

THE SHAPE OF THINGS: MAGAZINE ADS AND THE FEMALE BODY IDEAL

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## **Abstract**

Recent research on magazine advertisements, for the most part, has examined race in terms of representation and gender in terms of stereotypical social roles and objectification. Very few content analyses have been done regarding the depictions of women in terms of specific body types portrayed in the advertising content of women's and teen magazines. In addition, very few, if any, studies have examined women's and teen's magazine advertisements for the presence of gender and racial stereotypes, overt sexuality, and depictions of a body ideal. This content analysis of six mainstream women's magazines explores the existence of all those variables and puts them in context with one another, examining the implications for what these advertisements say about our society. Specifically, this study focuses on the portrayals of women in women's and teen magazines, where previous studies have examined portrayals of women in general magazines or men's magazines, but no focus has been put on teen magazines or specifically women's magazines. Major findings include the obvious suggestions of specific body ideals for women and teens of different racial backgrounds, perpetuation of social role expectations and social stereotypes, and lack of sexual imagery prevalence in women's and teen magazines.

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my husband, who is my rock, and my son, who is my inspiration.

## **CHAPTER 1 - Introduction**

The mission of the advertising industry includes the creation of persuasive, targeted messages. The messages advertisers create are intended to reach a specific audience and influence that audience to purchase a specific product or try a certain service. In fact, according to Jean Kilbourne's most recent installment of the *Killing Us Softly* series (2000), Americans see three thousand ads per day and will watch three years of commercials in their lifetime.

Previous research has studied the portrayals of women and minorities in men's magazines, magazines with general readership, and magazines that focus on minority readership. However, very few studies have examined the portrayals of women in the advertisements in women's and teen magazines. This study seeks to examine those portrayals in the hope that if any negative effects can be attributed to them, the advertising industry may change its strategies in order to reduce or eliminate these effects.

### **Body Image and Self Esteem**

"To a great extent, advertising tells us who we are and who we should be" (Kilbourne, 2000, 03:50). One of the most potentially detrimental unintended effects of advertising messages is on the consumer's self-image. Although it may seem that our bodies are "natural" – an entity only determined by biology – in fact, both women and men's physical bodies are also constructed by cultural ideals of what constitutes the ideal body image and these ideals change over time (Hesse-Biber, 2006). Communication studies have shown that media consumption plays a crucial role in influencing body images and body satisfaction (Eisend, 2006). In addition, though family and peers are influential, Stice and Shaw (1994) also emphasized that mass media messages may

in fact be one of the strongest transmitters of this pressure to be thin through movies, magazines, and popular television.

The underlying problem with this is, according to a study by Lennon et al. (1999):

In contemporary U.S. culture, an attractive appearance has important social consequences. Attractive people are selected more often as work partners, more often for hiring and more often as dating partners than unattractive people. Attractiveness not only affects perceived characteristics of a person but also affects social interactions. Attractive people are more successful than unattractive people at selling products at influencing people and at getting people to help them. In addition, attractive people report significantly higher earnings than unattractive people suggesting the existence of employer discrimination. Furthermore, the effects of physical attractiveness may be more important for women than for men.

...indeed, according to traditional gender role stereotypes, not only is a woman's value judged by her attractiveness, an active quest for beauty is also expected of women. Thus, women are socialized to be interested in maintaining an attractive physical appearance, a major component of which is a thin body. (pp. 379, 380)

Hesse-Biber (2006) added to this assertion by saying,

American culture sends a powerful signal to women – that only the beautiful, and the thin are valued and loved, catalyzing an American ideal of female body image where thinness is a sign of success, health, and being in charge of your life. Thinness promises women the 'goodies' life has to offer. (p. 208)

“Advertising today tells us that what is most important about women is how [they] look” (Kilbourne, 2000, 04:05). Because of the struggle to attain an ideal female body image and largely due to successful advertising campaigns, the beauty industry is one of the most successful



in today's economy. Consumers spend large portions of their paychecks on the latest clothing, makeup, and accessories that will help them attain the level of beauty they perceive in the mass media messages they encounter on a daily basis. According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), more than eleven million surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures were performed in 2007 and just under \$13.2 billion was spent on these procedures. The medical industry strives to fill up its empty hospital beds and facilities by drumming up "body insecurity" aimed at the lucrative female market in order to increase its revenue stream (Hesse-Biber, 2006).

### **Gender and Racial Stereotypes**

Stereotypes are often used in advertising to convey images with which potential buyers may identify so as to increase advertising effectiveness (Zhou and Chen, 1997). Women are often stereotyped to fit certain myths of combinations of qualities that depict a traditional stereotype of femininity (Gorman, 2005). The repeated observations of women in traditional roles or "working" at jobs of low socioeconomic status could lead an audience to believe that these roles or jobs are typical of women. They could also affect women's self-images and self-concepts negatively and limit their behavior (Zhou and Chen, 1997).

Investigators and commentators have long speculated that repeated exposure to [stereotypical] images may contribute to a broad range of social problems, including sexist attitudes and beliefs, sexual harassment, violence against women, eating disorders, and stereotyped perceptions of and behavior toward men and women (Lavine et al., 1999). For example, ads depicting scantily clad women posing as decorative objects may activate the beliefs that women are seductive and frivolous sex objects, whereas ads depicting women as homemakers may activate the belief that women are nurturing, communal, and domestically-minded (Lavine et al, 1999).

On a different note, minorities can also be negatively affected by the perpetuation of stereotypes in mass media messages. Zhou and Chen (1997) propose that if models who belong to a certain minority group are frequently shown in stereotypical ways, members of that group may feel a lack of understanding or social acceptance from members of the majority. In addition, these authors suggest that if the same negative stereotypes are consistently associated with a particular minority group, those minority group members may believe that it is socially permissible, if not socially expected, for them to fulfill that stereotype. If the advertisements in magazines perpetuate negative stereotypes or under-represent minority groups, it could have a negative impact on minorities, specifically minority women.

### **Sexuality and Sexual Behavior**

The mass media are an increasingly accessible way for people to learn about and see sexual behavior and the media may be especially important for young people as they are developing their own sexual beliefs and patterns of behavior, and as parents and schools remain reluctant to discuss sexual topics (Brown, 2002).

In fact, according to Brown et al. (2006):

Parents rarely talk in a timely and comprehensive way with their children about sex, and schools are increasingly limited in what they can say, mandated by federal money to promote only abstinence until marriage and to discuss the failure rates of contraception. In such a context of reticence by conventional sexual socialization agents, the mass media (e.g., television, movies, music, and magazines) may be powerful sex educators, because they provide frequent and compelling portraits of sex as fun and risk free. (p. 1019)

In Kilbourne's 2000 documentary, *Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising's Image of Women*, she suggests that the imagery in the advertisements in mainstream magazines tends to be sexual in

nature. Other researchers have indicated that sexual imagery in mass media messages promotes, in adolescents and teens, the belief that sexual activity is more prevalent among their peers than reality indicates (Gorman, 2005; Brown et al., 2006; Clark et al., 2007).

If the media, rather than parents and schools, are becoming the educators of acceptable and expected sexuality and sexual behavior, it is possible that viewing advertisements containing sexual imagery along these lines could have a negative impact on adolescents' and teens' perceptions of the reality of the sexual nature of the world around them.

## **CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review**

### **Cultivation Theory**

The definition of cultivation, according to Rosenberry and Vicker (2009), is the teaching of a common worldview, common roles, and common values. Gerbner's cultivation theory (1986), suggests that television presents a distorted social reality, and that the more time people spend watching television, the more similar their perceptions of the real world will become to the television message. According to cultivation theory, television is a primary source of information and entertainment in the United States, and, as such, it has the ability to act as a source of socialization through its continual repetition of stories (Clark, 2007). It also suggests that heavy television consumption causes viewers to falsely assume the degree to which televised portrayals represent the social environment. Because of this, heavy television viewers may unconsciously attribute the "reality" portrayed on television as reflective of the world they live in and make assumptions about their peers and themselves based on these attributions.

Indeed, according to a study by Zhang and Kremar (2004):

Cultivation theory is based on the assumption that television is a 'socializing agent.' It works as a dominating source of information in American society and delivers the relatively uniform messages of social reality. Long-term exposure to the symbolic images on television contributes to people's formation of perceptions about the real world. Based on these ideas, the theory suggests that heavy television viewers, compared to light television viewers, are more likely to perceive society in ways congruent with those portrayed on television. (pp. 4-5)

The two main concepts within Cultivation Theory are mainstreaming and resonance. Mainstreaming, according to Rosenberry and Vicker (2009), describes how people from different social groups will come together to share a common perception as a result of their exposure to television. This idea suggests that viewing of media messages can be a great equalizer of opinions and perceptions across vastly different social groups.

Resonance, according to Rosenberry and Vicker (2009), describes how some images can have a greater impact for people whose real-life reflects that which is shown in the media. This means that if the messages the media are showing happen to “hit home” for certain groups, they are going to be more affected by them than those whose lives are drastically different.

If one were to look at the effect the media can have on perceptions of body image as it relates to the main concepts within cultivation theory, the focus Gerbner places on television viewing would not be enough. Focusing on women in particular, television is not the only form of media viewed by this group, and cannot be held completely responsible for any effects women may suffer in relationship to their body image. So, as mentioned earlier, one must look at how any form of media that women may view heavily can affect this. Magazines in particular have been shown, through previous content analyses and qualitative studies, such as those by Sengupta (2006), Law and Labre (2002), and Hesse-Biber (2006) to portray people of specific body types with such a quantity of images that perceptions of norms and expectations of body image are, in fact, strongly affected. Magazines that do not target specific groups of people can, then, have a mainstreaming effect on body image. Women of different ages, races, and backgrounds who view the same magazines will tend to develop similar opinions of what is normal and expected in terms of and ideal body type. To a degree, men who view these same images will also experience a mainstreaming effect in what they expect women to look like, according to what they perceive

to be the norm from the cultivation effects of their media viewing. In fact, one needs only to look at magazine images from fifty years ago and compare them to images from current magazines to see the changes in body image that have been portrayed over the years. Looking at the increase in eating disorders and disordered eating habits, specifically in women, over the same period of time supports the idea that viewing the images in media messages has an effect on what women expect of themselves and others in terms of body image.

### ***Heuristic Processing Model***

Though Cultivation Theory does explain the effects mass media messages can have on perceptions of reality, researchers who use it as a theoretical background tend to focus their research on television viewing, because that is the only form of media mentioned within the theory. However, the principles of the theory can, and likely do, explain similar effects created by any and all forms of media, including the internet, magazines, and movies, to name a few. The main problem with Cultivation Theory is that it does not address third-party variables and how they may effect any changes in perceptions of reality. Rather, the theory focuses solely on television effects. Many media messages can have similar effects as television viewing in regards to cultivation. In addition to these, other influences such as peers, family, education, and simply growing up can change one's perceptions of reality.

