure it out.

Dove already knew that only 2% of women found themselves beautiful thanks to their study. Weiner's first course of action was to figure out what the remaining 98% of women needed to change their mindset. The answer was not about women at all, but an audience to whom Dove appealed: young girls. Their soap did not target young girls but rather their mothers. However, when women were asked what could change their idea of beauty, they replied "It's too late for me; focus on my daughter, so she doesn't grow up thinking this way" (Pasante 2020, 39). This information shifted Dove's outlook and gave Weiner inspiration to start what became the Dove Self-Esteem Project. "'That was such an amazing pivot, because I think it was when the brand realized, wow, we not only have really interesting insight and information, we have a responsibility to do something if we say we care about this consumer,'" Weiner said (Pasante 2020, 39).

The mission of the new project was to "ensure the next generation grow up enjoying a positive relationship with the way they look – helping girls to raise their self-esteem and realize their full potential" (Dove 2019, n.p.). Weiner set to work, participating on a team that put together the debut ad of Dove's Global Self-Esteem Fund in 2006, which aired as an ad during Super Bowl XL. The ad consisted of portraits of girls overlaid with messages like "hates her freckles," "thinks she's fat" and "wishes she were blonde" (See Appendix B) (Giacomini 2015, n.p.). The goal of the advertisement was to lay out the mission of the new and improved Dove Beauty. The beauty industry tells girls to see their flaws and teaches them to compare themselves in harmful ways. "Let's change their minds" became the mantra of the campaign (Pasante 2020, 39).

The title of Dove's Global Self-Esteem Ambassador was given to Weiner, who said her job is, "to help them extend the reach of their mission, which is to create a world for girls and women where beauty is seen as a source of confidence, not anxiety" ("Jess Weiner Champions" 2017, n.p.). Along with a team of self-esteem educators, mentors, and psychologists, Weiner

helped create a free self-esteem curriculum designed to combat body and self-esteem issues present in young girls. Then, she brought these workshops to schools and communities with the hope of reducing girls' appearance driven anxiety ("Jess Weiner Champions" 2017). Weiner next travelled internationally, holding workshops with young girls around the world, from Brazil to Canada, and everywhere in between. Weiner described her time abroad: "We [got] to spend an hour with girls all over the world, ages eight to 18. We [got] to talk about things like social media and beauty stereotypes and bullying and creative expression, things that I think are really important for our own wellbeing and growth," (Piña 2017, n.p.).

Traveling the globe with these workshops posed challenges, most of which came from the stigma around the open discussion of these topics. Weiner explained, "Where there's a lot of emphasis on physical beauty, it can be very hard. We have to remember that the conversation around challenging beauty stereotypes is a predominantly very Western conversation, and so it was more that in some markets I had to be reminded that not everybody is having these same conversations. When you grow up in a culture that values physical beauty, coming in to talk about challenging that can be very uncomfortable for people" (Piña 2017, n.p.).

In 2010, Dove partnered with Girl Scouts of America for the launch of "It's Your Story – Tell It! An annual Dove Self-Esteem Weekend". The program was aimed towards mothers and mentors in an effort to talk to girls about confidence, insecurity, and beauty (Harris 2020).

Femvertising

Dove reimagining their brand as a way to empower women and combat beauty standards is an example of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and served as the inaugural femvertisement campaign (Dan 2017). CSR is "a continuing commitment by an organization to behave ethically and contribute to economic development, while also improving the quality of life of its employees (and their families), the local community, and society at large" (Lindgreen and Swaen 2010, 37). Literature and discussion about the specific social roles of corporations began appearing in the 1930's and 1940's, but until 2002, corporate social responsibility and financial interests were considered independent (Latapí Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir 2019; Hunt 2017). In the *Harvard Business Review* in 2002, Michael Porter and Mark Kramer argued that, "in the long run...social and economic goals are not inherently conflicting but integrally connected". By taking into account ethical dilemmas and acknowledging the link between CSR and corporate financials, a competitive advantage is created by integrating factors other than economic ones. This differentiates firms from competitors, builds a better image, and creates consumer good will (Lindgreen and Swaen 2010, 26).

