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The Difference of Body Exposure:  
Images of Females and Males in Three Top Teen Magazines

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Communication  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Angie Blank  
May 2002

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Dr. John King, Chair  
Dr. Dan Brown  
Dr. Tom Coates

Keywords: Teen Magazines, Body Image, Adolescent Girls, Media, Face-ism

## ABSTRACT

### The Differences of Body Exposure: Images of Females and Males in Three Top Teen Magazines

by

Angie Blank

This study examined differences of how females and males were represented in three top teen magazines. Depiction of female and male bodies in the magazines was explored by the cropping of the photographs. The images were examined to determine if emphasis was placed on the face or the body. The researcher used the Body Index Scale coding instrument. A simple random sample of 1200 images in the three top teen magazines was analyzed.

The study did not show any statistical significance on hypotheses one, which stated that photographic images of females will be cropped lower on the body than images of males. However, there were significant findings on how images were cropped in relation to story type.

The significance of this study was showing how images of females and males are cropped differently in teen magazines. This finding could affect the way adolescent girls think and feel about their appearance.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

There have always been pressures on women for conformity, whether it is to conform to society's standards of beauty or trying to meet cultural expectations of the correct body weight. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idealized female body changed drastically from the century prior. Previously, the ideal women were big, tough, muscular, and strong.<sup>1</sup> As the 19<sup>th</sup> century approached, the ideal female body was more sickly, frail, pale, and prone to fainting.<sup>2</sup> With the corset coming into fashion in the early 1800s until the 1920s, the desirous hourglass figure was well on the way to a set another standard of beauty for women. Having ribs surgically removed kept women striving for the ideal image of the time to obtain the small enough waist size.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1920s, women were pursuing women's rights, and the idealized female image grew thin. The most significant change was the notion for women to show their sexuality and look sexy. This change meant having the right makeup, clothing, and hairstyle, which was the bobbed look at the time, and small breasts, which were physically bound to make women look flat chested.<sup>4</sup> By the 1940s the female image had changed again. As World War II approached, women now had to revert to the strong tough girl image again.

The 1950s introduced the "womanly body." The ideal image was shown through images such as Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the ideal body image had changed again. The model Twiggy epitomized the new boyish and slim image. The images of the 1980s were a mix of a more healthy and stronger image. Bigger breasts seemed to be the trend with this new image, as top fashion models were still boyish and skinny.<sup>5</sup> "Today it's not ribs we remove but fat. We attempt to melt it away with chemicals applied to the skin's



surface, we exercise strenuously to burn it out of our bodies, we go to have the excess fat sucked out of areas that displease us by their appearance, we get the fat surgically removed, cut away, and have ourselves stitched back up again. We also get plastic surgery to increase, lift, or reduce the size of our breasts, to tuck away excess skin on the face or other body areas, get noses reshaped and jaw lines redefined. We dye our hair, pluck our eyebrows, shave or wax our legs, wear high heeled shoes to cripple our feet, long nails that keep us from using our hands freely, make-up to enhance what we are convinced must be natural ugliness, perfume to cover our natural scent—all in the name of femininity.”<sup>6</sup>

One can see the ever-changing images of women throughout the century. Changes are still occurring today, which still cause some confusion about what is expected for the female image. The media can be seen, at times, emphasizing and promoting these different images for females. As seen throughout the numerous studies conducted on how the media influences women of all ages to conform to the thin body ideal, there can be various negative effects brought about from this pressure. From this constant reminder towards females of how they are expected to look, some women try to obtain this image but never live up to the media’s standards. Many young girls are caught in this trap from the media to achieve this perfect image that the media portray.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this content analysis is to examine how female and male images are portrayed in teen magazines. Images will be analyzed to determine if females and males are depicted differently in teen magazines. The story type in relation to body index will also be analyzed to determine if there is a difference between story type and the scores on the body index scale, which will be explained in more detail in the Hypothesis/Research Question section of the paper. Stereotypes possibly encourage magazine editors to portray females to show more

of their bodies than males. The female images shown could sway adolescent girls who frequently read these magazines to think that the shape or weight of their body is the most important issue.

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant because of the long-term emotional and physical effects, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, that can afflict adolescent girls in relation to the social standards of how girls should look and act. Ideal women are portrayed throughout the media, and this is what adolescent girls perceive as real. The ideal woman seems to be tall, thin, have long legs, flat stomach, good hair, and big breasts. More than likely the girls seeing these images are not aware of the probability that the images in these magazines are airbrushed or enhanced to yield this ideal image.

By researching the occurrence of this thin-ideal exposure of adolescent girls in teen magazines; publishers, editors, and writers of teen magazines can be able to see the results of such studies of how young girls can be caught up in obtaining this perfect image, shown throughout these teen magazines.

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

In today's society, there are many pressures on people from numerous types of media. There are the pressures to be rich, white, black, famous, skinny, tall, beautiful, smart, popular, and the list goes on. Impossible ideals can end up consuming people, encouraging them to strive for a false sense of self. All types of media such as magazines, television, movies, and advertisements, could offer models of ways of life or images of reality, particularly for young

girls. Adolescence is a time of physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual change for girls. As the media portray beauty and appearance as being the typical characteristics for American women, adolescent girls are conforming to fit in to be socially accepted. As Wendy Bantam put it, “Every day in the life of a woman is a walking Miss America Contest.”<sup>7</sup>

The idea that one type of medium may influence a young girl’s self-image and self-perception and could be the deciding factor on how young girls felt about their body is a very poignant subject. The media promote and reproduce our culture’s standards for what women’s bodies look like and the importance of beauty. The media also seem to emphasize that if girls are skinny, they too, can have happiness, love, and success. For adolescent girls, who would not want all of this? This idea of continuous concern for body image comes to girls at a very early age. Girls are taught at an early age that self-worth is based on a large part on how they look. For example, 90% of all girls ages 3-11 have a Barbie doll, which has a physically unattainable figure.<sup>8</sup> There are several ways negative body images can affect a young girl’s mental health. “People’s physical characteristics and body image affect personality development, self-esteem, interpersonal attractiveness, career opportunities sexual adjustment, and the prevalence of disordered eating behaviors.”<sup>9</sup>

### Media Influences

Research has shown that the media play a powerful role in molding children’s beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. From an early age girls are active participants in the media population, reading fashion magazines, watching over twenty hours of television a week, seeing over 20,000 advertisements a year, listening to the radio and C.D.s, watching music videos, and playing video games.<sup>10</sup> Researchers have suggested that the increasing impact of the media may make it one of the most influential influences in the adolescent community. A study on gender and the media was conducted, which illustrated the dual role media can play on adolescent girls.

The media can offer girls many positive role models; however, the media can often contain stereotypical messages about appearance, relationships, and priorities.<sup>10</sup> With these messages being both positive and negative, their influence is increased through continuous repetition. As seen in this study, the media seem to reinforce troubling stereotypes about the importance of appearance and relationships to girls, while stressing that careers are more important for men than women.<sup>10</sup> Magazine articles reinforce this message by focusing much more on dating (35%) and appearance (37%) than on subjects such as school or careers (12%).<sup>10</sup> A study conducted by Signorielli examined six types of media that are most frequently used by teenage girls. The sample included television shows, movies, teen magazines, music videos, television commercials, and magazine advertisements. A survey of 10-17 year-olds found that young people are getting opposing messages in television shows. Both girls (61%) and boys (53%) said the female characters they saw on television are thinner than women in real life. The kids also noticed that worrying about appearance or weight, crying or whining, weakness or flirting were all qualities associated with a female character on television. According to the study, seven out of 10 (69%) girls said they wanted to look, dress, or fix their hair like a character they saw on television.<sup>10</sup>

Other studies demonstrate that the current standard of attractiveness portrayed in magazines and on television is slimmer for women than for men. Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, and Kelly conducted four studies finding that the mass media play a role in emphasizing the hypothesized pressure to be thin. The first study looks at the weight of male versus female television characters. Television shows were selected from a weekly Nielsen National Index in 1982 in which 221 characters were rated from one (thin) to 10 (fat). Each of the characters received a weight rating as well as an age rating. The authors found that 65% of female characters aged 26 to 35 received weight ratings of less than three out of a 10-point scale, compared to only 26% of the males. Fifty-four percent of the female characters aged 36-50 received weight ratings of less than three, compared to 13% of the males.<sup>11</sup>