Many researchers believe that the effects explained by cultivation theory are, in fact, explained by heuristic processing. One assumption of this model suggests that the television effect on perception formation is mediated by the accessibility of information from memory (Zhang, 2004). Heuristic processing is a limited mode of processing that requires little effort and few cognitive resources (Shrum, 2001). Rather than making a careful and complete search of information in the memory, they tend to rely on the information that is most accessible to

formulate judgments without considering whether it accurately reflects the reality (Zhang, 2004). In other words, as information viewed in mass media messages tends to be more accessible, plentiful, and fresh in the mind, many real-world assumptions are based on this information, according to the heuristic processing model.

Cultivation effects have been mostly investigated with respect to the perception of the social reality (i.e., what is “normal” behavior in the social environment, and what we describe as “social perceptions”), but may also apply to perceptions and beliefs related to the self (Eisend, 2006). The implications, then, are that if heuristic processing brings these perceptions and beliefs to the forefront of the mind, any negative opinions the consumer has of him/herself caused by advertising or other mass media messages will be the most prevalent and therefore most influential when the consumer is making decisions about his/her body.

Though cultivation theory is attributed most often to television viewing, the heuristic processing model suggests that any mass media message can produce cultivation effects. Viewing magazine advertisements that portray specific body ideals, social stereotypes, and overt sexuality may affect participants’ beliefs about reality and their perceptions of themselves.

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Festinger’s social comparison theory (1954) hypothesized that people have a need to objectively compare themselves. However, if objective standards are unavailable, people will engage in social comparison; that is, evaluate themselves in comparison with others. Generally the research shows that exposure to better off others (upward comparison) results in lower self-esteem than exposure to worse-off others (downward comparison) (Lennon, 1999). Other research suggests that people will compare themselves to members of groups to which they do not belong or with social categories – models in ads, for instance (Richins, 1991).

As models in advertisements largely represent an unachievable physical, social, and economic ideal, consumers are consistently using upward comparison, which lends itself to the creation and perpetuation of low self-image and could cause consumers to take drastic measures to try and achieve the standards represented by the models, with little to no success.

### **“Ideal” Body Type and Self-Image**

According to Hesse-Biber (2006), a woman’s sense of self-esteem is dependent upon her perceived attractiveness to the opposite sex, and body weight plays an increasing importance in whether she is considered physically attractive. Body image in general, however, as mentioned previously, is a concept developed from societal norms and values which, when fed by media images, can create a “norm” that is anything but.

“Women learn from a very early age that we must spend enormous amounts of time, energy, and, above all, money striving to achieve this ideal and feeling ashamed and guilty when we fail” (Kilbourne, 2000, 04:17).

Advertising images are filled with models who hardly qualify as meeting the standards of average body types for healthy individuals. In fact, it has been estimated that models and actresses have from 10-15 percent body fat while the average body fat for a healthy woman is 22 to 26 percent (Cussins, 2001). In addition to advertising, prime time television shows (e.g., Grey’s Anatomy, Smallville, The Bachelor), which are largely targeted toward teens and young adults, also feature stick-thin, glamorous actresses whose body types are largely unattainable. Their physical appearance and bodies deviate from the population average, hence, heavy viewers of those programs may have a biased perception of what an average appearance and body looks like in today’s society and what efforts are undertaken in order to achieve such bodies (Eisend, 2006). It has been argued that female viewers of those programs in particular are more likely to



perceive unrealistic thin female bodies as a standard. Eisend (2006) also states that advertising studies have revealed support that exposure to advertising with attractive models can temporarily raise comparison standards for physical attractiveness, enhance beliefs about the importance of attractiveness, and lower body satisfaction. In addition, the study performed by Eisend and Möller (2006) found that television viewing cultivated body dissatisfaction for males and females, largely due to the unachievable ideal images portrayed by the actors and models.

However, the ideal body type portrayed in the mass media is, essentially, unattainable. Only the very thinnest 5-10 percent of all American women can actually acquire and easily maintain the supermodel's salient, and most desired feature: her fat-free body (Tiggeman and Pickering, 1996). In fact, this body type that statistically only 5 percent of American women have is the only one we ever see as desirable or acceptable (Kilbourne, 2000). "This is genetic. You can't diet your way into this body type. Not for long anyway...this is a body type that basically doesn't exist" (Kilbourne, 2000, 13:42).

Because cultivation theory, through the heuristic model, creates the idea that one's peers are meeting the standard portrayed in the media and, as explained by the social comparison theory, then judge themselves against this standard that they perceive to be real, media consumption can, in fact, lead to more serious problems such as eating disorders in addition to low self-image and depression. In fact, females overestimate their body sizes and have low levels of body satisfaction after viewing ideal body images (Eisend 2006). Biased media images of ideal female beauty seem to contribute to the fact that one woman out of every two is dissatisfied with her body (Eisend, 2006). A study by Lavine et al. (1999) supported this with their findings that women who were exposed to ads containing a specific body ideal reported their own weight and body size as heavier/larger than reality.

The fast food, diet, cosmetic, and plastic surgery industries promote a dangerously thin beauty ideal that provides a climate ripe for the development of disorderly eating and eating disorders (Hesse-Biber, 2006).

In fact, the fast food industry not only supports a culture of obesity, but also perpetuates a vicious circle whereby consumers are shown tantalizing images of burger and fries, and then shown images that make them feel guilty and inadequate for gaining weight on those burgers and fries, which can lead to anorexia and bulimia on the other end of the spectrum. Thus, rather than developing a healthy diet and exercise plan, some consumers may experience a yo-yo effect which leaves them with disordered eating habits.

The more serious developments (e.g., anorexia, bulimia) that can arise from this type of behavior, brought on by viewing mixed signals of society's expectations of ideals, present a major problem with the dissemination of these images within mass media messages. For example, anorexia is one of the few psychiatric disorders with a significant mortality rate, and in fact, carries the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Bulimia is believed to be four to five times more common than anorexia, but is more difficult to detect since many bulimics are not underweight, and may even be over-weight (CDC, 2008). Bulimics are usually secretive about their gorge-and-purge episodes, and because their external appearance does not alert others to the presence of the disorder, their condition goes undiagnosed unless the individuals seek help for themselves. The number of women dying from bulimia is hard to estimate but bulimic symptoms can have serious medical consequences such as kidney failure, and congestive heart failure (Hesse-Biber, 2006).

In addition to this, according to Hesse-Biber et al. (2006):

The more dissatisfied one is with their body prior to viewing images of the media's

portrayal of the ideal woman, the more dissatisfied they become with their weight as images are presented to them. Eating disorder patients have pointed to models in fashion magazines as one source of motivation for their drive for thinness. (p. 217)

The implications, then, for consumers who already suffer from eating disorders are clear. Viewing unattainable ideals in the media perpetuates their feelings of inadequacy and can worsen their condition.

However, Hesse-Biber et al. (2006) explains the similar effects the media can have on consumers who are not necessarily suffering from all-out eating disorders:

In striving to attain a cultural mandate of thinness, some young women engage in rigid exercise routines, calorie restriction, chronic dieting, bingeing and purging, and the use of laxatives and diuretics to control their weight. However, they do not manifest the full range of psychological traits usually associated with clinical cases of an eating disorder – i.e. interpersonal distrust and perfectionism; they mimic anorexia and bulimia without the underlying psychological profiles. (p.211)

Because of the potentially devastating effects magazine advertisements could then have on the self-image, and therefore health, of consumers, it is important to ascertain whether the current state of advertising in magazines directed toward women reflects a societal expectation of an ideal body type.

*Research Question One: Does women's magazine advertising suggest specific body ideals to women, minorities, and teens?*

## **Stereotypes and Social Roles**

Unfortunately, the gender and racial stereotypes that appear to be prevalent in today's advertising are neither realistic nor flattering. For example, according to Kilbourne (2000, 07:26), "Women of color are often literally shown as animals, dressed in leopard skins and animal prints." In addition, advertising gives adolescent women the message that they shouldn't take up too much space; that they shouldn't be too powerful (Kilbourne, 2000). Frequent depictions in advertisements of women in submissive poses, subordinate careers, or being objectified send a message to female consumers about what society expects of them.

Unfortunately, this message is first delivered at a very young age. Children's television and advertising toward and about children frequently depict boys and girls in stereotypical gender roles (Brown, 1998; Barner, 1999). In fact, according to Kilbourne (2000), all of the ads in the March 1999 issues of two progressive parenting magazines showed active boys and passive girls. The ads in question featured boys being outgoing and "tough" while girls were depicted playing with makeup, trying on clothing, being shy, or practicing their smile.

Gorman's (2005) content analysis of *Seventeen* magazine found that traditional displays and stereotypes of femininity (submission, domestication, sexuality, etc.) continue to be produced in magazine ads targeted at teen girls, with female subordination being the most prevalent stereotype displayed. In addition, it showed that ads continue to promote the stereotypical definitions of femininity that have been observed in adult women's magazines for years, displaying them as subordinate and sexualized.

The ads in Kilbourne's (2000) documentary typically showed boys as taller and looking down at the girls unless race enters the picture, in which case roles were reversed. A white girl would look down at a black boy, etc. (Kilbourne, 2000). The indication with these depictions is that minorities are expected to be submissive.

A content analysis by Sengupta (2006) found similar stereotypes in magazine advertisements. Three teen fashion magazines were analyzed for depictions of White, Black, South Asian, and East Asian women. Asian women were largely under-represented in the sample and were typically found in background roles, as opposed to being featured as the main model in the advertisement. A significant overrepresentation of White women in advertisements for beauty products and an under-representation (or nonexistent) of Black and Asian models in these was also found, which could be a signifier for the potential of a “White” beauty ideal. Black women were depicted the most often in clothing advertisements and tended to conform to the cultural stereotype of being aggressive and hypersexual. Asian women were significantly over-represented in advertisements for technology products.

Coltrane and Messineo’s (2000) content analysis of television commercials from the mid-1990s found that Asian and Hispanic women were more likely to be pictured in a childlike state or as children, suggesting a marginalized or low-power status compared to their white counterparts. It also found evidence of derogatory stereotypes of Blacks and under-representation of Asians and Hispanics. In addition, it found that white women were found in domestic scenes more often than any other occupation and that minorities were excluded, for the most part, from these domestic depictions.