Through the decades, corporate responsibility issues have varied from employee benefits in periods of high inflation to pollution in the 1970's, but excluded women's issues (Latapí Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir 2019, 5). Advertisements routinely engaged in the 'male gaze.' First theorized by Laura Mulvey in 1989, the 'male gaze' describes the process in which the camera puts the audience members in the role of the hegemonic, heterosexual male (Mulvey 1989, 62). This framing of women, as objects to be gazed upon and men as active participants, shaped advertisements aimed at women.

Female audiences adopted the male gaze due to the saturation and ubiquitous nature of it. Film, photography, commercials, advertisements, and gendered language all played a part in shaping how women view themselves through a critical lens (Shields and Heinecken 2002). Brands

and advertisers saw the advantage of exploiting women's insecurities, because it forced women to be consistent consumers of products in order to achieve an unattainable standard (Hunt 2017, 20).

Second wave feminism, or the movement starting in the 1960's and continuing through the 1990s that focused on unity and solidarity among women by advocacy of social and economic equality between the sexes, shifted commonly held ways of thinking (Oxford 2021). Through the 1960s and 1970s, the organized movement highlighted the financial independence of women and created a new market: the modern working woman. Advertisers began rethinking how they engaged with female audiences when it became clear that objectifying women might not be the best way to attract women as consumers (Gill 2008). Femvertising, or "advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls," was born (SheKnows Media 2014, n.p.). Proponents of femvertising argue that it is the manifestation of women's purchasing power and rejection of objectification as women began demanding more from brands (Hunt 2017, 25). It is seen as a way for the third wave feminist movement[1] to be represented in the media and to positively influence the messages shaping society's values (Weusten 2008). Proponents also rationalize that the selling of a product is a small price to pay for diversified representations of women in advertising (Marcus Reker 2016, n.p.). Opponents point out the flaws of 'commodity feminism', or "the various ways in which advertisers attempt to 'incorporate the cultural power and energy of feminism whilst simultaneously neutralizing or domesticating the force of its social/political critique'" (Gill 2008, 39). The conflict lies in the dilemma between capitalism, a system that oppresses women, and femvertisements, which urge women to support feminism by supporting capitalism (Hunt 2017, 26).

Successes of the Campaign

The Dove Self-Esteem Project, which aimed to facilitate positive relationships between young girls and their bodies, posed challenges for Weiner and her team, but it was evident these workshops needed to occur in order to facilitate a larger body positivity movement. The Self-Esteem Project continued and expanded until, in 2017, eleven years after the project launched, 625,000 teachers had delivered a Dove self-esteem workshop in person and 1.5 million parents had engaged with Dove's online content (Dove 2019). All of this culminated in 19.4 million young people in 138 countries that had participated in the project (Dove 2019).

The success of the Self-Esteem Project drove the success of the Real Beauty Campaign. It signaled to the public how seriously Dove was committed to its cause and built trust with the public. As a result of Dove's interactive advertisements, the campaign reached 5.5 million people and 171 million negative messages were replaced. More than 50 percent of the women who visited Dove Ad Makeover created a message, and 82% of the ads seen were created by friends of the viewer (Harris 2020, n.p.). Dove's video 'Sketches' was viewed by more than 50 million people within 12 days of its release (Sharadha 2020). It went on to win the Titanium Grand Prix at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity in 2013. At the time of the award, the video had amassed 163 million views globally, 4.6 billion media impressions, and reached 275,000 followers on Google+ ("Real Beauty Shines Through" 2013). Financially, the campaign was a smash, resulting in a 24 percent increase in sales across the Dove brand during its advertising period (Morel 2009). Dove's sales revenue grew from $2.5 billion in 2004 to $4 billion by 2014 (Skene 2017).

[1] Third wave feminism emerged in the 1990's and is marked by the inclusion of intersectional feminism and the view of gender as a spectrum rather than rigid boundaries (Grady 2018).

