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Measuring short-term media effects upon women's self esteem

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MEASURING SHORT-TERM MEDIA EFFECTS
UPON WOMEN'S SELF ESTEEM

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science

by

Mahvish Bari

August 2007

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ABSTRACT

MEASURING SHORT-TERM MEDIA EFFECTS UPON WOMEN'S SELF ESTEEM

by Mahvish Bari

This study measures the short term effects of exposure to the content of women's magazines upon women's self esteem and body image satisfaction. Out of the top 20 U.S. women's magazines, 8 are selected for experimentation and analysis. The subjects are exposed to 10 images and 10 articles, which are categorized as positive stimuli and negative stimuli.

This study is not to solely examine the content of women's magazines, criticize the genre, and certainly not to transform the industry. It is targeted more towards measuring the effects, and studying the influences upon a woman's self image.

As predicted, Group A, females who were exposed to the positive depictions of women scored higher on all three self esteem questionnaires than Group B, females who were exposed to negative depictions of women.

DEDICATION

I would like to thank the faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications, specifically Dr. Baldwin, Dr. Craig, and Dr. Tillinghast for their generous guidance, patience, and support. I would also like to thank both of my parents for their consistent encouragement and genuine enthusiasm, without which this thesis would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Many theorists have contended that the media's constant and salient equating of slenderness and beauty with self-worth and success has a powerful and adverse effect on the ideal body shape and resulting body satisfaction of women (Chafe, 1991). Women's magazines in the United States have been critical in shaping as well as reflecting the values, ideologies, habits, and aspirations of American women. Political events, such as the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and the Women's Suffrage Movement, have contributed significantly in bringing about social change in the media depiction as well as the representation of women's issues (Peterson, 1964). The economic climate, political climate, and social norms have been influential, as well as influenced by, the content exposure and structure represented in mainstream print magazines.

The analysis of the social effects of magazine content has not been subjected to any attempted scientific evaluations or explanations (Ford, 1969). Journalism in general, specifically newspaper, radio, and television, has received a great deal of academic attention by researchers and scholars. But not many studies have been conducted on the content and effects of magazines (Garner, 1980). Whether a magazine publisher should have a social purpose at all, or whether such a purpose should be the main reason for being, is a constantly debated matter.

Out of all the major areas in magazine publishing, the most changes have occurred within women's magazines, with regard to content and images (Hendersen-King & Hendersen-King, 1997). These changes reflect the evolving role of women in today's

society. With the changing interests of readers, magazines have been forced to redefine and redirect their contents in order to maintain circulation.

The most accessible evidence of how mass communication works is provided by a vast body of messages and meanings, which are continuously transmitted and received from all kinds of different media. The reasons for studying media content in a systematic way stem from an interest in the potential effects of mass communications, or from a wish to understand the appeal of content to the audience (McQuail, 2000).

Early studies of content reflected concern about the portrayal of crime, violence, or sex in popular entertainment; the use of media as propaganda; and the performance of media with respect to racial or other kinds of prejudice. The range of purposes was gradually extended to cover news, information, and entertainment content. Most early research was based on the assumption that content reflected the purposes and values of its originators, more or less directly; that meaning could be discovered or inferred from messages; and that receivers would understand messages more or less as intended by producers (McQuail, 2000). It was even thought that effects could be discovered from the seeming message built into content. More broadly, the content of mass media had often been regarded as more or less reliable evidence about the culture and society in which it was produced. Overall, the study of content became increasingly complex and challenging.

With their power to frame, define, and neglect aspects of the social world, the mass media are a principal social and cultural institution. The central position of the media in everyday life ensures that symbols distributed through the media become points

of focus and interaction in the population. Imagery is contested and criticized by various groups and individuals. Ethnic, religious, and gender groups struggle to influence society's values, myths, symbols, and information through media (Gans, Herbert, 1972, as cited in McQuail, 2000), whereas individuals ignore, devalue, and criticize media images. Media processes are studied through multiple methods. These include quantitative work, such as content analyses, and experimental studies, which have concluded that a stereotyped or unrealistic content can affect or harm individuals (Milkie, 1999). For example, researchers who have done content analyses of girls' magazines suggest that unrealistic beauty images and a focus on traditional femininity may damage girls' self-image (Milkie, 1999).

In particular, it has been argued that the media, particularly beauty and fashion advertisements, provide images of an unattainable "ideal," and that these images may have a cumulative effect on women's satisfaction with their appearance (Kilbourne & Jhally, 1987). The more pervasive the media imagery, the more women feel they must meet these unattainable standards and the less positive they feel about their bodies. The female body is reflected and portrayed in the media as an object of desire. Targeting markets to sell products such as diet, cosmetics, and exercise gear, the media constructs a dream world of hopes and high standards that incorporates the glorification of slenderness and weight loss. Research indicates that magazine advertisements and other media ploys are often used as a social comparison. However the degree to which women are susceptible to media messages about physical attractiveness may depend on other factors in addition to media exposure. If acute exposure to magazine images and content

of stereotypical attractiveness causes a decrease in psychological well being, it is possible that chronic exposure is in part responsible for the increasing concerns for weight, appearance, and shape found in Western cultures (Gardner, et al., 2002). Content analyses often show how media content departs from reality in regard to who is represented, and how groups and situations are portrayed. Experimental studies show how content involving depictions of women and accompanying stereotypes affects self-concept, attitudes, and behavior. Often the impact has been strongly negative.

The idea that one type of medium may influence a woman's self-image and self perception and could be the deciding factor on how young women felt about their body is a very poignant subject. The media promotes and reproduces our culture's standards for what women's bodies look like and the importance of beauty. The media also seems to emphasize that thinness, attractiveness, and beauty equate with happiness, success, and galore. The socio-cultural perspective is that mass media such as fashion magazines and television promote, if not establish, a standard of slender beauty that leads many females to feel badly about their weight shape, and appearance (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). Many women are caught in this trap from the print media to achieve this perfect image that the magazines portray. The principal findings in most media effects studies point out that further research is necessary to elucidate why women are motivated to read fashion magazines and how the media can aid in primary or secondary prevention of negative body image (Cash, et al., 1983).

Purpose of Study

This study will measure the short term effects of exposure to content of women's magazines upon women's self esteem and body image satisfaction. Out of the top 20 U.S. Women's magazines, 8 will be selected for experimentation and analysis. The subjects will be exposed to 10 images and 10 articles, which will be categorized and better explained in detail in the Methods section.

This study is not to solely examine the content of Women's magazines, criticize the genre, and certainly not to transform the industry. It is targeted more towards measuring the effects, and studying the influences upon a woman's self-image. The overall effect of what has actually occurred due the emergence of a new genre of women's magazines would be interesting to study. What has really occurred? Is this new content really liberating for women? Does more skin exposure and attention to sexuality constitute as part of a woman's empowerment? What happens to a woman's self-image when she is bombarded by magazine content which focuses on her sexuality, desirability, ability to attract and capture a man, rather than her intellect, nature, spirituality, and career ambitions in life? What happens to a woman's body satisfaction when all she sees in magazines are figures, shapes and bodies of the "thin ideal" which statistically only five percent of the women in the United States actually have (Kilbourne & Jhally, 1987). Perhaps what has resulted is more cyclical. Maybe women are yet still entrapped and imprisoned by media's images, but this time it is not by what is restricted, but by what is overly exposed. Now the question is not an issue of women's rights, but of women's

portrayal and constant stigma as a sexual object. What are the resulting effects of this exposure upon women's self-esteem and body satisfaction, and eventually, mass society?

