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THE FRAMING OF FEMININITY IN POPULAR WOMEN'S MAGAZINES IN 2009:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF *SEVENTEEN, GLAMOUR* AND *COSMOPOLITAN*
MAGAZINES

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ABSTRACT

At all levels of media, commercialism preys daily on women's insecurities (Oppliger, 2008). Research demonstrates that women's magazines may make assumptions that women's priorities are to stay fit, vanish wrinkles and to mold their looks and behavior to please men. Oftentimes, women are encouraged to perceive themselves, and in turn their self-worth, through a male lens. Research shows that young girls and women look to magazines to help them make lifestyle choices. Research for this thesis involved a content analysis of the popular women's magazines, *Seventeen, Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*. More than 1,500 images of women and 500 stories were analyzed for their emphasis on beauty, sexuality, health, relationships and their depiction of race. The data collected and analyzed revealed that overall, the magazines focused most on sex/love, followed by beauty and fashion. Most articles did not emphasize relationships, but the majority of those that did focused on romantic relationships, with a minority focusing on friendships and workplace relationships. The majority of women were pictured in inactive, but non-sexual poses, and the depiction of race was on par with the U.S. population according to Census 2000 data.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this thesis

For as long as I can remember, I have been an avid magazine reader. Not just any magazines, though -- not *Newsweek*, *Time* or other magazines focused on current events -- but, rather, teen and women's magazines. I buried myself in these magazines for the bulk of my teen years as they served as my own private how-to books while I navigated the challenging waters of adolescence. They provided me with information and advice that I was too embarrassed to seek elsewhere. They did so much so, in fact, that they often replaced uncomfortable conversations with my parents, as my mom became very familiar with the, "Mommmm, I already know about that" answer when she tried to offer her two cents on sensitive topics.

For at least 10 years, I have called these magazines (first *CosmoGirl!* and *Seventeen*, then *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*) my guilty pleasures, my escape from reality. A few years into college, however, I began to realize that maybe they weren't my escape from reality, but rather the complete opposite: They were shaping my reality.

As I grew to be more mature, I thought I simply used magazines as a leisure activity, something to get my mind off my worries for half an hour or so. Around the same time, though, I started to notice a pattern in the values and concerns of my friends, largely centered on their physical appearance and romantic relationships. I wondered, why was it that they seemed to feel more accomplished if they were spot-on with their boyfriend's birthday gift or lost five pounds -- than if they made Dean's List? I noticed that one thing we all had in common was that we loved beauty and fashion magazines and read them on a regular basis. So, as a print journalism major and women's studies

minor, I was curious about the effect that reading such magazines has on girls and women, including the effect they potentially have on me.

The purpose of this study was to answer some questions I have developed about the content and influence of women's magazines. What type of content and focus do these magazines have, and does it differ according to publication? How much emphasis do they put on the importance of romantic relationships and friendships? Do they depict "average girls" like me or strictly models and celebrities? Are women presented as sex objects or as active and non-sexual? How does race factor into all of this? These are just a few of the questions my study was designed to answer.

History of women's magazines

Magazine publishing began in 1828 when Sarah Josepha Hale published *Ladies' Magazine*, which helped to define the standard of behavior for women at the time and offered entertainment in the form of art and fiction (Zuckerman, 1998a). The first magazine to reach a circulation of one million readers, however, was not until 1883 when Cyrus H.K. Curtis published *Ladies' Home Journal* (Taft, 1982*).* Five other magazines soon joined: *Delineater, McCall's, Woman's Home Companion, Good Housekeeping* and *Pictorial Review*. Collectively, these magazines became known as "The Big Six" and served as guides for women on behavior and duties. In these magazines, women were encouraged to take action on social ills and get involved in women's movements (Zuckerman, 1998a). By the 1930s, many more magazines had entered the marketplace, and the field began to get competitive. *Redbook* was published in 1903, *Better Homes and Gardens* in 1922, *Family Circle* in 1932 and *Woman's Day* in 1937. These

magazines were published in the decades surrounding World War II and did not ignore the war and its effects, focusing on stories about wives at home, war work and food conservation (Tranell, 2004). The magazines of the 1940s and 1950s thus influenced a cultural shift in values, with women starting to operate in diverse roles (Tranell, 2004).

Most of the magazines that are on newsstands today, though, did not launch until after World War II, as changes occurred that reflected both industry and society trends. The roles of women were changing, and the magazines paralleled this change by reflecting a wider range of interests. More women were in the workforce, self-sufficient and taking on new hobbies, so to meet these interests the magazines picked up new subject matter (Zuckerman, 1998b).

As more and more feminist ideals came to the forefront, magazines that embraced these points of view emerged, such as *Ms.* In 1972 and *Working Woman* in 1976 (Taft, 1982).

Present-day publications reflect yet another cultural shift – away from domestic life and more focused on fashion, beauty, relationships and everyday tips. Women's magazines on today's newsstands cover a range of topics. *Shape* is geared toward physical fitness, while *Cosmopolitan* dishes on the latest dating and fashion tips, and *New Beauty* conquers the plastic surgery frontier. Teen magazines feature similar topics and have long mirrored the same cultural ideals as their adult counterparts. *Seventeen*, the first teen magazine*,* has offered lifestyle advice to teens since 1944, followed by *Young Miss* from the 1940s to 2004 and *CosmoGirl!*, which launched in 1999, only to fold in 2008.

Whether these types of magazines play as vital a function in the lives of American women as past publications is debatable (Tranell, 2004). In Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards' book, *Manifesta: young women, feminism, and the future*, the writers argue that the function of women's-interest publications is to bring crucial information to women, and they should not waste ink on "inane fluff" (cited in Tranell, 2004, p.8). However, some argue that aside from political functions, women's magazines play an important role in educating women on social and health issues pertaining to their lifestyle. Magazines bring issues such as sexual dangers to women and create general public awareness. Some scholars even credit current magazines with teaching women to take charge of their own health and learn to value themselves, thus giving them a sense of empowerment (Zuckerman, 1998b, p.225).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Images of women in popular culture

Over the decades, idealized images of women in popular culture have been disseminated on a mass scale. Since the first publication of women's magazines in 1828, women's magazines and the images of female perfection that they portray have become a social institution, helping to shape a woman's view of herself and society's view of her (Duke, 1998).

Even with the rise of technology and the popularity of the Internet, which now includes digital versions of many of the most-read women's magazines, print media – especially women's magazines -- have remained an influential medium in popular culture (Tranell, 2004). The images portrayed in popular culture, especially through magazines, set beauty standards and define the ideal (Oppliger, 2008). Women, and girls especially, look to popular culture for cues in shaping their female identity.

The message to girls and women, according to research, is often that model's thighs or perfectly shiny hair equate to having "made it." The message that these impeccable images of women send to readers is that beauty is to be equated with success (Duke, 1998). In other words: If you don't look like the cover girl, don't worry, because the magazine is filled with ways to help you get there.

Unfortunately, these digitally manipulated images of flawless women represent body proportions unattainable for 99 percent of the American population (Oppliger, 2008). The ideal image they present is virtually unachievable because only about 1 percent of women are born with the body proportions to resemble them. Without the

retouching made possible with programs such as Photoshop, even that 1 percent of women would not look like the image in the magazine.

By framing the beauty ideal depicted in popular culture as attainable by all when in reality it is not, media have redefined attractiveness and the "properly shaped" female body. Women are enticed, as opposed to turned off, by these images of perfection because of magazines' promises that if women try hard enough, the promise of the ideal body and look will be fulfilled (Oppliger, 2008, p.132). Research shows that digitally manipulated images of women make the average reader feel inadequate as they send a "you are not good enough" message (Milkie, 2002, p.839). The producers of these images, mainly elite male marketers, capitalize on instilling insecurities in women and girls and use editorial content and advertising to reinforce it (Milkie, 2002, p. 840). Too much cellulite or visible under-eye wrinkles? The magazines offer creams for that. Can't fit into the latest-style jeans? The magazines have calorie-skimping diets for that.

Who is the ideal? An overwhelming number of images of women are white, impossibly slim, and reflect the all-American ideal of blond hair and blue eyes (Massoni, 2004, p.217). An example might be supermodels Heidi Klum or Gisele Bundchen, both of whom are easy to find in any magazine on the newsstand.

