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THIS IS IN:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF IMAGES IN WOMEN'S MAGAZINES FROM 2009-2011

A Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

in the Department of Journalism and New Media

The University of Mississippi

by

JENNIFER K. WILSON

May 2011

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ABSTRACT

Many research studies have shown that women constantly compare themselves to the models they see featured in women's magazines, and in turn, develop body image issues, negative mood changes and even eating disorders. The majority of findings show that women often develop these serious side-effects because they are bombarded with images of mostly thin models. Yet editors of women's magazines continue to choose women much smaller, in most cases at least six times smaller, than the average sized American women to feature. It is very unusual to see fashion spread in a women's magazine featuring a model close to the size of the average American woman. The purpose of this study is to explore three popular women's magazines and discover how many times a woman is shown an image of a thin body while reading such magazines, and in turn, possibly suffers negative emotional and physical effects. The results show that thin women are featured prominently in three of the top-selling women's magazines. For all three magazines, over 89 percent of the images featured were of thin women; and for two of the magazines studied, 97 percent of the images featured were of thin women.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Every year, millions of women read magazines like *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, *Nylon* and *W*. According to the numbers reported in *Vogue*'s media kit, it had a 2011 circulation of 1,248,121 and 89 percent of those readers are female (Berken 2012).

Similarly, the numbers provided by *Elle*'s media kit show that the magazine had a circulation of 1,124,569 at the end of 2010. Of all of *Elle*'s readers, 92 percent are women ("*Elle* demographics," 2012).

Glamour's current media kit shows that the magazine had a 2011 circulation of 2,304,146 and 94 percent of their readers are female (Berken, 2012).

These are just a few of the circulation figures from popular women's magazines in America, but they make it clear that a great number of women read the magazines that are created solely for their entertainment. These magazines concentrate their content on topics that the owners and editors feel are important to women, such as: fashion, beauty, health, fitness, sex, relationships, popular culture, and global issues.

In women's magazines, a large percentage of the pages are filled with pictures of models in advertisements. Also, within the written articles, there are often images of women inserted to accompany and enhance the words. In most women's magazines, fashion spreads are featured.

Sometimes, there are several fashion spreads in one issue. These spreads usually feature women modeling clothes, handbags, shoes, and jewelry.

The female models that appear in women's magazines are almost always thin, "straight-sized" models, which mean that they are smaller than a size four. In the fashion industry, many designers prefer models that are a size zero or two. A website that concentrates on body image and eating disorders reported that the average U.S. fashion model is 5'11" and weighs 117 pounds ("Media influence," 2011).

Also, a research study done by Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, and Thompson found that the average model found in women's magazine spreads is 13-19 percent below the healthy weight for her height ("Facts about media," 1996).

It is very unusual to see a fashion spread featuring a model close to the size of the average American woman. The average woman in America is 5 foot 4 inches tall, 165 pounds, and wears a size 12-14, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, yet, as the previously stated facts point out, one rarely sees a model larger than a size four featured in a fashion spread.

Magazine editors often blame fashion designers for the large size difference in the average American woman and the average American model. Some have said that it is nearly impossible to find sample clothing at the size of the average woman. That may be true in some cases, but there are other images featured in women's magazines besides the ones in fashion spreads, so there are many opportunities for women closer to the average size to be shown. Also,

there are many designers that produce garments for larger women. Some of the designers who do so are: Eliza Parker, Gayla Bentley, Jessica Simpson, Jill Alexander Designs, Kiyonna, Melissa Masse, Rue 114, Queen Grace and Douglas Says ("The curvy fashionista," 2012).

Yet despite the fact that plus-sized designer clothing options do exist, plus-sized models are rarely seen. Also, the images that accompany the other articles in the sections of beauty, fitness, sex, and global issues, also usually show women close to runway model size.

Some magazine editors have recently made attempts to feature models of different sizes and shapes in the pictures they feature. In *Glamour*'s September issue of 2009, a small photo of plus-sized model Lizzie Miller was featured, which resulted in a huge amount of positive feedback from readers. One reader's comment said, "I love this picture. I was starting to despair of ever seeing real women in magazines and it made me reassess how I look at myself. I have a similar tummy, which I hate - but look at her, she's beautiful," ("Glamour magazine shows un-airbrushed photo," 2009).

Soon after, the magazine provided a "Beautiful Bodies Spread" showing seven nude models of varying skin colors and sizes. This inclusion of female models that fall within the average size range of American women was big news. *Glamour* received a great amount of positive feedback from its readers and the magazine included that feedback in the following issue. One reader said this about the spread, "Lovely to see somewhat normal figures in fashion spreads. If we had more of this, and more diversity in general, we would all have healthier body images."

Yet there were others who felt that the women in the photos, labeled “plus-sized models” were still not even close to the actual plus-sized American woman. Another reader said this of the models, “These women are absolutely stunning, but they are hardly "plus-size." I wear plus-size clothing and I am much bigger than any of these women. Get a clue Glamour!! These women are NORMAL size!” (“Supermodels who aren’t super-thin,” 2011).

This comment is one that represents many comments from women regarding “plus-size” models. Because the average American woman is a size 12-14, plus-size garments are described as size 16 and larger. Yet models working in the fashion industry that are deemed plus-size can be as small as a size 6. Therefore, even when plus-size models are featured in women’s magazines, they are often still smaller than the average American woman.

Marie Claire has also made a recent attempt to show women of different shapes and sizes. In 2009, the magazine introduced a new column in their fashion section titled, “Big Girl in a Skinny World.” The column concentrates on dressing a larger body type. The original writer for the column, Ashley Falcon, addressed fashion issues for larger women. She reported that she was 5’2, 220 pounds and a size 18 (Falcon, 2009). Falcon has since been replaced, but the column still exists. The current columnist, Nicolette Mason, also writes about her own issues, suggests stores and brands for larger women and discusses cuts and styles of clothes that flatter a plus-sized body.

While some readers reacted positively to this inclusion of an actual plus-size fashion commentator, many felt it was step backward for the magazine. It has been called by critics, “a

condescending regular fashion column,” (Brown, 2011). The column has been accused of having, “less than pure motives,” (“*Marie Claire*- big girl in a skinny world,” 2010). The overall feeling from many women when the column debuted was that it was ridiculous to provide fashion advice to larger women in a magazine that focuses mainly on thin models.

These instances of plus-sized models being shown in popular women’s magazines were newsworthy when they occurred because they do not happen on a regular basis. Instead of it being a novelty for an average to plus-sized woman to be featured in a women’s magazine, it should be the standard.

In their study, “When Comparisons Arise,” Gilbert, Giesler, and Morris stated that “social comparisons may be relatively spontaneous, effortless, and unintentional reactions to the performances of others and that they may occur even when people consider such reactions logically inappropriate,” (Gilbert, Giesler & Morris, 1995). That idea is the backbone of this research. Women cannot help but compare themselves to other women, especially when the models featured in magazines and other media are drastically thinner than the norm.

Purpose

Previously conducted studies have shown that women constantly compare themselves to the models featured in women’s magazines, and in turn, serious problems have arisen. Many research studies, which are discussed in the literature review, have been conducted on the connection between women viewing the images these magazines and then developing body image issues, negative moods and even eating disorders. The majority of findings show that

women often develop body image issues, negative moods, and in some cases, eating disorders because they are bombarded with images of thin models in women's magazines. The problem is, editors of women's magazines continue to choose women much smaller, in most cases at least six times smaller, than the average sized American women to feature.

The purpose of this study is to explore three popular women's magazines and discover how many images in these women's magazine feature a thin, idealized woman. By doing this, one will be able to see how many times a woman is shown an image of a thin woman while reading a women's magazine, and in turn, subjects herself to possible negative emotional and physical effects. This study will also discover which of the three magazines studied: *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, show the highest percentage images of thin women, and therefore could possibly cause the most harm to a woman's emotional and physical state of being.

