

FAST, PAINLESS AND POUND-SHEDDING: A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF DIET AND
FITNESS COVERAGE IN TEEN AND WOMEN'S MAGAZINES AND A LOOK AT
SURROUNDING ADVERTISEMENTS FROM 2005

By
SARAH WOOD

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Dr. Kim Walsh-Childers

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Sarah Wood

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It is an alluring promise: “Never overeat again: Tame hunger in 10 days and still feel satisfied,” or, for another variant, try “Cosmo’s fast, painless, pound-shedding plan.” These days, it is hard not to notice all the diet and fitness titles that scroll across magazine covers and fill the content inside. But what exactly are they telling readers? This study analyzes the diet and fitness text and graphics found in ten magazine titles, five women’s magazines and five teen magazines, and the surrounding advertisement during 2005. It uses framing theory—which dictates how a reader may perceive information through the textual wording, phrasing and examples—and social comparison theory—which in this case is how one compares themselves to media images.

This study revealed some differences and some similarities in the major frames and topics in the two genres (women’s and teen magazines) for diet and fitness coverage. The women’s magazines focused on primarily fast-and-easy techniques, beauty, long-term health and sinister scare tactics. The teen magazines, on the other hand, centered more on beauty, celebrities, confidence and body image, and eating disorders. Therefore, the teen magazines dealt with outer appearances (fame, beauty) and inner struggles (confidence, eating disorders), whereas the

women's versions contained more of a focus on motivation (speed/ease, scare tactics) and long-term health benefits.

Staying fit and healthy for beauty's sake was the only constant theme between the two genres. Beauty and pretty, thin models were the only significant common factor in all editorial frames, advertisements and article photos for both teen and women's magazines. For the women's magazines, the beauty frame was found about equally in advertisements and editorial content. For teen magazines, editorial content had a higher percentage of units with a beauty tone than did ads, but beauty was a top frame for both.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

It is an alluring promise: “Never overeat again: Tame hunger in 10 days and still feel satisfied,” or, for another variant, try “Cosmo’s fast, painless, pound-shedding plan” (Micco, 2003, p. 148; & McMorris, 2001, p. 137). These days, it is hard not to notice all the diet and fitness titles that scroll across magazine covers and fill the content inside. And why not? Forty-seven percent of all Americans, after all, turn to magazines as their top source for dietary supplement and nutrition information, according to a survey conducted in 2000 (Kava, 2002). Even more, magazine health coverage may be on the rise, and teen magazines are following that trend (Bonner, & McKay, 2000). In April 2005, for instance, CosmoGirl! added a monthly five-page health section to its magazine, an increase from its one to two pages previously devoted to the topic (60 sec, 2005). “We decided there is an obesity epidemic, and there are a lot of teens with eating disorders like anorexia,” CosmoGirl! Editor-in-Chief Susan Schultz said on the decision to create a health section. “It’s really scary” (60 sec, 2005). But given that rigid diet and fitness regimes often are paired with a hefty dollar amount of food advertising in many magazines, is the actual coverage also “scary?”

Only a narrow subset of magazine studies on diet and fitness are specifically about editorial content. This content analysis and framing study, however, attempted to examine three aspects of diet and fitness coverage in women’s and teen magazines. It sought to answer the following research questions: (1) How did women’s magazines frame information related to diet and exercise, through both content and graphics, during 2005? (2) How did female-oriented teen magazines frame such content? (3) What types of advertisements were placed adjacent to such content in both the teen and women’s magazines?

Although much research has been done on the possible connection between magazine exposure and body image, fewer studies center on diet and fitness editorial coverage, especially studies that compare magazines aimed at younger females and their counterparts targeting adult women. The majority of research on this topic focuses on graphics or advertisements. However, to get a complete picture of the message being sent to the reader, one needs to look at what the story is saying contextually as well as the pictorial message. By looking at all three aspects—editorial content, graphics and advertisements—this study offers scholars, media professionals and readers a better understanding of the entire message. Given that the editorial content, graphic elements and nearby ads may send conflicting messages, examining only one element may give an inaccurate view of the overall message being sent.