Women as hypersexualized and filling traditional roles

Sexualized images of women in popular culture send the message that a woman's value lies largely in terms of her appearance, and that a woman exists to be looked at (Stankiewicz, 2008). Research shows that images of women in popular culture are often hyper-sexualized, presented as passive objects who express "come-hither" looks as if

they are oozing with desire, and that that in turn makes them desirable (Stankiewicz, 2008). These images are not new – instead, they have been used for decades (Tranell, 2004). Images in popular culture continue to objectify women as marketers use the same old sexual clichés repackaged as female empowerment (Stankiewicz, 2008).

Through these images of women in popular culture, research shows that mainstream magazines have failed to show images of women in progressive roles and instead have supported traditional gender roles: importance of youth, beauty, heterosexual romance, and the role of consumption in the attainment of these beauty ideals (Evans, 2005).

Magazines aimed at teenagers

These idealized images are not only featured in women's magazines, but also in teen magazines that influence girls in a very vulnerable stage of identity formation (Massoni, 2004). Researchers have been critical of magazines aimed at girls because they are strikingly similar in the ways they present idealized beauty, to magazines for women (Currie, 1999, p. 146).

Images of girls in teen magazines set the agenda for what young girls think they should look like and essentially reflect a parallel universe in relation to their adult counterparts (Massoni, 2004). Just the vast number of fashion and beauty-based pictures are enough to give the impression that those are their most important features (Massoni, 2004).

In light of a perceived shift to featuring more "real" women, magazines claim to have more images of less-than-perfect models. These images, however, especially in teen

magazines, are frequently paired with editorials on how to "minimize defects through clothing choices" as opposed to aspiring to, or being proud of, having a curvaceous body type (Oppliger, 2008, p. 134). These images often have slogans such as "Real Women" splashed across them, but too often associate "real woman" with "overweight and unattractive" as opposed to healthy and happy (Milkie, 2002, p. 843). An example of such an article can be found in the March 2009 issue of Seventeen, titled "Shop for Your Body," see Appendix C. This is not to say, however, that magazines should all jump on the "real women have curves" bandwagon, as "not all slender women are *unreal* waifs who should just eat a cheeseburger and get over themselves," said Cindi Leive, the editor-in-chief of *Glamour*. Leive suggests that we should not turn the tables and bash one type instead of another, but rather magazines should be encouraging women to celebrate what they were born with (Leive, 2009).

Overall, regardless of the medium through which images of women in popular culture are viewed, media producers – especially those at magazines -- continue to encourage women and girls to morph themselves into a practically unachievable beauty ideal, defined by as being a size 0, having flawless skin, sexy hair and submissive bedroom eyes (Duke and Kreshel, 1998). As long as images of women in popular culture continue to encourage women to conform to a beauty ideal that is unattainable, women and girls will continue to feel inadequate in their own skin.

The power of visual images to influence girls and women

It has long been said that a picture is a worth a thousand words. The images of women presented in the media – particularly women's and girl's magazines – are no exception; research shows that women and girls use images and messages presented in

magazines as a platform for determining their own self-worth (Ferguson, 1983). When they encounter an image in a magazine, they subconsciously evaluate it based on pre-existing beliefs and experiences (i.e. schema) and form frameworks through which to interpret this visual information (Domke et. al, 2002). A large component of this process is the element of repeated exposure, which evidence suggests occurs at a very high rate for women and girls in regard to print media (Sypeck, Gray and Ahrens, 2003). Through repeated exposure, women and girls internalize visual messages, often leading them to feel as though they need to change themselves in order to conform to what is presented as the norm. With the tendency of women's magazines to portray a beauty ideal largely centered on nearly unachievable thinness, repeated exposure to these types of images can have dangerous effects relative to women and girls' body dissatisfaction (Sypeck, Gray and Ahrens, 2003).

According to a study by the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto, people look to society's standards for their personal concept of ideal beauty (Pinhas, Toner, Ali, Garfinkel and Stuckless, 1998). In recent decades, the gap between a woman's weight and the perceived ideal has widened, leading to a greater degree of body image disturbance among women and girls (Malkin et. al, 1999). Pinhas et. al's study examined the relationship between exposure to the visual image of the ideal female beauty in western culture and its effect on mood, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating through a self-report questionnaire. Results showed that women feel angrier and have a greater depressed mood immediately after looking at images of the thin ideal (Pinhas, Toner, Ali, Garfinkel, & Stuckless, 1998).

A similar study evaluated why adolescent girls watch their weight and determined that a societal pressure to be thin is a main contributor, with as many as 50 percent of adolescent girls reporting that they have dieted and would like to be thinner. One girl who participated in this interview-based study said, "Everybody feels like they are not good enough, not pretty enough, not skinny enough…Every time you open a magazine you always see beautiful people…you have to look good to be a good person" (Wertheim, Paxton, Schutz and Muir, 1996, p. 346). Fifteen percent of girls said they would give up five years of their life to be thinner (Currie, 1999). This isn't entirely surprising given that the ratio of diet articles in men's and women's magazines was found to be 1:10, which is identical to the actual ratio of eating disorders in men and women in the general population (Malkin et. al, 1999).

Research shows that even for women who don't develop eating disorders, their social construction of what it means to be a "woman" is largely framed around an ideal of attractiveness presented as attainable by all (Duke and Kreshel, 1998). The presentation of the "perfect body" alongside a step-by-step textual guide as to how to achieve it in only a matter of weeks sends the message that if women work hard enough they can look like the model – when in reality, most of the American population is not 5'10 and 115 pounds and never could be (Ferguson, 1983, p. 184). The body, which will never be "good enough" compared to media ideals, becomes the instrument through which women construct their feminine identity; femininity is taken on as a project (Duke and Kreshel, 1998). Women are encouraged to view themselves through this lens of ideal beauty through which they will never measure up quite well-enough; thus, they are taught to analyze the ways in which they deviate from the ideal and work to fix them (Duke and

Kreshel, 1998). The "average body," the one most readers of women's magazines have, is inadvertently presented as undesirable, with the goal of the image or message not celebrating this "less-than-perfect" figure but rather using it as an example of a body that has room for improvement in makeover pieces or how-to articles on how to minimize the appearance of wide hips or broad shoulders (Oppliger, 2008). The contemporary beauty standard as taut, narrow-hipped, and embodying a slimness bordering on emaciation is a silhouette more appropriate for an adolescent boy than an adult woman, but this is what women are taught to idealize (Currie, 1999).

The emphasis on physical appearance in women's magazines isn't limited to weight loss and maintenance. Most general interest women's magazines include sections devoted to a wide range of beauty concerns, with an attention to skin care, hair care, cosmetic use and the items and products that support these processes (Tranell, 2004). Regarding a study done on *Mademoiselle* and *Ms.* Magazines, Tranell (2004) wrote:

> The keynote of beauty and fashion magazines is an exaggerated concern with physical appearance so that other aspects of the complete human being are undervalued. In order to stimulate sales of cosmetics and apparel whose advertisers sustain these magazines, editorial features encourage readers to dissect themselves conceptually into fragments that various products are promised to improve. (p. 5)

With a reputation for this type of content, women's magazines have also been criticized for their contradictory beauty ideals disguised as the pursuit of good health. These messages may lead women to assess their health in terms of appearance, causing them to ignore signs and symptoms of illness as long as they look or feel beautiful. Essentially, the beauty standard presented in the media paints the picture of false health (Tranell, 2004). Health is frequently presented purely in sexual or beauty/fitness terms such as acne solutions or get-slim-quick diets (Evans, Rutberg, Sather, Turner, 1991). A 1985

report by the Hearst Corporation, which is one of the two major publishers of women's magazines in the United States, illustrated the untapped value of magazines for health functions, stating that 78 percent of women cited magazines as their primary source of health-related information in a randomized telephone survey (The Hearst Corporation, 1985).

Emphasis on "getting a man" and sexualized images

Despite the progression of women into more independent, ambitious and self-sufficient roles, media – particularly women's and girls' magazines – still reinforce traditional beliefs that the road to happiness "is attracting males for successful heterosexual life by way of physical beautification" (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998, p.59). The majority of advertising and editorial content in teen girls' and women's magazines remains focused on what girls and women should do to get and keep their man (Brown, 2010). Advice columns, fictional stories and features on sexual issues in magazines encourage women and girls to become sexual objects whose lives are not complete unless sexually connected with a man (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998).