This study is needed to provide numerical evidence to support the many conclusions from previous studies. To the knowledge of the researcher, only one similar content analysis has been conducted on this topic. Brown (2006) studied the images in women's magazines up to 2005 and determined how five female undergraduate students perceived images from several women's magazines. This study will provide a current look at this topic and add to that study's results. While this study is not exactly like Brown's, it is similar in nature. The results will provide numerical evidence of the amount of times a women is subjected to a thin woman while viewing a women's magazine and possible exposing herself to many negative side-effects.

This study will add valuable information to any field of study that concentrates on female body images or eating disorders.

Methodology

Several research studies have been conducted on the effects that reading women's fashion magazines and viewing the images within those magazines have on women's minds and bodies. This paper studies and goes beyond that research. This paper contains an exhaustive look at the research that has already been done on the topic of women's magazines and body issues.

First, a review of the literature relevant to this study was conducted. For the literature review, research studies covering the topic of women viewing images in women's magazines and the effects of viewing those images were sought. Studies that focused on teenagers or children were not included. Studies that focused on purely the text found in women's magazines were also not included. Only those studies that focused on women and the images found in women's magazines were used for this study. After extensive searching, 13 research studies based on this topic were found and analyzed. Three themes arose through analyzing the results of the aforementioned studies:

- 1) Body Image, Mood and Self-Objectification
- 2) Eating Disorders
- 3) Positive Side- Effects

Therefore, in the literature review, the research articles were separated and discussed by the issue or topic that was being addressed during the study.

The information found through analyzing research studies provides a background on what has already been discovered about the connection between viewing images in women's magazines and the mental, physical and emotional effects doing so can have on women. The literature review shows the possible damaging effects the images in women's magazines can have on women.

A content analysis was then used. Content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use." Conducting a content analysis involves "a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessary from an author's or user's perspective," (Krippendorff, 2004).

For this research study, the following questions and hypotheses were created:

Research Question 1: Were more images of thin female bodies featured than bodies of average-sized or overweight women in *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* from 2009-2011?

Research Question 2: From 2009-2011, which women's magazine, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* or *Cosmopolitan*, featured the highest percentage of images of thin women?

The content analysis was conducted to show how many images a thin female body a woman is exposed to while reading a women's magazine, therefore subjecting her to the previously aforementioned effects: negative effects on body image, mood, and sometimes, disordered eating. To the knowledge of the researcher, only one content analysis has been conducted on the amount of times an image of a thin model is featured in a women's magazine, the previously mentioned study by Brown.

For the content analysis, three magazines were chosen: *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*. These magazines were chosen because they are classified as women's magazines and because all three are in the top 10 women's magazines reaching the major market segment of women aged 18-34, according to the MRI Spring 2011 figures listed on *Cosmopolitan's* online media kit ("*Cosmopolitan* media kit," 2012).

Glamour magazine calls itself, "The magazine that helps every woman become the "DO" she was born to be." On its online site, *Glamour* boasts that one in every 10 American women reads the magazine with a print audience of 12 million. Also, it states that 3.2 million readers view the website every month. According to 2011 figures, *Glamour* had a total paid circulation of 2,304,146. *Glamour's* Editor-in-Chief is Cynthia Leive. Under Leive's leadership, *Glamour* has won a record number of National Magazine Awards, including Magazine of the Year (Berken 2012).

On *Cosmopolitan's* website, the magazine is described as "the lifestylist- and cheerleader- for millions of fun, fearless females who want to be the best they can in every area

of their lives.” *Cosmopolitan* is currently the best-selling women’s magazine in America and had a total paid circulation of 3,032,000 at the end of 2011. The readership page on its site states that magazine readers also spend more time reading *Cosmopolitan* (75 minutes) than any other women’s magazine. Kate White is the current Editor-in-Chief (“*Cosmopolitan* media kit,” 2012).

Marie Claire’s Editor-in-Chief, Joanna Coles, said, “The *Marie Claire* reader is socially connected and heavily networked both personally and professionally- she wants her peer group to take her seriously. And, it’s the reason she wants to see, do, and have everything first.” *Marie Claire*’s online media kit states that the magazine ranks at number one for employed and professional women. It also states that it is the number one women’s magazine to reach women who spend a large amount of money on luxury goods (an average of \$5,000 on fashion in one year.) The magazine had a total paid circulation of 963,305 in 2011 (“*Marie Claire* media,” 2012).

Six issues of each magazine were chosen from the years 2009-2011, two from each year for each magazine. This created a sample of a total of 18 magazines. The months used for each magazine were based on accessibility of issues. The years 2009- 2011 were chosen because they are the three most recent years that circulation numbers and market segment information was available. The researcher sought to ensure that the information gathered would be as current as possible. It was important for the magazines used to be current so the reader can get an understanding of what is currently happening in women’s magazines.

In Chapter Three, the method will be more thoroughly explained and discussed.

Theory

The social comparison theory was used as the underpinning of this research study. It was developed by Leo Festinger in 1954. The social comparison theory states that humans are innately driven to “evaluate their opinions, abilities and overall self-worth,” (Seidel, 2009).

In order for this to take place, Festinger said, humans must look at other people that are somewhat similar to them to identify with. Humans will seek out other humans who resemble them in some way to make comparisons between themselves and some other people (Ibid).

Festinger further hypothesized that because humans have this innate need for social comparison, there is an increased pressure on them to form uniform groups. In short, people don't want to stand out; they want to be like other people. Also, humans cannot help but strive to improve themselves and their abilities. People will compare themselves with other people they feel are better or more capable in some way (Ibid).

Since Festinger developed the social comparison theory, it has been believed that “upward comparisons may result in low self esteem and that downward comparisons may increase feelings of self worth.” Yet some research has suggested that both types of social comparisons can cause humans to either be inspired or depressed. “Upward comparisons may result in increased desire to succeed and improve one's situation, while downward comparisons

may lower the expectations of the individual and decrease their motivation to continue to grow,” (Ibid).

Significance

Many previous research studies have suggested that there are strong connections between women viewing thin female body images in magazines and women then developing body image issues and eating disorders. Because of this, it was the goal of this research to discover how many times a woman is exposed to a thin body image in the average issue of a women’s magazine and therefore possibly feel the aforementioned effects due to the viewing of such images. The researcher also sought to discover which of the following magazines: *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, featured the most average images of thin women instead of average or overweight women, therefore possibly causing the most emotional and physical damage to women. By doing this, the reader will be able to see how many times a woman is shown an image of a thin woman while reading a women’s magazine, and in turn, possibly suffers negative emotional and physical effects. This study will also discover which of the three magazines studied: *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, show the highest percentage images of thin women, and therefore could possibly cause the most harm to a woman’s emotional and physical state of being.

These findings will benefit the creators, publishers and editors of women’s magazines, as well as any other contributors. They will be able to see exactly how many times a woman is exposed to an image of a thin, ideal woman while viewing a women’s magazine. This research could help inspire all of the contributors to women’s magazines to feature women closer to the

average-sized American woman and to feature women of a variety of sizes on a regular basis. It has been shown through several studies that women automatically compare themselves to the images of other women in magazines. Possibly, if the women shown in magazines came in a wider variety of shapes, and less thin, idealized women were prominently featured, women would not be as likely to suffer from negative emotional and physical effects.

These findings will also show which magazine of the three chosen is the most likely to feature a thin women instead of an average-sized or plus-sized woman. This could help the creators of the magazine that features the most images of thin women to strive to include more women who are average or plus-sized.