The answers to this study's research questions are important for three reasons. The first is the extent of women's and teen's concerns about and disorders related to food, nutrition and exercise. On any given day, 56% of American women are dieting, and 75% of them consider themselves too fat (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999). As for teens, 80% of girls go on a diet at least once before the age of 18 (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999).

Eating disorder statistics are just as staggering, if not even more so. About eight million women and teens are affected with eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and compulsive overeating (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999). Psychology Today reported that such disorders afflict up to 40% of college students at some point during their college years, and 13% of high school girls purge (Marano, December 10, 2004). But teens and young adults aren't alone. A recent study shows an increase—from 5 to 10%—in women older than 40 receiving treatment for anorexia (Adult Anorexia, June 2005). In fact, weight gain ranked second only to memory loss as the most feared consequence of aging in a 1995 study of adult women (Wilson &

Blackhurst, 1999). Regardless of age, however, the effects of these eating disorders can be lasting. Adolescents with bulimia nervosa have a 20-fold increased risk of continuing symptoms throughout adulthood, and only 30 to 40% of anorexics ever fully recover (Kotler et al., 2001; Hesse-Bilber et al., 2006). According to The Eating Disorders Coalition, anorexia has the highest mortality rate—approximately 20%—of any mental illness (Hesse-Bilber et al., 2006). While such numbers for bulimia are more difficult to obtain because many of its sufferers go undetected, its effects are also potentially deadly, including kidney failure and congestive heart failure (Hesse-Bilber et al., 2006).

A second reason for this study's importance is that frequent dieting, in the vast majority of cases, actually leads to increased weight in the long run. U.S. News and World Report reported on a 2006 study of 149 obese women. Women who had "dieted before age 14 were twice as likely to have dieted 20 times or more and had the highest BMIs" (Spake, January 16, 2006). Only 79% of the study's participants were able to maintain significant weight loss from a diet over a long period of time, and many actually gained weight from such "yo-yo" dieting (Spake, January 16, 2006).

The third reason for the importance of this study is that dieting is the single most important predictor of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia (Boschi et al., 2003). Boschi et al. (2003) states that "dieting, a behavioral phenomenon which is becoming more and more common among adolescents as a result of their persistent endeavors to modify their physical appearance, is certainly involved in the pathogenesis of eating disorders" (p. 285). Likewise, Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention, Inc., found that dieting, along with body dissatisfaction and the drive for thinness, are the primary precursors to anorexia and bulimia development (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999).

This study strives to identify similarities and differences in mass-marketed, high-circulation teen and women's magazines in regard to diet and fitness editorial content and advertising. In order to do this, the study uses framing theory. According to the theory, how dieting and fitness stories are written—their use of catchphrases, metaphors, exemplars, etc.—help to clarify how readers may perceive the information (Zoch, 2001; Hertog and McLeod, 2001). For instance, if an article constantly refers to simplicity and quickness, the reader may infer that exercise done in the prescribed way is easy to do or that significant weight loss will follow quickly if the reader uses the techniques the magazine describes. These frames, then, help us predict what kinds of ideas readers of both teen and women's magazines are gaining related to dieting and fitness.

Chapter 2 describes a review of previous literature on body image, the media's role in body image disturbance and advertising influences. It also includes a discussion of framing and social comparison theories. Chapter 3 describes the methods to be used in the study, including selection of editorial content and advertising to be analyzed and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 describes the frames found in both genres and discusses the types of advertisements placed next to such articles. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings, the study's limitations and potential ideas for additional research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 provides a review of previous research linking exposure to body-focused media content, particularly that of magazines, with girls' and women's development of poor body image; unhealthy attitudes toward diet, nutrition and general eating habits; and disordered eating patterns, including anorexia nervosa, bulimia and overeating. In addition, the chapter describes the theoretical underpinnings of the study, including social comparison theory, which links magazine consumption—specifically its use of ultra-thin models—with disordered eating and unhealthy food- and nutrition-related attitudes. The chapter also discusses framing theory, which focuses on how editorial content is written and presented, and how this can influence readers' understanding of fitness and dieting.