Perhaps after analyzing the findings, editors, writers, and publishers of these magazines will be more sensitized to what they are portraying and producing for women today.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The most accessible evidence of how mass communication worked was provided by a vast body of messages and meanings, which were continuously transmitted and received from all kinds of different media. The reasons for studying media content in a systematic way stemmed from an interest in the potential effects of mass communications or from a wish to understand the appeal of content for the audience. Early studies of content reflected concern about the portrayal of crime, violence, sex in popular entertainment, the use of media as a propaganda and the performance of media in respect to racial or other kinds of prejudice. The range of purposes was gradually extended to cover news, information, and entertainment content. Most early research was based on the assumption that content reflected the purposes and values of its originators, more or less directly, that meaning could be discovered or inferred from messages, and that receivers would understand messages more or less as intended by producers. It was even thought that effects could be discovered from the seeming message built into content. More broadly, the content of mass media had often been regarded as more or less reliable evidence about the culture and society in which it is produced. Overall, the study of content became increasingly complex and challenging.

Media Communication Model

Different types of content had different effects and results from different audience needs and organizational pressures. However, most studies did not explicitly examine content; rather, they looked at the time spent with a particular media vehicle versus other activities (television versus newspapers). There were countless ways to categorize media content. Labels based on audience appeals (highbrow/lowbrow), particular effects (pro-social/anti-social), the medium used (television, radio, print) and sexual content (pornographic, non-pornographic). The most common approach was suggested by Harold Lasswell in relationship to his Communication Model (Lasswell, Harold, as cited in McQuail, Dennis, 2000). He identified three important functions that communication served in society: (1) the *surveillance* of the environment; (2) the *correlation* of parts of society in responding to the environment; and (3) the *transmission* of social heritage from one generation to another. Entertainment had been a fourth addition to the list. The two functions which were most pertinent to the study of magazines and print media were transmission and entertainment. All forms of content transmitted the perceived norms of society in some way. Although Lasswell considered educators to be society's socialites, virtually all mass media performed this function at some point in time.

Even in magazines designed for women, stereotypes were well defined. In a sample of women's magazines, such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, Helen Franzwa found that all the women in fiction stories were defined by the absence or presence of men in their lives, furthering a dependent and passive stereotype (Moore-Daman, 1994). As a corollary, work for women was treated as secondary to their home

life and even undesirable. Susannah Wilson (1981) analyzed two general interest magazines, and found that fewer fictional heroines in these publications were employed, compared with the percentage in the population (Moore-Daman, 1994). Few working married women and even fewer working mothers were portrayed. Helen Butcher (1981) noted a consistent image of women across several media outlets, all depicting women as oriented toward being mothers, wives, housewives, and sex objects (Chafe, 1991).

Agenda Setting

Agenda setting was a theory about the transfer of salience of the elements in mass media's pictures to the elements of the pictures in one's mind frames, generated by Walter Lipmann. The core theoretical idea was that elements prominent in the media picture became prominent in the audience's picture. The core hypothesis stated that the degree of emphasis placed on issues in the news images (Lippmann, 1960) influenced the priority accorded these issues by the public. Agenda setting has shown strengths in its compatibility and complementarities with a variety of other social science concepts and theories. Incorporated concepts included status conferral, stereotyping, image-building, and gate keeping.

Walter Lippmann's hypothesis stated that the perceptions people had of the larger universe, of the things they could not see for themselves, were not the results of direct observations or firsthand experiences. According to Lippmann, they were the result of second hand information derived mainly from mass media images and reports (McQuail, 2000).

Lippmann's hypothesis can be actively studied and applied to the content analysis of women's magazines. What really needed overlooking were the constant cultural messages about perfection that created a loathing in many women for their very own body parts and appearance. It would have been more constructive, to turn a critical eye on the culture that encourages such destructive conclusions, a media which perpetuates it, rather than to a woman's very self.

Prior Research and Recent Studies

Media content analyses have indicated that mass media tend to portray the female form as much thinner than the average body size in the population, particularly in the last twenty years. This shift toward a thinner ideal was first documented by David Garner et al. (1980) where they found a 20% decrease in the body measurements and weights of *Playboy* centerfolds and Miss America Pageant contestants from 1959 to 1978. This decrease was combined with a significant increase in the number of diet articles in popular women's magazines over the same period (Garner, et al., 1980). In a more recent analysis, 21 popular women's magazines throughout 1996 were examined, and on 78% of the covers there was a message regarding bodily appearance (Forbes, Curtis-Adams, Rade, Jaberg, 2001). And in 1985, Gonzalez-Lavin and Smolak found that 94% of the female characters on television shows favored by young females were below average in their weight (Milkie, 1999). Thus, it is evident that the depiction of the female body shape in magazines and on television is hugely distorted and fails to represent the real diversity of female body shapes (Durkin, 1999). Socio-cultural pressures are thought to play a very influential role in the prevalence of body satisfaction in contemporary

Western society. An increasing incidence of body dissatisfaction has coincided with changes in socio-cultural norms for females over the past few decades. In contemporary society the ideal female is thin, tall and long legged, and there is a pervasive belief among women that one needs to fit this ideal to be successful. These messages about the ideal female form are transmitted largely through mass media. The ubiquitous nature of the mass media makes it a particularly powerful force for influencing social attitudes. With a moderate level of body dissatisfaction now believed to be normal among females, many researchers have looked toward this far reaching medium of print magazines as a driving force for the dissemination of notions that a slender body is desirable (Forbes, et. al., 2001).

Many studies have indicated that females often compare themselves with idealized images presented in media. This tendency to self-compare is another possible factor that makes women vulnerable to the negative impact of media exposure. Fifty percent of the women in one study reported comparing themselves with the models in advertisements “about half the time or more” and that these advertisements made them feel dissatisfied with the way they look (Ritchins, 1991). In a similar study, the majority of females thought about comparing oneself to the models when reading magazines and they associated negative self-evaluations with the process of reading magazines. It’s often found that certain personality characteristics make a woman more vulnerable to these images in magazines. Erika Shaw (1994) found that adolescents showed greater body dissatisfaction after viewing fashion magazines than did young adult females (Stice, et. al, 1994). Another study has indicated that Caucasian women were more affected by

idealized images than African American or Latino women, as these women did not identify with predominantly “white” images, nor did they believe that males their age or their peers were influenced by them, unlike the “white” girls (Milkie, 1999).

Recent research has also suggested that women with certain “vulnerability” characteristics may be more susceptible to the impact of thin-ideal media. In one of the most sophisticated studies into the association between reported media exposure and body dissatisfaction, Eric Stice et al. (1994) investigated the influence of individual characteristics in mediating the effects of “thin ideal” media exposure on body satisfaction). They found that greater exposure was associated with increased acceptance of traditional female gender roles, which in turn lead to increased acceptance of the thin ideal, which was in turn associated with greater body dissatisfaction. This study indicates an indirect route from exposure to negative body image, where the characteristics of the person viewing the idealized images influence the extent of the impact. Supporting this, Dale L. Cusumano and J. Kevin Thompson (1997) found that the level of internalization of societal standards of appearance predicted the level of body dissatisfaction after viewing fashion magazines.

A number of studies have investigated the role of individual characteristics by measuring body satisfaction and self-esteem prior to and after exposing females to images of thin models, and examining which types of women are most affected by the exposure. Leslie J. Heinberg and J. Kevin Thompson (1995) found that those high on measures of body image disturbance and internalization of socio-cultural attitudes of

thinness and attractiveness became significantly more depressed and dissatisfied with their appearance following the exposure. (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997).