Previous research has, for the most part, examined race mostly in terms of representation in advertisements. In addition, the focus has been on determining whether women are portrayed as dominant/submissive OR in specific occupational roles. Further research needs to examine the existence of all of these attributes in advertisements so they can be put into context.

*Research Question Two: Does women’s magazine advertising suggest expectations of specific social roles for women, minorities, and teens?*

## **Sexuality and Violence**

Media effects on societal expectations are not only limited to body image, however. Cultivation theory suggests that any societal norms displayed prominently in mass media messages can distort consumer's perceptions of reality and, in turn, promote behavior to adapt to those norms. Many of the themes present in popular magazines and television shows, for example, are sexual in nature and the content of these media include suggested standards for sexual activity that can influence sexual decision making in viewers, especially in younger viewers whose ideas of societal norms are still being formed, which makes media messages much more influential to them than older viewers. According to Gorman (2005), teens are particularly vulnerable to the powerful cultural influence of advertising because they are at the identity-forming stage in life.

Adolescents seek out magazines for answers and guidance during the confusing teen years and teen girls use magazine images to construct their definitions of femininity by comparing the images to themselves, others, and the ideals of their peers (Gorman, 2005).

A study by Clark et al. (2007) found that young women in particular are influenced by standards present in the media such that their expectations for sexual timing (i.e. how soon their peers engage in sexual behavior and how soon they are expected to) were affected. More specifically, the more television the women watched related to perceptions that more of their peers engaged in sexual activity on a first date, and exposure to shows with dating themes was related to earlier expectations of self-sexual timing, earlier expectations of when other women engage in sexual behavior, more permissive sexual attitudes in committed relationships, and reports of engaging in sexual activities earlier in a relationship. A study by Brown et al. (2006) found that one of the strongest predictors of risk for early sexual intercourse was the perception that the individual's peers were having sex.

The results of previous studies have indicated that reality shows do not have a different effect than non-reality based shows, but research by Clark et al. (2007) suggests that:

The use of ordinary people instead of actors signifies a major difference that could affect viewers' perception of content realism and, in turn, the beliefs and attitudes cultivated about sexual behavior. Indeed, though reality programs are only considered to be 'moderately real,' they still appear to be perceived by viewers as more realistic than fictional programs. (p. 7)

As Kilbourne (2000, 25:50) states, however, "The problem isn't sex, it's the trivialization of sex." In *Killing Us Softly 3*, examples of ads showed women in violent sexual situations. Those situations were portrayed as comical or seductive, trivializing violence, specifically sexual violence, toward women and pushing it into a state of acceptability. The presence of these images in women's magazines, showing women in submissive states, perpetuates this idea by telling women not to stand out or fight back. One of the larger concerns with this is that as teens struggle to gain power in their lives, sexualized female depictions perpetuate the idea that all women are powerless to control their lives without relying on their sexuality (Gorman, 2005).

Numerous studies have found a relationship between men's viewing of sexual imagery and desensitization toward and acceptance of sexual violence. One such study, by Krafska et al. (1997) found that the effects could be similar with women's perceptions of sexual violence. In fact, women who were exposed to sexual material exhibited emotional desensitization and showed relatively lower levels of concern for a victim of sexual assault. The implications, then, are that advertisements that depict women as sexualized and submissive could cause women to become desensitized to and accepting of sexual violence toward their peers and themselves.

Grown women are also frequently infantilized in advertisements in many ways through fashion and body image (Kilbourne, 2000). Children hold subordinate positions in society, and positioning women as childlike encourages valuing them with the same status (Goffman, 1976).

A content analysis by Nelson and Paek (2005) studied issues of *Cosmopolitan* magazine from seven different countries for differences in sexual imagery. They found a significant difference in the amount of sexual imagery in each of the countries, reflecting the societal acceptance of same. There were implications that the cultural standards are not reflected in the depictions of models sharing the ethnicity of one country for the magazines in another.

Another content analysis, by Zhou and Chen (1997), which examined advertisements in Canadian mainstream magazines, found that women were depicted mainly as sex objects and were rarely depicted in any kind of occupation, domestic or otherwise.

Previous research has focused on women's portrayals as sex objects in a stereotypical sense. However, by looking at submissive characteristics as well as sexuality, a richer understanding of our culture's expectation of women can be gleaned. Additionally, given the potential for increased underage sexual activity, which can lead to unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and unnecessarily high expectations from peers, as well as the potential for an increased acceptance of sexual violence toward women and children, it is important to establish whether magazines aimed at young women display an acceptance of or push toward obvious sexual displays and sexual behavior.

*Research Question Three: Do women's and teen's magazine advertising glorify overt sexuality and sexual behavior?*



## CHAPTER 3 - Method

### Selection of Advertisements

A content analysis of the advertisements from twelve issues of six magazines spanning five years (2003-2007), for a total of seventy-two magazines, was used as the sample for this study. Each model within the advertisements was coded separately, up to six models per ad, for a total of 4,107 models coded in 2,686 advertisements. The magazines were chosen based on the Audit Bureau of Circulation's (ABC) (2008) estimates of the total paid and non-paid circulation for magazines in the "Women's," "Fashion, Beauty and Grooming" categories. The magazines were then checked against a Mediamark Research & Intelligence report by Megan Pechin (2008), a Senior Media Planner working at the Bernstein-Rein Advertising agency. Due to unavailability of materials, a magazine was also chosen from the "Home Service and Home" category, though it was checked against the MRI report for readership statistics. The report listed projections of magazine readership for women aged eighteen to twenty-nine and women thirty and over. The magazine chosen from the "Women's" category was: *Ladies Home Journal* which was listed with the ABC (2008) as having the fourth -highest total paid and analyzed non-paid circulation in 2007. The MRI report from Pechin (2008) projected that women aged thirty and over were 213 times more likely to read *Ladies Home Journal* than other adults, that this demographic makes up 87.15 percent of the magazine's total readership, and 13.16 percent of this demographic reads this magazine. In the "Home Service and Home" category, *Better Homes and Gardens* was listed as having the second-highest total paid and analyzed non-paid circulation in 2007. This magazine was substituted as the second magazine for the women's category, which

was supported by statistics from the MRI report from Pechin (2008), which projected that women aged thirty and over were 171 times more likely than other adults to read *Better Homes and Gardens*, that 30.01 percent of this demographic reads this magazine, and that this demographic makes up 69.77 percent of this magazine's total readership.

In the "Teen" category, the magazine chosen was *Cosmo Girl*, which is listed with the ABC as having the highest total paid and analyzed non-paid circulation in 2007. *Seventeen* was substituted from the "Women's" category as the second "Teen" magazine, due to its popularity among teen readers and its inclusion in the Hearst "Teen" Network (of Hearst Publishing) which includes *Seventeen*, *Cosmo Girl*, and *Teen Mag*, to name a few (*Seventeen*, 2008). In addition to its teen readership, it is listed as having the ninth-highest total paid and analyzed non-paid circulation for 2007 in the "Women's" category. The MRI report also projected that women aged eighteen to twenty-nine were 435 times more likely than other adults to read *Seventeen*, that 15.39 percent of this demographic reads *Seventeen*, and that this demographic makes up 47.79 percent of the magazine's total readership. In the "Fashion, Beauty, and Grooming" category, the magazines chosen were: *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, which were listed with the ABC (2008) as having the first- and fourth-highest total paid and analyzed non-paid circulation in 2007, respectively. The MRI report from Pechin (2008) projected that women aged eighteen to twenty-nine were 288 times more likely to read *Vogue* than other adults, that this demographic makes up 31.57 percent of the magazine's total readership, and 13.81 percent of this demographic reads this magazine. In addition, women aged thirty and over were 188 times more likely than other adults to read *Vogue*, that 6.63 percent of this demographic reads this magazine, and that this demographic makes up 56.39 percent of the magazine's total readership. The MRI report projected that women aged eighteen to twenty-nine were 195 times more likely to read *Harper's*

*Bazaar* than other adults, that this demographic makes up 21.36 percent of the magazine's total readership, and 2.62 percent of this demographic reads this magazine. In addition, the report projected that women aged thirty and over were 166 times more likely to read *Harper's Bazaar* than other adults, that this demographic makes up 67.96 percent of the magazine's total readership and 2.24 percent of this demographic reads this magazine.

All advertisements that were at least full-page featuring at least one female were selected for the study. Multiple occurrences of the same advertisements were coded to simulate repetition of viewing these ads, which can increase the effects suggested by Cultivation Theory and Social Comparison Theory.. A probability sample using the constructed year sampling method (Lacy et al., 1998) was used to randomly select one issue from each month for each magazine across the five-year sampling frame. Constructed time period samples, which are a form of stratified samples, have been shown to be statistically more efficient than simple random samples (Lacy et al., 1998). See Appendix A for sampled months and years.

Models in the ads were the unit of analysis, rather than the ads themselves, to allow specific coding of each model's relationship within the ad, rather than the general environment the models appeared in.

## **Coding**

Two graduate students from a Midwestern university coded the advertisements. Coders were given definitions of the variables being tested (See Appendix B) and shown examples of advertisements not in the sample group to gain a clear understanding of what characteristics to look for in coding. Coders were trained at the same time over the course of two evening sessions for a total of three hours of training. Sample advertisements were discussed with the coders and

discrepancies between the coders were addressed by having them reread the definitions of coding variables and initiating further discussions about the ads to clear up any confusion.

In addition to general information about the issue of magazine being coded, advertisements were coded based on ten variables. These variables were: product type, race of model, beauty type, body type, role in advertisement, relationship to other models, confidence of model, portrayed occupation of model, and number of male and female models in the advertisement. Occurrence of male models was coded in order to establish potential gender and social role stereotypes present. However, only female models were coded according to the other variables. See Appendix C for the coding sheet.