Also, the average woman will benefit from reading this study. If a woman knows that she cannot help but compare herself to other women and she often feels worse about herself after viewing thin images in the media, she will be able to review this research and make an informed decision. In the results of this study, she will be able to see how many times each of the three magazines, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, features a thin woman rather than an average of plus-sized woman. She will also be able to see which of the three magazines utilized in this study is the biggest offender of showing mostly thin women. Then, if she desires, she can stay away from that publication and the possible negative effects of viewing it.

The researcher hopes to add to the results of the studies that have already been conducted on this topic and provide current research on the topic. This paper will give provide a look into how women's magazines are currently portraying women. This study will contribute to the

already existing body of work on this topic and provide new and current information to the field of magazine journalism.

Organization

Chapter one provided an introduction to this research study. In it, the theory, purpose, significance and a summary of the method were discussed. The research questions and hypotheses were stated. The remainder of this research study contains four more chapters.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature relevant to the study's topic of the representation of women's bodies in women's magazines. Thirteen research studies, thesis and dissertations are discussed and compared. These 13 studies were separated into three categories that were found to stand out by the researcher: 1) Body Image, Mood and Self-Objectification 2) Further serious side-effects: Eating Disorders and 3) Positive side effects: Do they exist?

Chapter three contains the methodology of the study. This chapter explains how the research study will be conducted. Content analysis is defined and explained. The specifics of how the data for this study was obtained are also discussed.

Chapter four contains the findings of the study. This includes several charts utilized to show the numbers and percentages obtained from research. Both research questions will be answered, and any additional findings will be reported.

Chapter five is a discussion of the findings. In this chapter, the numbers and percentages found during research will be reported and explained. The discussion chapter will help the reader to understand the data discovered during research.

Chapter six is contains the summary and conclusions. The results of the research study will be summarized. The researcher's thoughts and opinions will be found in the conclusions sections, as well as any suggestions for future research.

Several figures and descriptive materials will be included at the end of this paper in the. The codebook, code sheet and Thompson and Gray's Contour Drawing Rating Scale will be included to help the reader understand the materials utilized during research.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Several research studies have been conducted on the topic of women comparing themselves to the images of the women they see in magazines and the effects that doing so has on their body images and self-esteem. The majority of studies conducted on this topic have concluded with the fact that women do compare themselves with the models featured in images in women's magazines and have negative feelings about their own bodies and negative changes in their moods because of those images.

Additionally, some studies have shown that the impact that viewing women's magazines has on some women can lead them to harm themselves through eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

Finally, there were a few studies found that suggested it is possible for women to have positive mood changes and outlooks after viewing images of a "thin ideal woman." Each of these types of studies will be discussed in this paper, to give insight into all of the research that has already been conducted on this topic.

Body Image, Mood and Self-Objectification

“Fashion is about dreams and illusions...and no one wants to see round women,” Karl Lagerfeld.

Three themes arose through the study of previous literature regarding this topic. The first, which comprised the majority of the research studies found, is that there is an obvious connection between women viewing idealized images of female models in magazines and the women then having increased body dissatisfaction and negative mood swings directly after viewing the images.

One of the earlier studies found was a 1977 exploratory analysis titled, “The Influence of Fashion Magazines on the Body Image Satisfaction of College Women: An Exploratory Analysis.” Two researchers brought 39 female undergraduate students together to examine how exposure to fashion magazines impacted their own body image satisfaction (Turner & Hamilton, 1997).

This study had an aspect to it that sought to go beyond previous studies that required a female subject to just look at an image and report her feelings. The women were randomly split up into two groups, with no differences in average height and weight between the two groups. One by one, the women of each group were brought into a room and told that there would be a short wait before testing. Each woman was left alone for a total of 13 minutes. The difference was, the women of the first group were left alone with only fashion magazines and the subjects in the second group were left in a room with only news magazines. The researchers hoped to

prove that women who viewed fashion magazines, as opposed to news magazines, would show increased levels of body image dissatisfaction and would report being less satisfied with their bodies (Turner & Hamilton, 1997).

The outcome of the study supported the hypothesis. The women who had been exposed to the fashion magazines while waiting for the study to begin reported that they wished they weighed less than the women who read the news magazines. The women who read the fashion magazines also reported feeling more negatively about their bodies than the group exposed to the news magazines. The researchers concluded that “exposure to fashion magazines was related to women's greater preoccupation with being thin, dissatisfaction with their bodies, frustration about weight, and fear about deviating from the thin standard,” (Turner & Hamilton, 1997).

The researchers of the study, Turner and Hamilton, also discussed the fact that their study was different than previous studies because of the method used. Instead of simply showing women images and asking them to respond to them, they put the women into a real world situation, where they sat down and flipped through magazines. They wanted to make the study feel as realistic as possible by placing their subjects in a situation that would occur in real life, not just in a lab experiment. By doing this, they felt they would get a better understanding of how women feel after actually looking through a magazine as they would normally, not just looking at certain chosen images taken from a magazine (Turner & Hamilton, 1997).

The Turner and Hamilton study showed that women who compare themselves to the models they see in magazines suffer from body shame and feel less happy about their own

bodies. The results of that study were consistent with the results in a study performed by researchers at Flinders University of South Australia in 2004.

Researchers Harper and Tiggemann asked 126 women to view advertisements from magazines that featured images of thin, idealized models. The research team sought to show the effects on women's "mood, body dissatisfaction, and weight anxiety" after seeing images of skinny models (Tiggemann, 2004).

Although each woman viewed only 11 pictures of the idealized bodies of models in ten minutes, which is much less than what a woman would see when reading any average magazine in everyday life, the study showed that the subjects did have increased body dissatisfaction after seeing the images from women's magazines, as well as increased negative attitudes (Tiggemann, 2004).

This study contributed to previous research by showing that women compare themselves to the women they see in magazines, and because of that, have a greater amount of body dissatisfaction and a heightened anxiety regarding their own body shape and weight.

A 2005 research study titled, "Media-portrayed idealized images, body shame, and appearance anxiety," built upon the results in the previously mentioned study. The 39 subjects in the study were shown women's magazine advertisements to evaluate. Some of the ads had no models, some were focused on the models by promoting body-related products, such as clothing or diet drinks, and some featured a thin, idealized woman in the ad, but the focus was on some non-body-related product, such as a car or furniture (Monro & Huon, 2005).

Like the findings from the previous studies, the results also showed increased appearance anxiety in the female subject after they had viewed the images of thin women in the magazine advertisements. Yet some new and interesting information surfaced through this study. It did not matter what the advertisement was for, whether it was a body-related product or a non-body-related product, if there was a thin and pretty woman featured, the subjects felt worse about their own appearances after seeing it. Both the images that had a direct focus and an indirect focus on an idealized women's body affected the way the subjects reported feeling about their own bodies (Monro & Huon, 2005).

These findings were inconsistent with previous results found by Lockwood and Kunda in 1997, who found that "self-view and behavior is more likely to be influenced by role models that make the goal appear attainable and relevant." Yet Monro and Huon found no difference in how the women felt based on whether they viewed images related to weight loss or images related to buying cars. The part of the advertisement that had an impact was the women in the picture, not the product she was selling or the message she was sending through the product (Monro & Huon, 2005).

Similarly, a study published in 2008 named, "The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image," also sought to discover women's feelings about their own body image and mood. Yet they added an additional aspect to delve even further into how women view themselves after seeing idealized images. The two researchers focused their study around objectification theory, which contends "contends that

experiences of sexual objectification socialize women to engage in self-objectification,” (Tiggemann & Harper, 2008).

Therefore the goal was not only to see how women’s moods changed and how they reported feeling about the level of body dissatisfaction they had at the time, but also if they engaged in a greater amount of self-objectification due to magazine images of models (Tiggemann & Harper, 2008).