The second study relates to the weight messages in women's and men's magazines. A content analysis was conducted on the most popular women and men's magazines at the time of the study. The four women's magazines, *Family Circle*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Redbook*, and *Women's Day*, and the four men's magazines, *Field & Stream*, *Playboy*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Sports Illustrated*, were all analyzed. The content analysis focused on advertisements and articles that dealt with body shape and size and with dieting and food. The results showed major support that women receive more messages to be slim and stay in shape than men. The total number of advertisements for diet foods found in the 48 issues of women's magazines was 63, compared to one advertisement for diet foods in the men's magazines. The total number of articles dealing with body shape or size and nonfood body enhancing products was 96 in women's magazines and eight in men's magazines. A last result indicated that the total number of advertisements related to food in women's magazines was 1,179 compared to a total of 10 in men's magazines.<sup>12</sup>

The third study conducted by Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, and Kelly analyzed the curvaceousness of females portrayed in photographs in two popular women's magazines, at four-year intervals during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Ladies Home Journal* and *Vogue* were chosen for the study. The results were presented in terms of bust-to-waist ratios, which is the ratio of bust width to waist width. The bust-to-waist ratio in both magazines dropped from a high at the beginning of the century to a low in 1925. By the late 1940s, the ratio had increased by one-third in both magazines. By 1949, the ratios dropped again, reaching the 1920s level in the late 1960s and 1970s. Since 1965 the combined average of the bust-to-waist ratio in the magazines had been below 1.3.<sup>13</sup> This finding points to an interesting fact that today's 30 year-old woman has been exposed to a very non-curvaceousness standard since she was 11 years old. This supports the idea that the current standard of body attractiveness for women portrayed in magazines may have played a role in generating the next epidemic of eating disorders among women.<sup>14</sup>

The fourth study analyzed the curvaceousness of the most popular female movie stars from the past 50 years. Photographs of actresses were measured based on the bust-to-waist ratio mentioned in the previous study. The ratios of actresses during the 1960s and 1970s were compared with the ratios from the 1940s and 1950s. The results indicate that there were significant differences between the 1960s and 1970s and the 1940s and 1950s, to show that the standard became increasingly noncurvaceous.<sup>15</sup>

These four studies support the conclusion that the media plays a role in promoting a thin standard of attractiveness over the recent years. Fields, Cheung, Wolf, Herzog, and Colditz administered a questionnaire to 548 girls in grades five through 12 to assess the influence of the media on girls' weight concerns.<sup>16</sup> The questionnaire assessed body weight, dissatisfaction with body weight and shape, exposure to fashion magazines, the impact of the media on feelings about weight and shape. The results indicated that pictures in magazines had a strong impact on young girls' perceptions of their weight and shape. Of the girls, 69% said that pictures in magazines influenced their idea of the perfect body, and 47% wanted to lose weight because of looking at the pictures. Girls who were frequent readers of fashion magazines were two to three times more likely than infrequent readers to diet to lose weight because of a magazine article; to exercise to lose weight because of a magazine article; and to feel that magazines influence what they believe is the ideal body shape.<sup>17</sup> The frequency of reading fashion magazines was related with the majority of pre-adolescent and adolescent girls' being unhappy with their body weight and shape. It was observed that the frequency of reading magazines was positively associated with the frequency of having dieted to lose weight, dieting because of a magazine article, exercising to lose weight or improve body shape, and deciding to exercise because of a magazine article. These findings demonstrate the hazards associated with trying to look like underweight models. In the United States, many young females are overly concerned with their body weight and shape and may engage in unhealthy weight-control methods as a result.<sup>18</sup>

Repeated exposure to this thin ideal by various types of media can lead to the internalization of this ideal. The media reflect images of thinness and link these images to symbols of prestige, happiness, love, and success for women.<sup>19</sup>

In 1992, Andersen and DiDomenico analyzed the ten most popular magazines read by men and women.<sup>20</sup> They found that the women's magazines had 56 diet advertisements or articles and 20 muscle-building advertisements, as compared to five diet advertisements or articles and 17 muscle-building advertisements for magazines read by men. Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, and Thompson also found an increase in the number of diet-for-weight-loss articles in six leading women's magazines (*Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, *McCalls*) between 1959-1978.<sup>21</sup>

Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, and Ahrens conducted a similar study to determine if the trends found by Garner et al had continued, or faded in the next decade. This study also included some additional analysis relating to exercise for weight loss articles in women's magazines. The number of diet-for-weight-loss, exercise and diet articles were calculated for 1959-1988 for the same magazines Garner et al. used for their previous study. There was a drastic increase in the amount of diet and exercise articles between 1959 and 1988.<sup>22</sup> Body measurements, age, height, bust size, hip size, waist size, and weight were recorded for the *Playboy* centerfolds from 1979-1988 and the Miss America contestants from 1979-1985. The results found that Miss America contestants decreased in body size between 1979 and 1988, while *Playboy* centerfolds stayed at a lower level of body weight.<sup>23</sup> Over the 10-year time period, 69% of the *Playboy* centerfolds and 60% of the Miss America contestants had weights 15% or more below the expected weight for their age and height category. According to the DMS III-R,<sup>24</sup> a 28-item self-report scale measuring bulimia nervosa, maintaining body weight of 15% below expected weight is one of the major criteria for anorexia nervosa. This research continues to demonstrate the cultural ideal for the thin-body image among females, to grow thinner and thinner over time.

Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood, and Dwyer discuss the influence of fashion magazines on body image.<sup>25</sup> This study examined the impact of fashion magazines on women's body images. Participants included 39 college women in an introductory psychology class at a New England women's college. After taking a body image survey, half of the women were given fashion magazines and the other half of the women were given news magazines. The fashion magazines included: *Vogue*, *Bazaar*, *Elle*, and *Allure*. The news magazines included: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Newsweek*. A questionnaire was administered to assess body image satisfaction. It consisted of female body images used to indicate the participants' own body images, their ideal body images, and their perception of the ideal body image as seen by society. The participants indicated which of the eight magazines they read before taking the survey.

As hypothesized, "Women who viewed fashion magazines preferred to weigh less, were less satisfied with their bodies, were more frustrated about their weight, were more preoccupied with the desire to be thin, and were more afraid of getting fat than their peers who viewed news magazines."<sup>26</sup>

### Prevalence of Dieting and Eating Disorders

Aside from the media, there have always been cultural standards and expectations of how women should look. This expectation of thinness has also influenced an increase of eating pathology 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.<sup>27</sup> Also, the rise in eating disorders has corresponded with the increase of articles on weight-loss, diets, and exercise appearing in women's magazines.<sup>28</sup>

Stice and Shaw demonstrated the adverse effects from exposure to the thin ideal on females.<sup>29</sup> Participants included 157 female undergraduates who were exposed to pictures from magazines containing ultra-thin models, average weight models, or no models. A measure that



was used was the Ideal-Body Stereotype Scale.<sup>30</sup> Participants answered questions about the physical attributes of the ideal body for women. The Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with Body Parts Scale was used to assess body dissatisfaction. Lastly, the BULIT-R,<sup>31</sup> used to assess bulimic symptomatology, was also used to measure eating behaviors and thoughts about eating. The results indicated that exposure to the thin ideal portrayed in the media resulted in heightened feeling of depression, unhappiness, shame, guilt, and stress and led to decreased levels of confidence.<sup>32</sup> Exposure to these ideals also led to increased body dissatisfaction. The findings also suggest that being exposed to the thin ideal creates a negative mood. In relation to this research, indicating that bulimics binge eat in response to negative mood<sup>33</sup>, it could be said that exposure to media portrayed thin-body images results in a negative effect, which could instigate eating disorders.

As one can observe, the direct effect of the constant reminder the media gives in relation to appearance can cause a negative impact among adolescent girls. “Girls compare their bodies to cultural ideas and find themselves wanting. Dieting and body dissatisfaction have become normal reactions to puberty. Girls developed eating disorders when our culture developed a standard of beauty that they could not obtain by being healthy. When unnatural thinness became attractive, girls do unnatural things to be thin.”<sup>34</sup> Some studies have found a direct correlation between media consumption (reading magazines or watching television) and dieting and bulimic behaviors.<sup>35</sup> “Thousands of young girls in school, colleges, and offices are not dieting, as they fondly believe, but are starving themselves...the modern girl is so afraid of being overweight she is not willing to be of even normal weight.”<sup>36</sup>