The variables of product type, beauty type, role in advertisement, and relationship to other models were based upon and adapted from variables used by Sengupta (2006). In that study, product types were divided into three categories: beauty, clothing, and technology. For the purposes of this study, additional categories were added based on and adapted from typical consumer product categories: hygiene, consumables, services, prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, stores, home improvement, and public service announcements. The definitions were simplified to reduce potential confusion for coders. The categories in Sengupta's (2006) study did not include definitions to support products and services that fit into these additional categories, which would have eliminated a significant number of ads from this study. In addition to this, fragrances were designated to the beauty category, as they had not been defined in Sengupta's study. The hygiene category included all personal hygiene and skin care products. The consumables category included all foods, beverages, and alcohol. The services category was added to cover all companies that provide services, rather than products, such as insurance and exterminators. The prescription drugs category included all products that require a prescription to

purchase. The over-the-counter drug category included all consumable drugs that do not require a prescription to purchase. The stores category included all advertisements that were for stores, rather than products. The home improvement category was added to include all cleaning products and products designed for home improvement, such as paint, furnishings, fixtures, etc. Finally, the public service announcement category was added to cover advertisements that are not selling products, rather promoting change, such as the American Library Association's "Read" campaign and any anti-drug or anti-smoking campaigns, to name a few. Shampoo was included with other hair care products in the beauty category. In Sengupta's study, beauty types were divided into Classic/Feminine, Casual/Sporty, Sensual/Sexy, and Trendy. No definition was provided for the Sensual/Sexy category, so one was developed for this study based on socially accepted sexual signifiers (i.e. lingerie, revealed cleavage, etc.). Role in advertisement defined the model's importance within the advertisement and was coded as either major, minor, or background. A model was determined as having a major role in the advertisement if she appeared to be important to the theme of the advertisement, was holding or interacting with the product, or was shown in the foreground of the advertisement. A minor role consisted of a model being easily noticed in the advertisement with no significant relationship to the theme or product. A model was described as having a background role in the advertisement if she had little to nothing to do with the theme or product and/or appeared in a crowd or was difficult to find. Relationship to other models related to whether the model interacted with fellow models or was alone. This was coded as either a female/female, female/male, or impersonal interaction. When only one model appeared in an advertisement, she was coded as alone. Models were numbered in the advertisements and coded, according to this number to distinguish multiple models in advertisements. Role and relationship variables were unchanged from Sengupta's study.

The body type variable was adapted from a study by Law and Labre (2002) which analyzed men's images based on specific muscle mass to body fat ratios. Photographs were used to show the different body types. Similarly, photographs depicting the different body types in this study were used to reduce ambiguity for coders. The body types from the Law and Labre study were modified to reflect female images. Where Law and Labre studied muscle mass and body fat levels, this study examined the female body in terms of breast and hip size in relation to body fat. Breast and hip size were referred to as curves. Nine categories consisting of combinations of low, medium, and high body fat with no curves, slightly curvy, and very curvy were used to code models. A tenth category, "not apparent," was added to cover advertisements that did not feature enough of the model to discern body type. See Appendix D for visual representations of body types.

Confidence of model was coded as dominant, submissive, or mixed, adapted from a study by Gorman (2005). Gorman's (2005) study found that many ads displayed mixed messages by having a model looking directly into the camera, a dominant trait, while exhibiting subordination with her body posture. Pre-testing indicated that the omission of a "mixed" category created confusion when models displayed clear dominant traits (looking directly into the camera) and submissive traits (covering a part of the face with a hand). In order to draw clearer boundaries between the categories, models were only counted as dominant if they displayed no submissive traits, only counted as submissive if they displayed no dominant traits, and counted as mixed if they displayed both. The body positions indicating sexual and confidence characteristics in Gorman's (2005) study were based on and adapted from those defined in Goffman's (1979) study on sexuality in advertisements.

The occupation variable was adapted slightly from a Zhou and Chen (1997) study. Occupation was divided into domestic, and high-, middle-, and low-level non-domestic categories. A fourth category, “not apparent,” was added when pre-testing showed a lack of specific occupation in some of the fashion advertisements. In addition to this, “clerical” as an occupation was moved into the middle-level non-domestic category as it was found to be difficult to distinguish from a generic non-management white-collar occupation.

Race was defined as simply as possible to minimize ambiguity. Race was coded as White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Other. Though this may have minimized some minority representation in coding, these four races account for the most commonly occurring racial representation of models in the magazines chosen. Characteristics of race were limited to skin color, hair color, and eye shape, as these were thought to be the most easily distinguishable visual characteristics. In addition, representation of racial minority was not the direct purpose of this category. Rather, discovering potential stereotypes or implied social roles of minorities was the aim, so models that may have been grouped into the “Other” category still served the objective, even if they were not specifically named as a race.

Advertisements for movies, magazines, and television shows were not coded because these ads typically feature screenshots or pictures designed to portray the theme of the media they are selling. The models in these ads are not portrayed in the same context as the models in other consumer product advertisements. These ads made up less than 10 percent of the sample and were omitted to narrow the focus of the data collection to advertisements with models posed specifically to sell a product, rather than entertainment.

Reliability was tested at the beginning of the coding process using duplicate coding of 476 advertisements, and again toward the end of the coding process using duplicate coding of 329

advertisements. Coder 1 was responsible for 56.1 percent of the models, leaving 43.9 percent to Coder 2. Intercoder reliabilities were calculated using Krippendorff's alpha, an intercoder reliability formula that corrects for agreement expected by chance in variables with differing numbers of categories. Krippendorff's alpha coefficients greater than .75 are typically considered to be reliable in content analyses. As shown in Table 1.1, an initial average reliability of .89 was recorded, with a high of .97 in the Number of Male Models variable and a low of .74 in the Body Type variable. The second test revealed an average reliability of .92, with a high of .98 in the Number of Female Models variable and a low of .83 in the Confidence variable. The Low Body Fat/No Curves and Low Body Fat/Slightly Curvy categories within the Body Type variable were collapsed because of their similarities to increase reliability. Where there were disagreements between coders, the coding sheet which was determined by the author to be the better application of the definitions to the advertisement was used in the data set.



**Table 1.1 Intercoder Reliability**

N = 476

N = 329

	<b>Initial Reliability</b>	<b>Final Reliability</b>	<b>Average</b>
<i>Product Type</i>	.89, $\Sigma a = 435$ , $\Sigma ef = 106.53$	.88, $\Sigma a = 298$ , $\Sigma ef = 67.12$	.89
<i># of Female Models</i>	.96, $\Sigma a = 480$ , $\Sigma ef = 204.26$	.98, $\Sigma a = 326$ , $\Sigma ef = 184.63$	.97
<i># of Male Models</i>	.97, $\Sigma a = 473$ , $\Sigma ef = 373.27$	.97, $\Sigma a = 326$ , $\Sigma ef = 302.84$	.97
<i>Race of Model</i>	.93, $\Sigma a = 466$ , $\Sigma ef = 342.57$	.92, $\Sigma a = 320$ , $\Sigma ef = 209.42$	.93
<i>Beauty Type</i>	.87, $\Sigma a = 436$ , $\Sigma ef = 176.50$	.97, $\Sigma a = 322$ , $\Sigma ef = 99.20$	.92
<i>Body Type</i>	.74, $\Sigma a = 427$ , $\Sigma ef = 285.01$	.91, $\Sigma a = 307$ , $\Sigma ef = 84.75$	.83
<i>Role in Advertisement</i>	.96, $\Sigma a = 472$ , $\Sigma ef = 383.34$	.96, $\Sigma a = 327$ , $\Sigma ef = 383.34$	.96
<i>Relationship</i>	.93, $\Sigma a = 457$ , $\Sigma ef = 192.59$	.90, $\Sigma a = 314$ , $\Sigma ef = 176.31$	.92
<i>Confidence</i>	.81, $\Sigma a = 472$ , $\Sigma ef = 383.34$	.83, $\Sigma a = 309$ , $\Sigma ef = 212.62$	.82
<i>Occupation</i>	.89, $\Sigma a = 469$ , $\Sigma ef = 421.32$	.93, $\Sigma a = 324$ , $\Sigma ef = 257.15$	.91
<b>Average</b>	.81	.93	.87

$\Sigma a$  = Sum of Diagonals

$\Sigma ef$  = Sum of Expected Frequencies

## CHAPTER 4 - Results

Frequency and descriptive tests were run on the data for the initial variables. Low variance between variable categories was apparent on most of the categories, necessitating recoding of original frequency tables. This was done to ensure validity in the statistical tests being applied to the variables.

The Product Type variable was recoded into three categories: Beauty and Hygiene, Clothing/Fashion, and Other. The Beauty and Hygiene category contained the original categories of Beauty products and Hygiene products. The Clothing/Fashion category did not change. The Other category included all ads that were coded into Technology, Stores, Consumables, Home Improvement, Services, Prescription Drugs, Over the Counter Drugs, and Public Service Announcements. The Number of Female Models and Number of Male Models variables were collapsed into One, Two, Three, and Four or More for female models and Zero, One, and Two or More for male models. (The highest number of females present in any ad coded was eighteen and the highest number of males present in any ad coded was ten.) The Race variable was recoded into White, Black, and Other categories. The Other category included the previous categories of Hispanic, Asian, and Other. The Beauty Type variable was recoded into three categories: Classic/Feminine, Casual/Sporty, and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy. The Body Type variable was recoded into four categories: Low Body Fat/No Curves & Slightly Curvy, Low Body Fat/Very Curvy, Medium and High Body Fat (all), and Not Apparent. The Role in Advertisement variable was recoded into two categories: Major and Minor/Background. Finally, the Occupation variable was recoded into two categories: Apparent and Not Apparent.

As shown in Table 2.1, 64.9 percent of the advertisements had only one model to code, 17.7 percent had two models to code, and 17.4 percent had between three and six models to code. A total of 4,107 models were coded in a total of 2,686 advertisements. Vogue had the highest number of models coded, at 32.1 percent, and Ladies Home Journal had the least number of models coded, at 9.4 percent. September and March issues of magazines contained more models to code, at 18.9 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively, whereas January issues of magazines contained the least number of models to code, at 2.6 percent. This was not surprising as the September and March issues of the Fashion, Beauty, and Grooming magazines were the Fall and Spring Fashion Preview issues, which typically contain more advertising than other issues.

Prior to recoding of variables, frequencies and descriptive statistics were run on all variables. See Tables 2.1 and 2.2, respectively, for complete listings of these. Within the Product Type variable, the Clothing/Fashion category was coded most frequently, accounting for 47.6 percent of the sample. The category coded least frequently was Public Service Announcements, which accounted for only 1.3 percent of the sample. For Number of Female Models, 63.1 percent of the models coded were featured by themselves and 0.1 percent of the models were coded as part of a group of eighteen women, which was the highest quantity of female models in any advertisement coded. For Number of Male models, 82.2 percent of the female models coded were not featured in the presence of a male model, 0.5 percent were coded with eight male models, and only one female model (0.0 percent) was coded with ten male models. Within the Race variable, 88.1 percent of the models were coded as White, 1.3 percent were coded as Hispanic, and 0.1 percent were coded as Other races. For Beauty Type, 47.1 percent of the models were coded in the Classic/Feminine category and only 4.7 percent were coded as Trendy. Within the Body Type category, 58.8 percent of the models fell into the Low Body Fat/No Curves and Slightly Curvy

category, and only 0.1 percent fell into each of the High Body Fat/No Curves and High Body Fat/Slightly Curvy categories. The models feature in a major role in the advertisement made up 91.3 percent of the sample and only 1.5 percent were featured in a Background role. Coders found that 96.6 percent of the models were not featured in any occupation and only 0.2 percent were shown in Middle-Level Non-Domestic occupations. Most of the models, 61.1 percent, were featured alone in the advertisements and 18.2 percent were featured interacting with other women, with 12.3 percent interacting with men. Of the 4,107 models coded, 49.1 percent displayed submissive characteristics and 17.9 percent displayed both dominant and submissive characteristics.