In terms of the Real Beauty Campaign's success with combatting unrealistic beauty standards, studies have shown its effectiveness. After the interactive ad makeover, 71% of the women polled said that they felt more beautiful (Harris 2020). Furthermore, when women were asked about Dove ads, "76% described the women in the ads as beautiful and 68% admitted that the ads made you think differently about the brand". Dove took a stand in making itself a message-based company and relying on cause marketing plans, or marketing plans that rely on consumers identifying with and supporting a cause. Dove's advertisements, activism, and the Self-Esteem Project all conveyed to the consumer how sincere Dove was about challenging unrealistic beauty and taking a stand to improve the confidence of women.

Controversy

The contrast between sincerity of a brand's message and its ultimate goal of profits is the main critique of the Dove Real Beauty Campaign. Research by scholar Jennifer Millard found that regular women do, in fact, resent the connotations of beauty society has fed them because it is unattainable. The connotations associated with beauty, including superior, hard-working, and valuable, are hurtful, but Millard's research also found that women still strive to meet the ideals (2009). The women Millard interviewed expressed the juxtaposition between resenting ideals while striving toward them as part of the reason they appreciate the Real Beauty Campaign: it is challenging the internal stigmas they all hold. "'It makes it okay to be different...to not be the typical size, height, color, age, whatever, you don't need to be that,'" one respondent stated (Millard 2009, 12). The appreciation and, at times, admiration of the advertisements was a shared sentiment, yet the reflection of real women did not fool the focus groups, with participants aware that the end goal was Dove selling an experience. They were aware Dove was in an industry that promises to sell products to enhance women's beauty, but they rationalized Dove's approach, partly because of the work the brand was doing to change mindsets through the Self-Esteem Project. As opposed to telling women how wrong they looked, Dove promised products that would enhance the beauty that already exists. The gentler tactic connected with real consumers: "Even though it's a gimmick, it's a good gimmick" (Millard 2009, 16).

This sentiment became the biggest criticism from real women when asked about the campaign. "'A nonprofit foundation wouldn't have that kind of dollars to put out something this massive...I'm glad somebody's doing it as opposed to nobody'" (Millard 2009, 17). The goal of a company using cause-based marketing tactics to make money was not lost on the focus groups, but each criticism was followed with the acknowledgement this type of campaign is an improvement to previous campaigns.

Dove was one of the first businesses to base their brand on femvertisements. Since the launch of the Real Beauty Campaign, other brands have followed suit to capitalize on feminism (Iqbal 2015). Cover Girl has used the technique in their #GirlsCan campaign launched in February 2014. The campaign was "about discovering, encouraging whatever it is that makes a girl take up the challenge; break those barriers and turn 'can't' into 'can'" (Iqbal 2015). The intended consequence was an uptick in makeup purchases. In June 2014, Pantene launched #ShineStrong with 'Sorry, Not Sorry', a short film that highlighted how women constantly apologize. The goal was to start a national conversation and help women stop apologizing for existing...with the help of shiny hair. Rounding out 2014 was Always, a company that sells pads and other menstrual products. Their #LikeAGirl campaign launched with a video that debuted at the Super Bowl. In it, women, men, boys, and pre-pubescent girls were asked to show what it meant to run, to illustrate

how 'girl' is associated with 'weak' (Iqbal 2015, n.p.). All of the above brands based their marketing plans on femvertisements rather than their product in hopes to attract consumers.

It makes sense more and more brands are adopting this marketing strategy. "A recent global ranking published by the Ethisphere Institute found that the most ethical companies perform better financially, even in time of economic crisis; making a point that investing in ethical practices has benefits for organizations" (Singh, Iglesias and Batista-Foguet 2012). Companies that target women are changing their marketing tactics to femvertisements as a means to communicate to consumers that they care, while also keeping their sales up. Femvertising uses notions of female empowerment to sell products by "leveraging the language of liberation in the service of shilling" (Windels, Champlin, Shelton, Sterbenk and Poteet 2020, n.p.). Brands capitalize on a message in hopes the consumer forgets that the purpose of the message is to sell a product.