A number of studies have examined body satisfaction, eating disorder symptomatology, and negative effects as correlates of using mass media images. A group of researchers from Kenyon College set up a quantitative, meta-analytic review of controlled experiments that evaluate the immediate effects of images of slender, ideal beauty on female body image (Gardner, et al., 2002). The following information was recovered through the Kenyon College Study: Department of Psychology The authors hypothesized that viewing slender models would increase a female's immediate sense of body dissatisfaction and that females with a pre-experiment history of eating disorders or high body dissatisfaction scores would be more susceptible to the negative effects of thin media images. Data from 25 studies were used to examine the main effect of mass media images of the slender ideal, as well as the moderating effects of pre-existing body image problems, the age of women, the number of stimulus presentations, and the type of research design. All studies contained actual media stimuli that depict the entire body of thin models and included slides, advertisements or video clips from television commercials. As a control comparison, the study included stimuli depicting at least one of the following: average models, attractive non-models, overweight models, or objects such as cars or houses. Thirteen studies assessed body satisfaction using the Pictorial Body Image Scale, the Body Dissatisfaction Subscale of the Eating Disorders Inventory, the Visual Analogue Scale or other scales. Four studies used the Body Esteem Scale to

assess weight satisfaction, while seven studies assessed physical attractiveness, and the remaining two studies used body size estimation to assess body size distortion.

Based on 25 studies, 43 d values were calculated. A negative d value means that thin media images had an adverse influence on body satisfaction levels compared with control images, while a positive d value reflected the opposite opinion. The analysis found 38 negative d values and five positive d values. Participants with significant body images were more adversely affected by thin media stimuli than participants without body satisfaction issues. In addition, participants not yet in college were more adversely affected by the presentation of thin media stimuli than participants aged 19 years and older. The negative effect of the slender ideal appears to be greater when compared with the effect of heavier, more full figured women. There was also a significant effect of the number of stimuli presented, with participants being less affected by the presentation of thin media images as the number of stimuli presented increases. The meta-analysis is the first statistical review of the effects of experimental manipulations of the thin ideal on the body image of girls and women. The results show that magazines promote an unrealistic standard of beauty which makes the great majority of women feel depressed about their appearance. One negative aspect of this analysis is that one half of the studies did not measure body satisfaction before exposing participants to images of the thin ideal. The principal findings of this review point out that further and more detailed research is necessary. Another relevant body esteem study was conducted in the late 1980's. The title of this study was "Media Effects on Women's Body Esteem: Social and Individual Difference Factors" (Hendersen-King, & Hendersen-King, 1997). It was designed to

assess the effect of viewing ideal images on women's feelings about their bodies. Further, it was also examined whether increased awareness of social judgments of attractiveness would exacerbate the effects of the ideal images. Thus, women were presented with a series of either neutral or ideal images; however before viewing these images, they heard either a neutral conversation or a judgmental conversation involving a woman who had gained weight and had become less attractive. Stephen L. Franzoi and Stephanie A. Shields' (1984) Body Esteem Scale (BES) was used to measure participants' self evaluations. The measure was comprised of three subscales which assessed how an individual felt about different aspects of their physical self (ie. sexual attractiveness, physical condition, and weight concern). Eaaron Hendersen-King and Donna Hendersen-King (1997) expected to find the lowest self-evaluation scores among women who were in the ideal image condition and had overheard the judgmental conversation. It was hypothesized that among those who heard the judgmental conversation, high self-monitors' self evaluation would be negatively affected, while those of low self-monitors would not. In the neutral conversation condition, no difference was expected between high and low self monitors. Specifically, in the ideal image condition, weight was expected to be negatively related to body satisfaction, while no relationship was expected in the neutral image condition.

Participants were 87 undergraduate women who took part in the experiment as part of their course requirement in an introductory psychology class. The average age of the participant was 19. Of the participants 54% were White, 18% were Asian, 11% were African American, 6% were Hispanic, and the remaining 11% indicated that that they

were of mixed racial ethnicity. Data for five participants was dropped due to noise which prevented them from hearing the stimulus conversation.

The following describes the stimulus materials used:

Images. In each image condition, participants viewed 30 slides of images from popular magazines. In the neutral condition, none of the slides contained human images; most were advertisements for products such as stereo equipment, vehicles, and household products. In the ideal condition, 10 neutral slides were included with 20 slides presenting ideal images of the sort commonly found in women's magazines such as *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vogue*. Images were selected by the principal investigators and a team of research assistants. All images were selected on the basis of consensus regarding whether or not the models would be perceived by most people as attractive.

Conversation. In both conversation conditions, two female experimenters discussed a fictional, mutual female friend whom neither had seen recently. In the neutral condition, the friend had moved to a new apartment. In the judgmental condition, the friend had "let herself go," gained a lot of weight, and become less attractive.

The following describes the questionnaires used. Participants received two questionnaire packets. The first contained measures of media exposure and self-monitoring. The second questionnaire contained the dependent measures involving body esteem and weight.

Self Monitoring. Mark Snyder and Steve Gangestad's (1986) 18-item Self Monitoring version of this scale has been used widely. Snyder and Gangestad provided evidence of

validity and report satisfactory internal consistency for the measure (+.70). Possible scores ranged from 0 to 18, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-monitoring.

Body Esteem. The BES (Franzoi & Shields, 1984) was used to assess several aspects of women's satisfaction with their bodies. The scale asked respondents to rate their feelings about various parts of their bodies on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly negative) to 5 (strongly positive). Scores for the various body parts were combined to form indices for three aspects of women's body esteem: sexual attractiveness, physical condition, and weight concern. Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction with each aspect of body esteem. Good convergent and discriminant validity based on samples of female undergraduates has been reported for all three subscales (Franzoi, & Shields, 1984). There was high internal reliability for each of the three indices using the present sample; Cronbach's alphas for physical condition, sexual attractiveness, and weight concern were .86, .86, and .91, respectively.

Physical size. Participants were asked to report their current weight and height.

The following describes the procedure used. Experimental sessions were conducted with two to four participants in each session. All experimenters and confederates were female. At the beginning of each session, participants were told that one more participant was expected and were asked to fill out a consent form while they waited. While the consent forms were being completed, a confederate posing as an experimenter for another study entered the lab on the pretense of borrowing a pencil, addressed the experimenter by name, and had a brief conversation with her.

After the confederate left the room, the experimenter announced that the session would begin. The research was introduced as a study about factors which make advertisements memorable. Participants were told they would view a series of 30 slides of advertisements which they would later be asked to remember and that, in between viewing the slides and the recall task, they would be given a second questionnaire in order to keep them from rehearsing the slides they had seen. They were then asked to complete the first questionnaire consisting of demographic and self-monitoring measures. After viewing the slides, participants completed the second questionnaire which contained the dependent measures, ostensibly for another professor. Finally, they were given one minute to list as many of the advertisements as they could remember. All participants were then fully debriefed.