For this experiment, 90 female college students, aged 18 to 35, were each shown 15 full page magazine advertisements. These ads showed either a thin woman all alone, a thin woman interacting with a handsome man or simply a product with no people at all (Tiggemann & Harper, 2008).

The women who were shown advertisements with a thin woman reported “a greater state of self objectification, weight-related appearance anxiety, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction” than the subjects who saw only products related ads (Tiggemann & Harper, 2008).

These results were comparable to those of a study titled, “Upward and Downward: Social Comparison Processing of Thin Idealized Media Images.” The goal of this study was also to show the connection between viewing images in women’s magazines and a negative self image, but the researchers also predicted something further. They believed that women would only experience a negative mood change and feel dissatisfaction about their own bodies when they compared themselves physically to the models. This was labeled called an “appearance

comparison.” It was theorized that when the women compared themselves intellectually to the models in the magazines, it would result in more positive outcomes than when they engaged in appearance comparison (Tiggemann & Polivy, 2010).

The subjects, 114 women between the ages of 18 and 35, partially fulfilled the theory. The women were asked to compare themselves to the models in the magazine images through a series of questions. Overall, they did experience a negative mood change after being asked to view models and compare themselves based on appearance (Tiggemann & Polivy, 2010).

Yet what the study did not predict is that the women also felt worse after comparing themselves intellectually. The surprising written section of the experiment showed that even though one group of women was supposed to have compared themselves based solely on intelligence, they also compared themselves physically. That was actually the reason that women felt worse about themselves. The subjects were unable to compare themselves without factoring looks into the equation (Tiggemann & Polivy, 2010).

Because of the results, the researchers concluded that “instructions to compare on any dimension will automatically elicit comparison on the basis of appearance, given that appearance may be the most immediate and salient aspect of the models,” (Tiggemann & Polivy, 2010).

All of the studies discussed so far regarding how women feel about their own bodies after they view images of idealized women in magazines share the same outcome. Overall, the subjects that participate in these studies had increased amounts of negative feelings about their

own bodies, along with a heightened amount of anxiety, a worsened mood, and, in one study, even experienced a greater state of self objectification.

There has also been research conducted that discovered even more serious side-effects can occur after women spend time looking at fashion and beauty magazines featuring idealized images of women. Other studies have found that women not only feel worse about their own bodies after seeing these images, but also act upon those feelings in some cases. Some women engage in activities such as: pushing themselves to exercise an extreme amount of time each day, drastically cutting the amount of calories they consume daily, and even developing eating disorders to live up to the standards set by women's magazines.

Further serious side-effects: Eating Disorders

“Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels,” Kate Moss.

Some researchers that looked into how women who read fashion and beauty magazines have a direct decrease in overall mood and personal body satisfaction took their studies a step further. They did this by attempting to discover if the women in their studies not only feel badly about themselves after seeing idealized images, but also acted upon those feelings by changing their behavior. If women who read certain magazines feel badly about themselves because of the images shown, that can cause mental grief and stress. But if the same women also act upon those feelings, that could cause dangerous physical effects as well.

One of the earliest studies discovered that sought to prove a positive correlation between viewing idealized images in the media and developing eating disorders was aptly titled, “The Relationship Between Media Consumption and Eating Disorders,” (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

This 1997 study by Harrison and Cantor was conducted by looking at the relationship between women’s levels of media use and the symptoms they show regarding disordered eating. The researchers also studied college men for a comparison of which gender is more greatly affected by idealized images (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

The 232 women who participated in the study were asked to report on the amount of time spent watching certain television shows and reading certain women’s magazines. There were four groups of magazines that were listed on the women’s survey: beauty and fashion, events and news, gossip and entertainment, and health and fitness. The women also took the “Eating Attitudes Test,” developed by Garner and Garfinkel in 1979, to evaluate the behaviors of the women in relation to disordered eating habits. An example of the questions listed included: “I exercise strenuously to burn off calories.” Six possible answers were available, ranging from two extremes, “never” and “always,” (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

It was concluded that the women were affected by the media in a greater way overall than the men. Also, it showed that women who exposed themselves to more images in fitness and health and fashion and beauty magazines were more likely to have a negative body image and engage in dangerous and irresponsible eating habits (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

A study published in 2006 sought to discover if viewing images from women's magazines could affect the way women consumed food, therefore suggesting a connection between reading women's magazines and developing eating disorders. The larger theme of the study though, was that of implicit measures versus explicit measure (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

The researchers believed that previous studies relied too much on the self-reporting of the subjects and not enough on observation of behaviors. The researchers organized 71 undergraduate female students at Washington University to participate in their study. The researchers wanted to prove that even if their subject did not explicitly show that they were affected by the images shown to them, they did experience changes and an implicit level. This study was different than many previous studies because of the method used. Women were not only asked to report their feelings, but they also were observed to discover how their internalized feelings would be externalized through an experimental situation (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

The subjects were shown images from magazines the women's magazines *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan* and *InStyle*. Some of the pictures featured just products, others showed female models. The experimental group was shown the images featuring models, while the control group only saw products. After viewing 20 images, the women were put through an implicit self-evaluation, a computerized test that required women to quickly respond to human traits by choosing either a positive or negative adjective to describe that trait, and an explicit test, which

required the subject to use self-reporting techniques of their feelings (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

To further measure how viewing the magazine images affected the participant's behavior, each individual was led into a waiting room after seeing the pictures. The subjects were left in a room, alone, for almost four minutes. The room contained several magazines, a table, chairs, and two food items from two categories: healthy food and junk food. The healthy food group included banana chips and raisins. The junk food group included jelly beans and chocolate candies. The subjects were told to help themselves to a snack (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

The results showed that the women felt worse about themselves according to the implicit tests than according to the explicit. This showed the researchers that women are affected by thin, idealized images of other women and more likely to internalize their negative feelings about themselves than express them openly (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

Also, the food test suggested that women may act upon those feelings by changing their eating behaviors, which could lead to an unhealthy relationship with food and possible even eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. The group of participants who were shown idealized images of women were less likely to consume any food and also less likely to consume food from the junk food category (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

These results not only reinforced the outcomes of previous studies, but also introduced a novel idea. The researchers discovered that women may often internalize their feelings regarding their appearance and how they compare themselves to the women featured in magazines and then

directly act upon those feelings by changing their eating habits. This conclusion was different than the conclusion of previous studies because other experiments had solely focused on explicit results. Gurari, Hetts, and Strube concluded that “small effects of advertising’s portrayal of women may have underestimated such effects by relying primarily on explicit, self-report measures of body image,” (Gurari, Hettes & Strube, 2006).

The previously mentioned studies sought to determine a connection between reading women’s beauty and fashion magazines and developing an unhealthy relationship with food. A study conducted in 2001 at Brigham Young University put a new twist on the other experiments by interviewing young women that had already developed eating disorders. The researchers wanted to find out if the images in women’s magazines had influenced the women to begin engaging in habits related to eating disorders. They also wanted to discover if the young women were still affected by the magazines after they had developed disorders (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

For the study, 28 outpatients at a treatment facility for eating disorders were interviewed regarding their experiences. Each of the women had been diagnosed with having anorexia nervosa by the therapists at the clinic. Over a period of 17 months, each of the women was interviewed at the facility for two hours. The goal was “The goal of the study was to produce a descriptive explanation of anorexic media use grounded in the reality and experiences of the anorexic patients,” (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

The researchers found that none of the participants blamed the media specifically for their problems with anorexia. Yet many of the women felt that the media did play a large role in the development of their disorders. Also, many expressed that they were still affected by the images and messages found in women's magazines (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

Along with a shared "heavy media usage," the women also shared several personality factors, such as a high level of intelligence, a drive to be perfect, and a high amount of sensitivity to problems of family members and friends (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

A connection shared by almost every patient was that of using women's magazines as a comparison tool. Several of the women said that they had felt inferior to the models featured in fashion and beauty magazines and that they also felt a need to change their own bodies to look more like the models (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

This excerpt from the study demonstrates how the participants handled viewing images of idealized women:

Interviewer: If you were to have picked up one of your *Mademoiselle* magazines and turned the page and saw a girl like this [interviewer shows a picture from a copy of *Mademoiselle* magazine], what would you look at on her?