The decision Weiner faced, to help Dove make money by employing social issues, is complicated. Describing her work with Dove, Weiner said, "We want the brands we purchase to have purpose. We want them to align with our values and to be socially responsible. It's proving to not only be good for people but good for business" ("Jess Weiner Champions" 2017, n.p.). Bringing feminism and socially relevant marketing tactics to corporations is her way of moving the dial in a positive direction. Weiner acknowledges the juxtaposition of brands positioning themselves as activists while using social issues to make money, but she believes brands caring about these issues and putting positive messaging into the world is an important step.

Critics also point out the hypocrisy of Dove championing women when Dove is owned by Unilever, the same parent company that owns Axe and Fair & Lovely. Unlike Dove, Axe has created ad campaigns that rely on misogynistic tropes and unrealistic beauty ideals, depicting 'perfect' women losing their minds (and clothes) over boys wearing Axe (Celebre and Waggoner Denton 2014, n.p.). Fair & Lovely is a company that made their fortune selling skin lightening products (Celebre and Waggoner Denton 2014, n.p.). Critics struggled with supporting a brand that was ultimately feeding a parent corporation responsible for funding misogynistic and racist companies (Celebre and Waggoner Denton 2014, n.p.). Unilever has taken on these criticisms, with former Dove Skin Vice President Fernando Machado stating, "Unilever brand's advertising efforts 'are tailored to reflect the unique interests and needs of its audience'" (Kurtzelben 2013, n.p.). The parent corporation has taken the defense of being the owner but allowing each brand to craft their own messages and marketing.

Dove also created a series of racist marketing campaigns through the years. In 2011, Dove printed an ad featuring a Black woman beside a Latinx woman beside a white woman. The words 'Before' and 'After' feature above the women, with the 'Before' above the women of color and the 'After' above the white woman, implying that Black women need improvement while white women are desirable (See Appendix C) (Edwards, 2011). Then in 2014, Dove found itself in hot water again after labelling a product 'for normal to dark skin,' implying that dark skin is not normal (Zed and Dashner 2019, 7). Both times Dove issued a statement restating their commitment to real beauty but denying any intentional wrongdoing. They claimed it had been a production oversight (Zed and Dashner 2019). Instead of acknowledging their wrongdoing and promising to do better through concrete actions, Dove ignored the criticism about racism in their advertisements. The handling of both missteps culminated on October 6, 2017, when Dove ran an advertisement that showcased a Black woman taking off a t-shirt to reveal a white woman, who then took off a t-shirt to reveal an Asian woman (See Appendix D) (Conor, 2017). Although unintentional, Dove depicted a Black woman turning into a white woman through use of its product, playing into a

harmful, racist narrative that white women are clean and Black women are dirty. The ad was called out on social media for perpetrating racist connotations and the ad was taken down. Dove issued a statement on Twitter on October 7, "An image we recently posted on Facebook missed the mark in representing women of color thoughtfully. We deeply regret the offense it caused" (Zed and Dashner 2019, 11). Dove released a statement elaborating its apology on October 9th.

This incident was inevitable due to Dove's past handling of their previous racist actions and culminated in the backlash against the 2017 commercial. The Independent UK and the New York Times ran pieces calling out the 'we apologize for how you feel' response from Dove (Zed and Dashner 2019, 12). On the flip side, Lola Ogunyemi, the model at the center of the controversy, wrote an op-ed for The Guardian defending Dove, describing her positive experience and the intent of Dove to do good (Zed and Dashner 2019, 11).

Eighteen months later, Dove launched Project #ShowUs, an interactive partner project with Getty Images and Girlgaze that asked individuals to create the most expansive, inclusive photo library to shatter beauty stereotypes (Zed 2019). The question of why it took so long remained, but for the first time, Dove took a step back and absorbed the critique. Dove acknowledged they were wrong by making a statement, but also by taking action in a way that reaffirmed their message and attempted to mend the broken trust between their consumers and the brand. Speaking to Dove's commitment to their brand and mission, Weiner said, "I love that Dove as a brand is so committed to that [real beauty] ...that's a tremendous, tremendous experience. So I feel very, very lucky to be a part of that" (Piña 2017, n.p.). In 2018, Dove won the title of Ybrands "most trustworthy brand" among consumers (Zed and Dashner 2019, 8).