Girls and women are told in magazines, both subtly and directly, that they should focus primarily on "understanding the guy" and what they can do to hold on to him as if conquering the mission to find a man should be their main concern (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998, p.67). Women are told that they must lose weight, learn about sophisticated sexual techniques, apply makeup well, and dress in a sexy manner if they want to be seen as desirable (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998).

Research has found that images in women's and girl's magazines depict men as sexually powerful and aggressive and women as sexually passive; men are depicted as animalistic with women encouraged to take the role of animal trainer (Greenberg, 1997).

Similarly, a content analysis of nearly 2,000 advertisements in 58 popular U.S. magazines resulted in, on average, one in every two advertisements portraying women as sex objects (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). These advertisements run alongside the most repeated messages in women's magazines: the importance of getting and keeping a man and how to become more beautiful (Currie, 1999). Additional research shows that not only are women encouraged to get a man to take care of them and presented as sex objects, but these depictions show them as passive compared to images of men. Most images of women and girls in magazines show them posing motionless, oftentimes with body parts or facial features cropped from the photo, while men are often pictured in action shots (Oppliger, 2008). The majority of images in girls' magazines are actually of adult women, with very sexualized postures, head tilts and "bedroom eyes" (Oppliger, 2008, p.133).

How magazines aimed at teen readers may differ from magazines aimed at older women

Although extensive research is just starting to be done on teen magazines, early studies show that these magazines are governed by the same theme of self-improvement -- approached though topics such as fashion and physical beautification -- as women's magazines (Currie, 1999). Mirroring their adult counterparts, girls' magazines advance the traditional concerns of femininity with the dominant topic of heterosexual romance (Garner, Stark, & Adams, 1998). Many women's magazines have, or had in the past,

versions that are tailored to pre- and early teen girls, such as *Elle Girl*, *CosmoGirl!* and *Teen Vogue*. In her book on the sexualization of girls in American culture (1998), Patrice Oppliger says, "Their motto should be 'destroy her self-esteem early and have a customer for life" (p.132). Girls' magazines start the beauty craze and body obsession early and sell products in their pages to make girls more attractive to the opposite sex (Oppliger, 2008).

Research shows that girls spend about 75 percent of their money on clothing with a total of $158 billion in spending power, making them a very appealing market to tap through girls' magazines, especially since these same readers will later switch to adult versions that push even higher-end products (Oppliger, 2008). Teen magazines often feature more mixed messages than women's magazines, as they try to strike the balance of age-appropriate content. They encourage girls to look sexy but stay a virgin, dress like a model but have a personal style, to be an adult but remain a child (Oppliger, 2008,). Girls' magazines sound the same themes as women's magazines – how to meet successfully the needs and desires of men, enacting a vision in which men are the citizens of the world and women are citizens of the world of men (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998, p.75).

The girls' magazine is a highly privileged site, as it offers cheap and easily accessible information that girls may feel uncomfortable getting from friends, teachers or parents (Ferguson, 1983). Research shows that girls tend to read teen magazines in private, over-and-over again, as a "syllabus for womanhood" from which they can shape and negotiate ideals to create meaning in their lives (Duke and Kreshel, 1998, p. 61). The magazines give explicit information to their readers, serving as sources of information

and influence on attitudes and behaviors, including sexuality. Teenage girls spend

billions of dollars a year and untold hours following the advice of friends and teen

magazines to "fit in but be themselves" (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998, p.60).

Images of race in women's magazines

The validity with which women's and girl's magazines depict racial diversity is a

topic that has not been as widely researched as other aspects of these publications.

However, in magazines, the perpetuation of the beauty ideal as thin and white seems to

reinforce femininity as necessarily white (Currie, 1999). This construction is based on the

otherness of non-white and non-heterosexual women (Currie, 1999).

Images of minorities, in the same way that images of women with disabilities or

obese women, appear to be more absent from women's magazines than their skinny,

Caucasian peers (Currie, 1999). While not much research has been completed on images

of race particular to women's magazines, research on media images of femininity have

shown how the disadvantage of minority women is created and perpetuated through

"symbolic annihilation" – ignoring or portraying them in narrow, irrelevant or inferior

ways (Milkie, 2002, p.839). These texts and images are powerful because they enter the

discourse and practices of women and men in the everyday negotiation of femininity and

masculinity.

Based on research confirming the impact of images of the feminine ideal on

women and girls who consume such images, minority women who inherently do not meet

these (white) criteria would in turn feel less satisfied with their appearance. However, a

study by Cynthia Frisby at the University of Missouri found that women and girls are

more likely to compare themselves to women and girls of the same ethnic background,

and that minority women viewing images of white women in images has less of detrimental effect on their self-esteem that it does on white women (Frisby, 2004).

METHODS AND FINDINGS

Magazines for analysis

This study involved a content analysis of three market-leading women's magazines: *Seventeen, Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*. Each magazine is aimed at girls and/or women.

With a combined readership of more than 30 million people each month, *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Seventeen* magazines undoubtedly serve as excellent conduits and guidebooks for messages aimed at women, be they positive, negative, or somewhere in between. In order to comprehend the impact and content of these magazines, it is important to first understand their demographics, target audiences, circulations, publishers, advertisers and editors.

Glamour. *Glamour*, the self-proclaimed "most celebrated women's magazine in America," was founded in 1939. It is published monthly by Condé Nast Publications, Inc., which is a worldwide magazine publishing company that currently produces 19 publications in the United State alone. Condé Nast is a U.S.-based company that is headquartered in New York City. It is a unit of Advance Publications, including consumer magazines, Condé Nast Digital, The Fairchild Fashion Group, *Parade*, The Condé Nast Media Group and The Shared Services Centers. Bill Wackermann has served as *Glamour's* publishing director since April 2004. Wackermann also oversees *Brides* and *Details* magazines.

Glamour is a global magazine, published in countries including the UK, Sweden, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Russia, Greece, Poland, South Africa, Hungary, The Netherlands and Australia (Mediamark Research Inc., 2009). Since 2001, the Editor-in-Chief of *Glamour* has been Cynthia Leive, who is also a women's lifestyle contributor for *The Today Show* and serves on the board of The International Women's Media Foundation. Under Leive's leadership, *Glamour's* circulation of nearly 2.4 million has risen to its highest level in history, and Glamour.com's traffic has increased by 321 percent after a successful re-launch in September 2008. With a monthly readership of 12.2 million, *Glamour* targets women 18-to-49 years-old, with a median age of 35. It claims to outsell 98 percent of magazines on newsstands today and has won more than 170 editorial awards in the past decade (Mediamark Research Inc., 2009). As a life and style magazine, *Glamour* aims to translate trends and styles for women, as well as touch on beauty, fashion, health and political issues. In the past year, *Glamour* has received much press for featuring un-doctored photographs of "real women." The plus-size model, Lizzie Miller, was featured in its September 2009 issue in a very short story titled "The Body Image Revolution." The response by readers was so positive that *Glamou*r ran a follow up piece in its November issue (Leive, 2009).

The magazine also has received media coverage about its personnel. One of Condé Nast's top executives, Richard Beckman, who served as president of Condé Nast Media Group and was in charge of ad sales and promotional events for the entire magazine chain, resigned January 12, 2010, to head e5 Global Media. His resignation comes a year after what some perceived as a demotion, as he was asked to become CEO of Fairchild Fashion Group instead (Mediamark Research Inc., 2009).

Cosmopolitan. *Cosmopolitan* magazine caters to women ages 18-34; however, the median reader age is 30 years-old. *Cosmopolitan* is the top-selling young women's magazine in America, in addition to boasting the most international readers as it is published in 34 different languages (Mediamark Research Inc., 2009). According to the most recent data released in January 2010, *Cosmopolitan* has a total circulation of 2,900,000 (Hearst Corporation Media Kit, 2010). The magazine was founded in the United States as a family magazine, but became a women's magazine in the 1960s thanks to a gutsy copywriter, Helen Gurley Brown, who was looking to get the "truth" about sex and relationships out to women (Hearst Corporation Media Kit, 2010).