Abraham and Llewellyn-Jones reported that women receive messages that slim equals success and fat equals failure. Young girls are expected to push aside the experience of eating as pleasurable and above all, not get fat.<sup>37</sup> Eating disorders appear to be a predominantly female problem. The American Psychiatric Association estimates that the ratio of women to men with eating disorders to be 10-to-1.<sup>38</sup> Garfinkel and Garner, two prominent eating disorder

researchers, argue that the most successful and beautiful protagonists in the media are portrayed as thin.<sup>39</sup> Hamilton conducted a study to examine the link between college women and their attraction to female media personality of various body sizes and symptoms of disordered eating. Two-hundred and thirty-two female undergraduates were asked how frequently they watched the following shows, with characters ranging from thin to heavy: Beverly Hills 90210, Melrose Place, Seinfeld, Northern Exposure, Designing Women, and Rosanne. Participants also indicated how many issues of popular magazines they read every month. The results showed that attraction to thin/provocative media personalities positively predicted symptoms for eating disorders, drive for thinness, anorexia, bulimia, perfectionism, and ineffectiveness. Attraction to average media personalities did not promote the above symptoms for the participants.<sup>40</sup>

Bulimia and binge eating was also prevalent in adolescent girls according to a study of 363 girls. The subjects completed a 43-item questionnaire, which asked current weight and height, weight and dieting history, frequency of certain eating behaviors, especially binge eating, and other behaviors used to control weight. (fasting, vomiting, and laxative abuse) The results indicated that of girls in the study, 167 (46%) said they had engaged in binge eating, with 19.9% binging weekly and 4.2% daily. When asked about the methods used to control weight, 40 (11%) of the girls said they vomited after eating, 17 (4.7%) said they used laxatives, and 132 (36%) stated that they fasted to lose weight.<sup>41</sup> On the basis of these criteria, 28 of the girls surveyed could indeed receive a diagnosis of bulimia. The study also found that the bulimic adolescents were significantly older and had significantly lower grade point averages than those who did not engage in any binging or purging methods.<sup>42</sup>

The most popular slimming method used is self-imposed dieting, which is commonly used in the overweight, but is practiced by normal and even underweight girls and, in some cases, by girls as young as 9.<sup>43</sup> Apart from the risks of nutritional deficiencies, including lower levels of calcium, iron, vitamins, and minerals, attention is now turned to the risks of smoking, which is used by almost one-fifth of Irish teenage girls to control their weight.<sup>44</sup> In a study of

1,093 high school students between the ages of 14-18 years old, Vanthorne and Vogel reported that the highest percent of bulimia was among 14-year-old girls.<sup>45</sup> Another study was conducted on 175 female junior high school students to assess eating behavior as well as attitudes regarding dieting and body weight. Over half (55%) revealed that they had been on a diet at some point in their lives. The reported age of the first diet ranged from 6 years old to 15 years old, with 63% of those subjects who had dieted reporting that they had first dieted when they were 12 years old. Almost one quarter (27%) of the subjects reported that they were on a diet at the time of the assessment.<sup>46</sup>

It appears that the thin-ideal images can begin at an early age, affecting one's self-perception, body image, and body satisfaction. Thelen, Powell, Lawrence, and Kuhnert found that elementary school girls in fourth grade had expressed concerns about being overweight and reported engaging in dieting behaviors.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Lawrence found that girls in the third grade desired to be thinner and also engaged in dieting behaviors.<sup>48</sup> Even at this young age, girls experience this pressure to be thin and begin to control or lose weight. Unfortunately, eating disorders such as anorexia have been documented in girls as young as seven years old.<sup>49</sup>

Why are young girls taking extreme measures to lose weight and jeopardizing their health? Who is to blame? Could the media be blamed? One study showed that the level of underweight female models in magazines was sufficient to fulfill one of the major criteria for a diagnosis of anorexia nervosa<sup>50</sup> Harrison replicated a survey demonstrating the correlation between adult's thin-ideal media exposure and eating disorders with a sample of 366 adolescents.<sup>51</sup> Measures used included interest in body improvement media content, exposure to thin-ideal magazines and television, exposure to sports magazines, and eating disorder symptomatology. Adolescents were chosen for this study because adolescence is a time when bodies are changing and increasing awareness of social standards of body image are more frequent.<sup>52</sup> Also, most eating disorders start in adolescence.<sup>53</sup> The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between media use and disordered eating among adolescents.

The sample consisted of 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The findings indicate that for females, exposure to fat-character television content is related to increased bulimia, whereas exposure to thin-ideal magazine content is connected with increased anorexia and among 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders increased bulimia as well. Sports magazine exposure was related to increased body dissatisfaction among 12<sup>th</sup> grade females only.<sup>54</sup> The results were as expected in that significant media exposure and eating disorder relationships were stronger for females than for males.

Irving examined the effects of the thin body standard on the self-evaluation of women displaying varying levels of bulimic symptoms.<sup>55</sup> Subjects were shown media images of thin, average, and oversized models. Measures of self and body-esteem were given to subjects following exposure to the images of the model to examine the impact on the subjects' self-evaluation. The slides for the thin model came from two fashion magazines and one fashion catalogue. (*Elle*, *Glamour*, and *Avon Fashions*). The average model slides were photographs of women who were not fashion models. The oversized model slides were taken from a Spiegel catalogue for oversized women. The results indicate that exposure to thin models was related to lower self-evaluations, regardless of level of bulimic symptoms.<sup>56</sup>

Field, Cheung, Wolf, Herzog, Gortmaker, and Colditz discuss the influence of the media on girls' weight concerns and perceptions of body weight and shape. A questionnaire, which assessed body weight, dissatisfaction with body weight and shape, and exposure to fashion magazines such as *Seventeen*, *Glamour*, and *Sassy*, was distributed to 548 girls in grades five through 12 in Boston. The total sample of girls included 29.5% elementary school, 34.1% junior high, and 33.3% high school students. The questionnaire was completed during physical education class time. Height and weight were self-reported. Exposure to fashion magazines was measured by asking, "How often do you read magazines?" The infrequent readers answered with "never" or "once a month", the moderate readers answered with "2-5 times a month", and the frequent readers answered with "twice per week" or "daily". Two questions were used to assess the impact of media on feelings of weight and shape: "Do you think that pictures of

women in magazines influence what you think is the perfect body shape?” and “Do pictures of women in magazines make you want to lose weight?” Also, the girls were asked if they agreed with the following statements: “I have gone on a diet to lose weight because of an article in a magazine” and “I have initiated exercise because of an article in a magazine.”<sup>57</sup>

Preferences of body types were assessed by showing the girls four pictures of models representing different body types, being very thin, overweight, athletic, and “normal” weight. The girls were then asked to choose which girl they wanted to look like, did not want to look like, thought was most popular with boys, was the most healthy, was the least healthy, was the most likely to succeed, and was the most likely to be a failure in life. The authors concluded that the majority of the preadolescent and adolescent girls were unhappy with their body weight and shape. This dissatisfaction with body weight was strongly related to the frequency of reading fashion magazines. Pictures in the fashion magazines had a strong impact on girls’ perception of their weight and shape. A total of 69% of the girls said that the magazine pictures influenced their ideas of the perfect body shape, and 47% reported wanting to lose weight because of magazine pictures. The effect of the magazines was so strong that, even among the girls who infrequently read fashion magazines, almost 60%, felt that the magazines influenced their idea of the perfect body shape.

Cusumano and Thompson discuss the sociocultural approach, which puts social pressures as the motive behind a person’s need to conform to body shape standards. The participants consisted of 175 female students from the University of South Florida who were given a questionnaire packet containing questions about: body dissatisfaction, physical appearance, bulimia, drive for thinness, body shape ideals, self-esteem, and magazine exposure. The Participant Magazine Assessment Tool was created to identify the most popular magazines among college students. The participants indicate how much time they spend per month reading each selected magazine. The next step was to examine the body shapes of the people who appeared in the magazines that were identified as most popular among the female participants.

The Contour Drawing Rating Scale was used to rate the body shapes of the females in the magazines, one representing the thinnest and nine representing the heaviest. The Breast/Chest Rating Scale was also used to rate the breast size of the females in the magazines, one representing smaller breasts and five representing larger breasts.<sup>58</sup> *YM*, *Seventeen*, and *Teen* were all present in the 33 magazines analyzed. For the rating of body shape, *Teen* took first place out of all 33 magazines with a rating of 1.86. (one representing the thinnest figures and nine representing the heaviest figures) *YM* was close behind with a rating of 2.41, and *Seventeen* had a rating of 3.19. As for the breast shape rating, *Teen* took a 1.88, *YM* took a 2.20, and *Seventeen* took a 2.50.<sup>58</sup>

A content analysis of *Seventeen* magazine from 1945 to 1995 sought evidence of impact from the feminist movement from the 1940s to the present day. The study explored whether the articles in the magazines had changed because of the feminist movement. “It was hypothesized that there would be a higher percentage of feminist messages for 1945, 1975, and 1995, compared to 1955, 1965, and 1985.”<sup>59</sup> Twelve issues of *Seventeen* for the years 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985, and 1995 were analyzed to determine if content of the magazines was different from year to year. The articles were categorized as having traditional (categories 1-3) or feminist (categories 4-6) messages. Articles were coded into one of six categories: appearance, male-female relations, home, self-development, career development, and political/world issues. Each magazine was analyzed for content by counting the number of pages devoted to each article. Each article was then given a code (1-6).