Patient #13: Her, well, her legs are what I notice.

Interviewer: What about her legs?

Patient #13: They are so thin and long.

Interviewer: And is that like the ideal body to you?

Patient #13: Yeah. The tall-model type. Definitely,” (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

This study went beyond just showing the possible negative impacts on women who read certain magazines. By talking to women who actually developed eating disorders about their usage of women’s magazines, the argument becomes stronger. Almost every woman said that she felt inferior to the models featured in magazines such as *Glamour* and *Seventeen* and was determined to change her body to look more like those models (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

While the magazines were not blamed by any subject as being the sole reason an eating disorder developed, it was expressed by the patients that the media strongly influenced the negative feelings they had about their bodies and the decisions they made regarding (Thomsen, McCoy & Williams, 2001).

Positive side effects: Do they exist?

“I don't know who decided that skinny is more appealing than not skinny,” Gwyneth Paltrow.

The majority of research studies that have been done on the topic of women viewing idealized images of other women and how doing so affects their body image and self-esteem have shown that most of the women are less happy with their own bodies after seeing the magazine images and sometimes respond by hurting themselves through mental and physical

abuse. After reading the results of the many studies that have been conducted on the topic, one may conclude that there is no good reason for a woman to view a fashion or beauty magazine. Why would a woman subject herself to looking at images that could lead to increased negative feelings about her own body and possibly an eating disorder?

However, not every study has revealed that women suffer from negative side effects from looking at these idealized images. It seems reasonable that some women can have positive reactions to magazines and the images contained in them; why else would so many women buy the magazines produced for them? In fact, a few studies have shown that positive side effects can occur in women after they view idealized images of female models in the media, and one showed that women can react positively to such images in magazines in particular.

One research study, done in 2009, found that it is possible for women to have positive reactions to images of idealized models in magazines. Yet before the women viewed the images, something very specific had to take place; the women had to be told to pretend they *were* the models (Tiggemann, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009).

Tiggemann, Polivy, and Hargreaves conducted a study to discover the effects on women after being exposed to magazine images that showed thin, beautiful female models. The participants included 144 women. Those women were shown magazine advertisements that contained either just products or that showed thin, attractive women. A control group was used, of course, but instead of just asking one other group of women to compare themselves and report their reactions, a third group was created and designated the “fantasy group,” (Tiggemann, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009).

The fantasy group was inspired by a previous study done by Myers and Biocca (1992) that brought about the idea of a “thinness fantasy” in regards to viewing images in the media. That particular study focused on television images. The thinness fantasy suggests that “instead of feeling worse about herself after seeing slim media images, a girl or woman may engage in a fantasy of believing herself to be thinner and more attractive.” In other words, if women, instead of comparing themselves to the models in magazines, imagine that they are the models, they will respond positively instead of negatively (Tiggemann, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009).

For Tiggemann, Polivy, and Hargreaves’ study, the comparison group, like in many other studies, was shown images of ideal women’s bodies. The women in this group were asked questions based on comparing their own bodies to the model’s bodies. In the fantasy group, the women were asked to imagine that they were the models, and answer questions about themselves and the images in that mindset (Tiggemann, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009).

The results showed that the women in the comparison group had overall increased body dissatisfaction, like in all of the previously mentioned studies. On the other hand, the women in the fantasy group had improved moods and did not show an increase in body dissatisfaction. The researchers concluded that “the nature of the processing women engage in is crucial to their response to thin ideal images,” (Tiggemann, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009).

This study proved to be an extremely important addition to the existing research because it was the first to show that there could be both positive and negative side effects for women after viewing the same idealized images.

Conclusion

Many researchers have sought to discover the connection between the viewing of idealized images of women in magazines and a woman's negative self-image, decreased mood, and disordered eating habits. Most of those studies have proven through different methods that women cannot help but feel worse about their own bodies after looking at thin, beautiful female models in magazines. In almost every study done on this topic, women show an increase in body dissatisfaction and in negative moods after being exposed to those "perfect" women.

Also, in some cases, it has been proven that viewing such images can cause women to take drastic measures in regards to the ways they eat. Disordered eating has also been shown as a side effect of looking at idealized images of women in magazines. Women sometimes change the way they look at food and how they consume food because of the pressure they feel to look like the average model.

Yet it would be hard to understand why women's magazines continue to be produced and consumed if women only had negative reactions to them. A few studies have sought to prove that women can have positive reactions to the models they see in the media. One study even showed that a group of women reacted positively to idealized images in magazines; but the women first had to pretend they *were* the models, not just compare themselves to them.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Problem

As previously stated in this paper, the average straight-sized model featured in an image from a women's magazine is a size 2. The average American woman is a size 12-14. The message that many women's magazines are sending to women is that they should be very thin. The majority of the studies conducted on the topic of the effects these images have on women have concluded with the fact that women compare themselves with the models shown in women's magazines and have negative feelings about their own bodies and negative changes in their moods because of the women featured in the magazines.

Also, some studies have shown that the impact that viewing women's magazines has on some women can lead them to harm themselves through eating disorders. Turner and Hamilton (1997) found that "exposure to fashion magazines was related to women's greater preoccupation with being thin, dissatisfaction with their bodies, frustration about weight, and fear about deviating from the thin standard."

Due to those issues, it was the goal of the researcher to collect data through content analysis to establish whether image of thin models are shown more often than images of average-sized or overweight models in women's magazines, and to discover which of the three magazines studied featured the highest percentage of thin models in its

images, in spite of the research that suggests great exposure to thin body images can have a negative effect on women's minds and bodies.

Research Questions

Two research questions were examined in this study:

RQ1: How many of the female images in the three magazines, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, are of thin body images?

RQ2: Which women's magazine, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* or *Cosmopolitan*, features the highest percentage of thin female bodies?

Content Analysis

Content analysis was used to perform this study, which investigated women's magazine's representations of female bodies. Content analysis "entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images and symbolic matter." It is a scientific tool used to "provide new insights and increase a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena," (Krippendorff, 2004).

This method was chosen to show how many images of a thin body type a woman is exposed to while reading a women's magazine, therefore subjecting her to the previously aforementioned effects suggested by previous research: negative effects on body image, mood, and sometimes, disordered eating.

For this study, three women's magazines were chosen for review for use in the content analysis: *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *Marie Claire*. These three magazines were ultimately

decided upon because they are classified as women's magazines and because all three are in the top 10 women's magazines to reach the major market segment of women aged 18-34.