Today, *Cosmopolitan* is published by Hearst Corporation, which is a privately held American-based media conglomerate in New York City. Hearst Corporation was founded more than 120 years ago by William Randolph Hearst, who focused mainly on newspaper ownership. Hearst Magazines, which publishes *Cosmopolitan*, is a unit of Hearst Corporation, and one of the world's largest publishers of monthly magazines with 15 U.S. titles and nearly 200 international editions. Both publishers, Hearst and Condé Nast, also have television affiliates thus giving them media ownership across the spectrum. Frank A. Bennack, Jr. has been Hearst Corporation's Vice Chairman & CEO for more than 23 years, and Michael Clinton has served as the Chief Marketing Officer and Publishing Director since January 2001.

According to White, *Cosmopolitan* is the "lifestylist for millions of fun fearless females who want to be the best they can be in every area of their lives" (Hearst Corporation Media Kit, 2010, p.2). The magazine regularly features stories on relationships and romance, fashion and beauty, entertainment and pop-culture, and the

latest on women's health and well-being. With nearly as much notoriety as the magazine itself, *Cosmopolitan's* Editor-in-Chief since 1998, Kate White, is the face and brains behind *Cosmopolitan*. White also manages to have a thriving independent writing career as a critically acclaimed author of both fiction and nonfiction books (Hearst Corporation Media Kit, 2010, p.4).

      Seventeen. Also published by Hearst, *Seventeen* is the best-selling magazine in its category of 13-to-21 year-olds, with a median age of 16, giving it a significantly younger demographic than *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*. Now with more than 13 million readers each month, *Seventeen* was first published in 1944 by Walter Annenberg's Triangle Publications, which was bought by News Corp. in 1988. News Corp. sold *Seventeen* to K-III Communications (later Primedia), who ultimately sold *Seventeen* to Hearst in 2003. The magazine's Editor-in-Chief is Ann Shoket, who joined the magazine in January 2007 after working as Executive Editor for *CosmoGirl!*. *CosmoGirl!* was also owned by Hearst, but the company decided to consolidate it with *Seventeen*, because *Seventeen* has a higher readership and a similar audience. Subscribers to *CosmoGirl!* started receiving *Seventeen* instead when the magazine folded in December 2008 (Portfolio, 2008). CosmoGirl.com, a spin-off of Cosmopolitan.com, still continues despite the print publication folding (Portfolio, 2008). With a young, tech-savvy audience, *Seventeen's* publisher, Jayne Jamison, is primarily focused on expanding the magazine's web presence, particularly video tutorials (Hearst Corporation Media Kit, 2010, p.6).

      Seventeen is the top magazine subscribed to by female first-year college students (Mediamark Research Inc., 2009). The magazine offers information and advice about beauty, skincare, fashion and celebrities. It is also known for embracing topics such as

body image and health issues relating to nutrition, exercise and concerns unique to

teenagers. With its younger target audience, *Seventeen* fills its pages with quizzes and

horoscopes, articles on the shorter side and high-quality photographs. The magazine and

its advertisers have capitalized on the fact that its readers are big spenders, who are

proven to be the top buyers of beauty and skincare products, and go shopping more than

the average person (Hearst Corporation Media Kit, 2010).

Content analysis

Content analysis is defined in brief as "the systematic assignment of

communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships

involving those categories using statistical methods" (Riffe, 2005, p.1). It is an

empirically grounded method, exploratory in process and predictive or inferential in

intent (Krippendorf, 2004, p.3).

Content analysis has as its goal a numerically based summary of a chosen

message set, and can be used to reveal differences in content and identify intentions,

focus or communication trends in publications. It can also be used to make inferences

about the consequences of messages (Neuendorf, 2002, p.49). Content analysis has

frequently been used in previous research on images and text in magazines, as it allows

researchers to draw representative samples of content and code for specific categories,

which can later be analyzed to reveal important patterns or characteristics, or to identify

relationships among the content qualities examined (Riffe, 2005, p.3).

One related example of content analysis already discussed in the literature review

is that of Evans, Rutberg, Sather and Turner (2005) on the major content patterns of

Sassy, Seventeen, and *Young Miss* magazines, based on their circulation rates for 1988.

This particular content analysis coded editorial content and advertisements for categories relating to the theme of self-improvement. The researchers found this topic to be was largely approached through fashion dressing and physical beautification, mixed in with a small amount of heterosexual relationship advice.

Research questions

Based on the review of literature, the following research questions were designed for this study:

1) Overall, what is the focus of the stories in these magazines? How do the magazines compare in their article focus?

2) How do the magazines focus on relationships, overall? Do they emphasize friendships or romantic relationships more?

   a. How do the magazines compare with one another in their emphasis on relationships in articles?

   b. How do the magazines compare with one another in their depictions of women or girls in photos -- alone, or with men or women?

3) Overall, how often are "average women" featured in the magazines, compared to models or celebrities?

   a. How do the magazines compare in their use of models or celebrities in relationship to average women or girls?

   b. Are there any differences in the way average women or girls and celebrities or models are depicted in relationship to sexual poses, type of clothing, or whether they are active or passive?

4) Overall, do the magazines present white and non-white women in ways that

are inclusive and representative of the U.S. population? How do the magazines compare in their racial depictions?

5) Overall, what facial expressions are most often expressed in the photos? How do the magazines compare in depictions of facial expressions?

Sample and coding variables

To answer the above research questions, a manageable content sample was used for analysis. Three magazines were selected based on total circulation figures for 2007 released by the Audit Bureau of Circulations. The Audit Bureau of Circulations is a non-profit organization widely accepted as the leading third-party auditing organization in the U.S. It is the main source of circulation figures within the magazine industry, and its audit information and publisher profiles are used on both the advertising and editorial sides of publishing (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007).

Cosmopolitan and *Glamour* were chosen for this study because they are leading women's magazines. *Seventeen* was chosen because it is the number one selling magazine for girls. Issues of *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Seventeen* magazines published in March, June, October, and December of 2009 were coded. The sample included a total of 12 magazines, 538 stories (only those included in the Table of Contents) and 1592 images of women. Advertisements, reader feedback, letters from the editors, horoscopes and quizzes were not coded in this study. Two codebooks were designed for analysis, one for text and one for images.

A text codebook was used to code each story listed in the Table of Contents of the magazines. In the table of contents, each story was coded for publication (*Cosmopolitan, Glamour* or *Seventeen*), month of publication (March, June, October or December), focus

of story (beauty, health, sex/love, career, etc.) and emphasis on relationships (romantic, workplace, friendships, or none at all). For example, a story titled "How I Picked Him Up" in the December issue of *Cosmopolitan* was coded as "sex/love" with an emphasis on romantic relationships, whereas a story titled "How Normal Is Your Temper?" in the March issue of *Glamour* was coded as "emotion/mood" with an emphasis on friendships.

In addition, an image codebook was used to code all female subjects embedded in the editorial content of the magazines. This codebook evaluated images based on which magazine they were in, month of publication, facial expression of the subject, sexual or non-sexual poses, inactive or active poses, and clothing and race of the subject. For example, a woman could be coded as being in *Seventeen's* June issue, clearly white, wearing fashionable clothing, in an inactive pose that is non-sexual, and with a smile on her face. A different woman could be coded as being in *Glamour's* October issue, not clearly white or clearly African American, wearing underwear, a blank expression and in a sexual, inactive pose.

Images were evaluated separately for each category, meaning a woman who was in revealing clothing such as a swimsuit could still be categorized as non-sexual, active and smiling, whereas a fully dressed woman may be coded as inactive, with a submissive look and a sexual pose. Women in a collage of photos were coded independently, thus individual women were the unit of analysis. About three-fourths of photos in the magazines featured women alone. In addition, the researcher understood that many of the "average girls or women" coded were, in reality, models, but they were depicted to look "average" by virtue that they were in "everyday" settings. A woman or girl

who was not featured by way of editorial accompaniments as being a "girl off the street" type, was thus coded as a model.

The codebooks were pretested with the magazines and revised to achieve reliability. Reliability "can be defined as the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.141). Since the goal of content analysis is to identify and record characteristics of communication in an unbiased and objective matter, the reliability of coding methods and instructions is crucial for success (Tranell, 2004, p. 32).