The results supported the hypothesis, revealing that a higher percentage of feminist messages appeared for 1945, 1975, and 1995 as compared to 1955, 1965, and 1985 respectively. Among all the issues, the largest percentage of pages was devoted to articles about appearance.

## Adolescence and Body Image

Mary Pipher, a clinical psychologist who was influenced by social learning theorists, wrote *Reviving Ophelia* as an attempt to understand the hardships that some adolescent girls go through in today's society. Pipher uses some of her accounts of therapy sessions with adolescent girls, discussing self-mutilation, drugs and alcohol use, and eating disorders, and blames the media for some of these problems. Pipher suggests "girls are coming of age in a more dangerous, sexualized, and media-saturated culture. They face incredible pressures to be beautiful and sophisticated, which in junior high means using chemicals and being sexual."<sup>60</sup> Pipher explains the notion of adolescent girls' learning the importance of appearance to be accepted in today's society. Attractiveness is in fact a necessity for a girl's success. Pipher also talks about "lookism" in her book and how teen magazines are prime suspects to this term. "Lookism" involves the obsessive want and need for attractiveness. Appearance and, above all, thinness are the criteria by which girls are often judged. Magazines for teenaged girls give training in "lookism". The emphasis is on makeup, fashion, weight, and how to attract boys with almost no space given to sports, hobbies, or careers.

For the media to market this thin-ideal body image, there must be a direct target. "The achievement and maintenance of thinness and beauty is a major female pastime, as reflected by all magazines, newspaper articles, television shows, commercials, idealized role models, and books that are aimed at the female audience."<sup>61</sup> Adolescent females are major targets that the media focus on to impose this perfect thin-body ideal. From an early age, girls learn to stand outside of themselves and disconnect and evaluate themselves as others might. It is not whether they desire but whether or not someone would desire them.<sup>62</sup> "Beauty is the defining character for American women. It is important for women of all ages, but the pressure to be beautiful is most intense in early adolescence."<sup>63</sup> Adolescents do worry about their hair, clothes, and makeup, but most of all; they worry about their weight. The fear of fatness affects far more women than men. Heunemann, Shapiro, Hampton, and Mitchell<sup>64</sup> found that 70% of high school

girls were unhappy with their bodies and wanted to lose weight. Other studies have also shown that adolescents can be associated with increasing rates of depression, eating disorders, suicide, and delinquency.<sup>65</sup> Girls are maturing at an earlier age and going through puberty almost two years earlier than boys. As girls develop, body fatness levels increase, and there is a change in body shape, causing girls to experience body image dissatisfaction.

More studies have shown that self-esteem drops more drastically for females compared to male adolescents, with self-perceptions of physical attractiveness contributing to the drop.<sup>66</sup> There have been numerous studies that suggest that advertising and the mass media may be related in creating and reinforcing an obsession with attractiveness and the thin-body ideal.<sup>67</sup> Jean Kilbourne focuses on how female bodies are illustrated in advertising imagery and explains the possible effects on females' physical and mental health in her videos "Still Killing Us Softly" and "Slim Hopes".<sup>68</sup>

Cultural norms in the United States put emphasis on the importance of being attractive and especially being thin. This emphasis begins at infancy<sup>69</sup> and continues throughout childhood and adolescence.<sup>70</sup> According to a study by the National Heart and Lung and Blood Institute, a survey showed that 40% of 9 and 10 year-old girls have tried to lose weight.<sup>71</sup> A recent survey of 326 adolescent females attending an upper-middle class high school found that the students demonstrated exaggerated fears of obesity regardless of their actual weight. More than half of the underweight students described themselves as being extremely fearful of becoming obese, and more than one-third were preoccupied with their body fat.<sup>72</sup> In a 1992 study to assess the effect of television advertisements and programming on body image distortion, Myers and Biocca<sup>73</sup> exposed 76 females to ideal-body programming and commercials. They concluded that the one time 30-minute exposure had a negative effect on women's body size perception. They defined ideal body programming and commercials as those that focus or center around the ideal thin female body.



Harrison and Cantor applied social learning theory in a study of college students to look at the impact of magazine and television exposure on body image disturbance. Television viewing was overall related to body dissatisfaction but not a drive for thinness or eating disorders. There was a clear relationship, however, between exposure to magazines and eating disorder behaviors than television viewing.<sup>74</sup> In another study, Botta used a sample of 214 high school girls to predict adolescents' body-image disturbance and thin-ideal endorsement. Media content reflected 15% for the drive for thinness, 17% for body dissatisfaction, 16% for bulimic behaviors, and 33% for the thin-ideal endorsement.<sup>75</sup>

The results of numerous studies all reflect the same concept for the media portrayal of the thin-body image. "For twentieth century American teenagers, particularly adolescent girls, body image is so crucial that we can virtually predict a girl's self image by exploring her body."<sup>76</sup> Body image is formed from experiences gained from parents, role models, and media. An image is formed from the positive and negative feedback from people, or the media, whose opinions matter. Body image is also formed by the way a person perceives his or her body to fit or not fit the cultural image.<sup>77</sup>

In *Reviving Ophelia*, Pipher writes about the four ways in which girls react to the "cultural pressures to abandon the self." She says they can "conform, withdraw, be depressed, or get angry."<sup>78</sup> Pipher points out the problems, such as the psychological disorders of anorexia, chemical addictions, depression, or self-destructive behavior, that tend to occur with the far-fetched idea of becoming someone they are not.

Pipher also confides that girls who conform to the pressures are as if they are killing the self, losing uniqueness or self-confidence. They are empty inside. By conforming, these young girls fall to a sense of false self, giving up on the idea of who or what they want to be for themselves.<sup>79</sup>

Carol Gilligan conducted a study on the psychological development of teenage girls. She found that when girls reach adolescence, they experience a major drop in self-esteem and lack of

confidence due to conflict between the image that a girl has of herself and what society tells her a woman should be like.<sup>80</sup> Gilligan discussed the magazine *Seventeen* and how it pushes for the cultural expectations on adolescent girls to be concerned with their appearances. Gilligan describes the average issue of *Seventeen* as having about eight to twelve fashion and beauty features, usually a story about a new exercise or fitness plan, a make-over story on a “normal” looking girl, and numerous make-up tricks and tips. She also emphasizes that the magazine focuses on men. In 1992, 61 of the celebrity’s features in the “Talent” section were men, while only 20 were women.<sup>81</sup> The fashion and beauty stories were also centered on men. For example, some titles included: “A Little Romance to Find Monsieur Right in France”, “How to Rustle Up a Ranchero”, “Romance 101”, and “Making the honor roll can have some hidden perks—like John begging me to cram for the English midterm with him.”<sup>82</sup> Gilligan’s study seemed to report that *Seventeen* teaches young girls that the most important things in a girl’s life should be her appearance and boys and reinforces the drop in self-esteem reported in her study.

### Gender

Most research on body image has determined that compared to men women are more concerned about their appearance.<sup>83</sup> There has been evidence that compared to boys adolescent girls experience greater stress and are twice as likely to become depressed.<sup>84</sup> Girls’ depression has been linked to negative feelings about their bodies and appearance. Lower body image and eating disorders are much more prevalent among adolescent girls than boys.<sup>85</sup> As research has shown, stereotypes of female beauty can be seen as an obvious threat to adolescent girls’ healthy psychological and physical development.