The following describes the discussion of results. The purpose of this study was to examine whether social and individual difference factors serve to moderate women's reactions to media images which reinforce current standards of attractiveness for women. The present findings indicated that women were not all similarly affected by idealized representations of women. In the neutral image condition, there was no relationship between self monitoring and women's feelings about their physical condition; in contrast, among women who were exposed to ideal images, there was a positive relationship between self-monitoring and feelings regarding physical condition. Compared to those in the neutral image condition, participants' weight was negatively related to feelings about sexual attractiveness. Self-monitoring was also found to moderate the effects of being made aware of social judgments about attractiveness. For high self monitors,

overhearing the judgmental conversation resulted in less positive feelings about sexual attractiveness, physical condition, and weight concern, while for low self monitors, body esteem levels were higher in the judgmental conversation condition than in the neutral conversation condition. As a whole, these findings indicate that individual difference factors play an important role in determining responses to events which reinforce standards of attractiveness.

Several studies confirm the operation of contextual contrast effects on judgments of the physical attractiveness of others such as the “Contrast Effects and Self Evaluations” (Cash, et al., 1983).

This experiment was conducted to determine whether contrast effects also occur on self-evaluations of physical attractiveness. Fifty-one female college students rated their own attractiveness and body parts satisfaction following exposure to same-sexed stimulus persons who either were not physically attractive, were physically attractive, or were designated as attractive professional models.

Research on physical attractiveness had progressed near the 1980’s (Cash, et al., 1983) and many behavioral scientists had begun to examine factors that influence judgments of attractiveness. While one approach focused on perceiver characteristics, a second approach considered the effects of contextual and situational factors on attractiveness judgments. One such contextual factor concerned the presence of other stimuli that varied in their levels of physical attractiveness. Melamed and Moss asked male and female college students to rate photographs of average-looking females presented in the context of other photographs of either attractive or unattractive females.

The investigators observed the operation of a contrast effect-that is, targets were judged to be more physically attractive when viewed in the context of photos of unattractive females than in the context of attractive stimuli (Thornton & Maurice, 1999).

In a field study, Douglas Kenrick and Sara Gutierrez (1980) found that males downgraded the physical attractiveness of an average-looking female after having watched *Charlie's Angels* as compared to males who had watched another television program. These researchers also conducted two controlled laboratory experiments and again confirmed the operation of a perpetual contrast effect on judgments of physical attractiveness (Thornton & Maurice, 1999).

Each of these investigations focused on the contrast effects of contextual factors on ratings of others' physical attractiveness. However, the influence of the level of physical attractiveness of comparison persons on self-evaluations of attractiveness has not been determined. The need for such research is underlined by the fact that the mass media constantly expose its audience to the upper extreme of the normal distribution of physical attractiveness. In their classic study extending the domain of Leon Festinger's social comparison theory, Stephen J. Morse and Kenneth Gergen (1970) did find that the casual exposure of subjects to persons whose manner and appearance conveyed either desirable or undesirable characteristics produced social comparison contrast effects on subjects' self-esteem. Since the stimulus persons varied on several dimensions, the role of their physical attractiveness per se is uncertain. (Thornton & Maurice, 1999).

The principal purpose of the present experiment was to assess the effect of exposure to same-sexed peers of varying levels of physical attractiveness on self-

perceptions of physical attractiveness. Derived from social comparison theory, the hypothesis was that of a contrast effect. Lower subjects' self-ratings were predicted under a more attractive than a less attractive stimulus context. Moreover, in lieu of a neutral comparison group to discriminate positive and negative contrast effects, Thomas Cash et al. (1983) included a stimulus context that used professional models for the attractive stimulus persons (comparable to advertisements in "beauty magazines"). The researchers expected the subjects to see themselves as less physically attractive following exposure to attractive peers as opposed to attractive advertising models. A secondary purpose of the study was to explore individual differences in self-evaluations of attractiveness, particularly differences related to personality variables derived from Arnold Buss's (1980) theory of self-consciousness (Thornton & Maurice, 1999).

A sample of 51 female college students was recruited from introductory psychology classes. All subjects were White Americans with a mean age of 22.7 years. Three sets of 25 stimuli were constructed to represent the manipulation of social comparison conditions. All stimuli were pictures of 18 to 35 year old women taken from magazine ads and articles and assembled with one per page in a booklet. In the not attractive condition, stimulus persons were determined by consensus of four student judges to reflect average to unattractive levels of physical attractiveness. Because of this range, the referent "not attractive" is more accurate than "unattractive." In the two attractive conditions, stimulus persons were matched on these factors. Photos of stimulus persons were consensually judged to be above-average in physical attractiveness. Stimuli included a range of picture sizes, both black and white and color pictures, as well as full

body, upper body, and head only photos. The not attractive and attractive conditions were matched on these factors. Photos of stimulus persons were cut out from their sources in a manner that eliminated information about their original contexts. The professionally attractive conditions differed from the attractive only by the attachment of an advertiser's name (such as Calvin Klein, Cover Girl, Bloomingdale's) cut from magazines and randomly paired with each picture in order to emphasize the stimulus person's status as a professional model.

Subjects arrived in small groups at the research laboratory, and the female experimenter explained the study's purpose as the development and evaluation of materials to be used in future research. Subjects initially completed the Self-Consciousness Inventory (Buss, 1980 as cited in Cash, et al., 1983). This 23-item, factor-analyzed instrument contains three scales: private self consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. Subjects indicated on a 5 point scale the degree to which each item was characteristic of them. Persons who scored high on the Private self consciousness scale tended to engage in self-focused attention to inner processes and were more likely to possess clear and accurate knowledge of their personal feelings and motives. Persons who scored high on the Private Self-Consciousness Scale tended to engage in self-focused attention to inner processes and were more likely to possess clear and accurate knowledge of their personal feelings and motives. Persons who scored high on the Public Self-Consciousness Scale reported frequent awareness of themselves as social objects, including awareness of the impressions and appearance they convey to others in social situations. The Social Anxiety Scale measures feelings of discomfort and

inhibition in social situations. Next, subjects went to individual cubicles where they received all instructions by a standard tape recording. Following a random groups design, each subject was assigned one of the three booklets of stimulus persons. In this manner, the three conditions were run simultaneously. The subjects were instructed to look at the first picture for 15 seconds and to give tone-cued reactions on the Picture Rating Questionnaire provided. Thirty seconds were allowed for responses before instructions were given to turn the page, to observe the next picture for 15 seconds, and to give questionnaire ratings. This procedure was repeated until the subject had observed and rated all 25 pictures in her booklet. Ten-point ratings included an evaluation of each stimulus person's physical attractiveness embedded between evaluations of familiarity and noticeability.

Subsequent to their ratings of all stimulus persons, subjects were instructed to open an envelope and complete the enclosed self-evaluation scales as a "part of another research project." First, subjects rated their own physical attractiveness on a 10 point Likert scale. Second, subjects completed the Body Satisfaction Questionnaire (Cash, et al., 1983) making 6 point ratings of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each of 24 body parts and with overall appearance. Finally, subjects were debriefed and signed a "promise of non-disclosure" form, agreeing not to discuss the research with others until its completion.

Preliminary analyses indicate that subjects in the three conditions did not differ with respect to age, height, weight, or the personality variables of private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. An initial one-way analysis

of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as a check on the physical attractiveness manipulation in the three stimulus conditions. Analysis of the subjects' mean 10-point ratings across the 25 stimulus persons in each condition indicated significantly lower (more neutral) ratings for the not attractive condition. ($M=5.6$) than for both the attractive ($M=7.3$) and the professionally attractive ($M=7.3$) conditions. Thus, the intended attractiveness manipulation was successful. This study revealed that, as predicted, subjects exposed to attractive persons rated their own physical attractiveness lower than subjects exposed to the same stimuli presented as professional advertising models.