Review of Literature

Body Image: Teen and Women Readers

Media and advertising effects on body image have been widely studied, with researchers examining everything from the frequency of magazines' use of thin, airbrushed models to the repetitive focus on certain health topics and frames. This is especially true for magazines and diet content. Ronald Bishop (2001) writes

Articles about diets and dieting appear in nearly every issue of most women's magazines. Those who buy women's magazines often read more than one article per issue about the latest diet regimens. Medical professionals and communication scholars argue that this focus by media companies on the benefits of dieting has caused an increase in the number of people who suffer from eating disorders. (p. 221)

An historic example of this—described in a study by Harrison and Cantor (1997) — occurred from 1950 to 1984, when advertisements significantly increased their usage of thin models in popular magazines. During the same time, body measurements and weights of *Playboy* centerfolds and Miss America contestants also began to shrink. Popular women's magazines

followed suit, increasing their dieting coverage from a yearly average of 17.1 articles in the 1960s to 29.6 articles in the 1970s. The normal weight of U.S. women younger than 30, however, rose by five to six pounds (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). By 1979 to 1988, 69% of *Playboy* centerfolds and 60% of pageant contestants weighed at least 15% below their expected, healthy body weight (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). The authors writes

This is noteworthy because being at least 15% below one's expected body weight is considered symptomatic of anorexia nervosa (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). At the same time, the number of dieting and exercise articles in popular women's magazines increased year by year during the period of study, whereas the normal weight range of American women and the reported prevalence of eating disorders in the United States both continued to rise. (p. 42)

Andersen and DiDomenico (1990) also found evidence for the link between dieting content and eating disorders in their study, which compared 10 male and 10 female magazines. The authors found that the female magazines contained 10.5 times more weight-loss articles and ads than the men's magazines. This figure, they noted, mirrored the ratio of female to male cases of eating disorders (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1990). In other words, women were also about 10 times more likely to have an eating disorder. The authors state that such a difference could suggest anything from the magazines' mere reflection of society to the perpetuation or even creation of an overvaluation of extreme thinness. Either way, the magazines "impose gender-related norms which then lead to sex-related differences in the frequencies of critical behaviors," including eating disorders (Andersen and DiDomenico, 1990, p. 286). It is worth a note, however, that the magazines examined for this study were published in the 1980s before the Men's Health phenomenon really came about, in which photographs of excessively muscular males with no body fat caused similar body perceptions issues with its readers who strove to look more like the depicted male ideal.

Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) found a similar relationship among dieting, eating disorders and magazines consumption. They state that dieters are about eight times more likely than non-dieters to develop bulimia nervosa. This is most likely to occur among women following strict, more extreme diets, which fuel a cycle of bingeing and dieting. Body-image frustration often results from dieting, and magazine food advertisers, knowing that 56% of women are dieting, play on such feelings. Examples the authors use are magazine food advertisements that encourage “all-or-none” thinking by showing high-calorie and high-fat foods as forbidden. The ads portray their low- or no-fat options as the exceptions to a world of bland-tasting diet foods and as the solution to all the reader’s weight problems. Two Kraft advertisements in *Woman’s Day*, for instance, stated that “finally women could ‘have pizza whenever’ they wanted” by using Kraft’s fat-free cheese or eat sandwiches “that actually have ‘rich taste’” by using a fat-free mayonnaise (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999, p. 117). Such ads, the authors suggest, “endorse the widespread fear and loathing of fat,” “reinforce the ‘all-or-none’ thinking” and give the mistaken belief that a sought-after body can be achieved with the right products (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999, p. 117). Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) conclude, “food advertisements not only promote the thin ideal, but also explicitly endorse high-risk eating behaviors as a way of attaining the ideal” (p. 117).