By pretesting for reliability, the researcher was able to identify and correct the design of the codebooks. To do this, a preliminary content analysis of magazines not in the sample, was performed by the researcher and then by a supervisor. The two sets of code sheets were then compared for discrepancies and the process was repeated and revised until agreement between the two could be established.

For instance, an early version of the image codebook had a much more extensive race category with options such as Native American, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Asian, etc. After testing this category, it was determined that the exact race of subjects was too difficult to determine, so this category was revised to have only three options: clearly white, clearly African American, or not clearly white or clearly African American.

The categories of the text codebook were also revised. For example, the category that coded for main focus of the story initially had men, sex and love as separate topic choices. As stories were coded for reliability it became apparent that these categories overlapped too frequently and were often too difficult to discern from each other. This

resulted in sex and love being consolidated into a single choice, and men being removed

as a focus type altogether. For full examples of the codebooks please see Appendix B.

Findings

Story focus

Stories across all magazines focused most often on *Sex/Love* (23%; n=125),

Beauty (21%; n=113), and *Fashion* (20%; n=108). Overall, the article focus found

least often was *Career/School Success* (3.5%; n=19). An example of this emphasis

can be found in any number of issues, but the October issue of *Cosmopolitan* is

illustrative. The issue contained 27 articles focused on romantic relationships or

sexually oriented advice, 13 articles focused on beauty, and eight articles focused on

fashion. There were two articles focused on career or school success in this issue.

The magazines differed in their article focus, but not dramatically and in

ways that might be expected (X^2 = 51.01; df=16; p<.01). See Table 1. For instance,

Cosmopolitan focused much more often on sex/love in its articles than did *Glamour*

and *Seventeen*, and *Seventeen* focused slightly more often on sex/love than did

Glamour. *Glamour* focused more on health than did *Cosmopolitan* and *Seventeen*.

Table 1: Differences among magazines by article focus

Focus	*Cosmopolitan*	*Glamour*	*Seventeen*	Total in all Magazines
Beauty	18%(42)	24%(42)	22%(29)	21%(113)
Health	9%(20)	15%(26)	10%(13)	11%(59)
Sex/Love	35.5%(82)	14%(24)	14%(19)	23%(125)
Fashion	14%(33)	21%(37)	29%(38)	20%(108)
Emotion/Mood	6.5%(15)	3%(6)	4%(5)	5%(26)
Interview	4%(10)	9%(16)	6%(8)	6%(34)
Success	3%(6)	5%(8)	4%(5)	3.5%(19)
Consumer/gifts	5%(12)	6%(10)	9%(12)	6%(34)
Other	5%(11)	3%(5)	3%(4)	4%(20)

Emphasis on relationships

The data collected indicated that the majority of articles in *Cosmopolitan,*
Glamour and *Seventeen* did not focus on relationships of any kind (62%; n=332), but
those that did emphasize relationships focused primarily on romantic relationships (31%,
n=168). A small number of the 538 total stories focused on friendships (5.4%l; n=29) and
even less so on workplace/school relationships (2%, n=9).

The magazines differ significantly in their emphasis on different types of
relationships (X^2 = 30.87; df=6; p<.01). See Table 2. *Cosmopolitan* focused nearly twice
as much on romantic relationships (43%, n=99) than *Glamour* (23%; n=40) or *Seventeen*
(22%, n=29). An example of this can be found in several issues of the sample. For
instance, the December issue of *Cosmopolitan* had 28 articles emphasizing romantic
relationships, five on friendships, one on workplace/school relationships and 21 articles
without any emphasis on relationships. In comparison, the December issue of *Glamour*
had a total of 50 stories, with 11 articles emphasizing romantic relationships, 1 article on
workplace/school relationships, 3 articles on friendship and 35 articles not focused on a
relationship of any kind.

Table 2: Emphasis on relationships by magazine

Relationship	*Glamour*	*Cosmopolitan*	*Seventeen*	Total in all Magazines
Friendship	5%(9)	6%(13)	5%(7)	5.5%(29)
Romantic	23%(40)	43%(99)	22%(29)	31%(168)
Workplace/School	3%(5)	2%(4)	0%(0)	2%(9)
None	69%(120)	50%(115)	73%(97)	62%(332)

Emphasis (or lack thereof) on different types of relationships also varied depending on article focus (X^2 = 491.42; df=24; p<.01). Almost all beauty and fashion articles had no focus on relationships (88%, n=100) and (93.5%, n=101) respectively. Articles coded as focusing on "sex/love" were most obviously romantic (94%, n=117), but focuses such as health (22%, n=13) and emotion/mood (23%, n=6) also turned out to emphasize romantic relationships. Articles that most frequently emphasized friendships were those focused on emotion/mood (31%, n=8), feature interviews (18%, n=6), and career/school success (10.5%, n=2). Workplace relationships were not significantly emphasized in any particular focus category.

Of the 1592 images of women and girls coded in *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Seventeen*, the majority were of girls or women alone (75%, n=1192). Roughly the same number were pictured with other women (11.3%, n=180) as were pictured with men (11.9%, n=189). A very small number were pictured in a group photo with both men and women (2%, n= 31).

As mentioned in the methods section, women in a collage of photos were coded independently from one another and thus coded as being pictured alone. As example of such a collage can be found on page 94 in the October issue of *Glamour* in which 11 women are pictured in an article titled "That's Some Sexy Straight Hair." See Appendix C.

The magazines were compared in terms of their depictions of women or girls in photos (X^2 = 69.15; df=6; p<.01). *Seventeen* had the most women pictured with others (13.8%, n=66) and *Cosmopolitan* had the most women pictured with men (21.5%, n=88). See Table 3 below for the full distribution.

Table 3: Women pictured alone or with others by magazine

	Cosmopolitan	*Glamour*	*Seventeen*	**Total w/in Magazines**
Alone	72%(294)	75.5%(530)	77%(368)	75% (1192)
With Women	6%(24)	13%(90)	14%(66)	11% (180)
With Men	21.5%(88)	10%(71)	6%(30)	12%(189)
With Men & Women	1%(4)	1.6%(11)	3%(16)	2% (31)

Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

Depiction of "average women" featured in the magazines

The magazines were similar in that the number of models and celebrities depicted did not differ greatly, but there was a substantial difference in their depiction of average women. The data gathered confirms that *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Seventeen* magazines feature celebrities and models more so than "average" women (X^2 = 65.098; df=4; p<.01). Of the total sample, 44% of women depicted were celebrities, 41.5% were models, and 14.5% were depicted as average women or girls – neither models nor celebrities. *Glamour* featured the most (18%, n=129), closely followed by *Seventeen* (17%, n=82), with *Cosmopolitan* a distant third (5%, n=20). See Table 4. For example, the October issue of Seventeen depicted 59 celebrities, 58 models, and 41 average people, whereas the October issue of *Cosmopolitan* depicted 40 celebrities, 50 models, and only six average people.

Table 4: Depictions of models, celebrities and average people

Role	*Cosmopolitan*	*Glamour*	*Seventeen*	Total w/in Magazines
Celebrity	47%(191)	48%(337)	36%(172)	44% (700)
Model	48.5%(199)	34%(236)	47%(226)	41.5%(661)
Girl Woman depicted as average	5% (20)	18%(129)	17%(82)	14.5%(231)

Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

The data shows that there was not a significant difference between the depiction of models and celebrities versus average people in terms of inactive or active poses in *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Seventeen* (X^2 = 68.42; df=4; p<.01). Models had the highest percentage of inactive poses (63%, n=415), compared to celebrities (56%, n=389) and average people (54%, n=125). Pictures in which the subject was only photographed from the chest up were coded as "n/a." The majority of images of women were coded as inactive, or passive, and a significant number of celebrities were coded "n/a." See Table 5.

Table 5: Active and inactive poses by role

Role	Active	Inactive	N/A
Celebrity	12% (81)	56%(289)	33%(230)
Model	22%(144)	63%(415)	15.5%(102)
Average Person	16.5%(38)	54%(125)	29%(68)

Photos across all magazines more frequently showed models (16%, n=1-7) pictured in sexual poses than celebrities (5%, n=38) or average people (2%, n=5), as almost all average people were non-sexual (98%, n=226; X^2 = 62.78; df=2; p<.01).