Correlational and laboratory findings revealed that socio-cultural factors played a role in the development of body-image disturbance (Gardner, et. al., 2002). The following study provided comparative data for measurement: Effects of Exposure to Physique slides on Emotional Responses.

Researchers who had examined the effects of acute exposure to the media's portrayal of the ideal physique on people's psychological well-being usually found that after viewing images of the thin ideal female physique, women reported significant decreases in body satisfaction), decreased self-esteem and increased body size distortion, and increased mood disturbance (Gardner, et. al., 2002).

The purpose of this study was to examine high and low body dissatisfied (BD) men's and women's in-task emotional responses to the acute exposure of sex-specific physique slides of the aesthetic ideal, (ideal slides) and themselves (self-slides). It was hypothesized that a) viewing the ideal and self-slides would result in greater emotional disturbance (i.e. decreased pleasure and increased arousal) for the high BD group

compared with the low BD group, and b) the women would report more emotional disturbance than the men to both the ideal and self-slides (Gardner, Rebecca E., et. al., 2002). Participants were 35 male and 30 female university students, with the median age of 20.48. The volunteers were selection from undergraduate classes at a large southeastern university in the United States, and they were paid for their participation in this study.

Body Dissatisfaction. The Body Dissatisfaction (BD) Subscale of the Eating Disorder Inventory assesses dissatisfaction with the size and shape of various body parts (Garner, et al., 1991). For each item, individuals responded on a 6 point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (never) to 6 (always); a higher score indicated greater body dissatisfaction. Research supported the validity and reliability of this subscale (Garner, et al., 1991) and in this study the internal consistency score of the Body Dissatisfaction Subscale was good ($\alpha=.83$).

Self Assessment Manikin (SAM). The SAM is a figure-rating system that measures emotional responses to either an object or an event (Gardner, et. al., 2002). The valence (pleasant to not pleasant) and arousal (calm to excited) dimensions were used for this study. The SAM is ideal for assessing emotional responses during slide viewing because of its easy administration and good psychometric properties.

Slides. The slides showed eight different body views of a) the participants (ie. self-slides), and b) a male or female ideal (ie. ideal slides). The first view was frontal, and the subsequent views were taken at 45 degree angle turns. The participants and models were required to keep the same facial expression for their eight pictures. The male model wore

spandex exercise shorts, and the female model wore a bikini. Both the female and male models were below average weight, as to represent the aesthetically appealing thin ideal. To establish content validity on the ideal slides, two faculty members and two graduate students with expertise in body image indicated whether the model's physique would be legitimate for the study. There was a hundred percent agreement.

Overall, it was found that the men and women had different emotional responses to viewing self and ideal slides and that the high and low BD groups reported varying emotional responses to viewing the physique slides. Consistent with previous research (Heinberg, & Thompson, 1997) the high BD group had a greater percent body fat than the low BD group; the female participants had a higher percent body fat than the male participants. Thus, the high BD group reported heightened body-image disturbance despite the fact that their percent body fat was within a healthy range. In short, individuals with a percent of body fat at the higher end of normal deviate more from the aesthetic ideal, and this deviation may manifest as body dissatisfaction.

Consistent with the hypotheses, the men reported more pleasure than the women while viewing self-slides. These results suggested that women were more prone than men to the negative effects of the media and that body dissatisfaction moderated this relationship.

During the past three decades, the portrayal of women in advertising has been an active area of study (Banfield & McCabe, 2002). While research findings in the 1970's indicated some perceived improvements in advertising's treatment of female roles, the

use of traditional female stereotypes (e.g., women as primarily domestic types, sex objects, subservient to men) continued in the 1980's (Banfield & McCabe, 2002).

According to a number of researchers (Banfield & McCabe, 2002) perceptions of these portrayals appear to vary by demographic factors (i.e., feminists tend to be more educated than traditionalists) as well as by feminine role orientation (e.g., traditionalist versus feminist). These studies indicated that feminists in particular were more sensitive to the portrayal of women in advertising and expected a greater emphasis on contemporary working women in ads.

At least five studies in the 1980's focused upon content analysis of women's portrayals in magazines. One of the earliest studies evaluated portrayals of women in television commercials (Banfield & McCabe, 2002). While preliminary research indicated more contemporary roles reflected in a comparison between 1971 and 1976, this trend appeared to reverse itself when compared to a 1980 sample. In 1983, Stephen Lysonski examined the portrayal of women in magazine ads. He found that advertisers between 1974 through 1975 and 1979 through 1980 had responded by portraying women more often as career oriented as well as in nontraditional activities. In contrast however, little reduction was noted in the portrayal of women as housewives and as being concerned with appearance and physical attractiveness. (Banfield & McCabe, 2002)

A later study (Soley & Kurzbard, 1986) compared the depiction of women in 1964 print ads in general interest magazines (*Time* and *Newsweek*), women's magazines (*Cosmopolitan* and *Redbook*), and men's magazines (*Playboy* and *Esquire*). The authors

found an increase in the overtness of illustrations of women used as sex objects, in particular, for general interest magazines.

Amy Mays and Donald Brady (1990) compared portrayals of women in seven general readership magazines (*Life*, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker*, *Saturday Review*, *Time*, *Reader's Digest*, and the *U.S. News and World Report*) for the years 1955, 1965, 1975, and 1985. Between 1975 and 1985 women were shown less in the home and more in social and business settings as well as in “decorative” depictions. In contrast, however, and somewhat consistent with Soley and Kurzbard’s 1986 study, the authors found that the number of women in “alluring,” sex-object roles had not decreased (Soley & Kurzbard, 1986). In summary, these recent content analyses indicated that role portrayals of women are still quite diverse. Specifically, while less traditional depictions are now more common, some stereotypical female portrayals (e.g., overt sex-object roles) may have actually increased. However content analyses only indicate changes in advertising practices over time. Key to evaluating the impact of female sex-role portrayals is understanding the heterogeneous mindsets or “consciousness” of women as they perceive advertising portraying their gender (Soley & Kurzbard, 1986).

An outpouring of additional women’s titles has occurred over the past twenty years, reflecting new reader’s needs, new imperatives from advertisers, and the intensified trend toward specialization. Publishers, experienced and novice, spotted opportunity in the assortment of female interests and activities surfacing. The recession of the early nineties, with its cramping effect on advertising spending, somewhat dampened the enthusiasm for new magazine starts, but titles still continued to appear

(Brown, 1981). Many new journals focus on a particular segment of females. Such magazines attract circulations far lower than those of traditional women's magazines. The fashion journal field has been shaken up with the advent of *Elle* and *Vogue*. Such new genres are a new breed of competition for the Seven Sisters publications. Such has been the effect of these new publications on women's magazine content.

All publications, as do all other institutions, elicit some type of social effect. A magazine publication may or may not be a social institution, that is, one with a social purpose. Whether a magazine firm should have a social purpose has been a constantly debated matter. (Braithwaite & Barrell, 1979).

Overview

Aside from the media, there have always been cultural standards and expectations of how women should look. This expectation of thinness and flawlessness has also influenced an increase of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive pathology in women as well. The increase in eating disorders over the last several decades has coincided with the decrease in the weight of the ideal-body for women portrayed in the media.