Body image and weight loss beliefs and behaviors were examined in 341 females and 221 male high school students. The results indicated that girls were significantly more dissatisfied with their bodies than boys, as indicated on the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI) subscale,

which measures body image attitudes. Seventy-one percent of girls chose an ideal thinner than their current figure compared to 33% of boys. Almost half (49%) of girls chose an ideal figure, at least one figure smaller than their current figure.<sup>86</sup>

The effect of self-perception of physical attraction on self-esteem is different for girls than boys. For example, Hatter found that self-perception of physical attractiveness and levels of self-esteem declined systematically over time in girls but not boys.<sup>87</sup> Grogan, Williams, and Conner investigated the effects of viewing same-gender photograph models on women's and men's self-esteem. Participants first completed questionnaires regarding body image, then viewed 16 photographs from fashion magazines, rating each photograph for attractiveness. Both men and women felt less satisfied with their bodies after viewing attractive same-gender models. However, women scored significantly lower than men on the body-esteem scale.<sup>88</sup>

Body dissatisfaction is the continuous wanting to be thin and is prevalent among females. In a study of almost 500 schoolgirls, 81% of the 10-year-olds said they had dieted at least once.<sup>89</sup> Another study involving 36,000 students in Minnesota found that girls with negative body image were three times more likely than boys of the same age to say that they feel badly about themselves. These girls were more likely to believe that others see them negatively. The study also found that negative body image is associated with suicide risks for girls but not boys.<sup>90</sup> Wooley and Wooley found that girls are influenced more and are more vulnerable than boys to ideal body images set by cultural standards. Also, a national health study showed that of 2,379 girls ages 9 and 10 40% reported that they were trying to lose weight.<sup>91</sup>

A study in 1997 showed that compared to men, women had more negative body image evaluations, stronger investments in their looks, and more frequent body-image dysphoria.<sup>92</sup> Cash and Henry conducted a survey of the body images of 803 adult women in the United States. The survey instrument included the subscales of MBSRQ,<sup>93</sup> including appearance evaluation, body satisfaction, and overweight preoccupation. Almost half reported negative evaluations of their looks and concerns with being or becoming overweight. Whereas age effects were lower,

there were significant effects found with race and ethnicity. There were more positive body images among African Americans than Anglo or Hispanic women.<sup>94</sup>

## Race

Evaluating race in relation to body image results in different findings from what the research has shown in prior studies. A study by the University of Arizona revealed a difference in body image attitude between white and African American teenage girls. While 90% of white girls wanted to be thinner and had dissatisfaction with their bodies, 70% of African Americans were satisfied with their bodies.<sup>95</sup> In fact, a significant number of overweight black teens described themselves as happy. It is interesting to see that white teens defined perfection as 5'7 feet and 100-110 pounds-superwaif Kate Moss....and black teens described the perfect size in more attainable terms as full hips and thick thighs...Almost two-thirds of black teens defined beauty as having the right attitude.<sup>96</sup> Desmond, Price, Hamilton, and Smith<sup>97</sup> asked 341 black and white male and female adolescents to evaluate their weight. Approximately 43% of normal weight white girls considered themselves as heavy. On the other hand, 100% of the heavy white girls considered themselves as heavy. Overall, thin and normal weight white girls tended to consider themselves as heavier, while black girls who were normal weight or heavy, perceived themselves as thinner.<sup>98</sup>

Duke interviewed African American and white female readers of the three most popular teen magazines, *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen*, for their interpretation of the feminine ideal presented in the magazines. Results showed that most African American girls were uninterested in obtaining the ideal feminine image the magazines portrayed. African Americans also tended to evaluate themselves on character and personality rather than appearance. On the other hand, most white girls' were interested in obtaining the ideal feminine image. White girls were

interested in cosmetics, and thought that some kind of makeup was necessary for girls to look their best rather than having a good personality.<sup>99</sup>

### Teen Magazines

By focusing on one type of medium, such as teen magazines, one can see how repetition of the same messages can negatively affect an adolescent girl, leading her to go to extreme measures to obtain this appearance of a perfect girl. According to Teenage Research Unlimited, 80% of girls between ages 12 and 19 read a magazine for pleasure every week. Teen magazines are increasingly popular and, with their emphasis on makeup, hair, clothes, boys, and weight, are seen as vehicles for the early socialization of young adolescent girls into traditional appearance-based and sexual standards of femininity.<sup>100</sup> The images presented through the four most popular U.S. teen magazines, *Seventeen*, *YM*, *Teen*, and *Sassy*, are “unrelentingly idealized, and a large portion of the editorial content of each magazine is devoted to how-to articles on self-improvement, developing interpersonal skills, and enhancing attractiveness through the latest makeup, clothing, and hairstyles.”<sup>101</sup>

Duke and Kreshel interviewed 10 girls ages 12-13 who were regular readers of *Seventeen*, *Teen*, *YM*, and *Sassy*. The girls were interviewed concerning their use of the magazines to define their idea of femininity. Results indicate that the girls relied heavily on boys’ opinions featured in the magazines concerning ways to attain male approval and assume proper female roles in romantic relationships.<sup>102</sup> A second finding indicated that the girls also used the information to form their own ideas of femininity. In an analysis of 30 issues of *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Sassy* from 1988 to 1989, Evans, Rutberg, Sather, and Turner found that fashion was the number one topic in all three magazines, followed by feature articles, beauty care, and entertainment features. Far behind were articles on self-esteem (6%), health (5%), and education and career (5%).<sup>103</sup>

Stice, Spangler, and Agras randomly assigned 219 girls ages 13 to 17 to a 15-month subscription to *Seventeen* magazine or to a no magazine control group. Even though the only adverse effects occurred in adolescents with initial elevated body dissatisfaction, exposure to the fashion magazines resulted in increased negative effect for those adolescents.<sup>104</sup> It is important to note that 41% of adolescent females report that magazines are their most important source of information on dieting and health, and 61% of adolescent females read at least one fashion magazine regularly.<sup>105</sup>

There has been evidence that the typical female model appearing in fashion magazines is young, tall, long-legged, and very slender. For example, out of 106 pages of *Teen* magazine, there were approximately 95 girls, none were heavy, only two were African Americans, and only two could be construed as having moderate waists or hips.<sup>106</sup> Magazines are also more likely to feature a women's full body and show her lying down or bending rather than standing tall.<sup>107</sup>

In 1989, Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) was hired by *Seventeen* magazine to survey a sample of 1,034 girls aged 12 to 19. TRU reported that 40% of the girls read *Seventeen*, 32% read *Teen*, 30% read *YM*, and 20% read *Sassy*.<sup>108</sup> A total of 83% of the girls in that age group reported spending an average of 4.3 hours reading magazines. "Many theorists have contended that the media's constant and salient equating of slenderness with beauty and success, has a powerful and adverse effect on the ideal body shape and resultant body satisfaction.<sup>109</sup> To demonstrate these effects Martin and Kennedy used questionnaires and a projective story-telling test to show that a majority of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade female students thought about self-comparison and self-enhancement in association with reading magazines and looking at models.

An interesting study was conducted by Morris, Cooper, and Cooper to examine the changes over 1967-1987 in the physical features of female fashion models. Information was collected from a London modeling agency, including the height, bust, waist, and hip measurements for each model. There was a significant increase in height and waist

measurements, as well as an increase in the bust area. There were no changes in hip measurements, producing a less curvaceous figure, and a more tubular figure.

Durham discusses the mark of adolescence as a point of transition into popular culture,<sup>110</sup> focusing on the role the mass media has on the sexuality of young girls. She analyzed each issue of *YM* and *Seventeen* magazines, which circulate by the millions to adolescent girls, from July through November in 1996. Her method of analysis included reading all text of the magazines, including features, photo captions, letters from readers, and advertisements relating to sex and sexuality. Images were also coded according to visual codes taken from an earlier study, developed from Goffman<sup>111</sup> and Berger's<sup>112</sup> criteria for gendered ideologies in advertisements of analyzing images of females. The visual codes used to capture sexualized representations of women were as follows:

- \* the representation of girls as sexual objects of the male gaze;
- \* the costuming of girls such that their nudity is emphasized and their vulnerability is increased;
- \* sexual explicitness through the exposure of girls' breasts, buttocks, and genitals;
- \* the arrangement of girls' bodies in positions of sexual submissions—lying down, kneeling, or reclining;
- \* the feminine self-touch, in which girls are shown caressing or touching themselves, and;
- \* facial expressions of coyness, seduction, or sexual ecstasy.

The written text that Durham used was the analysis of “the cultural significance of linguistic symbols to create and maintain shared meaning.”<sup>113</sup> Durham wanted to determine how magazines used phrases to convey sexuality. Her strategy of analysis was based on Frye's conceptualization of feminist epistemology.<sup>114</sup>

In Durham's 1993 analysis of *Seventeen* magazine, girls were portrayed as “neurotic, helpless, and timid beings that must rely on extended sources, usually men, to make sure of their lives.”<sup>115</sup> In Durham's research, *YM* and *Seventeen* showed stereotypical types of physical beauty through pages of products for cosmetics, fashionable clothing, and diet ads.

Durham found repeated patterns in the two magazines that conveyed a central theme around “sexual decision making versus sexual significance via costuming, cosmetics, and body image.”<sup>116</sup> *YM*’s idea of beauty centered on the desirability of a heterosexual relationship, through fashion, beauty, and fitness information. The captions that were noted along with the text were words such as “hot,” “sexy,” “touchable,” and “kissable.” Photos that came with text consistently confirmed to one or more of the earlier mentioned six visual codes for sexual representation of women.