**Table 2.1 Original Frequencies**

N = 4107		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Product Type</b>	Beauty	837	20.4%
		Hygiene	294	7.2%
		Clothing/Fashion	1954	47.6%
		Technology	80	1.9%
		Stores	216	5.3%
		Consumables	225	5.5%
		Home Improvement	124	3.0%
		Services	99	2.4%
		Rx Drugs	136	3.3%
		OTC Drugs	90	2.2%
		PSAs	52	1.3%
	<b>Race</b>	White	3617	88.1%
		Hispanic	52	1.3%
		Black	350	8.5%
		Asian	82	2.0%
		Other	6	0.1%
	<b>Body Type</b>	LBF/NC&SC	1935	11.8%
		LBF/VC	360	35.2%
		MBF/NC	53	8.8%
		MBF/SC	164	1.3%
		MBF/VC	26	4.0%
		HBF/NC	4	0.6%
		HBF/SC	4	0.1%
		HBF/VC	7	0.1%
		Not Apparent	1557	0.2%
	<b>Number of Female Models</b>	1	2593	63.1%
		2	549	13.4%
		3	459	11.2%
		4	238	5.8%
		5	103	2.5%
		6	69	1.7%
		7	28	0.7%
		8	12	0.3%
		9	37	0.9%
		10	6	0.1%
		11	6	0.1%
		14	1	0.0%
		18	6	0.1%
		<b>Number of Male Models</b>	0	3377
	1		400	9.7%
	2+		132	3.2%
3	88		2.1%	
4	37		0.9%	
5	24		0.6%	
6	20		0.5%	
7	6		0.1%	
8	22		0.5%	
10	1		0.0%	

N = 4107		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Beauty Type</b>	Classic/Feminine	1933	47.1%
		Casual/Sporty	1620	39.4%
		Sensual/Sexy	363	8.8%
		Trendy	191	4.7%
	<b>Occupation</b>	Domestic	87	2.1%
		High-Lev. Non-Domestic	14	0.3%
		Mid-Lev. Non-Domestic	9	0.2%
		Low Lev. Non-Domestic	28	0.7%
		Not Apparent	3969	96.6%
	<b>Role in Ad</b>	Major	3749	91.3%
		Minor	296	7.2%
		Background	62	1.5%
	<b>Relationship</b>	Female/Female	746	18.2%
		Female/Male	507	12.3%
		Alone	2511	61.1%
		Impersonal	343	8.4%
	<b>Confidence</b>	Dominant	1353	32.9%
		Submissive	2018	49.1%
		Mixed	736	17.9%
	<b>Coders</b>	Coder 1	2306	56.1%
		Coder 2	1801	43.9%
	<b>Magazines</b>	Better Homes and Gardens	498	12.1%
		Ladies Home Journal	388	9.4%
		Vogue	1317	32.1%
		Harper's Bazaar	758	18.5%
		Seventeen	600	14.6%
		Cosmo Girl	546	13.3%
	<b>Models</b>	A	2666	64.9%
		B	725	17.7%
		C	396	9.6%
		D	185	4.5%
		E	86	2.1%
		F	49	1.2%
	<b>Months</b>	January	106	2.6%
		February	264	6.4%
		March	547	13.3%
		April	266	6.5%
		May	244	5.9%
		June	235	5.7%
		July	218	5.3%
August		291	7.1%	
September		778	18.9%	
October		440	10.7%	
November		413	10.1%	
December		305	7.4%	

**Table 2.2 Original Descriptive Statistics**

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>	<u>Variance</u>
<i>Coder</i>	1.00	2.00	1.44	0.50	0.25
<i>Model</i>	1.00	6.00	1.65	1.09	1.18
<i>Magazine</i>	1.00	6.00	3.35	1.72	2.97
<i>Month</i>	1.00	12.00	7.17	3.28	10.78
<i>Product Type</i>	1.00	11.00	3.50	2.35	5.51
<i>NumberFemale</i>	1.00	18.00	1.90	1.67	2.80
<i>NumberMale</i>	0.00	10.00	0.38	1.09	1.18
<i>Race</i>	1.00	5.00	1.25	0.70	0.50
<i>BeautyType</i>	1.00	4.00	1.71	0.81	0.66
<i>BodyType</i>	1.00	10.00	5.20	3.86	14.91
<i>Role in Ad</i>	1.00	3.00	1.10	0.35	0.12
<i>Relationship</i>	1.00	4.00	2.60	0.88	0.77
<i>Confidence</i>	1.00	3.00	1.85	0.70	0.49
<i>Occupation</i>	1.00	5.00	4.89	0.61	0.37

Coder: 1 = Coder 1, 2 = Coder 2  
 Model: 1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C, 4 = D, 5 = E, 6 = F  
 Magazine: 1 = Better Homes & Gardens, 2 = Vogue, 3 = Seventeen,  
 4 = Ladies Home Journal, 5 = Cosmo Girl, 6 = Harper's Bazaar  
 Month: 1 = Jan, 2 = Feb, 3 = March, 4 = April, 5 = May, 6 = June, 7 = July,  
 8 = Aug, 9 = Sept, 10 = Oct, 11 = Nov, 12 = Dec  
 Product Type: 1 = Beauty, 2 = Hygiene, 3 = Clothing/Fashion, 4 = Technology,  
 5 = Stores, 6 = Consumables, 7 = Home Improvement, 8 = Services,  
 9 = Rx Drugs, 10 = OTC Drugs, 11 = Public Service Announcements  
 Race: 1 = White, 2 = Hispanic, 3 = Black, 4 = Asian, 5 = Other  
 Beauty Type: 1 = Classic/Feminine, 2 = Casual/Sporty, 3 = Sensual/Sexy, 4 = Trendy  
 Body Type: 1 = LBF/NC, 2 = LBF/SC, 3 = LBF/VC, 4 = MBF/NC, 5 = MBF/SC,  
 6 = MBF/VC, 7 = HBF/NC, 8 = HBF/SC, 9 = HBF/VC,  
 10 = Not Apparent  
 Role in Ad: 1 = Major, 2 = Minor, 3 = Background  
 Relationship: 1 = Female/Female, 2 = Female/Male, 3 = Alone, 4 = Impersonal  
 Confidence: 1 = Dominant, 2 = Submissive, 3 = Mixed  
 Occupation: 1 = Domestic, 2 = High-Lev Non-Domestic, 3 = Mid-Lev Non-Domestic,  
 4 = Low-Lev Non-Domestic, 5 = Not Apparent

After recoding of variables, frequencies and descriptive statistics were run again, as shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, respectively. Within the Product Type variable, the Clothing/Fashion category was unchanged by recoding, Beauty/Hygiene accounted for 27.5 percent of the sample, and 24.9 percent of the sample fell into the Other category. The Number of Female Models variable did not change in regard to the category coded most frequently, but only 12.3 percent of the total sample featured a model as part of a group of four or more women. The Number of Male models variable was unchanged in regards to the category coded most frequently, but only eight percent of the female models were featured with two or more men. Within the Race variable, the number of White models was unchanged by recoding, and only 3.4 percent fell into the Other category. Recoding of the Beauty Type variable did not change the Classic/Feminine category, but only 13.5 percent fell into the new Sensual/Sexy/Trendy category. Within Body Type, the Low Body Fat/No Curves & Slightly Curvy category remained unchanged, but only 6.3 percent of the models coded fell into the Medium and High Body Fat category. The same 91.3 percent of the models were portrayed in a Major role in the advertisements and only 8.7 percent were featured in a Minor/Background role. Only 3.4 percent of the models were portrayed in any occupational roles that were apparent to the coders.



**Table 3.1 Recoded Frequencies**

N = 4107		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Product Type</b>	Beauty/Hygiene	1131	27.5%
		Clothing/Fashion	1954	47.6%
		Other	1022	24.9%
	<b>Race</b>	White	3617	88.1%
		Black	350	8.5%
		Other	140	3.4%
	<b>Body Type</b>	LBF/NC&SC	1932	47%
		LBF/VC	360	8.8%
		MBF/HBF	258	6.3%
		Not Apparent	1557	37.9%
	<b>Number of Female Models</b>	1	2593	63.1%
		2	549	13.4%
		3	459	11.2%
		4+	506	12.3%
	<b>Number of Male Models</b>	0	3377	82.2%
		1	400	9.7%
		2+	330	8.0%
	<b>Beauty Type</b>	Classic/Feminine	1933	47.1%
		Casual/Sporty	1620	39.4%
		Sensual/Sexy/Trendy	554	13.5%
	<b>Occupation</b>	Apparent	138	3.4%
		Not Apparent	3969	96.6%
	<b>Role in Ad</b>	Major	3749	91.3%
		Minor/Background	358	8.7%
	<b>Relationship</b>	Female/Female	746	18.2%
		Female/Male	507	12.3%
		Alone	2511	61.1%
		Impersonal	343	8.4%
	<b>Confidence</b>	Dominant	1353	32.9%
		Submissive	2018	49.1%
Mixed		736	17.9%	

**Table 3.2 Recoded Descriptive Statistics**

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>	<u>Variance</u>
<i>Product Type</i>	1.00	3.00	1.97	0.72	0.52
<i>NumberFemale</i>	1.00	4.00	1.73	1.08	1.16
<i>NumberMale</i>	0.00	2.00	0.26	0.59	0.35
<i>Race</i>	1.00	3.00	1.15	0.45	0.20
<i>BeautyType</i>	1.00	3.00	1.66	0.70	0.49
<i>BodyType</i>	1.00	4.00	2.35	1.39	1.93
<i>Role</i>	1.00	2.00	1.09	0.28	0.08
<i>Occupation</i>	1.00	2.00	1.97	0.18	0.32
<i>Relationship</i>	1.00	4.00	2.60	0.88	0.78
<i>Confidence</i>	1.00	3.00	1.85	0.70	0.49

Product Type: 1 = Beauty/Hygiene, 2 = Clothing/Fashion, 3 = Other  
 NumberFemale: 1 = 1, 2 = 2, 3 = 3, 4 = 4+  
 NumberMale: 0 = 0, 1 = 1, 2 = 2+  
 Race: 1 = White, 2 = Black, 2 = Other  
 Beauty Type: 1 = Classic/Feminine, 2 = Casual/Sporty, 3 = Sensual/Sexy/Trendy  
 Body Type: 1 = LBF/NC&SC, 2 = LBF/VC, 3 = MBF/HBF  
 Role: 1 = Major, 2 = Minor/Background  
 Occupation: 1 = Apparent, 2 = Not Apparent  
 Relationship: 1 = Female/Female, 2 = Female/Male, 3 = Alone, 4 = Impersonal  
 Confidence: 1 = Dominant, 2 = Submissive, 3 = Mixed

## **Ideal Body Types**

Research Question One asked whether the advertisements in women's magazines suggest specific body ideals for women in general, minority women, and teens. To test this, crosstabulation descriptive tests were run on the Race and Body Type variables, as shown in Table 4.1. For White females, more models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat/No Curves & Slightly Curvy (LBF/NC&SC) category, and fewer models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat/Very Curvy (LBF/VC) and Medium & High Body Fat (MBF/HBF) categories. For Black females, fewer models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat/No Curves & Slightly Curvy category, and more models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat/Very Curvy and Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat categories. For women in the Other category, fewer models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat/No Curves & Slightly Curvy and Low Body Fat/Very Curvy categories, and more models than expected fell into the Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat category. The relationship between Race and Body Type was significant  $\chi^2_{(6)} = 96.60, p < .001$ .