The average American views 3,000 advertisements per day. The image one sees the most, specifically in women's magazines, is a figure and body type which statistically only five percent of women in the U.S. have (Kilbourne & Jhally, 1987). It is no wonder that women are experiencing greater body dissatisfaction than ever, and resorting to extreme methods to rectify the problem. One in every five women in the U.S. has an eating disorder (Kilbourne & Jhally, 1987). This statistic is often correlated with the

increase of the unrealistic model-thin ideal images portrayed in women's magazines today.

In all of these media effects studies, women were reported to have experienced drops in self-esteem and reported high body dissatisfaction. Self esteem and self image were negatively influenced in all of these experiments upon exposure to "ideal" slides.

There is not much academic research available on the media effects and social effects of long term exposure to this medium of magazine content. Scholars such as Lippmann and Lasswell have argued for many theories of application and have even set up paradigms for research. Media effects and content have been theorized as well as discussed far too long to not be initiated with thorough research and studied in its complete form.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The experiment will be conducted upon 60 undergraduate females in the Psychology and Journalism departments of San Jose State University. The design will measure immediate effects of exposure to content upon their self-esteem, self-image, and body dissatisfaction. The actual tests will be conducted as Stimulus/Response concepts.

Research Method, Experiment Design, and Materials

Out of the Top 20 U.S. Women's magazines, 8 have been selected based on popularity, rank, and circulation, which combine both fashion and fitness genres. All of the issues will be from October 2003.

- Cosmopolitan* #1
- Glamour* #13
- Allure* #15
- Marie Claire* #18
- Shape* #2
- Fitness* #8
- Prevention* #12
- Health* #16

A total of 20 advertisements and 20 articles will be extracted from these magazines, for a total of 40 stimuli.

Criteria of Selection

Images: The images will be photographs from advertisements or pictures extracted from stories, which feature a high BIS (Body Index Scale). The BIS is a measurable academic element that determines how much of the body is exposed in a photograph. One test group will view images of (model) females where higher portions of their bodies are

exposed and in stereotypical poses. The other test group will view pictures with a low BIS, and/or in images of “real” women.

Testing

The subjects will be divided into two groups of thirty.

- 10 Articles
- 10 Images
- 20 Subjects

Test Group B: Will only be exposed to model, “thin” ideal images and articles focused on appearance, beauty, and relationships.

- 10 Articles
- 10 Images
- 20 Subjects

Measurement Tools

There will be a total of four questionnaires used to assess the responses of the subjects. All tests are APA approved, have been replicated in several studies, and have strong validity and reliability.

The Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (CSI), which is a 57- item questionnaire is used to assess the global self-esteem of a person. The second test will be the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSE), which focuses upon one’s self-image and is scored on a four point Likert scale.

The third and fourth questionnaires will be more detailed and specifically ask questions on the subject’s perception of their physical appearance in order to measure the levels of body satisfaction. The Body Esteem scale will measure the subject’s actual level of contentment regarding her body image. The Magazine Assessment Tool will

measure the degree of skepticism or faith the subjects place into women's magazines in general. Their attitude will be reflected through how often they read women's magazines and whether they trust the content and images in these publications or not.

All questionnaires will be administered after the subjects have been exposed to their stimuli sets of images and articles. The results will be measured through the computer program called the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), using t-tests to see if the means and scores show any statistical significance.

Hypotheses

Women (Group B) exposed to negative stimuli will have low body satisfaction and negative self- image after immediate viewing.

Women (Group A) exposed to positive stimuli will have high body satisfaction and positive self- image compared to Group B women after immediate viewing.

The t-tests will compare the results of positive depictions with the results of the negative depictions.

Uniqueness of Study

All of the studies which have been conducted upon women to measure their body satisfaction and self esteem scores have only used slides and images for stimuli. Measurements and studies have been restricted to magazine pictures and advertisements, but not a single study has used content to measure the effect. The results of this study will reveal a lot of new and interesting information about the effects of women's magazines upon female self image and self esteem in a more holistic aspect. Content combined with images will yield new results about exposure as well as effects.

Limitations of Study

Limitations of this study are predicted as follows. Firstly, this research touches only on one type of medium, although there are many other types of media that portray negative body images to females. Certain individuals may only get exposure to a specific medium, and therefore may not be avid magazine readers. Second, women who feel dissatisfied with their body image already may be more likely to read women's magazines that enforce their negative beliefs about their bodies. Third, many of the subjects are Psychology majors, and thus may become familiar with the purpose of the test as well as the scoring, which can affect their scores and raw data. Fourth, individual and social differences are not accounted for. Some women may have lower self-esteem and body dissatisfaction to begin with, and thus are more affected by the images more than others. Some women, due to ethnicity, may not identify with the majority images of White women and thus create a psychological barrier which will prevent them from experiencing any negative effects.

Benefits of Study

Academically, no research has ever before combined both content and images as exposure stimuli in order to measure responses or effects. The results should yield new information regarding the influence upon women's self-image and body satisfaction. This study will contribute new wisdom in the field of print media for further academic theories to develop.

Magazine publishers, writers, and ownership of women's magazines will be more sensitized and aware of the psychological effects of their content and images upon their

readers. It is rather optimistic to assume, but not impossible to imagine, that perhaps this awareness will bring about a change in the way women are depicted in magazine advertisements, photographs, and content of articles.

Women themselves, as readers will benefit from this study as to gain self-awareness about these images, and perhaps gain greater control of their cognitive selection processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Traditionally, the reasons for studying media content in a systematic way stemmed from an interest in the potential effects of mass communications or from a wish to understand the appeal of content for the audience. Early studies of content reflected concern about the portrayal of crime, violence, sex in popular entertainment, the use of media as a propaganda and the performance of media in respect to racial or other kinds of prejudice. Hence to study the depiction of females in mainstream print media, and the effects this content had on women's self esteem was groundbreaking.

As predicted, Group A, females who were exposed to the positive depictions of women scored higher on all three self-esteem questionnaires than Group B, females who were exposed to the negative depictions of women. T-tests were conducted across the scores of all 60 women between the two groups and the following statistics were found when analyzing the difference between their means.

The statistics and results clearly supported the hypothesis that exposure to positive imagery and stimuli will yield in greater self-esteem scores amongst the subjects, and that exposure to negative imagery and stimuli will yield in lower self-esteem scores amongst the subjects.

Table 1 and Table 2 represent the results and raw scores of all the subjects across all four tests:

Table 1.

Group A Subjects' Raw Scores: Positive Stimuli Exposure

Group A					
	32	39	29	35	26
MAT	34	32	25	37	24
Scale 10-50	30	31	21	20	24
Mean:28.933	30	31	31	27	21
(868/30)	25	31	24	29	26
	32	33	27	31	22
BES	27	36	39	37	40
Scale 11-44	27	32	41	36	37
Mean:35.300	32	33	43	39	34
(1059/30)	26	39	41	39	31
	28	42	39	38	31
	31	37	38	39	31
	28	37	29	34	33
Scale 10-40	27	35	28	37	39
Mean: 33.900	36	31	37	33	33
(1017/30)	33	37	39	38	37
	26	38	34	36	36
	32	33	29	36	33
CSI	87	91	100	109	110
Scale 57-114	89	97	91	111	108
Mean:100.333	99	93	98	98	110
(3010/30)	100	94	102	112	108
	91	88	97	107	99
	93	113	106	99	98

Table 2.