Because of such research linking the use of thin models, dieting content and increased eating disorders, some teen magazines recently have opted to provide “no-diet zones,” where entire magazines, such as *YM*, are devoid of any dieting content (Fine, 2002). *Seventeen* magazine follows a related policy. “We’ll still have workout, nutrition, but we’re approaching it as not just helping [a reader] to act, but to understand why. And that’s going to help change her habits,” *CosmoGril!* editor Schultz said of the publication’s sister magazine (60 sec, 2005).

Still, Bishop (2001) points out that 70% of adolescent girls are dieting, and 75% say they feel fat. Even if teen magazines do not advocate dieting, he argues, they may help create the desire to match an impossible-to-mimic ideal woman.

Thomsen, Weber and Brown (2002) found just this in their study of female teen readership of beauty and fashion magazines. At the time of the study, 6.5 million adolescents read the three most popular teen magazines, *Seventeen*, *Teen* and *YM*. The scholars argue that the messages in these magazines, which target the 12–14 age range, are often used in the “identity development and gender socialization process” (Thomsen, Weber & Brown, 2002, p. 348). An underlying message the magazines get across: Happiness and success can be attained only with the right physical appearance, “ultra-thinness being the preferred state of health and beauty” (Thomsen, Weber & Brown, 2002, p. 348). Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) describe it as “an environment in which women equate thinness with success, happiness, worthiness and control” (p. 114). The result of portraying an unattainable look can be readers’ acceptance of unrealistic standards of beauty or even the development of unsafe, quick dieting methods, such as the excessive use of diet pills. However, Thomsen, Weber and Brown (2002) did find that the effects of magazine content were mediated by the reader’s previous state of mind. In other words, readers with high levels of weight anxiety before reading the magazines were more likely to engage in high-risk eating behaviors than readers who were less preoccupied with their weight.

With a focus on ideal thin images, health information is often replaced by beauty content in much of the diet and fitness coverage. This phenomenon does not occur only in teen magazines. One scholar concluded that “women are urged to take control of their bodies not for political or health reasons but to make them aesthetically pleasing” (Douglas, 1994, p. 266). Other scholars agree. Thomsen (2002), for instance, found in his study that there was not a direct

link between magazine reading and body-shape distress. Instead, the strongest predictor of size concern came from society's (and indirectly the medium's) portrayal of men's expectations for female thinness (Thomsen, 2002). Tuchman (1978) phrases it as magazine content that sells "successful and therefore pleasurable femininity" (p. 163). Magazines define women by the men in their lives, and these men, as depicted in the magazines, expect an ideal shape (Tuchman, 1978; & Bishop, 2001).

Weight, in fact, is a key factor in perceived "positive appearance," according to one study (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Hesse-Biber et al. (2006) write: "A woman's sense of self-esteem is dependent upon her perceived attractiveness to the opposite sex, and body weight plays an increasing importance in whether she is considered physically attractive" (p. 6). Likewise, Andersen and DiDomenico (1990) found that females placed a greater emphasis on weight when rating female attractiveness than did males rating female attractiveness.

Some scholars (Thomsen, 2002) mention the frame of hope in fitness articles as a possible contributing factor in body perception. The premise is that through following the magazine's diet, fitness and beauty advice, one could gain hope of attaining the sought-after look. Thomsen (2002) hypothesizes in his literature review:

Women's magazines are designed to contribute to consumption-based culture by encouraging readers to fantasize about the creation of an ideal or perfect self. By presenting readers with beautiful, inspiring role models to envy and emulate, the magazines may instill a sense of hope that personal ideals and goals can and will be attained by following the prescribed course of action. (p. 988)