**Table 4.1 Race and Body Type**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>BODY TYPE</b>				
		<b>LBF/NC&amp;SC</b>	<b>LBF/VC</b>	<b>MBF/HBF</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<i>White</i>	<i>Count</i>	1761	280	202	1374
	<i>Percent</i>	48.7%	7.7%	5.6%	38%
<i>Black</i>	<i>Count</i>	124	65	46	115
	<i>Percent</i>	35.4%	18.6%	13.1%	32.9%
<i>Other</i>	<i>Count</i>	47	15	10	68
	<i>Percent</i>	33.6%	10.7%	7.1%	48.6%

To further test the research question, crosstabulation descriptive tests were also run on the Race and Beauty Type categories, as shown in Table 4.2. For White females, more models than expected fell into the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories, and fewer models than expected fell into the Casual/Sporty category. For Black females, fewer models than expected fell into the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories, and more models than expected fell into the Casual/Sporty category. For females in the Other category, fewer models than expected fell into all three categories. Relationship between Race and Beauty Type was significant  $\chi^2_{(4)} = 52.26, p = .001$ .

**Table 4.2 Race and Beauty Type**

		<b>BEAUTY TYPE</b>			
		<b><u>Classic/Feminine</u></b>	<b><u>Casual/Sporty</u></b>	<b><u>Sensual/Sexy/Trendy</u></b>	
<b>RACE</b>	<b>White</b>	<i>Count</i>	1743	1358	516
		<i>Percent</i>	48.2%	37.5%	14.3%
	<b>Black</b>	<i>Count</i>	128	195	27
		<i>Percent</i>	36.6%	56.7%	7.7%
	<b>Other</b>	<i>Count</i>	62	67	11
		<i>Percent</i>	44.3%	47.9%	7.9%
$\chi^2_{(4)} = 52.26, p = .001$					

Expected frequencies were still too low in some of the Body Type variable categories to perform a valid chi-square test against Magazines, so the Body Type variable was recoded again for this analysis into three categories: Low Body Fat, Medium and High Body Fat (which included the Low Body Fat/Very Curvy category), and Not Apparent. Crosstabulation descriptives were run against the recoded Body Type variable and Magazines, as shown in Table 4.3.

Within Better Homes and Gardens, fewer models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat category, and more models than expected fell into the Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat category. Within Vogue, more models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat category, and fewer models than expected fell into the Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat category. Within Seventeen, more models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat category, and fewer models than expected fell into the Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat category. Within Ladies Home Journal, fewer models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat category, and more models than expected fell into the Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat category. Within Cosmo Girl, more models than expected fell into both categories. Within Harper's Bazaar, more models than expected fell into the Low Body Fat category, and fewer models than expected fell into the Medium Body Fat/High Body Fat category. The relationship between Body Type and Magazine was significant  $\chi^2_{(10)} = 318.3, p < .001$ .

**Table 4.3 Body Type and Magazine**

	<b>BODY TYPE</b>				
		<u><b>LBF/NC&amp;SC</b></u>	<u><b>MBF/HBF</b></u>	<u><b>N/A</b></u>	
<b>MAGAZINE</b>	<i><b>Better Homes and Gardens</b></i>	<i>Count</i>	95	112	291
		<i>Percent</i>	19.1%	22.5%	58.4%
	<i><b>Ladies Home Journal</b></i>	<i>Count</i>	134	26	221
		<i>Percent</i>	34.5%	21.4%	44.1%
	<i><b>Vogue</b></i>	<i>Count</i>	624	191	502
		<i>Percent</i>	47.4%	14.5%	38.1%
	<i><b>Harper's Bazaar</b></i>	<i>Count</i>	454	96	208
		<i>Percent</i>	59.9%	12.7%	27.4%
	<i><b>Seventeen</b></i>	<i>Count</i>	353	26	221
		<i>Percent</i>	58.8%	4.3%	36.8%
	<i><b>Cosmo Girl</b></i>	<i>Count</i>	272	110	164
		<i>Percent</i>	49.8%	20.1%	30%
	$\chi^2_{(10)} = 318.3, p < .001$				



In Race and Body Type, results show that white females are shown more often than expected as having low body fat and no curves or slight curves. Black females are shown more often than expected as having low body fat and being very curvy or having medium or high levels of body fat and varying levels of curviness. Females in other races are shown more often than expected as having medium or high levels of body fat and varying levels of curviness. In Race and Beauty Type, white females are shown more often than expected in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories. Black females are shown more often than expected in the Casual/Sporty category. Females in other races are shown less often than expected in any of the Beauty Type categories. Magazines in the “Women’s” category showed more models than expected in the Medium and High Body Fat category. Magazines in the “Fashion, Beauty, and Grooming” and “Teen” categories showed more models than expected in the Low Body Fat category. These results indicate that white females are expected to fulfill a body ideal that requires them to have low body fat and little to no curves, and black females are expected to fulfill a body ideal that requires them attain voluptuous bodies with higher levels of body fat than white women. Other minority women appear to be expected to fulfill a body ideal that requires them to have higher levels of body fat. The distribution in the Beauty Type variable indicates that white women are considered to be the standard for classic or feminine beauty and sensual or sexy beauty, and black women and other minority women are considered to fall more into casual and sporty beauty roles.

### **Social Roles/Stereotyping**

Research Question Two asked whether the advertisements in women’s magazines suggest specific social roles for women in general, minority women, and teens. To test this, crosstabulation descriptives were run comparing the distributions of Race with Relationship

(Table 5.1), Role (Table 5.2), Occupation, Product Type (Table 5.3), and Confidence (Table 5.4). More crosstabulation descriptives were run comparing the distributions of Confidence with Number of Males (Table 5.5), and Number of Females (Table 5.6).

Within the Race and Relationship test, more White models than expected were Alone in advertisements, and fewer models than expected were represented in Female/Female relationships, Female/Male relationships, and in Impersonal relationships. For Black females, more models than expected were represented in Female/Female and Impersonal relationships, fewer models than expected were represented Alone, and approximately the same number of models as expected were represented in Female/Male relationships. For females in the Other category, more models were represented in Female/Female, Female/Male, and Impersonal relationships, and fewer models than expected were represented Alone. The relationship between Race and Relationship was significant  $\chi^2_{(6)} = 74.31, p < .001$ .

**Table 5.1 Race and Relationship**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>				
		<b><u>Female/Female</u></b>	<b><u>Female/Male</u></b>	<b><u>Alone</u></b>	<b><u>Impersonal</u></b>
	<b><i>White</i></b>	<i>Count</i>	613	444	2288
	<i>Percent</i>	16.9%	12.3%	63.3%	7.5%
<b><i>Black</i></b>	<i>Count</i>	93	43	166	48
	<i>Percent</i>	26.6%	12.3%	47.4%	13.7%
<b><i>Other</i></b>	<i>Count</i>	40	20	57	23
	<i>Percent</i>	28.6%	14.3%	40.7%	16.4%
$\chi^2_{(6)} = 74.31, p < .001$					

Within the Race and Role test, fewer White models than expected were represented in both Major and Minor/Background roles. For Black females, fewer models than expected were represented in Major roles, and more models than expected were represented in Minor/Background roles. For females in the Other category, fewer models than expected were represented in Major roles, and more models than expected were represented in Minor roles. The relationship between Race and Role in Advertisement was significant  $\chi^2_{(2)} = 7.39, p < .03$ .

**Table 5.2 Race and Role in Advertisement**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>ROLE IN AD</b>		
		<b>Major</b>	<b>Minor/Background</b>
	<b>White</b>	<i>Count</i>	3312
	<i>Percent</i>	91.6%	8.4%
<b>Black</b>	<i>Count</i>	318	32
	<i>Percent</i>	90.9%	9.1%
<b>Other</b>	<i>Count</i>	119	21
	<i>Percent</i>	85%	15%
$\chi^2_{(2)} = 7.39, p < .03$			

The relationship between Race and Occupation was not significant.

Within the Race and Product Type test, more White models than expected were represented in the Clothing/Fashion category, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Beauty/Hygiene and Other categories. For Black females, fewer models than expected were represented in the Clothing/Fashion category, and more models than expected were represented in the Beauty/Hygiene and Other categories. For females in the Other category, fewer models than expected were represented in the Clothing/Fashion category, and more models than expected were represented in the Beauty/Hygiene and Other categories. The relationship between Race and Product Type was significant  $\chi^2_{(4)} = 23.05, p < .001$ .

**Table 5.3 Race and Product Type**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>PRODUCT TYPE</b>			
		<b>Beauty/Hygiene</b>	<b>Clothing/Fashion</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>White</b>	<i>Count</i>	994	1761	862
	<i>Percent</i>	27.5%	48.7%	23.8%
<b>Black</b>	<i>Count</i>	98	143	109
	<i>Percent</i>	28%	40.9%	31.1%
<b>Other</b>	<i>Count</i>	39	50	51
	<i>Percent</i>	27.9%	35.7%	36.4%
$\chi^2_{(4)} = 23.05, p < .001$				

Within the Race and Confidence test, fewer White models than expected were represented as Dominant and Submissive, and more models than expected were represented in the Mixed category. For Black females, more models than expected were represented as Dominant, fewer models than expected were represented in the Mixed category, and approximately the same number of models as expected were represented as Submissive. For females in the Other category, more models than expected were represented as Submissive, fewer models than expected were represented in the Mixed category, and approximately the same number of models as expected were represented as Dominant. The relationship between Race and Confidence was significant  $\chi^2_{(4)} = 11.79, p < .02$ .