Group B Subjects' Raw Scores: Negative Stimuli Exposure

Group B					
	42	41	37	41	38
MAT	34	39	43	39	40
Scale 10-50	43	46	39	37	43
Mean:40.300	41	38	41	42	41
(1209/30)	40	41	38	43	40
	43	43	45	31	39
BES	30	21	18	20	26
Scale 11-44	21	19	19	19	19
Mean:21.233	24	26	17	23	21
(637/30)	22	22	15	26	22
	21	21	25	18	21
	26	20	20	15	19
	24	26	23	21	25
Scale 10-40	23	22	20	26	24
Mean:21.800	26	19	19	20	26
(654/30)	21	21	21	19	20
	20	24	24	22	21
	23	19	19	22	19
CSI	71	75	61	70	69
Scale 57-114	75	68	69	68	59
Mean:68.933	63	69	75	63	68
(2068/30)	61	70	77	60	62
	59	73	74	74	73
	68	72	71	75	78

T-tests were conducted to measure the observed t values, difference between means, and to measure the significance of each test. Below are the T-test scores for each test after the raw scores were calculated in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social

Sciences). Tables 3-6 represent the results found when T-tests were conducted for each test.

Table 3.

MAT (Magazine Assessment Tool) T-test 1

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group A	26.67	30	4.82	.88
t value: -9.815				
Significance (2-tailed): .001				
Group B	40.27	30	3.10	.57

Range of Values: 10-50 Highest score: 46 Lowest score: 21

High score= More awareness/Higher Level of Skepticism

Low score= Less awareness/Lower Level of Skepticism

Table 4.

BES (Body Esteem Scale) T-test 2

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group A	35.4333	30	4.8330	.8824
t value: 11.329				
Significance (2-tailed): .001				
Group B	21.20	30	3.43	3.43

Range of Values: 11-44 Highest score: 43 Lowest score: 15

High score= Higher level of Body Esteem and Satisfaction

Low score= Lower level of Body Esteem and Satisfaction

Table 5.

RSE (Rosenberg Self Esteem) T-test 3

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group A	33.80	30	4.14	.76
t value: 14.854				
Significance (2-tailed): .001				
Group B	21.97	30	2.40	.44

Range of Values: 10-40 Highest score: 39 Lowest score: 19

High score= Higher level of Self-Esteem and Self-Worth

Low score= Lower level of Self-Esteem and Self-Worth

Table 6.

CSI (Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory) T-test 4

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group A	99.93	30	7.83	.76
t value: 15.927				
Significance (2-tailed): .001				
Group B	69.00	30	5.64	.44

Range of Values: 57-114 Highest score: 59 Lowest score: 112

High score= Higher level of Self-Confidence and Esteem

Low score= Lower level of Self-Confidence and Esteem

Table 7.

Mean Comparisons of Self Esteem Scores

The women in Group A, who viewed the positive depictions of other females, scored higher on all three self-esteem questionnaires.

In addition to that, they were less skeptical and more trusting of content and images in women's magazines. In the Magazine Assessment Tool survey (MAT), Group A presented a more accepting and positive attitude towards women's magazines.

Group B women, as predicted, scored lower on all three tests than Group A. The surprising finding was that these women had a higher level of awareness and skepticism about women's magazine content, yet they were still negatively affected by the stimuli. According to Table 3, the Group B scores on the MAT indicate that the level of skepticism and distrust was higher.

This finding goes to prove that no matter how educated or aware a woman may be about magazine content, she will still be affected by it on self-esteem and self-image levels. Another interesting finding was that Group B women were skeptical and exhibited a distrust and negative attitude towards women's magazines. This in turn, could have obviously been reinforced by the negative depictions of women. The way a magazine causes a woman to feel about her own self, will in turn affect how a woman feels about that particular magazine. This piece of information should interest publishers of such magazines. The ultimate lesson here for publishers will be: Make women feel good about themselves, they will associate a positive impression with that particular magazine.

The T-tests in all four situations reflected a significance value of .001, reflecting strong, valid, and significant t scores and thus constituting this as a legitimate and important statistic. One can call this "statistically significant." The differences between the means exhibited a strong influence of the stimulus over the scores of the subjects. It therefore becomes evident that the various stimuli are having a strong impact on the individual score of each subject, whether positive or negative.

There are some other factors and variables not accounted for, during this study however. One is the subject's personal psychological history. This would combine both the nature and nurture environment. If a woman, due to her upbringing, domestic environment, childhood trauma or history, or other psycho-social factors was already suffering from low self-esteem, then that certainly would affect their scores, and cannot be accounted for nor detected.

A second variable would be the particular events of that day. These women are students. If they just took a stressful midterm, or just received a bad grade on an assignment, chances of their self-esteem being very positive that day are slim. The circumstances or situations the subject faced that particular day of testing, cannot be measured or accounted for either, but at the same time would affect how they performed on the test.

A third variable has to do with the population size. Sixty females are enough to gather and analyze data but may not be sufficient enough to serve as a proper sample population for all females in the age group 18-26. A sample this size will or will not be a fair representation and the results therefore, may not be applicable to a larger, general population.

A fourth variable has to do with the subject's awareness level. One has to keep in mind that these students were all Psychology and Journalism and Mass Communications majors. Granted, they were primarily Freshmen and Sophomores, and had not reached the advanced levels of research in their subject areas. But in case they did become aware

of what the test is measuring, then they would have consciously answered the questions in order to make themselves appear a certain way.

Many factors can come into play during self-esteem questionnaires. Thus, they cannot be measured or detected. It is for that reason that some researchers conduct longitudinal tests, and conduct research on the same subjects for over 15 to 20 years, measuring their growth and test results. But, for the purposes of this thesis, and for the restrictions on time, the experiment was designed to measure short-term media effects and results upon women's self esteem. Hence, any data that could be collected had to be obtained within a 30-minute period, measuring the self-esteem effects immediately following the exposure to the stimuli. This way the images are still fresh in the minds of the subjects, and one can conclude that most of what the tests are displaying have largely to do with the exposure to the positive or negative stimuli.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In particular, it has been argued that the media, particularly beauty and fashion advertisements, provide images of an unattainable “ideal,” and that these images may have a cumulative effect on women’s satisfaction with their appearance (Kilbourne, & Jhally, 1987). The more pervasive the media imagery, the more women feel they must meet these unattainable standards and the less positive they feel about their bodies. The female body is reflected and portrayed in the media as an object of desire. Targeting markets to sell products such as diet, cosmetics, and exercise gear, the media constructs a dream world of hopes and high standards that incorporates the glorification of slenderness and weight loss. Research indicates that magazine advertisements and other media ploys are often used as a social comparison. However the degree to which women are susceptible to media messages about physical attractiveness may depend on other factors in addition to media exposure. If acute exposure to magazine images and content of stereotypical attractiveness causes a decrease in psychological well being, it is possible that chronic exposure is in part responsible for the increasing concerns for weight, appearance, and shape found in Western cultures (Gardner, Rebecca, et. al., 2002). Content analyses often show how media content departs from reality in regard to who is represented, and how groups and situations are portrayed. Experimental studies show how content involving depictions of women and accompanying stereotypes affects self-concept, attitudes, and behavior. Often the impact has been strongly negative.