This model places a direct, positive link between hope and magazine reading frequency and an indirect link between magazine reading frequency and body image concerns (Thomsen, 2002). However, when Thomsen set out to prove that such hypothesized "hope" existed in the articles, he found that it did not "mediate relationships between reading, expected future weight

gain or loss” or “body shape and size concerns” (p. 995). He did speculate, though, that this could be different when dealing with younger readers. He concludes

Age and . . . development levels may have had an impact on the results of this study, particularly in assessing the role of hope . . . For younger subjects, particularly those who are in early adolescence, self-concept is far less stable, and perhaps more likely to be influenced by exposure. As a result, both self-evaluative and self-improvement comparisons may have a greater impact, either negatively or positively, on one’s level of hope. (p. 1010)

However, he added, this speculation needs further study because his participants were not adolescents.

This idea is also shown through a focus-group study of Latina and Anglo women about ideal shapes portrayed in magazines and television programs (Goodman, 2002). Goodman (2002) found that even though women doubted the realism of such ideal looks and even criticized the strict methods they presumed models used to attain such shapes, they still sought to emulate the ideal. Goodman (2002) states

They [the participants] were aware of and desired the economic and social rewards that thinness produces. Further, they were aware of others’ acceptance of the ideal and understood that others often judge them by the ideal. Even when these women were critical of the ideal, they felt pressure to strive for thinness, given the social and economic consequences. (p. 722)

These ultra-thin, ideal women depicted in magazines often are framed as being “model citizens” as well as being ideally thin (Pagliassotti, 2003; Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Pagliassotti (2003) and Hesse-Biber et al. (2006) state that successful dieters are seen as following practices similar to those expected of exemplary citizens, such as possessing the Protestant work ethic, striving for self-improvement, being health-focused and displaying self-control.

Following this idea, a non- or unsuccessful dieter denotes laziness, lack of control, self-indulgence and moral failure. Hesse-Biber et al. write

It is the women's "Horatio Alger" story [that] if you work hard, you will be rewarded; [it's] as if thinness is achievable to all women who strive for it . . . Food choice and bodily outcome become a statement of self and one's self-worth more so for women. (p. 10)

But this ideal appearance is often unattainable. Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) point out that this is exactly what makes ultra-thinness an effective marketing tool. They state

Encouraging women to measure themselves against this standard allows advertisers to exploit not only women's inevitable dissatisfaction with their own bodies but also their resulting feelings of failure and inadequacy . . . Food advertisements signal to women that the failure is more than a lapse in willpower; it is a sign of weak character, even moral inadequacy. (p. 113)

Another point of interest is the importance of the media's role in nutrition-related knowledge and behavior. Signorielli and Staples (1997) found in a study of elementary school-aged children that "there was a strong positive relationship between television viewing and unhealthy perceptions of nutrition" (p. 289). The more TV a child watched—when other variables were accounted for—the more likely he or she was to (1) select unhealthy foods when allowed to choose foods he or she would rather eat, and (2) believe that the unhealthy foods were actually healthier than the more nutritious options.

Another study by Harrison and Cantor (1997) found that, overall, magazines were even better predictors than television when looking at eating-disorder and dieting behaviors among college-aged males and females. For females, magazine readership was a significant predictor of drive for thinness—more so than television (Harrison & Cantor, 1997, p. 61). Likewise for males, magazine readership was a stronger predictor than TV in male endorsement of thinness for themselves. The study did not find, however, an overall positive relationship between readership and male expectations of female thinness, but this changed when magazine effects were analyzed by genre (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Male entertainment magazines, such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, were most likely to cause such expectations.

These two studies—the Harrison and Cantor study and the Signorielli and Staples study—deal with different age groups and different health factors. However, one key component binds them together. They both reveal the impact of the media, magazines in particular, on health attitudes and behaviors.

Two other studies by Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) and Hesse-Biber et al. (2006) state that mass media messages, magazines included, may be one of the strongest transmitters of the excessively thin ideal. Wilson and Blackhurst (1999) suggest that such influences “normalize body dissatisfaction and weight preoccupation, glorify thinness, perpetuate unrealistic and unattainable standards of beauty, and encourage a rigid diet mentality” (p. 116). Hesse-Biber et al. agree, but these scholars place more of the blame on capitalist industries that fund such mass media portrayals—advertisers included.