For the content analysis multistage sampling was used. The first step of multistage sampling is to define the "universe." In this case, the universe consists of all women's magazines (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

The second step is to identify the "sampling documents." For this study, three magazines, *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire* and *Glamour* were chosen to represent the entire population of women's magazines. Six issues of each magazine were used for the research study. Two issues from 2009, two issues from 2010 and two issues from 2011 from each of the three magazines were used for a total of 18 magazines. The following issues were used for this study:

- 1) *Glamour*, February 2009
- 2) *Glamour*, June 2009
- 3) *Glamour*, June 2010
- 4) *Glamour*, July 2010
- 5) *Glamour*, February 2011
- 6) *Glamour*, July 2011
- 7) *Cosmopolitan*, April 2009
- 8) *Cosmopolitan*, August 2009

- 9) *Cosmopolitan*, July 2010
- 10) *Cosmopolitan*, August 2010
- 11) *Cosmopolitan*, November 2011
- 12) *Cosmopolitan*, December 2011
- 13) *Marie Claire*, March 2009
- 14) *Marie Claire*, April 2009
- 15) *Marie Claire*, January 2010
- 16) *Marie Claire*, August 2010
- 17) *Marie Claire*, May 2011
- 18) *Marie Claire*, November 2011

The last step, sampling within documents, was then conducted. Therefore, the documents to be analyzed were reduced to individual images within the magazines. First, the images to be included had to be defined in some way. To be included in the study, images had to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Image must be of a woman (Woman- female adult human appearing to be at least 18 years of age.)
- 2) Image can be of any size.
- 3) Image must show the woman's entire face.

- 4) Image must be from the waist-up.
- 5) Image may be part of any advertisement or any article.
- 6) Image may not include another person; only include images of one woman, alone.
- 7) Image must be within the magazine, do not include images on the cover or back of magazine.
- 8) If the same woman is featured more than once, each individual image must be counted separately.
- 9) Images of cartoon women must not be counted.

(The entire codebook can be found in Appendix A.)

From that point, every image that met the qualifications previously stated was marked with a sticker and numbered to note its inclusion in the study. This was done in lieu of making copies of each image, as several other researchers investigating this topic did.

This created a total of 1,998 images to be viewed and analyzed. For *Glamour* magazine, the total number of images coded was 783. For *Marie Claire*, the total number of images coded was 738. For *Cosmopolitan*, the total number of images coded was 477.

Coding

Recording occurs when readers or observers interpret what they find and then state their findings formally; coding is “the term content analysts use when this process is carried out according to observer-independent rules.” (Krippendorff, 2004) For this study, coding took place

when the coders viewed an image from a women's magazine and determined which of the nine images in Thompson and Gray's (1995) Contour Drawing Rating Scale (CDRS) it most closely resembled.

For this study, Thompson and Gray's (1995) Contour Drawing Rating Scale was used during the coding process. The coders looked at an image from a women's magazine and then chose the number of the image from the CDRS that most closely resembled the woman.

The CDRS is a drawing of nine male figures and nine female figures of varying sizes. The male figures were not relevant to the study and were not utilized. The nine female figures were used in the coding process.

The images were ranked from 1 to 9. The figure ranked number 1 represented the thinnest female and the figure ranked number 9 represented the largest female. These rankings were pre-determined by Thompson and Gray's study. In that study, the participants identified figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 as being thin. The figures marked 5 and 6 were identified as being average. The figures marked 7, 8 and 9 were identified as obese.

In this study, coders were asked to rank each image from the magazine a 1-9, corresponding with the image from the CDRS. If the coder marked the image a 1, 2, 3 or 4, it was determined to be an image of a "thin" woman, if the coder marked the image a 5 or 6, it was determined to be an image of an "average" woman and if the coder marked the image a 7, 8 or 9, it was determined to be an image of an "obese" woman, just as in Thompson and Gray's original study.

Convenience sampling was used to obtain coders to participate in this study. Denscombe (2007) said, “Because researchers have limited money and limited time at their disposal, it is quite reasonable that where there is scope for choice between two or more equally valid possibilities for inclusion in the sample, the researcher should choose the most convenient.”

The two coders that were recruited to participate in the study are both college graduates of the University of Mississippi. Both coders are Caucasian. Neither coder reported regularly reading women’s magazines or ever participating in a research study. This put both of the coders at the same experience level going into the coding process.

First, the two coders and the researcher coded three of the 18 magazines to ensure the method used in the study was reliable. This has been referred to as a “pilot study.” Wimmer and Dominick (2006) said “a study is reliable when repeated measurement of the same material results in similar decisions or conclusions.” Furthermore, intercoder reliability refers to “levels of agreement among independent coders who code the same content using the same coding instrument.” If the results in a content analysis do not achieve reliability, something could be wrong with the coders, the instructions or the overall method.

In a content analysis, it is important that coders are trained. Coder training is “an integral step in any content analysis and usually results in a more reliable analysis,” Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

In this study, the coders were trained by being given an overview of the study and then reading the codebook (see Appendix A).

Coders were also given a practice test before starting. They were both asked to view 10 images from a random women's magazine and write down which figure from the CDRS it most closely resembled. Both coders were able to accomplish the practice test.

Coder number one said the pre-test was easy and that coding the rest of the material would not be a problem. Coder number two said that she felt comfortable coding the images presented to her and "it will easy to rank the rest of the images." Both of the coders reported that they understood the nature of the study and the method of coding.

The coders were then asked to read the codebook carefully and begin coding. Each coder was provided a separate workspace. The workspaces were small and private. The coders were each given a codebook, 15 code sheets, two pencils and three magazines. The researcher also coded the three magazines in the pilot study.

The three magazines chosen for the pilot study to test the reliability of the study and to ensure intercoder reliability were:

- 1) *Glamour*, June 2010
- 2) *Marie Claire*, August 2010
- 3) *Cosmopolitan*, July 2010

These three magazines were chosen at random.

After the researcher and the two coders completed the task of coding three magazines, it was determined that the results were reliable. To show reliability, the researcher used Holsti's formula for determining reliability. The formula is:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N1+N2}$$

$$N1+N2$$

In this formula, M is "the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree and N1 and N2 are the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder," (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

For this study though, the researcher also coded for the pilot study, along with the two volunteer coders. So the formula was adjusted to:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{3M}{N1+N2+N3}$$

$$N1+N2+N3$$

For this study M= 302, N1=321, N2=321 and N3=321 because 321 was the total number of coding decisions and 302 was the number of coding decisions on which two coders agreed upon. According to the calculations of the researcher, the intercoder reliability for this study was .94 or 94 percent.

When using Holsti's formula, a minimum reliability coefficient of 90 percent or above should be reported. At 94 percent, this was achieved (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

This proved that the three coders agreed on the rankings for a majority of the images they were shown and that the researcher could continue on with her study and code the remainder of the material, confident that the method was sound.

The researcher then coded the 15 magazines that were not previously analyzed in the pilot study to determine the results of the full sample of 18 magazines.

A content analysis must be valid as well as reliable. For this content analysis, content validity was used to support the validity of the results that were found from looking at the data collected during the study. According to Wimmer and Domnick (2006), validity is defined as “the degree to which an instrument actually measures what it sets out to measure.”

Most content analyses rely on face validity, which “assumes that an instrument adequately measures what it purports to measure if the categories are rigidly and satisfactorily defined and if the procedures of the analysis have been adequately conducted,” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

Furthermore, Krippendorff (2004) states that content validity is used most often while conducting content analyses because “content analysis is fundamentally concerned with the readings of texts, with what symbols mean, and with how images are seen, all of which are largely rooted in common sense, in the shared culture in which such interpretations are made, which is difficult to measure but often highly reliable at a particular time.”

IV. Findings

For this content analysis, 18 magazines were looked at to determine how many times a woman is exposed to an image of a thin female model instead of an average sized or overweight model. This was done to determine how many times a woman is shown an image of a thin idealized woman while reading a women's magazine, and in turn, subject herself to possible negative emotional and physical effects previously discussed in the literature review. The researcher also sought to discover which of the three magazines studied: *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan*, features the most thin ideal women, and therefore could cause the most harm to a woman's emotional and physical state of being.