See Table 6. For example, of the total 410 images of women coded in *Cosmopolitan,* 30% (n=60) of the models were coded as "sexual", whereas only 7% (n=13) of celebrities and 15% (n=3) of girls or women presented as average were coded as such *(X² = 35.34; df=2; p<.01).*

Table 6: Celebrities, models and average people by pose

Role	Sexual	Non-Sexual
Celebrity	5%(38)	95%(662)
Model	16%(107)	84%(554)
Average Person	2%(5)	98%(226)
Total	9%(150)	90%(1442)

Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

The data collected shows that models were photographed in their underwear or nude more so than celebrities or average people, while average people were more often pictured in street clothes (everyday clothing) than models or celebrities *(X² = 342.61; df=8; p<.01)* . Models and celebrities were featured much more frequently pictured in fashionable clothing than average people. A higher percentage of celebrities were photographed from the chest up, meaning their clothes were not fully visible, than models or average people. See Table 7.

Table 7: Images of celebrities, models and average people by clothing

Role	Street	Fashion	Underwear	Nude	Can't Tell
Celebrity	14%(99)	48%(338)	2%(14)	.4%(3)	35%(246)
Model	16%(105)	49.5%(327)	11%(73)	3%(20)	21%(136)
Average Person	59%(136)	11%(25)	2.6%(6)	0%(0)	28%(64)
Total	21%(340)	43%(690)	6%(93)	1%(23)	28%(446)

Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

Images of race

Depiction of race across all magazines was on par with U.S. Census 2000 data of the American population. Of the 1592 images of women, most were coded as "clearly white" (72%, n=1153), some were coded as "clearly black" (15%, n=240) and some were coded as "not clearly white or clearly black" (12.5%, n=199). The depiction of race in *Cosmopolitan* was most accurate in comparison with the U.S. Census 2000, and *Glamour* and *Seventeen* had very similar percentages in depiction of race *(X^2 = 14.72; df=4; p<.01)*. See Table 8.

Table 8: Images of race by magazine

Race	*Cosmopolitan*	*Glamour*	*Seventeen*	U.S. Census 2000
White	79.5%(326)	69.2%(486)	71%(341	75%(2.8mil)
Black	11.5%(47)	16%(115)	16%(78)	12%
Not clearly white/black	9%(37)	14%(101)	13%(61)	Between10%-13%

*Not clearly white or black was calculated from the Census by adding up the main "mixed race" percentages
Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100

Race was not a factor in clothing, as similar percentages of white, black, and "not clearly white or clearly black" women were depicted in street clothes, fashion, underwear, etc *(X^2 = 21.29; df=8; p<.01)*. White women were slightly more likely to be pictured nude than black women or women who were coded as not clearly white or clearly black. See Table 9. For instance, of the 321 subjects coded in Glamour as wearing fashionable clothing, 47.5% were white (n=231), 37% were black (n=43) and 46% (n=47) were not clearly white or clearly black *(X^2 = 7.36; df=8; p<.01)*.

Table 9: Images of race by clothing

Race	Street	Fashion	Underwear	Nude	Can't Tell
White	21%(239)	45%(525)	6%(73)	2%(20)	26%(296)
Black	25%(61)	34%(82)	4%(10)	.8%(2)	35%(85)
Not clearly white/black	20%(40)	42%(83)	5%(10)	.5%(1)	33%(65)

The data collected shows that for the most part depictions of race relative to role (i.e. celebrity, model, or average person) and pose (i.e. active or inactive) are similar. Average people are slightly more frequently coded as black, or not clearly white or clearly black, than white *(X^2 = 16.51; df=4; p<.01)* and *(X^2 = 13.76; df=4; p<.01)*. See Table 10 and Table 11. For an example of diversified images of race in the December issue of *Glamour*, see an article titled "Choose the Best Shade for Your Skin," which depicts the magazine's attempt to cater to diverse readers. See Appendix C.

Table 10: Depiction of race by role

Race	Celebrity	Model	Average Person
White	43%(493)	44%(509)	13%(151)
Black	45%(108)	38%(91)	17%(41)
Not clearly white/black	50%(99)	31%(61)	20%(39)

Table 11: Depiction of race by pose

Race	Active	Inactive	N/A
White	17%(199)	60%(691)	23%(263)
Black	17%(40)	53%(127)	30%(73)
Not clearly white/black	12%(24)	56%(111)	32%(64)

Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

Facial expressions

Overall, the most common facial expression in *Seventeen, Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* was "happy/smiling" (67.5%, n=1075), followed by a "serious/blank" look (10%, n=157). *Seventeen* and *Glamour* had more "happy/smiling" faces than *Cosmopolitan*, which had significantly more expressions coded as "sexual" and "can't tell because eyes are not visible" *(X^2 = 82.35; df=12; p<.01).* See Table 12. For example, in the March issue of *Cosmopolitan* an article titled "Cosmo Weekend: You and Him" on page194 depicts a woman in her underwear facing a man with her back to the camera in one photo, and in another photo she is smiling while giving him a back massage. See Appendix C.

Table 12: Facial expressions by magazine

Expression	*Cosmopolitan*	*Glamour*	*Seventeen*	**Total in all magazines**
Happy/Smiling	54%(221)	71%(497)	75%(357)	67.5%(1075)
Angry	1%(5)	.5%(4)	.5%(2)	1%(11)
Intense/Crying	.5%(2)	1%(10)	1%(6)	1%(18)
Submissive	.5%(2)	0%(0)	.2%(1)	.2%(3)
Sexual	16%(65)	7%(52)	8%(40)	10%(157)
Serious/Blank	23%(94)	19%(135)	14%(68)	19%(297)
Not Visible	5%(21)	.5%(4)	1%(6)	2%(31)

Note: Because of rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The content analysis performed in this study revealed findings that both confirmed and contradicted past research on women's magazines cited in the literature review. Findings in this study showed sex/love to be the forerunner of article focus in *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Seventeen*, closely trailed by beauty and fashion articles. This correlates with past research completed by Garner, Stark and Adams (1998), which says that women's magazines emphasize the importance of heterosexual romance, sexual techniques and attracting male attention.

This study found that most articles did not focus on relationships, but those that did so concentrated almost entirely on romantic relationships, with very few on friendships or workplace relationships. Similarly, articles on career/school success were nearly absent from the magazines, an interesting finding considering that the magazines proclaim to be women and girls' guides to life. Does this imply that career/school success is not an important aspect of girl's and women's lives?

Past research also stressed that the beauty ideal is largely centered on being white, thus excluding other minorities such as African Americans and those of mixed descent through symbolic annihilation. This study, however, found that the depiction of race in the magazines was accurate in terms of the population of the United States. The beauty ideal presented might more often feature white women than minorities, but according to U.S. Census 2000 data, the U.S. population is about 75 percent white.

This research also refutes claims that women are hypersexualized, as the researcher found that the majority of women were in non-sexual poses, pictured alone rather than with men, and most often smiling. However, this study did find that the majority of women were pictured as inactive, which could reinforce notions that women are presented as passive objects. The exception to this finding was *Cosmopolitan*, in which women were more frequently pictured in sexual poses with men than in *Glamour* or *Seventeen*, and in a few instances their facial features were not visible, a finding similar to that of Patrice Oppliger's (2008) study.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings was the undeniable similarities between *Glamour*, a women's magazine, and *Seventeen*, a girl's magazine. *Seventeen* was found to have more in common with *Glamour* relative to textual and visual content than either *Seventeen* or *Glamour* had with *Cosmopolitan*. Could it be that a woman's and teen magazine is more similar than two women's magazines? *Glamour* and *Seventeen*, owned by Condé Nast and Hearst respectively, had nearly identical depictions of race and facial expression, as well as similar emphasizes on relationships and article focuses. This reinforces past research that teen magazines are often strikingly similar to publications with an older audience.

Conclusions

In performing this study, yet another year of my women's magazine reading career is behind me -- only this time thoroughly documented. After more than 10 years of reading girls and women's magazines, I designed this study to answer some big questions about the content and messages of market-leading publications, *Cosmopolitan, Glamour*, and *Seventeen*. I wanted to examine the potential effect that such magazines could have

in shaping women's (namely my friends') and my own identities. Twelve magazine issues, 1592 images and 538 stories later, I still have yet to cancel my magazine subscriptions and have no plans to do so, as I actually am pursuing a career in the magazine industry when I graduate this spring.