**Table 5.4 Race and Confidence**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>CONFIDENCE</b>			
		<b><u>Dominant</u></b>	<b><u>Submissive</u></b>	<b><u>Mixed</u></b>
<b>White</b>	<i>Count</i>	1175	1769	673
	<i>Percent</i>	32.5%	48.9%	18.6%
<b>Black</b>	<i>Count</i>	133	173	44
	<i>Percent</i>	38%	49.4%	12.6%
<b>Other</b>	<i>Count</i>	45	76	19
	<i>Percent</i>	32.1%	54.3%	13.6%
$\chi^2_{(4)} = 11.79, p < .02$				

The Confidence and Number of Male models test revealed that more models than expected displayed Dominant characteristics with no males present and fewer than expected displayed Dominant characteristics with one or more males present. More models than expected displayed Submissive characteristics with one or more males present and fewer than expected displayed Submissive characteristics with no males present. More models than expected displayed Mixed characteristics when no males or one male was present and fewer models than expected displayed Mixed characteristics with two or more males present. The relationship between Confidence and Number of Male models was significant  $\chi^2_{(4)} = 54.57, p < .001$ .

**Table 5.5 Confidence and Number of Male Models**

<b>CONFIDENCE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF MALE MODELS</b>			
		<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2+</u></b>
	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Count</i>	1180	89
<i>Percent</i>		87.2%	6.6%	6.2%
<i>Submissive</i>	<i>Count</i>	1574	239	205
	<i>Percent</i>	78%	11.8%	10.2%
<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Count</i>	623	72	41
	<i>Percent</i>	84.6%	9.8%	5.6%
$\chi^2_{(4)} = 54.57, p < .001$				

In the Confidence and Number of Female models test, more models than expected displayed Dominant characteristics when they appeared alone and fewer than expected displayed Dominant characteristics in a group of two or more models. More models than expected displayed Submissive characteristics when they appeared in a group of two or more models and fewer than expected displayed Submissive characteristics when they appeared alone. More models than expected displayed Mixed characteristics when they appeared alone or in a group of three or more models, and fewer than expected displayed Mixed characteristics when they appeared with one other female model. The relationship between Confidence and Number of Female models was significant  $\chi^2_{(6)} = 30.66, p < .001$ .

**Table 5.6 Confidence and Number of Female Models**

	NUMBER OF FEMALE MODELS					
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4+</b>	
<b>CONFIDENCE</b>	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Count</i>	878	173	151	151
		<i>Percent</i>	64.9%	12.8%	11.2%	11.2%
	<i>Submissive</i>	<i>Count</i>	1200	290	250	278
		<i>Percent</i>	59.5%	14.4%	12.4%	13.8%
	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Count</i>	515	86	58	77
		<i>Percent</i>	70%	11.7%	7.9%	10.5%
$\chi^2_{(6)} = 30.66, p < .001$						

It seems apparent that women's magazine advertisements do portray specific ideas of social roles to women, minorities, and teens. In Race and Relationship, white women were represented more often than expected as alone, and black and other minority women were shown more often in relation to other females and in impersonal relationships. In Race and Role in Advertisement, black and other minority women were depicted less often than expected in Major roles and more often in Minor or Background roles. In Race and Product Type, white women were depicted more often than expected in clothing and fashion ads, and black and other minority women were depicted more often than expected in the beauty and hygiene and other ads. In Race and Confidence, white models were depicted more often than expected as having mixed dominant and submissive characteristics, and black models were depicted more often than expected as dominant and models of other races were depicted more often than expected as submissive. In Confidence and Number of Males, Dominant characteristics waned in the presence of increasing numbers of men and Submissive characteristics increased. In Confidence and Number of Females, Dominant characteristics decreased as the number of female models increased, and Submissive characteristics increased for this same scenario. The results indicate confirmation of certain stereotypes, such as the dominating black female and the perpetuation of minority submission by placing them in minor or background roles in ads. In addition, minority submission is shown through the depictions of minorities in relationship to other women or impersonal relationships and not alone.

In addition, the increase in submissive characteristics for female models and in the presence of increasing numbers of men and women, and in turn the decrease in dominant characteristics for these situations suggests that women in general are meant to be submissive in the presence of

men. Moreover, it suggests that women should appear less confident when in groups of other women.

## **Sexuality**

Research Question Three asked whether women's and teen magazines glorify overt sexuality and sexual behavior. To answer this question, crosstabulation descriptives were run on the Beauty Type and Magazine variables, as shown in Table 6.1. Within Better Homes and Gardens, more models than expected were represented in the Casual/Sporty category, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories. Within Vogue, more models than expected were represented in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Casual/Sporty category. Within Seventeen, more models than expected were represented in the Casual/Sporty category, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy (S/S/T) categories. Within Ladies Home Journal, more models than expected were represented in the Casual/Sporty category, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories. Within Cosmo Girl, more models than expected were represented in the Casual/Sporty category, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories. Within Harper's Bazaar, more models than expected were represented in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy/Trendy categories, and fewer models than expected were represented in the Casual/Sporty category. The relationship between Beauty Type and Magazine was significant  $\chi^2_{(10)} = 105.8, p < .001$ .

See Table 7.1 for a complete listing of chi-square values.

**Table 6.1 Beauty Type and Magazine**

MAGAZINE	BEAUTY TYPE			
		<u>Classic/Feminine</u>	<u>Casual/Sporty</u>	<u>S/S/T</u>
<i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	<i>Count</i>	160	321	17
	<i>Percent</i>	32.1%	64.5%	3.4%
<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>	<i>Count</i>	122	262	4
	<i>Percent</i>	31.4%	67.5%	1%
<i>Vogue</i>	<i>Count</i>	849	203	265
	<i>Percent</i>	64.5%	15.4%	20.1%
<i>Harper's Bazaar</i>	<i>Count</i>	492	115	151
	<i>Percent</i>	64.9%	15.2%	19.9%
<i>Seventeen</i>	<i>Count</i>	154	390	56
	<i>Percent</i>	25.7%	65%	9.3%
<i>Cosmo Girl</i>	<i>Count</i>	156	329	61
	<i>Percent</i>	28.6%	60.3%	11.2%
$\chi^2_{(10)} = 105.8, p < .001$				



**Table 7.1 Chi-Square Values**

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u><i>p</i> &lt;</u>
<i>Race &amp; Body Type</i>	6	96.60	.001
<i>Race &amp; Beauty Type</i>	4	52.26	.001
<i>Body Type &amp; Magazine</i>	10	318.3	.001
<i>Race &amp; Relationship</i>	6	74.31	.001
<i>Race &amp; Role in Ad</i>	2	7.39	.03
<i>Race &amp; Product Type</i>	4	23.05	.001
<i>Race &amp; Confidence</i>	4	11.79	.02
<i>Confidence &amp; # Males</i>	4	54.57	.001
<i>Confidence &amp; # Females</i>	6	30.66	.001
<i>Beauty Type &amp; Magazine</i>	10	105.8	.001

Magazines in the “Women’s” category showed more models than expected in the Medium and High Body Fat category. Magazines in the “Fashion, Beauty, and Grooming” and “Teen” categories showed more models than expected in the Low Body Fat category. For Beauty Type, magazines in the “Women’s” and “Teen” categories showed more models than expected in the Casual/Sporty category. Magazines in the “Fashion, Beauty, and Grooming” category showed more models than expected in the Classic/Feminine and Sensual/Sexy Trendy categories. The results do not definitively answer this question, though the lack of Sensual/Sexy depictions in the “Women’s” and “Teen” magazines appear to lean the answer toward a non-glorification of overt sexuality and sexual behavior standpoint.

## **CHAPTER 5 - Discussion**

Though many studies have examined the advertisements and content in men's magazines, minority magazines, and magazines with general readership, few, if any, studies have studied the advertising in women's and teen magazines for the portrayals of women and minorities. The potential effects that perpetuation of unattainable body ideals through media messages can have on the self-esteem and body image of the audiences that view those messages can be detrimental and cause eating disorders, disordered eating habits, lowered self-esteem, and distorted perceptions of reality. In addition, the potential for glamorization of overt sexuality and sexual behavior in media messages can lead to earlier sexual timing in teens and adolescents, violence toward women, and a sense of trivialization about sex that can lead to higher levels of STD's and unwanted pregnancies among viewers of those messages. For these reasons, it is important to examine what the messages are that magazine advertisers are sending to their target audiences, which, in this case, are women and teens.

This study asked specific questions about the content of women's and teen's magazine advertising in relation to body ideal, social roles, and sexuality. To begin, Research Question One asked whether the advertisements in women's magazines suggest specific body ideals to women in general, minority women, and teens. Crosstabulation descriptives were run on the Race and Body Type, Race and Beauty Type, and Body Type and Magazines variables to answer this question. Testing showed significant relationships between all three combinations of these variables. The results definitely show that the advertisements in women's and teen magazines suggest specific body ideals to their target audience. Social comparison theory and cultivation theory suggest from these findings that women have been negatively effected by these

advertising messages by lowered self-esteem due to upward comparison to body types they can not achieve but constantly have at the front of their mind because of the volume of images they have been bombarded with that suggest this body type is the norm. Indeed, if only 5-10 percent of women can actually attain and maintain the Low Body Fat/No Curves or Slightly Curvy body type, then these advertisements are adding to the feelings of inadequacy women feel about their bodies by portraying 11.8 percent of all the models with this body type and further by portraying 38.2 percent of the models with the Low Body Fat/Very Curvy body type that occurs naturally for even less of the population and must be attained through cosmetic surgery for the rest. Of course, while this supports the plastic surgery field's yearly revenue, it does not support a general environment of healthy, natural body types in women. It was surprising, however, to see any variance between body types in these advertisements. That models in the medium and high body fat ranges are portrayed in any sense in magazine advertisements is an encouraging finding, even though there is still an overwhelming majority of thin models.