Durham saw that three of the six images in the articles showed girls in “submissive, off-balance positions, and two showed girls physically subordinate to boys.”<sup>117</sup> Durham concluded that these teen magazines uphold society’s norm of how a girl’s sexuality is supposed to be seen. Magazines aimed specifically to adolescent girls have no potential to change the gendered biases or expectations that girls are “supposed” to live up to, to be socially accepted.

As seen throughout the literature review, the majority of the studies have centered on the content and the effects of the media, towards adolescent girls’ depiction of body image. The media and their endorsement of the thin body ideal aimed towards women have been seen repeatedly throughout the previous studies. The current study will examine a concept known as face-ism in relation to how male and female images are depicted in teen magazines. The term face-ism was introduced by a study conducted by Archer, Kimes, and Barrios.<sup>118</sup> Their study involved analyzing 1,750 photographs in newspapers and magazines, such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Ms*. The significance of the study was the fact that pictures of men, which focused the most on the face, emphasized intellect; and pictures of women, which focused the most on the body, emphasized appearance. This study is based on the concept of face-ism, and how it relates to images of females and males in teen magazines.



### Hypothesis/Research Questions

The following hypothesis is based on the Body Index Scale, which is explained more in the Methods section. The BIS is measurable element that determines how much of the body is exposed in a photograph. Every photograph analyzed was coded in relation with the Body Index Scale. The research is based on the following hypothesis:

H1: Photographic images of females will be cropped lower on the body than images of males.

By using the independent variables of magazine title, issue, gender, and story type and the dependent variable of the body index, the following research questions were formulated:

R1: Are females and males cropped differently in teen magazines?

R2: Will different story type impact the way images are cropped in teen magazines?

Exploratory research was conducted to find the trends related to how images were cropped in relation to story types. For example, will story types related to fashion and beauty be cropped lower on the body compared to other story types? Will story types related to dating and boys be cropped lower on the body compared to other story types? Will story types related to exercise and sports be cropped lower on the body compared to other story types?

### Scope of the Study

This research study was conducted to examine any differences between females and males in relation to how they are portrayed in teen magazines. The images of 1,200 photographs from the top three teen magazines *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen* were analyzed to determine if females were cropped differently from males according to the Body Index Scale. Story type was also analyzed in relation to body index. The issues of the magazines were chosen from a simple

random sample and then analyzed. Only human photographic images were coded, excluding any advertisements.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS

#### Introduction

Images in the top three circulating teen magazines in the United States, *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen*, were analyzed. *Seventeen* was first published in 1944, had an initial circulation of 500,000, and now has a circulation of 2,384,166. *YM* first published in 1955, had an initial circulation of 250,000, and now has a circulation of 2,202,744. *Teen* was published in 1947. The initial circulation is not known; *Teen* now has a circulation of 2,062,497. These magazines are the most circulated teen magazines in the United States.<sup>119</sup>

The coding method of face-ism, developed by Archer, Kimes, and Barrios, was modified<sup>120</sup> into a six-part body index, called the Body Index Scale, to make coding images easier. Explanation of the Body Index Scale will be explained in the Research Design section.

#### Research Design

The purpose of this study was to focus on the body representation of females and males in relation to various story types in the magazines. These images were coded and then analyzed. The issues of the magazines were selected using a computer-based randomizer ([www.randomizer.com](http://www.randomizer.com)) to select two issues from January through December in each of the three magazines. After performing a simple random sample on *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen*, the images in all the magazines were coded for a total of 1,200 images. Only photographic images of human beings were coded, excluding advertisements. The samples were then coded on measurable scales including: title of the magazine, issue of the magazine, gender, body index, story type, and the number of images in each photograph.

First, the title of the magazines were coded as follows: *YM*=1, *Seventeen*=2, *Teen*=3. The issues were also coded as follows: February=1, March=2, July=3, August=4, September=5. The reason that there are only five months shown is because two of the issues selected from the randomizer were both from the month of August. The unit of analysis was then analyzed for gender: Female=0, Male=1, Unknown=7.

The Body Index Scale is a measurable element designed to tell how much of the body is shown in a photograph. The unit of analysis of the human image was analyzed in terms of the Body Index Scale and given a numeric code. The Body Index Scale is used to determine how much of the body is shown in a photograph. The body is broken down into six sections and given a numeric code. For example, photographs cropped at the face/head/eyes receive a coding of 1. A photograph cropped at the head/shoulders receives a coding of 2; a photograph cropped at the midline on the chest receives a 3; a photograph cropped below the midline on the chest and slightly above hips receives a 4; a photograph cropped at the hips/buttocks/thighs to the knees receives a 5; and a photograph cropped at the legs below the knees to the feet receives a 6.

Story type was also coded as follows: Fashion=1, Beauty=2, Dating and Boys=3, Exercise and Sports=4, Features=5, Celebrities=6, No story type found with photograph=7, Academics=8, and Other=9. Finally, the number of people shown in each photograph was also coded as a control to see if it was more likely for a group of people in a photograph to be cropped as full body images.

Intercoder reliability was determined by randomly selecting one issue from the three issues of magazines and having two coders code 20 images to reach a 90% or better agreement with the researcher's coding. Each variable reached the following agreements between the two coders: title reached a 100% agreement; issue reached a 100% agreement; gender reached a 100% agreement; body index reached a 90% agreement; story type reached a 95% agreement; and number of people in a photograph reached a 100% agreement. A coding instruction sheet

was provided with directions on how to code the images. The coding instruction sheet was adjusted as needed to reach the 90% agreement.

### Data Collection

The Research Randomizer site ([www.randomizer.com](http://www.randomizer.com)) produced a simple random sample of six magazines that were then coded. For each magazine, the number 12 was entered into the randomizer program, representing each month for the magazines. The randomizer program then randomly selected two numbers out of the 12 to represent the months of the magazines that would be analyzed. After completing this procedure for each of the three magazines, the six issues were then analyzed and coded. Human photographic images in all the magazines, excluding advertisements, were numbered and recorded in regards to the coding system.

### Data Analysis

After the issues were randomly selected, each human image was coded using the coding system mentioned earlier. After recording the data, they were analyzed using the computer program called the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were analyzed for frequency, chi-square, and a probability value, which was set at .01.

### Limitations

Limitations of this study are as follows. First, this research touches only on one type of medium, although there are many other types of media that portray negative body images to females. Second, girls who feel dissatisfied with their body image already may be more likely to read teen magazines that enforce their negative beliefs about their bodies. Third, the selection of

the three magazines was not random, they were purposely chosen for their popularity and circulation.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

In total, 1,200 images of humans in photographs were analyzed in the three top teen magazines, *Seventeen*, *YM*, and, *Teen*. The following research questions were presented in the study: Are females and males cropped differently in teen magazines? Will different story types impact the way images are cropped? There was also a hypothesis proposed for the study, which stated: Photographic images of females will be cropped lower on the body than images of males. Exploratory research was used to find the trends related to how images are cropped in relation to story types. For example, will story types related to fashion and beauty be cropped lower on the body compared to other story types? Will story types related to dating and boys be cropped lower on the body compared to other story types? Will story types related to exercise and sports be cropped lower on the body compared to other story types?

As shown in Table 1, about 400 images were analyzed in each of the teen magazines. Five of the 1,200 images were thrown out of the analysis because they were unidentifiable in relation to gender, making the total images analyzed 1,195.

Table 1. Frequency of Magazine Titles

Title	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YM	398	33.3	33.3
Seventeen	400	33.5	66.8
Teen	397	33.2	100.0
Total	1,195	100.0	

Table 2 shows the frequency of images shown in each issue. July (22.2%) and August (32.5%) seem to be the issues with the most photographs that were coded, compared to the other issues.

Table 2. Frequency of Magazine Issues

Month	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
February	146	12.2	12.2
March	153	12.8	25.0
July	265	22.2	47.2
August	388	32.5	79.7
September	243	20.3	100.0
Total	1,195	100.0	

Table 3 shows the frequency of females shown in the magazines compared to males. The results show a difference in the number of females appearing in the magazines, compared to the number of males appearing in the magazines. Females appeared 71% of the time in the magazines, compared to males appearing 29% of the time. These numbers show that these teen magazines are primary aimed towards females.

Table 3. Frequency of Magazine Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	848	71.0	71.0
Male	347	29.0	100.0
Total	1,195	100.0	



Table 4 shows the frequency of body index in the magazines. As indicated, there is a major finding that only 3.7% of the images contained photographs of head/face/eye, showing the emphasis being put mainly on the body. Another interesting finding indicates that 17.1% of the emphasis was put on the chest area of the images. Above all, 50% of the images shown in the magazines were cropped from the hips or lower, de-emphasizing the face, focusing more on the body. Only 16% of the images were cropped from the shoulders and above, emphasizing the face. The majority of the images in the magazines emphasize the body rather than the face. These findings generally support the face-ism theory, which suggest that more emphasis placed on the body deems the figure as being important. Emphasis put on the face represents intellect.