Through completing this study, I have unveiled some troubling findings about the content of the magazines – their overwhelming emphasis on sex, love, romantic relationships and beauty, all framed through a heterosexual, male lens. I also found aspects that were encouraging, such as their accurate depiction relative to images of race and their lack of overall emphasis on relationships.

 More importantly, in my opinion, I've highlighted some holes in their content – where are the articles telling women how to get ahead in their careers, excel academically and encouraging them to pursue their dreams? Through my thorough research of past and present magazines, in addition to my examination of scholarly studies on the effect of consuming this form of media, it has become clearer to me than ever that magazines are an excellent conduit for a message to girls and women. The problem lies in whether or not that message is an empowering one.

I want to work in the magazine industry because I am a believer in the power of magazines. I have learned that teen and women's magazines have the potential to impact how girls and women feel about themselves, their relationships and their goals, so if we can get the right content into the pages of these magazines than we have the chance to really make an impact. Do women and girls want advice on their romantic relationships and physical appearance? Sure, most of them do, but to counteract the message that achieving physical beauty and male satisfaction should be the objective of their lives,

these messages need to be intertwined with messages of female empowerment and success, as well as the importance of being well-rounded and maintaining solid friendships.

Perhaps a balance in these messages is nearly impossible to achieve, and he findings of this study – particularly in regard to teen magazines – remind us that we as consumers can't always have control over how a message may be presented, but what we can have self-control over is how that message is perceived. As I said, I am still an avid reader of women's magazines, and I still race to the newsstand to get the latest issue of *Cosmopolitan* to cuddle up with, but I have adopted a new practice – media literacy. I no longer allow myself to passively flip through the pages of a magazine without evaluating and analyzing the content. I do this so as to not allow negative messages to nestle themselves in my subconscious. For example, an article might encourage me to get in shape, but in the past I would interpret it as "I better lose 10 pounds before bikini season or no one will think I am as worthy of being paid attention to as the other girls." Now, I think about what I am really supposed to get from this message, and I can learn to take it at face value and interpret it as "OK, this is an opportunity to help me be more fit" as opposed to a body-bashing field day at my expense. I am more aware that reading these magazines affects how I view myself and others, and I can educate other women to practice media literacy by actively evaluating messages they are presented with. By transforming the process of media consumption into an active and critical one, women and girls can gain greater awareness of the potential for misrepresentation and understand the role of mass media in constructing views of reality.

This brings me to some new questions about these magazines. It occurred to me after completing this study that perhaps magazine editors think that women and girls don't want these magazines to reflect reality – reality is boring and they would rather think that life only exists in New York, L.A. and Paris – what they want is fantasy. I used to think this as well, claiming that magazines were my escape from reality. Now I can't help but wonder, do women want the truth in these magazines or do they sincerely use them as an escape into a fantasyland that they think is better than their own? If they approach them in this way, do they think it then has zero impact on their social construction of reality? Further research could be done on what women are truly trying to gain from women's magazines, and if a direct causal link could be found between consuming the messages in magazines and women's pursuit of the attainment of physical perfection. Further research could also examine why a women's magazine such as *Glamour* would have so much in common with a teen publication such as *Seventeen*, and whether or not such similarities are detrimental.

Appendix A

Codebook: Subjects of *Women's Magazines* images

Overall: Code all editorial photos. Code each person on the cover and in article images separately. Do not code those in the background of a photo, such as those in the crowd, and only code images of women. Do not code people whose face is not completely visible in the photograph. Do not code advertisements of any kind.

MAG: Indicate the magazine

Code	Description
0	Cosmopolitan
1	Glamour
2	Seventeen

MO: Indicate the month the issue was published.

Code	Description
0	January
1	February
2	March
3	April
4	May
5	June
6	July
7	August
8	September
9	October
10	November
11	December

AL: Indicate whether you are coding a woman/girl on the cover, as part of an article, in an advertisement, or if you can't tell.

Code	Description
0	Cover
1	Article

GR: Indicate whether the subject is shown by herself or with other women or with a man.

Code	Description
0	Pictured alone
1	Pictured with one or more women
2	Pictured with one or more men

RA: Indicate whether the person is white, black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Arab, or another race.

Code	Description
0	The photo subject is light-skinned, clearly Caucasian
1	The photo subject is black – clearly African American
2	The photo subject is non-white, non-black (neither clearly white nor black)

RO: Indicate whether the subject of the photo is a celebrity, a model, a "real" person or if you don't know.

Code	Description
0	Celebrity (actress, singer, reality TV star, etc.)
1	Model
2	Average person (someone who is not supposed to be a "model")
3	Can't tell

PO: Indicate whether the subject is in an active or inactive pose.

Code	Description
0	Active – The subject is engaged in physical activity or posture indicates movement. If the subject is not in action, he/she is in a pose suggesting action or preparing for movement.
1	Inactive – The subject is in a <u>posed</u> posture, one that suggests rest, such as sitting, lying down or standing still/upright; or she is photographed only from the chest up.
2	N/A such as in a mug shot.

CL: Indicate whether the subject is wearing street clothes, high fashion, underwear or mostly nude.

Code	Description
0	Street clothes – the person is in everyday clothes, not the focus of the photograph
1	Fashion – the person is in glamorous clothing, clothing is a key element in photo
2	Underwear – the person is lingerie or underwear
3	Nude – the person is not wearing clothing, but private parts are

	concealed or sides of breasts or buttocks are showing.
4	Can't tell – The person's clothes are not visible in the photograph, as in a mug shot or cut-out.

ACT: Indicate the body of the subject.

Code	Description
0	Sexual – pictured with a man/woman or alone in a sexual pose
1	Non-Sexual – person may be passive but is not posed provocatively

EM: Indicate the visible <u>facial</u> emotions of the subjects in each photograph.

Code	Description
0	Happy, smiling, celebrating, cheering, posing for the camera with a smile, joking with the camera/viewer
1	Angry, aggressive, scowling, threatening
2	Intense emotion – crying, shouting, look of fear/surprise, intense frustration
3	Submissive – only for use when pictured with another individual, usually male. The expression is one of being dominated by someone else or giving in to them.
4	Sexual – Giving a "come hither" look, illusion of sexual desire or selling something with the motive of "sex", kissing or winking, demure look
5	No expression – serious, contemplative or blank look
6	Cannot be determined visually — The subject's eyes are not visible, or the subject's face is so small (as in a mug shot or cut-out) that the facial features cannot be seen.

Appendix B

Codebook: **Text** in *Prominent Women's Magazines*

Overall: Code each cover line and headline on each page separately. Code all articles in the Table of Contents. Do not code horoscopes, letters to the editor, letters by the editor or reader feedback. Do not code advertisements.

MAG: Indicate the magazine.

Code	Description
0	Cosmopolitan
1	Glamour
2	Seventeen

MO: Indicate the month the magazine was published. _____

Code	Description
0	January
1	February
2	March
3	April
4	May
5	June
6	July
7	August
8	September
9	October
10	November
11	December

GR: Indicate primary focus of the article.

Code	Description
0	Beauty (facial/skincare/body)
1	Health
2	Sex/Love
3	Fashion
4.	Emotion/Mood
5	Feature interview
6	Career/success
7	Consumer/gifts, etc.
8	Other/not sure

RA: Indicate whether the message of the text is focused on successful improvement of relationships

Code	Description
0	The text is focused on friendships
1	The text is focused on romantic relationships
2	The text is focused on workplace relationships
3	The text is not about relationships of any kind.

Appendix C

shop for your body!

When you hit the right store, the clothes feel like they were *made* for you.

petite

olena, 18

Guess platforms are extra tall to make your legs look longer.

A body-hugging dress will really accentuate every curve you have.

sweater Sizes XS–XL, $49.
dress Sizes XS–XL, $89.
earrings $25.
necklace $42.
bracelet $30.
ring $25.
shoes Sizes 5–10, $99.

All items available at Guess stores.

small bust

connie, 17

The fabric on this sweatshirt isn't too bulky—it will look streamlined on your small frame!

This fun belt comes in four colors—perfect for creating an hourglass shape.

top Sizes XXS–XL, $48.
shorts Sizes 0–18, $38.
belt Sizes S–L, $20.