Research Question Two asked whether the advertisements in women's magazines suggest specific social roles for women in general, minority women, and teens. To answer this question, crosstabulation descriptives were run on the Race and Relationship, Race and Role in Advertisement, Race and Occupation, Race and Product Type, Race and Confidence, Confidence and Number of Males, and Confidence and Number of Females variables. The findings that White models dominated the Clothing/Fashion category while Black and Other minority models were more likely to be found in the Beauty product category directly opposes the results of Sengupta's (2006) study of teen magazines, though this study examined more categories. This study's findings do not support Sengupta's idea of the perpetuation of a "white beauty ideal" except in that White models dominated every category simply because they made up 88.1

percent of the sample. However, the under-representation of minority groups alone suggests that the media are sending the message that minorities are of less importance than the White majority, with only 8.5 percent of the models in these magazines being Black, compared to the 12.38 percent of the U.S. population that is Black, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008). In addition, only 2 percent of the models coded were Asian, compared to 4.38 percent of the U.S. population, according to Census (2008) data. Only 1.3 percent of the models coded were Hispanic, whereas 14.78 percent of the U.S. population is Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008). These under-representations support what other researchers have said about the implied role minorities are expected to take in society (i.e. submissive, background roles). In *Killing Us Softly*, Kilbourne (2000) makes the argument that the depiction of minorities in magazine ads suggests that they “in particular are supposed to shut up; to be ‘barely there’” (17:24). The results support this idea and reflect the findings of under-representation of minorities and placement of minorities in minor or background roles in ads in Sengupta’s (2006) study. By under-representing minorities by more than half and placing them more often in minor and background roles, these magazine ads are sending the message that minorities are expected to fill unimportant roles or simply fade into the background, rather than stand out and be noticed. In fact, if minorities who viewed these magazines experienced any cultivation effects from the advertisements, their reality will reflect this very idea. The data definitely suggest that women’s magazine advertisements portray women and minorities in specific social role contexts, which is discouraging, to say the least, and immediate change needs to take place to combat this message.

Research Question Three asked whether sexual behavior and overt sexuality are glorified in the advertisements in women’s and teen magazines. To answer this question, crosstabulation descriptives were run on the Beauty Type and Magazine variables. The lack of models placed in

Sensual/Sexy/Trendy beauty types does not support the idea that these magazines are glorifying sexuality and, in turn, early sexual timing. In fact, it would appear that with the exception of magazines in the Fashion, Beauty, and Grooming category, women's magazine advertising has moved away from using the "sex sells" tactic with ads that don't call for any sexual imagery (lingerie ads are expected to contain some level of this, for example). Using sex for the sake of it does not seem to be a marketing goal, at least to this demographic in this medium. This contradicts a lot of what Kilbourne (2000) talks about in her lecture series. However, it is encouraging to see an apparent shift from what Kilbourne noticed in the content of women's magazine ads to what this study found. The implications are that advertisers can, and might even consider, changing their strategies to benefit, rather than harm, the demographic they are trying to reach.

Advertisers and magazine publishers need to strive to portray all women in body types and social roles that reflect, rather than create, reality. The potential negative effects of the current portrayals are far too detrimental to continue to use them in magazine advertising messages directed at women and teens and though it is easy to say that advertisers are not going to change the way they do things, media practitioners need to challenge their marketing colleagues to at least try, for the benefit of the recipients of their advertising messages. The ultimate goal of this kind of research needs to be to promote change in the system, if needed, and not just to see what the system is doing. The results of this study are intended to challenge advertisers and magazine publishers to see what their messages are doing and to try and improve the content of these messages for the greater good.

Limiting the number of models coded within the advertisements, using student coders, narrow definitions of race, and condensed time period of data collection are the main limitations within

this study. However, intercoder reliability levels show that these limitations likely did not adversely affect the legitimacy of the data or the results.

The findings of this study highlight some important negative implications in women's magazine advertising. Future research focusing on the other content in women's and teen magazines relating to these research questions could shed more light onto how much more of a role women's and teen's magazines play in regards to negative perceptions of body image, lowered self-esteem, perpetuation of social role stereotypes, and the possibility of glorifying overt sexuality. Until these factors are examined in all the content of these magazines, research on this subject remains incomplete. This study, however, has contributed significant findings to the body of research and will hopefully inspire future researchers to further examine the topic and future advertisers and magazine publishers to take these findings into account when creating new messages.

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## Appendix A - Constructed Year Sample

	<i>Better Homes &amp; Gardens</i>	<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>	<i>Harper's Bazaar</i>	<i>Seventeen</i>	<i>Cosmo Girl</i>	<i>Vogue</i>
<i>Jan.</i>	2004	2004	2005	2006	2007	2005
<i>Feb.</i>	2007	2006	2003	2006	2007	2003
<i>March</i>	2005	2004	2007	2005	2004	2005
<i>April</i>	2005	2006	2004	2005	2005	2006
<i>May</i>	2005	2004	2006	2005	2006	2006
<i>June</i>	2003	2004	2007	2006	2004	2007
<i>July</i>	2007	2005	2005	2003	2006	2007
<i>Aug.</i>	2005	2006	2003	2006	2004	2004
<i>Sept.</i>	2007	2003	2005	2004	2006	2007
<i>Oct.</i>	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2004
<i>Nov.</i>	2006	2005	2005	2003	2006	2004
<i>Dec.</i>	2006	2003	2004	2005	2007	2003

## **Appendix B - Definitions**

### **Product Types**

*Beauty:* This category includes all cosmetics, hair care, and fragrance products.

*Hygiene:* This category includes all personal hygiene and skin care products.

*Clothing/Fashion:* This category includes all clothing, footwear, jewelry, and accessory designers, manufacturers, and distributors.

*Stores:* Ads for entire dept. stores, rather than specific products (i.e. Target, K-Mart, Wal-Mart)

*Home Improvement:* All cleaning products and home improvement products (paint, lumber, furnishings, fixtures, etc.)

*Technology:* Technological products such as telecommunication devices, electronics, and cars are included in this category.

*Consumables:* All non-drug consumable products, including snack foods, regular food, beverages, candy, and alcohol.

*Prescription Drugs:* All products requiring a prescription, characterized by an information sheet on the back of the advertisement.

*Over the Counter Drugs:* All consumed (pill, liquid, etc.) drugs that do not require a prescription to purchase (i.e. Tylenol, Tums)

*Services:* This category includes all companies that provide services (i.e. insurance, exterminators, etc.)

*Public Service Announcements:* This category includes all advertisements that promote better lifestyles (i.e. anti-smoking, anti-drug, reading, etc.)

## **Model's Race**

*White:* Light skin, oval eyes, and light, red, or dark hair.

*Hispanic:* Tan skin, oval eyes, dark hair (unless color treated).

*Black:* Dark skin, oval eyes, dark hair (unless color treated).

*Asian:* Light skin, almond shaped eyes, dark hair (unless color treated).

*Other:* All models not fitting above characteristics go in this category.

## **Beauty Types**

*Classic/Feminine:* This model has an elegant feminine look that is glamorous and sophisticated.

Model is shown wearing classically feminine, but not overly accessorized, apparel.

*Casual/Sporty:* Model is casually attired and has a cute and youthful appearance. Models in active situations attired in sportswear are also included.

*Sensual/Sexy:* This model wears revealing clothing, lingerie, or swimwear and has a seductive appearance. Overstated makeup and accessories are also factors.

*Trendy:* This model wears faddish clothing with prominent accessories. Hair and makeup are often overly stylized to reflect current trends.

## **Role In Advertisement**

*Major Role:* The model is very important to the advertising theme or layout, shown in the foreground or holding the product.

*Minor Role:* Model is of average importance to the advertisement theme. These models are not spotlighted but they are not difficult to find in the advertisement.

*Background Role:* A model who is difficult to find in an advertisement or who is not important to its theme or layout. A background role will also be coded if a model appears in a crowd. Code no more than 6 total models in an ad.

## **Relationship To Other Models**

*All Female Social Context:* Includes any group of two or more women or girls depicted in a social setting or context.

*Female/Male Social Context:* Includes any group of two or more women or girls depicted in a social or intimate setting with men or boys.

*Alone:* Only one model appears in the advertisement.

*Impersonal Context:* Multiple models appear, but there is no apparent relationship between them.

## **Confidence Of Model**

*Dominant:* Model holds herself upright, looks directly into the camera or into the eyes of another model.

*Submissive:* Model lowers herself to the camera by bending at the waist, bashfully bending at the knee, exhibiting a head or body tilt, looking over a shoulder, lying or sitting on an object or the floor, covering any part of the face (as with a hand or forearm, not hair or clothing, unless the eyes or mouth are covered), and/or behaving or dressing in a childish fashion.

*Mixed:* Model clearly displays one or more dominant traits in addition to one or more submissive traits.

## **Model's Portrayed Occupation**

*Domestic:* Cooking, house cleaning, taking care of children at home, etc.

*High-level non-domestic:* Top level manager, professional, entertainer, etc.

*Middle-level non-domestic:* White collar, non-management, clerical, etc.

*Low-level non-domestic:* Service, construction worker, student, etc.

*Not apparent:* The model doesn't appear to be working in a specific job.



## Appendix C - Coding Sheet

Female Model's Depiction In Advertising: Content Analysis Coding Sheet

Coder: \_\_\_\_\_ Advertisement #: \_\_\_\_\_ Model #: \_\_\_\_\_

Magazine (circle one):	Better Homes & Gardens	Vogue	Seventeen
	Ladies Home Journal	Cosmo Girl	Harper's Bazaar

Month (circle one):	January	February	March	April
	May	June	July	August
	September	October	November	December

Year (circle one):	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
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Product Type (circle one):	Beauty	Hygiene	Clothing/Fashion	Technology
	Stores	Consumables	Home Improvement	Services
	Rx Drugs	OTC Drugs	PSAs	

Number of female models: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of male models: \_\_\_\_\_

Race of model (circle one):	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Other
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Beauty type (circle one):	Classic/Feminine	Casual/Sporty	Sensual/Sexy	Trendy
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Body type (circle one):

- Low body fat/No curves
- Low body fat/Slight curves
- Low body fat/Very curvy
- Medium body fat/No curves
- Medium body fat/Slight curves
- Medium body fat/Very curvy
- High body fat/No curves
- High body fat/Slight curves
- High body fat/Very curvy
- Not apparent

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Role in advertisement (circle one):	Major	Minor	Background
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Relationship (circle one):	Female/Female	Female/Male	
	Alone	Impersonal	

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Confidence (circle one):	Dominant	Submissive	Mixed
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Occupation (circle one):

- Domestic
- High-Level Non-Domestic
- Middle-Level Non-Domestic
- Low-Level Non-Domestic
- Not Apparent

## Appendix D - Body Types

Low body fat/No curves



Low body fat/Slight curves



Low body fat/Very curvy



Medium body fat/No curves



Medium body fat/Slight curves



Medium body fat/Very curvy



High body fat/No curves



High body fat/Slight curves



High body fat/Very curvy



Not apparent: Not enough of the model is shown to infer body type.