Table 4. Frequency of Magazine Body Index

Body Index	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Face/head/eyes	44	3.7	3.7
Head/shoulders	148	12.4	16.1
Midline on chest	204	17.1	33.1
Below midline on Chest/slightly above hips	207	17.3	50.5
Hips/buttocks/thighs/Knees	228	19.1	69.5
Legs below knees/feet	364	30.5	100.0
Total	1,195	100.0	

Table 5 explains which story types were most apparent in relation to the images. Story types including celebrities were the most common reaching 38.2%, followed by story types on fashion at 23.3%. Stories about beauty were next at 10.2%, followed by feature stories at 8.3%, stories about dating and boys at 7%, stories about academics at 4%, other stories at 3.9%, exercise and sport stories at 2.5%, and stories with no story type at 2.4%. From looking at these

results, it appears that the editors of these magazines may feel that the most important things to young girls are stories about famous people and what they wear and how they look. It was surprising to see that academics came in at 4%. It would seem as though academics would have a larger part in these magazines, seeing that academics are a part in young girls' lives. It would also seem as if editors and writers would think it necessary to include more stories about academics. Young girls reading these magazines may conclude that academics does not fit into what is considered important by the writers and editors of the magazines.

Table 5. Frequency of Magazine Story Types

Story Type	Frequency	Percent
Celebrity	457	38.2
Fashion	279	23.3
Beauty	122	10.2
Feature	99	8.3
Dating/Boys	84	7.0
Academics	48	4.0
Other	47	3.9
Exercise/Sports	30	2.5
No Story Type (stand alone photos)	29	2.4
Total	1,195	100.0

Almost 95% of the images included four or fewer people in the photograph.

Hypothesis one proposed that the photographic images of females will be cropped lower on the body than on males. The results of the study did not support hypothesis one. As shown in Table 6, there were no significant differences in gender and body index. The reason why there

was no significance could be related to the fact that the percentages of male images (29%) were mostly related to celebrity story types that focused more on full body shots. The celebrity story types on the young males included a full body layout along with a short biography. The story type could in fact be the reason why males and females had no significant differences of how the images were cropped.

Table 6. Gender and Body Index Crosstabulation

Gender	Body Index						Total
	Face/head/eyes	Head/shoulders	Midline on chest	Below midline on chest/slightly above hips	Hips/buttocks/thighs/knees	Legs below knees/feet	
Female	3.4% 29	12.6% 107	17.1% 145	16.9% 143	18.2% 154	31.8% 270	100.0%
Male	4.3% 15	11.8% 41	17.0% 59	18.4% 64	21.3% 74	27.1% 94	100.0%
Total	3.7% 44	12.4% 148	17.1% 204	17.3% 207	19.1% 228	30.5% 364	100.0%

N=1,195, chi-square=4.15, degrees of freedom= 5, p=.528

Research question two inquired if different story types impact the way images are cropped. Table 7 shows a significant finding in relation to story type and body index. Exploratory research included questions of how images are cropped in relation to story types. There is a major significance in relation to the cropping of the body in general and story type. Images relating to fashion and beauty showed the most images in the category, 44%, as full body pictures, compared to showing only 3.5% of these photographs as face/head/eyes. These percentages show the majority of the emphasis of beauty and fashion stories being put on the body rather than the face. The results suggest that 58.9% of the images relating to fashion and beauty were cropped at the hips and lower, 27.7% of those images were cropped at the midline of the chest to slightly above the hips, and 13.5% were cropped at the shoulders and above.

Fashion and beauty were also the second most frequent types of stories, with 401 occurrences out of the 1,195 images. Young girls are continuously being exposed to images related to fashion and beauty, more than other important subjects. By the constant exposure to these images, young girls could assume that fashion and beauty are the most important concerns.

As Table 7 shows, the most frequent body index with 26.2% indicates that the full body was shown in most story types related to dating and boys. The results also indicate that 38.1% of the images relating to dating and boys were cropped at the hips or lower, 42.8% were cropped on the midline on the chest to slightly above the hips, and 16.1% were cropped at the shoulders and above. Seeing that only 16.1% of the images relating to dating and boys are cropped at the shoulders or above emphasizes that intellect is not the first thing that is focused on in these types of stories. What seems to be emphasized the most in stories about dating and boys are first the full body, and second the chest area.

Again, Table 7 shows the significant finding that 63.3% of images in stories related to exercise and sports are full body images. The results also show that 90% of the images related to exercise and sports are cropped at the hips and lower, and 10% were cropped at the midline on the chest to slightly above the hips. These results show that emphasis is put on the whole body in relation to stories about exercise and sports. These findings are not uncommon, seeing that one exercises the whole body, so showing the whole body is ideal. However, while showing the whole body during these story types, young girls may get the idea of the ideal body and what it looks like and how they can obtain it. The findings also showed that no images in this story type showed just the face or shoulders. The reason being that exercise and sports are, according to the teen magazines, only designed to impact the whole body and not the face.

The other story types include celebrities; 42.4% of the images in this category were cropped at the hips and lower, emphasizing the whole body. By young girls seeing the main emphasis on what celebrity bodies look like, they too may aim for that standard. With 38.9% cropped at the midline on the chest to slightly above the hips and 18.6% cropped at the shoulders

and above, emphasis here is put again on the upper body compared to the face. Stories about academics showed that 29.2% were cropped at the hips and lower, 35.4% were cropped at the midline on the chest to slightly above the hips, and 35.5% were cropped at the shoulders and above. It was interesting to see that only 4.2% of the images in the academic section were cropped to show the face. The face-ism theory explains that showing the face represents intellect. One would think that there would be more than 4.2% of the images focused on the face, rather than 14.6% of the images focusing on the whole body and 20.8% of the images focusing on the midline of the chest in stories about academics. The last story type comprised of other story types, showed that 49.6% of these images in this category were cropped at the hips and lower, 34.4% were cropped at the midline on the chest to slightly above the hips, and 16.1% were cropped at the shoulders and above.

Table 7. Story Type and Body Index Crosstabulation

Story Type	Face/head/ eyes	Head/ shoulders	Midline on chest	Below midline on chest/slightly above hips	Hips/buttocks/ Thighs/knees	Legs Below knees/ feet	Total
Fashion/Beauty	3.5% 14	10.0% 40	14.7% 59	13.0% 52	14.5% 58	44.4% 178	100.0%
Dating/Boys	13.1% 11	3.0% 5	19.0% 16	23.8% 20	11.9% 10	26.2% 22	100.0%
Exercise/Sports			3.3% 1	6.7% 2	26.7% 8	63.3% 19	100.0%
Feature	3.0% 3	7.1% 7	14.1% 14	23.2% 23	20.2% 20	32.3% 32	100.0%
Celebrity	2.4% 11	16.2% 74	21.0% 96	17.9% 82	23.4% 107	19.0% 87	100.0%
Academics	4.2% 2	31.3% 15	20.8% 10	14.6% 7	14.6% 7	14.6% 7	100.0%
Other/No Story Type	3.9% 3	9.2% 7	10.5% 8	27.6% 21	23.7% 18	25.0% 19	100.0%
Total	3.7% 44	12.4% 148	17.1% 204	17.3% 207	19.1% 228	30.5% 364	100.0%

Note: N=1,195, chi-square=155.75, degrees of freedom=30, p= <.001

There is an issue that must be addressed in relation to the analysis. The story types were collapsed to reduce the number of empty and small cells of the chi-square analysis. Results still had to be interpreted with caution because empty cells are still remaining.

“Beauty” was combined with “fashion,” “no story type” was combined with “other.” After combining these story types they were analyzed again. By combining these story types, the number of empty or cells with values lower than five was reduced.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if images of females and males would be cropped differently and to observe if the body would be cropped lower in story types about fashion/beauty, dating/boys, or exercise/sports. Data were collected from the three top teen magazines, *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen*. A simple random sample was taken from each of the magazines to determine which issues would then be coded. After two coders reached an agreement of 90% or better on 20 trial images, a total of 1,195 images were then coded. Only photographs of human images were coded, excluding images in advertisements. The variables coded included: title, issue, gender, body index, story type, and the number of images included in each photograph. After entering the data into the SPSS computer system, results were analyzed.

#### Survey of Major Findings

The research questions were based on the Body Index Scale, which is a measurable element that determines how much of the body is exposed in a photograph. Hypothesis one stated that photographic images would be cropped lower on the body than images of males. The study indicated that there were no significant differences between the cropping of females and males. A reason for this result could be the fact that *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen* are all teen magazines that are mostly aimed towards females. The males that were shown in the magazines were mostly teen celebrities showing full body layouts.