These types of controversies are the hardest part of Jess Weiner's job. Her company is brought in when something goes wrong or when a brand needs an update. Her job is to educate the company and make the next course of action good for business and hopefully good for society. Weiner stated on the hardships, "I think it's also hard when you get inside an industry, you realize that there's a lot of belief systems in these industries that make the products that come out of them, and so you're really trying to change people's minds overall, and that's not easy to do" (Piña 2017, n.p.). It is a constant learning and teaching process. Coming in and changing the way companies operate comes with missteps along with triumphs. "I value that authentic connection or I value challenging status quo, and sometimes, people ...don't want to challenge status quo, you know? They want to keep it going 'cause it makes money" (Piña 2017, n.p.). By coming in and educating companies on issues, Weiner is providing a rebrand, which will hopefully increase profits. She makes it make sense financially but hopes it will translate into an organizational and cultural shift.

Epilogue

The Real Beauty Campaign signaled a cultural shift when it came to brand marketing and values. Dove honed in on a message and devoted itself to a cause, cashing in on the results. Since its launch, Dove is synonymous with the Real Beauty Campaign. The brand is real beauty, and the campaign, "became the industry example for branding, marketing, and consumer reach" (Sharadha 2020).

In 2020, Dove, as a brand, was valued at 5 billion, which is 10% up from 2019 (Ridder 2020). It is also estimated that 60 Dove Beauty bars are sold every second (Gould 2018). Dove bars became the number one preferred soap brand in the U.S. and Unilever's best-selling product company-wide (Zed 2019). Aside from the numbers, Dove has maintained its mission focused

brand. In 2017, on its 60-year anniversary, Dove renewed its commitment by launching the Dove Real Beauty Pledge (Dove n.d.).

Along with renewing their belief in body confidence and the beauty of regular women, Dove has expanded its activism to issues outside of beauty ideals, namely, fighting systemic racism. In early 2019, Dove partnered with the National Urban League, Color of Change, and the Western Center on Law and Poverty to co-found the Creating a Respectful and Open World with No Racism (CROWN) Coalition in the US to end race-based hair discrimination. The Coalition includes effort to support CROWN legislation to outlaw racist hair-based discrimination and evolving their Self-Esteem Project to educate parents and mentors on how racism plays into confidence. The company also pledged $5 million to the CROWN Fund to aid ongoing anti-racist organizations (Dove 2020).

Jess Weiner is still acting as a Global Self-Esteem Ambassador. Working with Dove allowed Weiner to find the intersection of her entrepreneurial skills and social activism and she has gone on to work with other major name brands. She advised Disney on characterization and packaging when the company was figuring out how to write and develop the next generation of Disney princesses (Pasante 2020). She put together a youth seminar for Michelle Obama in the White House focusing on getting more women into STEM (Gold 2017). A decade after working with Dove, Weiner became an instrumental part in the relaunch of Mattel's Barbie which included seven new skin tones, 22 hair styles, and 24 eye colors (Pasante 2020 May). Personally, Weiner is the host of her own podcast, "We're All Going to Die, Anyway," where she discusses life, death, and everything in between. This past year she also launched a series of self-esteem and life coaching workshops, The Good Life (Weiner n.d.).

In conclusion, Dove's Real Beauty Campaign transformed modern day marketing and started a trend of companies basing their brands on Corporate Social Responsibility. With the help of Jess Weiner, Dove proved their commitment to improving confidence in young girls by launching the Dove Self-Esteem Project. Working with Dove also launched Jess Weiner's company, Talk to Jess, to more high-profile clients. Although the Real Beauty Campaign caused controversy, due to the capitalistic incentive to promote feminism, and the acts of racism committed by Dove, the brand reaffirmed their commitment to their cause and participated in real change, such as CROWN and donating to organizations fighting for systemic equality. The result was a huge success for Dove financially and a message Dove still promotes.

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Appendix A: Billboard image featured in Dove's Real Beauty Campaign (Burns, 2016)

Appendix B: Stills from Dove's Self-Esteem Project debut ad during Superbowl XL (Giacomini, 2015**)**

Appendix C: "Visibly more beautiful skin" ad (Edwards, 2011)

Appendix D: "T-Shirt" ad (Conor, 2017)