Content and Its Advertising

Another dilemma arises when advertising is thrown into the body-image mix. Some scholars (Douglas, 1994; Bishop, 2001; Kilbourne, 1999) argue that articles urge women to diet, but food advertisements and recipes in the magazines pull the reader toward consumption of their often rich and unhealthy products. “Thus, women are caught in a classic Marxist double bind: for every dollar spent on the treatment of obesity, food manufacturers spend \$100 to convince them to buy their products” (Douglas, 1994, p. 35). The result: “companies fatten us up and the \$30 billion a year diet industry tries to slim us down” (Bishop, 2001, p. 221). In short, women strive for an unattainable image portrayed in magazines, and therefore, are more likely to seek out diet products and articles (Kilbourne, 1999). However, the food marketers who advertise in women’s magazines tempt readers with fatty and/or sugar-laden products. In sum, Kilbourne states, “the junk food industry and the diet industry depend on each other” (p. 122).

Food and beverage advertising recently has surpassed the once dominant automotive industry as “the single largest category for publishers,” (“Food & Beverage,” 2005). An article in *MediaWeek* reported that “through August [2005], ad pages in the (food) category were up a healthy 12% over last year, the best showing besides Financial/Insurance/Real Estate among the major print categories, per Publishers Information Bureau” (“Food & Beverage,” 2005, p. 6). The major ad-page contributors included Philip Morris’ Altria (the parent company of Kraft and Nabisco), PepsiCo and Unilever (which make Lipton Tea and Slim-Fast). Unilever, in fact, increased its print coverage by 75% between 2003 and 2005 (“Food & Beverage,” 2005). Irene Grieco, the company’s print media manager, cited increased sales from the advertisements as the main reason. (“Food & Beverage,” 2005)

So which magazines are receiving the increased ad revenue from food and beverage industries? Of the \$2.16 billion food and beverage ad sales for 2004, the highest magazine category was women’s service magazines, which took in about \$522 million of such sales (“Food & Beverages,” 2005). *Better Homes and Garden*, *People*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Women’s Day* were listed as the top four food-and-beverage ad carriers in 2004, with *Ladies Home Journal* and *Family Circle* jumping to fifth and sixth in 2005. In fact, of the top-ten list in 2005, seven were women’s magazines—*O*, the Oprah Magazine, came in at 10th (“Food & Beverages,” 2005).

Advertising Effects on Readers

But what impact does such advertising really have on readers? The advertising-effects argument centers on a passive audience theory, and Bishop (2001) states that many women know they are being manipulated by food advertising. Still, two advertising-effects studies done by research companies Millward Brown and Nielsen Corp. found that “dollar-for-dollar, magazines are a better buy for increasing consumer awareness” compared to TV (Morris, 1999). The

Millward Brown study found that 19% of magazine readers surveyed were aware of an ad campaign; 16% were aware of the campaign when only viewed on TV (Morris, 1999). The percentage jumps to 65, however, when the individual had seen both TV and magazine ads. The argument is furthered by a case study of magazine ads for a mustard product. Morris (1999) writes on the Millward Brown study

In the case of Nabisco's Grey Poupon mustard, the company spent more than \$3 million in magazine advertising during the 16-week period. Ads ran in eight issues of four measured magazines. Brand penetration increased 22% in those households exposed to the ads.

It is worth a note, though, that some criticized the findings of the Millward Brown research, stating that the brand-penetration numbers were too high and that the data may have been misinterpreted (Morris, 1999).