With their power to frame, define, and neglect aspects of the social world, the mass media are a principal social and cultural institution. The central position of the media in everyday life ensures that symbols distributed through the media become points of focus and interaction in the population. Imagery is contested and criticized by various groups and individuals. Media processes are studied through multiple methods. These include quantitative work such as content analyses, and experimental studies which have concluded that a stereotyped or unrealistic content can affect or harm individuals (Milkie, 1999). For example, researchers who have done content analyses of girls' magazines suggest that unrealistic beauty images and a focus on traditional femininity may damage girls' self-image (Dittrich, 2003). The idea that one type of medium may influence a woman's self-image and self perception and could be the deciding factor on how young women felt about their body is a very poignant subject. The media promotes and reproduces our culture's standards for what women's bodies look like and the importance of beauty. The media also seems to emphasize that thinness, attractiveness, and beauty equate with happiness, success, and galore. The socio-cultural perspective is that mass media such as fashion magazines and television promote, if not establish, a standard of slender beauty that leads many females to feel badly about their weight shape, and appearance (Banfield & McCabe, 2002). Many women are caught in this trap from the print media to achieve this perfect image that the magazines portray. The principal findings in most media effects studies point out that further research is necessary to elucidate why women are motivated to read fashion magazines and how the media can aid in primary or secondary prevention of negative body image (Cash, et al., 1983).

There is not much academic research available on the media effects and social effects of long term exposure to this medium of magazine content. Scholars such as Walter Lippmann and Harold Lasswell have argued for many theories of application and have even set up paradigms for research. Media effects and content have been theorized and discussed far too long to not be initiated with thorough research and studied in its complete form.

The results of this study provide strong evidence that the positive versus negative depiction of women does eventually have an equivalent effect on a woman's self esteem and body image satisfaction. Even if the woman is highly educated and aware about the validity of the content and images, her self-esteem and body esteem are nevertheless still affected and influenced by the stimuli she views. This interesting finding was exhibited by the Group B women, who viewed the negative stimuli. Even though they had a higher awareness and skepticism level of these magazines, they still scored lower on the self-esteem questionnaires than did the Group A women.

There is also a reinforcement effect observed in this case. Since the Group B women were exposed to negative stimuli, and since their self-esteem was negatively affected as a result, their attitude towards women's magazines was in turn negative as well. On the other end of the spectrum, because the women in Group A viewed positive stimuli and their self esteem scores were higher, they felt more positive as a result about women's magazines.

Publishers should learn a lesson from this and may be interested in this finding. The more positively they depict women, and the more secure and satisfied they make

women feel about themselves, the more positive women will feel about their publications. This effect has been displayed and proven across all four tests and questionnaires.

Aside from the media, there have always been cultural standards and expectations of how women should look. This expectation of thinness and flawlessness has also influenced an increase of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive pathology in women as well. The increase in eating disorders over the last several decades has coincided with the decrease in the weight of the ideal-body for women portrayed in the media.

The average American views 3,000 advertisements per day. The image one sees the most, specifically in women's magazines, is a figure and body type which statistically only five percent of women in the U.S. have (Kilbourne & Jhally, 1987). It is no wonder that women are experiencing greater body dissatisfaction than ever, and resorting to extreme methods to rectify the problem. One in every five women in the U.S. has an eating disorder (Kilbourne & Jhally 1987). This statistic is often correlated with the increase of the unrealistic model-thin ideal images portrayed in women's magazines today.

The results of this study will benefit and foster further academic research on women's magazines, and for the first time have measured effects of image and content combined. Academically, no research has ever before combined both content and images as exposure stimuli in order to measure responses or effects. The results should yield new information regarding the influence upon women's self-image and body satisfaction. This study will contribute new wisdom in the field of print media for further academic theories to develop.

If taken to the level of publishers, these findings can have a significant impact on the type of content which is exhibited in women's magazines today. There is no guarantee of any potential and possible changes in advertisements, since publications survive off of sponsorships, but perhaps there is hope for the content itself to undergo some positive and critical metamorphosis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory

Like Unlike
Me Me

1. Things usually don't bother me.
2. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group.
3. There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could.
4. I can make up my mind without too much trouble.
5. I am a lot of fun to be with.
6. I get upset easily at home.
7. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.
8. I'm popular with persons my own age.
9. My friends usually consider my feelings.
10. I give in too easily
11. My family expects too much of me.
12. It's pretty tough to be me.
13. Things are all mixed up in my life.
14. People usually follow my ideas.
15. I have a low opinion of myself.
16. There are many times I would like to leave my social circle.
17. I often feel upset with my work.
18. I'm not as nice looking as most people.
19. If I have something to say, I usually say it.
20. My friends understand me.
21. Most people are better liked than I am.
22. I usually feel as if my family is pushing me.
23. I often get discouraged at work or school.
24. I often wish I were someone else.
25. I can't be depended on.
26. I never worry about anything.
27. I'm pretty sure of myself.
28. I am easy to like.
29. My parents and I have a lot of fun together.
30. I spend a lot of time daydreaming.
31. I wish I were younger or better looking.
32. I always do the right thing.
33. I'm proud of my academic achievements.
34. Someone always has to tell me what to do.
35. I'm often sorry for the things I do.
36. I'm never happy.

37. I can usually take care of myself.
38. I am pretty happy.
39. I would rather associate with peers younger than I am.
40. I like everyone I know.
41. I like to be called on during class.
42. I understand myself.
43. Nobody pays attention to me at home.
44. I never get scolded
45. I'm not doing as well in school as I'd like to.
46. I can make up my mind and stick to it.
47. I really don't like being a woman.
48. I don't like to be with other people.
49. I'm never shy.
50. I often feel ashamed of myself.
51. People pick on me very often.
52. I always tell the truth.
53. My teachers make me feel inferior.
54. I don't care what happens to me.
55. I'm a failure.
56. I get upset easily when scolded.

Appendix B

Rosenberg Self Esteem Inventory

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D	SD
2. At times I think I am no good at all.	SA	A	D	SD
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most folks.	SA	A	D	SD
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	A	D	SD
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	SA	A	D	SD
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SD
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA	A	D	SD
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel like a failure.	SA	A	D	SD
10. I take a positive attitude towards myself.	SA	A	D	SD

SA=Strongly Agree

A= Agree

D= Disagree

SD=Strongly Disagree

Appendix C

Body Esteem Scale

1. I am as good looking as most women in magazines	SD	A	D	SD
2. I am satisfied with my body shape	SD	A	D	SD
3. I put extra efforts into my daily appearance	SD	A	D	SD
4. I attract quite a few men with my looks	SD	A	D	SD
5. I feel happy when I read articles on relationships	SD	A	D	SD
6. I feel positive about myself after reading most magazine articles	SD	A	D	SD
7. When I look at images in magazine ads, I feel inferior or not good looking enough	SD	A	D	SD
8. The women in depicted in magazines are very similar to real women.	SD	A	D	SD
9. I feel disturbed when I see thin women in magazine ads.	SD	A	D	SD
11. Overall I feel I am an unattractive woman.	SD	A	D	SD
12. Overall I feel I am an attractive woman.	SD	A	D	SD

Appendix D

Magazine Assessment Tool

1. I read women's magazines on a weekly basis?	1	2	3	4	5
2. I trust women's magazines with most information	1	2	3	4	5
3. I go to women's magazines for reference on beauty, fashion, and relationships	1	2	3	4	5
4. I go to women's magazines for reference on career, health, and self improvement	1	2	3	4	5
5. Most women's magazines are accurate in their depictions of women	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel that most information in the articles is made up half the time	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel that diet and nutrition tips in women's magazines are helpful	1	2	3	4	5
8. I usually try advice offered in women's magazines on my own	1	2	3	4	5
9. I subscribe to at least 2 women's magazines	1	2	3	4	5
10. Overall, I feel satisfied with what I read	1	2	3	4	5

1=Very True 2=True 3=Somewhat True 4=Not True 5=Highly Untrue