All items available at American Eagle Outfitters stores.

seventeen.com
Check out celebs' figure-flattering tricks at seventeen.com/perfectfit

TURN for more looks! →

$ MAKE MONEY, SAVE MONEY! Never spend past your credit limit on your credit card. You'll typically end up paying around $30 in penalty fees for going even $1 over!

curvy booty

sarie, 20

This cute hoodie hits right below the waist, so it won't hide your butt!

These bright jeans are new for spring—the pockets angle in to really make your booty pop!

hoodie Sizes XS–XL, $45.
t-shirt Sizes XS–XL, $20.
jeans Sizes 0–12, $50.
belt Sizes S–L, $25.

All items available at Aéropostale stores.

curvy all over

kelly, 18

The V–neck and Empire waist keep eyes on the smallest part of you.

Torrid has lots of above–the–knee dresses that highlight the most toned part of your legs.

dress Sizes 12–26, Torrid, $64.
necklace $14.
bracelets $12 for set of six.

All items available at Torrid stores and torrid.com.

ON SARIE, EARRINGS, FOREVER 21; SNEAKERS, REEBOK. ON KELLY: EARRINGS, K + K CREATIVE; SHOES, OLD NAVY.

MAKE MONEY, SAVE MONEY! Babysit for two kids at once—but charge only 50 percent more. The parents will love the savings, and you'll make extra cash!

Choose the Best Shade for *Your* Skin

Little-known truth: Your complexion should determine your hair color.

(A CHEAT SHEET)

If your skin is DARK OR OLIVE...

To get an auburn color, avoid shades billed as "warm"—they'll make your skin look orangey—and stick with "cool" reds; try Revlon Color-Silk in Dark Auburn ($4, at drugstores). If you think you'd have more fun as a blond, visit a salon; it's a pro-only job.

If your skin is MEDIUM...

Think "cool" and "ash" browns like L'Oréal Paris Féria Multi-Faceted Shimmering Haircolour in Crystal Brown ($10, at drugstores). If you have light eyes, consider "cool" reds; if they're darkish, do a mahogany hue or cinnamon highlights. To go blond, hit a salon.
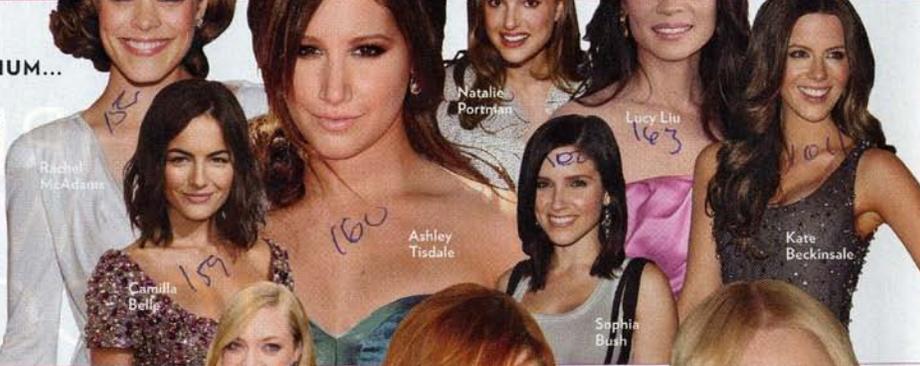
If your skin is FAIR...

Stick with honey blond or ginger colors and ones labeled "neutral." Try Clairol Natural Instincts in Coastal Dune ($9, at drugstores). Want to be a brunette? Choose a semipermanent "warm" shade. Avoid "cool" reds—they look unnatural against pale skin.

Alicia Keys

Vanessa Hudgens

Beyoncé

Mary J. Blige

Zoe Saldana

Sherri Shepherd

Jessica Szohr

Rachel McAdams

Camilla Belle

Ashley Tisdale

Natalie Portman

Lucy Liu

Sophia Bush

Kate Beckinsale

Scarlett Johansson

Amanda Seyfried

Ashlee Simpson-Wentz

Christina Hendricks

Liv Tyler

Nicole Kidman

Kate Bosworth

cosmo
weekend

BY VICTORIA P. LOWE

His Pet Peeve

"I text her when I'm out at a club or a concert, and she calls me instead of just texting back."

—Kris, 31

At a concert, Talk later.

Fun Fearless Way to Meet a Guy

Approach a cutie while shopping. Tell him you are going to a party and want a guy's opinion on a new outfit. Then show him two options, and make it at least *seem* like you'll take his advice. Of course tell him where the bash is and suggest he stop by.
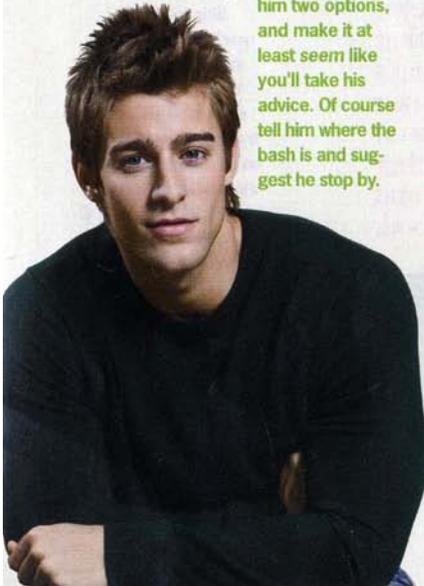
Hot Moment Together
Relax Each Other

Days off are all about unwinding, and there's a new trend that will help you and your guy do just that: Thai massage. De-stress him with a sexy move called the Assisted Cobra. Have your guy lie on his stomach while you kneel down on his glutes. Gently pull his arms back by the wrists, then switch (he'll have to support his weight a bit on his heels). Helping each other decompress is way hotter than going to a spa and having a stranger rub you both down.

He's about to invent a move of his own.

Tap In to Your Guy's Weekend Brain

The PDA he'll actually go for when you're out

A Quick Peck on the Cheek
The brief and innocent contact leaves him wanting a lot more.

The Thigh Grip
He likes that this is slightly sexual but not publicly inappropriate.

"Accidental" Brushing
Discreetly bump up against him with your breasts.

SOURCE: DATING EXPERT KIMBERLY DAWN NEUMANN, AUTHOR OF *THE REAL REASONS MEN COMMIT*

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Education:
> Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, Penn State University, Spring 2010
> Minor in Women's Studies
> Honors in Journalism
> Thesis Title: The Framing of Femininity in Popular Women's Magazines in
> > 2009: A Content Analysis of *Seventeen, Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*
> Thesis Supervisor: Marie Hardin

Related Experience:

GirlsGuideTo.com, *College Content Editor*, Summer 2009
> > Supervisor: Brette Borow, Founder
> > Responsible for generating and editing material for the "ladies only" guide to college life
> > Focused on giving the website a greater presence and readership via social networking sites

Niche Media LLC – Philadelphia Style Magazine, *Fashion & Editorial Intern,*
> > Summer 2008
> > Supervisors: Sarah Schaffer, Editor-in-Chief and Jessie Lane, Fashion Editor
> > Researched trends for the fashion and accessory pages
> > Assisted on photo shoots
> > Brainstormed article ideas and fashion spread themes
> > Served as the liaison between high-end designers PR reps and the magazine
> > Helped in the planning and execution of magazine-sponsored events

Valley Magazine, *Fashion Editor*, Spring 2007-Present
> > Supervisor: Devin Tomb, Editor-in-Chief
> > Penn State's premiere life and style magazine
> > Oversaw the "fashion team" and is responsible for all editorial content in the Collegiate Couture section
> > Works closely with the executive officers to identify the target audience

Alpha Sigma Alpha, *President,* Elected Fall 2007
> > Executive officer presiding over a chapter of 94 members

Liaison between the Panhellenic Council and the chapter, the chapter and ASA National Headquarters

Designed and executed a New Member Program to combat hazing and promote Greek unity

Established a networking system to maintain relationships with sorority alumni and donors

Awards:

Phi Beta Kappa
Golden Key
Dean's List all semesters
National Society of Leadership and Success
National Society of Collegiate Scholars

Activities:

Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON, Fall 2006-Present

THON is the largest student-run philanthropy in the world and raises funds for pediatric cancer through Hershey Medical Center's Four Diamonds Fund

As one of the top fundraisers, I danced in THON 2010 for 46 hours representing Alpha Sigma Alpha, to raise awareness and funds for this cause