Six issues of each of the three magazines were viewed for a total of 18 magazines. Out of those 18 magazines, 1,998 images were viewed and coded. For *Glamour* magazine, the total number of images coded was 783. For *Marie Claire*, the total number of images coded was 738. For *Cosmopolitan*, the total number of images coded was 477.

To determine how many times a reader of a women's magazine sees a thin model while viewing the magazine, Thompson and Gray's Contour Drawing Rating Scale was used. A designation of "thin," meant a model was ranked as a 1, 2, 3, or 4. A designation of "average" meant the model was ranked a 5 or 6. A designation of "overweight" meant the model was ranked a 7, 8, or 9.

The first research question asked, “Are more images of thin female bodies featured than bodies of average-sized or overweight women in *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* from 2009-2011?” Tables 1-3 show the results of the study and the answer to that question.

Table 1: <i>Cosmopolitan</i> Results (Numbers)				
Issue: April 2009	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	68	4	0	72
Issue: August 2009	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	60	2	0	62
Issue: July 2010	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	79	1	0	80
Issue: August 2010	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	112	0	1	113
Issue: November 2011	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	75	3	0	78
Issue: December 2011	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	71	1	0	72
Issue: All	Total number of images ranked “thin”	Total number of images ranked “average”	Total number of images ranked “overweight”	Total number of images for all issues of <i>Cosmopolitan</i>
	465	11	1	477

Table 2: <i>Glamour</i> Results (Numbers)				
Issue: February 2009	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	80	8	0	88
Issue: June 2009	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	160	12	0	172
Issue: June 2010	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	119	20	9	139
Issue: July 2010	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	121	15	0	136
Issue: February 2011	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	78	9	0	87
Issue: June 2011	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	141	11	0	152
Issue: All	Total number of images ranked “thin”	Total number of images ranked “average”	Total number of images ranked “overweight”	Total number of images for all issues of <i>Glamour</i>
	699	75	9	783

Table 3: Marie Claire Results (Numbers)

Table 3: Marie Claire Results (Numbers)				
Issue: March 2009	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	172	1	0	173
Issue: April 2009	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	124	5	5	134
Issue: January 2010	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	101	3	2	106
Issue: August 2010	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	86	5	2	93
Issue: May 2011	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	112	1	0	113
Issue: November 2011	Number of images ranked “thin”	Number of images ranked “average”	Number of images ranked “overweight”	Total images
	118	0	1	119
Issue: All	Total number of images ranked “thin”	Total number of images ranked “average”	Total number of images ranked “overweight”	Total number of images for all issues of <i>Marie Claire</i>
	713	15	10	738

The second research question asked, “From 2009-2011, which women’s magazine, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* or *Cosmopolitan*, features the highest percentage of images of thin women?” Tables 4-6 reflect the results of the study and the answer to that question.

Table 4: <i>Cosmopolitan</i> results (percentages)		
Issue: April 2009	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	72	94%
Issue: August 2009	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	62	97%
Issue: July 2010	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	80	99%
Issue: August 2010	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	113	99%
Issue: November 2011	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	78	96%
Issue: December 2011	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	72	99%
Issue: All	Total images for all issues of <i>Cosmopolitan</i>	Percentage of images for all <i>Cosmopolitan</i> magazines ranked “thin”
	477	97%

Table 5: <i>Glamour</i> results (percentages)		
Issue: February 2009	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	88	91%
Issue: June 2009	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	172	93%
Issue: June 2010	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	148	80%
Issue: July 2010	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	136	89%
Issue: February 2011	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	87	90%
Issue: June 2011	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	152	93%
Issue: All	Total images for all issues of <i>Glamour</i>	Percentage of images for all <i>Glamour</i> magazines ranked “thin”
	783	89%

Table 6: <i>Marie Claire</i> results (percentages)		
Issue: March 2009	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	173	99%
Issue: April 2009	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	134	93%
Issue: January 2010	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	106	95%
Issue: August 2010	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	93	92%
Issue: May 2011	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	113	99%
Issue: November 2011	Total images	Percentage of images ranked “thin”
	119	99%
Issue: All	Total images for all issues of <i>Marie Claire</i>	Percentage of images for all <i>Marie Claire</i> magazines ranked “thin”
	738	97%

V. Discussion

These results of the study suggest that a woman reading the average women's magazine is much more likely to see an image of a thin woman than of an average or overweight woman.

Two research questions were examined in this study:

Research Question 1: Are more images of thin female bodies featured than bodies of average-sized or overweight women in *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* from 2009-2011?

Research Question 2: From 2009-2011, which women's magazine, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* or *Cosmopolitan*, features the highest percentage of images of thin women?

The answer to Research Question 1 can be gleaned from the facts in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

According to the findings section, as shown in Table 1, a total of 477 images were coded in the six *Cosmopolitan* magazines. Out of the 477 images, the number of images featuring a thin woman was 465, the number of images showing an average-sized woman was 11 and the number of images featuring an overweight woman was zero.

Table 2 shows the results for *Glamour* magazine. Out of the 783 images coded from the six *Glamour* magazines, 699 showed a thin woman, 75 images showed an average woman and an overweight woman was featured in nine of the 783 images.

As shown in Table 3, a total of 738 images were coded from the six *Marie Claire* magazines included in the study. Out of those 738, 713 of the images showed a thin woman, 15 images featured a women of average size and 10 images showed an overweight woman.

Therefore, the results show that there are more images of thin female bodies than average-size or overweight female bodies in women's magazines from 2009-2011.

The answer to Research Question 2 can be gleaned from the facts in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

In Table 4, the results for *Cosmopolitan* can be seen. Out of the 477 images coded, 97 percent were ranked as showing a thin body image.

Table 5 shows the results for *Glamour* magazine. Out of the 783 images coded from the six magazines, 89 percent of the images were ranked as showing a thin model.

Table 6 shows the results for *Marie Claire* magazine. One can see that out of those 738 images coded, 97 percent feature a thin body.

Therefore, *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* both had the highest percentage of thin women featured in their pages. 97 percent of the images in both *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* showed a thin female body.

The researcher also discovered another interesting fact in addition to the answers to both research questions. It was discovered that while *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* both featured 97 percent of thin women in their pages, *Cosmopolitan* featured the thinnest thin women.

Thompson and Gray's CDRS shows that a woman with a body ranking of 1-4 is classified as

“thin.” When it came to body image rankings, the average ranking for all of the women featured in the six issues of *Cosmopolitan* was 2.31, the average ranking for all six issue of *Glamour* was 2.94 and the average ranking for all six issues of *Marie Claire* was 2.42. So, even though *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* have an equal score for percentage of thin women featured, the average image in *Cosmopolitan* was found to be thinner than the average image in *Marie Claire*.

VI. Summary and Conclusions

The results of this study were not entirely surprising, but they were disheartening. Before even beginning the research for the content analysis, the researcher believed that most of the images seen would be of thin women. This belief came from years and years of reading women's magazines. So it was not a surprise to discover *Glamour*, *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* all show images of thin women rather than images of average-sized women most of the time. Also, it was not surprising to discover that images of overweight women are rarely shown. The average woman is still not being represented in women's magazines; even though several of those magazine's editors and writers claim to be working to make sure women of every shape and size is shown.

However, the percentages of thin women featured in each magazine were surprising. *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* both featured images of thin women in 97 percent of the pictures studied. That number is absurdly high. *Cosmopolitan* is the number one selling women's magazine in America, but the average woman has an extremely low chance of seeing a body image representative of her own within its pages.

Glamour featured thin women in the issues studied 89 percent of the time and featured the most images of average women. But, even though *Glamour* does a better job than *Cosmopolitan* or *Marie Claire* at featuring images of average-sized and overweight women, it

still features images of thin women almost 90 percent of the time. So, although *Glamour* looks good in comparison, it still fails miserably at showing images representing the average American woman.