Research question two inquired if different story types would impact the way images were cropped on the body. Exploratory research examined the trends related to how images were cropped in relation to story types. Stories relating to fashion and beauty showed that 58.9% of the images in this category were cropped at the hips and lower; it can be concluded that the emphasis is put on the whole body. Given the fact that some of the images were related to fashion, it is customary that one would want to show the full body when modeling clothes. On the other hand, the images were also related to beauty, emphasizing the importance of showing the whole body. This could conclude that the body is thought of being beautiful rather than the face being beautiful. Only 13.5% of these images focused on the face, meaning less emphasis on intellect and more emphasis on the body.

Stories relating to dating and boys showed that 38.1% of the images were cropped at the hips and lower, focusing on the whole body, and more importantly 42.8% of the images were cropped on the chest area. These results indicate that images in stories about dating and boys are highly concentrated on areas such as the chest, hips, waist, buttocks, thighs, and legs.

Lastly, stories relating to exercise and sports showed that 90% of the stories emphasized the full body. Two conclusions can be made from this finding. The first conclusion could be the fact that it is important to show the whole body in stories about exercise and sports to show the exercises being done because it is normal to work out the whole body. The second conclusion could be the fact that it is important to show the whole body during these stories to emphasize what the ideal body should look like when doing those exercises or playing those sports.

### Discussion/Conclusions

By looking at the findings of this study, there are some important issues brought about concerning the messages adolescent girls are getting from teen magazines. The results confirm that more emphasis is put on the entire body in stories including fashion and beauty, dating and



boys, and exercise and sports. By looking at the total images, 30.5% were cropped at the legs below the knees and feet; 19.1% were cropped at the hips/buttocks/thighs/knees; 17.3% were cropped below the midline on the chest to slightly above the hips; 17.1% were cropped at the midline on the chest; 12.4% were cropped at the head and shoulders; and 3.7% of the images were cropped at the face/head/eyes.

By young girls seeing this overemphasis being put on the body, the notion of how the body looks could be seen as the only important thing that matters. By young girls constantly seeing images of these thin bodies, some can't help but want the same look for themselves. As we have seen in previous studies, some young girls go to extreme measures to obtain this popular thin image, even if it is not obtainable.

It is possible that the media stress the importance of how the body should look by targeting young girls with this thin body image and persuading them to be primarily concerned with their weight and their appearance. By looking at the findings of this study, one can see the over emphasis being put on the body in teen magazines. There is more emphasis being put on what a celebrity's body looks like, outweighing stories about academics. This finding could illustrate to young girls that a person's body could bestow fame and success, rather than having an education.

Females appear to place more emphasis on their weight when comparing themselves to the models seen in magazines and on television. Girls appear to be dieting now at unthinkable early ages to obtain this perfect image. There is also a rise of disorders used to control weight, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia, fasting, and laxative abuse, used by girls as young as seven.

What young girls do not think about when making these comparisons to ultra-thin models is the fact that there is a set standard of what a healthy and normal body should weigh based on their age and height. It seems as if teen magazines are leaving this very important point out of their magazines. By young girls' constantly getting the same visual message over and over again from the media, of how a girl is supposed to look like, it becomes instilled in their heads as

the only right thing to do. Thank goodness for the few who are not affected by cultural expectations of thinness and allow themselves to be what they make of themselves.

This research is important in that it breaks down what is actually going into adolescent girls' heads, which may cause them to think and do some of the things they do in relation to their body and appearance. This study demonstrates that the body is the main emphasis in the top three teen magazines. By seeing the comparison of percentages of the body shown in relation to story type, it can be concluded that the body is the main focus for young girls. For example, more emphasis was put on the whole body in stories about beauty and fashion, dating and boys, exercise and sports, feature, and other stories. Stories relating to celebrities were cropped mainly at the hips, buttocks, and thighs. Stories relating to academics were mainly cropped at the head and shoulders, which is a positive finding in that it presents intellect.

By magazines editors and writers seeing what can actually be caused by the constant, and sometime unrealistic, images they produce in their magazines, they can rethink their approach to adolescent girls. Instead of mainly focusing on the body and appearance and how to obtain this idealistic image all the time, they could focus more on what is really important in life, such as being themselves, school, etc. Magazine editors and writers should get to know what adolescence is all about and know that it is a time for self-acceptance and self-evaluation. Adolescent girls are in the palm of their hands, and these people are in a sense molding them into what they will become.

### Recommendations

As long as future studies are involved in the research of the well being of adolescent girls in relation to the various types of media there will be many benefits. By extending the research of face-ism in relation to teen oriented media, educators, journalists, and public relations representatives can take the findings from the research and recognize what is being exposed to

young girls. These professionals could change the way young girls are represented in all teen oriented media and place more emphasis on other important issues other than the way your body is supposed to look, such as academics, sports, and other hobbies.

There are some recommendations I suggest in relation to this particular study. First I would analyze both female and male magazines targeted at teens. By doing this, there would be a similar amount of images, relating to both of the genders, targeting adolescents. Results could indicate if there is a significant difference between how differently female and males are portrayed in teen magazines. A second recommendation would be to use a different coding instrument. The Body Index Scale is a simple and accurate scale, but there could also be a more thorough way to code images. For example, the coding that Durham<sup>106</sup> used in her study on *Seventeen* magazine could illustrate in more detail the positioning, the facial expressions, and the placement of females in relation to males in the same photographs.

The results of the current study have made significant findings in relation to images in teen magazines aimed at females. With these findings, as well as other findings from studies conveying other significant conclusions, beliefs about what is really important in a young girls' life can be changed into a more positive, self-involved experience.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Sample List

*Seventeen:* Circulation of 2,384,166

*YM:* Circulation of 2,202,744

*Teen:* Circulation of 2,062,497

APPENDIX B

Coding Sheet

	Title	Issue	Gender	Body	Story	# of People
1						
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## APPENDIX C

### Coding Instruction Sheet

Title: YM=1  
Seventeen=2  
Teen= 3

Issue: February=1  
March=2  
July=3  
August=4  
September=5

Gender: Female=0  
Male=1  
Unknown=7

Body: Face/head/eyes=1  
Head/shoulders=2  
Midline on chest=3  
Below midline on chest and slightly above hips=4  
Hips/buttocks/thighs/knees=5  
Legs below knees/feet=6

Story: Fashion =1  
Beauty=2 (hair/makeup,etc.)  
Dating/boys=3  
Exercise/Sports=4  
Feature=5  
Celebrity=6  
No story type=7  
Academics=8  
Other=9

# In picture: 1-10, etc

## APPENDIX D

### Definition of Terms

1. Mass Media- Publicly supported institutions and forms of communication that generate messages designed for a very large, very heterogeneous, and essentially anonymous audience.<sup>121</sup>
2. Adolescence- Marks a developmental turning point in American life, particularly in terms of sexuality. During the teen years (13-19) gender identities and sexual attitudes move to the forefront of consciousness. This period of transition is marked and inflected by popular culture.<sup>122</sup>
3. Self-Image- The set beliefs and image we all have and hold to be true of ourselves.<sup>123</sup>
4. Body-Image- The ever-changing total of conscious and unconscious information, perceptions, and feelings about one's body as different and apart from all others. It is a social creation, developed through reflected perceptions of the surface of one's body.<sup>119</sup>
5. Body Dissatisfaction- The perceptions of the level of satisfaction with current body shape.<sup>124</sup>
6. Eating Disorder Symptomology- The collection of self-perceived attitudes and behaviors characteristic of disordered eating.<sup>125</sup>
7. Bulimia- Involves periodic episodes of uncontrollable, excessive eating or bingeing, followed by self-induced vomiting or other purgative behaviors.<sup>126</sup>
8. Anorexia Nervosa- People who strive for less than 15% of ideal body weight and a life-threatening disorder of deliberate self-starvation.<sup>122</sup>

9. DSM III-R- 28-item self report scale of a valid measure of bulimia in clinical and non-clinical populations.<sup>127</sup>
10. EDI- (Eating Disorders Inventory) A 64-item self-report questionnaire containing eight subscale (drive for thinness, interceptive awareness, bulimia, body dissatisfaction, ineffectiveness, maturity fears, perfection, and interpersonal distrust) designed to assess psychological traits relevant to anorexia and bulimia.<sup>128</sup>
11. Face-ism- Describes the tendencies for photographs and drawings to emphasize the faces of men and the bodies of women.<sup>129</sup>



## APPENDIX E

### Endnotes

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