Review of Theory

Framing Theory

The main theory used in this study is framing. For the purpose of this study, framing is defined as “a number of thematically related attributes related to a topic or news event that affects the pictures in our heads relating to that topic or event” (Zoch, 2001, p. 196). It goes beyond what to think about—as explained by the agenda-setting theory—and focuses on *how* one thinks about an issue or event (Zoch, 2001). Hertog and McLeod (2001) take the definition a step further, claiming that frames are “organizing principles . . . that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (p. 140). Therefore, for example, the public’s interest in back-and-forth elections may be a result of “horse-race” frames used by the media (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). On the other hand, the authors also suggest that it could be the reverse. Frames may reflect social realities already in place (Hertog & McLeod, 2001).

From another angle, Dahinden (2005) defines frames as general patterns of interpretation that usually consist of four parts: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and

treatment recommendation (p. 2). Frames, according to Dahinden, “structure information” in order to “reduce complexity” (Dahinden, 2005, p. 2).

One example of framing is an analysis by Zoch (2001), who examined media framing of the Susan Smith case. The case—which dealt with a woman who was being tried for murdering her two children—erupted with a media-circus atmosphere and the media soon started covering itself. The author looked at five recurring devices in the media to determine any frames: metaphors, visual images, catchphrases, depictions and exemplars (Zoch, 2001, p. 199). From these, she found a frame of “media are part of the story,” which had six additional sub-themes that supported the frame. By looking at these devices, therefore, Zoch was able to figure out *how* people were informed about the Susan Smith case, which in this case, was that the media were also a part of the story.

The framing method is the most appropriate for this study because of its focus on enabling the researcher to decipher how these magazines portrayed diet and fitness and how readers of this information, in turn, may think or act. This is shown through a media framing analysis of breast cancer and implants (Andsager & Powers, 2001). The authors contend “it is important to understand the ways in which journalistic framing of issues occurs, because framing influences public understanding and, consequently, policy formation” (Andsager & Powers, 2001, p. 164). The authors cite an increase in breast cancer public awareness fueled by the media’s attention (and its urgent-toned frame) in the 1990s. The attention nudged Congress into enacting a bill that allocated Medicare coverage for biannual mammograms to women older than 65 (Andsager & Powers, 2001). Although an attached four-state statute giving free screening to poor women in the bill was eventually revoked, the media coverage, the ensuing grassroots campaign and President Bill Clinton’s directives prompted the National Institute of Cancer to reallocate funds

to breast cancer research, which increased by more than 34%. The Food and Drug Administration also banned silicon implants until their effects could be verified. The authors write

Certain pieces of information are selected and put together within the genre constraints of a news story. These choices, based on news values and journalists' interpretations of social responsibility, have consequences. Readers form impressions of the news stories' central theme—issue and attitudes toward the policy actors. For the most part, the media are the public's only contact with technical fields . . . Thus, the media create boundaries within which debate can take place. (p. 166)

By applying similar framing techniques found in these examples, this study is intended to determine how diet and fitness are framed in women's and teen magazines. The implications of such findings, as shown by Andsager and Powers, are important because they could have an impact on readers' perceptions and actions. If dieting articles are framed a certain way, they may alter one's views on dieting and body image.

Social Comparison Theory

Another theory worth note is that of social comparison. Festinger (1954) first defined the theory in three parts: 1. Individuals seek to improve themselves and to evaluate their abilities and opinions, 2. Individuals compare themselves to others, and 3. Individuals prefer to compare themselves to people with whom they are similar. Throughout the years, the theory has been revised. Individuals, in accordance with the modified theory, could compare themselves to those to whom they were dissimilar, and social comparison could occur in areas such as physical appearance and eating habits (Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992).