Another statistic that stood out was the numbers of average-sized and overweight body images featured in the magazines. *Cosmopolitan* had the lowest number of both average-sized and overweight body images with 11 ranked as average and one ranked as overweight. *Marie Claire* showed 15 average-sized women in its images and 10 overweight women. *Glamour* featured the most average-sized women in its pages, 75 images. And with 9 images of overweight women, *Glamour* falls one image short of showing the most overweight women, right behind *Marie Claire*.

Some may ask, “Why is this even important?” It is important because several studies have shown that women cannot help but compare themselves to the models they see in women’s magazines. This paper has discussed this fact extensively in the both the Theory section and the Literature Review. Studies have shown that women are affected by the images they view, whether they like it or not. Often, women develop negative mood changes and negative views of their own bodies after looking at images of thin models in women’s magazine. In some cases, women change their eating habits and alter their exercise routines after looking at these magazines. If looking at thinner than average models in magazines can cause women to have all of these awful emotional and physical side-effects, why in the world do the majority of images in women’s magazines feature thin women? Possibly, if the women shown in magazines came in a wider variety of shapes and sizes, and less thin women were featured in each issue, women would not be as likely to suffer from negative emotional and physical effects.

It is believed by the researcher that every person who helps create a women's magazine should be knowledgeable of the previous studies done on this topic and aware of the effects the images in their magazines can have on women. The results of this research could help to open the eyes of some of the editors and writers of major women's magazines. Although the fact that women's magazines feature mostly thin models many not be surprising to the contributors, being able to view the numerical evidence might have an effect on them.

In conclusion, this research suggests that women's magazine are continuing to favor the use of thin women in their images the majority of the time. Also, it is possible that by doing so, women are exposed to the possible effects that were discussed in the literature review: negative moods, body image problems and even eating disorders. Editors and contributors of women's magazines should be aware of this research and strive to include many more images of women of average size, so the average American woman can see her own body type represented within the pages of the magazines created for her. Probably, this would help the average woman to become more comfortable with her own body and not feel the need to change her physical appearance to fit a media- created stereotype of the "ideal woman."

Limitations and Future Research

For future research, more magazines could be examined if one wanted to extend my study. For this study, three women's magazines that were on the top 10 list for best-selling women's magazines in America were chosen. If one were to add to my research, he or she could expand upon the number of magazines used or the number of issues selected for each magazine.

Due to the vigor of the study, the researcher does not believe the results would change much at all, but it bears exploring.

The only limitation during the research was the limited access of magazine issues needed for the study. Neither the library at the University of Mississippi nor the county libraries had all of the copies needed. The surrounding counties' libraries also did not have all of the issues. The copies could have been acquired through a library loan service, but marking the image would not have been allowed and keeping the magazines for the entirety of the research would have been difficult if not impossible. The issues needed were ultimately acquired from friends and acquaintances.

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List of Appendices

Appendix: A

Codebook

“Thin is in:

A content analysis of images in women’s magazines from 2009-2011”

Codebook

Please read the entire codebook before beginning.

Instructions:

- 1) Please write your name at the top of the code sheet.
- 2) Please write the title of the magazine next to “Magazine:” at the top of the code sheet

Possible magazine titles:

Glamour

Cosmopolitan

Marie Claire

Please write the issue date of the magazine next to “Issue date:” at the top of the code sheet

Write six digits:

The first two digits represent the month (March = 3, December = 12)

The third and fourth digits represent the day (01 to 31)

The fifth and sixth digits represent the last 2 digits of the year (2009=09)

Example: March 26, 2009= 032609

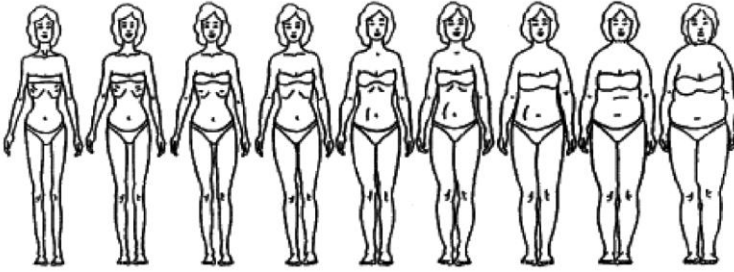
Category- Images

To define the Image Number:

Open the magazine and begin with the first marked image.

Begin with the first image, marked “1.” Continue on in numerical order.

For each image, write the corresponding code number featured below based on the size of the woman in the magazine image. Write ONLY one number for each image.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

01- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 1

02- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 2

03- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 3

04- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 4

05- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 5

06- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 6

07- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 7

08- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 8

09- The woman in the image appears to be the size of woman 9

Images to be included in the study:

- 1) Image must be of a woman (Woman- female adult human appearing to be at least 18 years of age.)
- 2) Image can be of any size.
- 3) Image must show the woman's entire face (Face- The front of the head, from the forehead to the chin.)
- 4) Image must be from the waist-up (Waist- The part of the body between the ribs and the hips; approximately where one would expect the belly button to be located.)
- 5) Image may be part of any advertisement or any article.
- 6) Image may not include another person; only include images of one woman, alone.
- 7) Image must be within the magazine, do not include images on the cover or back of magazine.
- 8) If the same woman is featured more than once, each individual image must be counted separately.
- 9) Images of cartoon women must not be counted. (Cartoon- a sketch or drawing as in a newspaper or periodical, symbolizing, satirizing, or caricaturing some action, subject, or person of popular interest.)

Appendix: B

Code Sheet

Name:

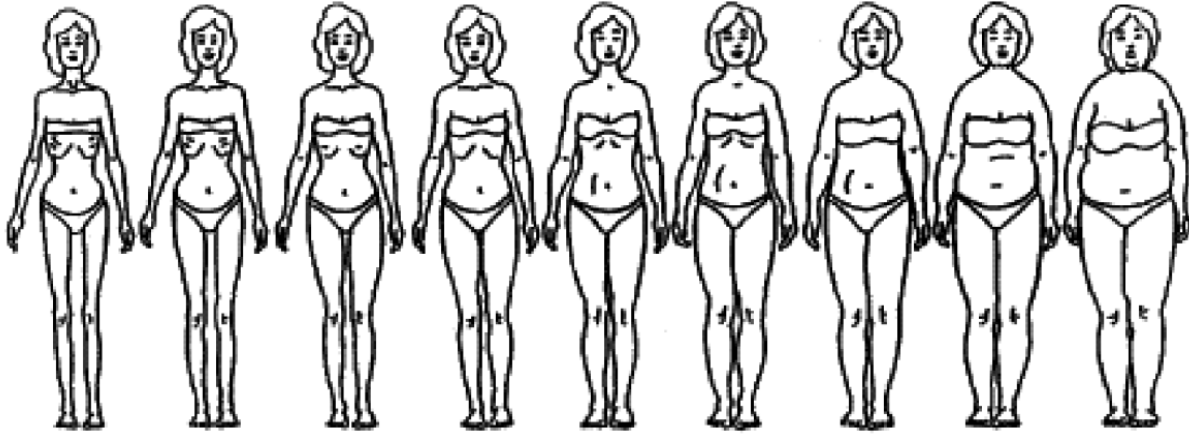
Magazine:

Issue Date:

Image Number	Code Number

Appendix: C

Thompson and Gray's Contour Drawing Rating Scale



VITA

Jennifer Wilson is from Fulton, Mississippi. After completing her work at Itawamba Agricultural High School in 2005, she attended the University of Mississippi. She graduated in May of 2009 with an undergraduate degree in Fashion Merchandising. In May of 2012, Jennifer successfully completed the graduate program in Journalism at the University of Mississippi.