Comparison of physical appearances with those dissimilar to oneself are usually upward, meaning the individual doing the comparing often feels inferior (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). This is commonly the case when individuals engage in social comparison with ideal images found in magazines ("Body image evaluation," 2004). Females who consider celebrities—often portrayed

in magazines—as an important comparison group, for instance, were more likely to feel that their bodies were not adequate and to participate in pathological weight control practices to change this (“Body image evaluation, 2004). Likewise, Thomsen, Weber and Brown (2002) concluded that adolescents use beauty and fashion magazines for “the purposes of self-evaluation and self-improvement” (14). The authors state

[Teen readers] make comparisons between themselves and the models in magazine photos; they come to accept these beauty ideals as realistically attainable goals. The more they desire to attain these goals, and, in turn, the more they read beauty and fashion magazines, the more they may be willing, or feel pressured, to try shortcuts or potentially harmful measures to attain them. (Thomsen, Weber & Brown, 2002, p. 15)

Literature Review in Sum and Research Questions

Four major themes on diet and fitness content and advertising dominate throughout the literature. First, the media, magazines in particular, are influential in both how we perceive ourselves and how we understand healthy eating habits. Secondly, health information has been displaced by beauty content in diet and fitness coverage. This is seen through the use of thin, airbrushed models, content that suggests that readers can hope to attain such an ideal body and the portrayed desire to be aesthetically pleasing for men. This plays into the third theme. As women strive to look more beautiful through rigorous diet and fitness regimes, they are constantly tempted by advertisements for fatty and sugar-laden foods. Much of the research suggests that women who diet often gain weight in the long run. This causes frustration, which may cause poor body perception or even disordered eating. Lastly, food advertisements fill women’s magazines, with women’s service magazines receiving the lion’s share of ad revenue from the food industry.

One thing lacking in the research, however, is a comparison of the editorial aspects of teen and women’s diet and fitness coverage. This study was designed to fill in the gap by answering the following research questions: 1. How did women’s magazines frame information related to

diet and exercise, through both content and graphics, during 2005? 2. How did female-oriented teen magazines frame such content? 3. What types of advertisements were placed adjacent to such content in both the teen and women's magazines?

By looking at these questions in this way, the study will be able to analyze teen and women's magazines separately and provide comparison data. Doing so will determine if similar frames are being used for the different age groups. This information could pinpoint more precisely what's being said—not just shown pictorially—and to which group. Also, with the addition of the advertisement research question, the study seeks both to confirm previous research that suggests the placement of fatty/sugary food advertisements next to dieting content and to show any differences in teen and women's magazines advertisements.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Chapter 3 describes the method used for the study and outlines how the study was conducted. The method for this study was a qualitative framing analysis of articles focusing on fitness, nutrition and diet in national women's and teen magazines. The content of adjacent advertisements—ads that appeared immediately before, after or in the middle of the stories—also were analyzed. In both the articles and ads, this study looked at how the content was framed, noting the catch phrases, keywords, exemplars, source listings, metaphors, images and photos. This method follows the example of past framing studies, including the Zoch (2001) and the Hertog and McLeod (2001) studies.

Why Magazines and How They Were Selected

This study focuses on women's and teen magazines because they are at the forefront of the body image debate and are most likely to report frequently on dieting, nutrition and/or fitness compared to other media. A comparison of the two genres also revealed some differences between women's and teen magazines, which offer further, less-explored insight into how women's and teen magazines frame such topics. A comparison between women's magazines and teen magazines was thought important because it could reveal a pattern of frames that starts with teen magazines (and their readers) and gradually progresses to women's magazines (and their readers). If similar frames are found in both, it stands to reason that this frame would greatly affect how one perceives health and fitness coverage, since it has been told to the reader since adolescence. This study differed from other magazine body image studies by looking extensively at the editorial content and not only the graphics or advertisements. Looking at what the content of a story is saying in addition to what it is saying pictorially gives researchers and media professionals a better understanding of the entire message that is being sent the readers.

Five magazine titles from each genre were chosen based on high national circulation rates. Preference was given to magazines that had a teen/woman counterpart magazine (for instance, *Cosmopolitan* and *CosmoGirl!*). However, many such counterparts differed in subject matter and could not be used for the study. For instance, *Teen People* fell into the category of a general teen magazine (with subjects ranging from fashion to health). *People* magazine, on the other hand, dealt almost exclusively with celebrity gossip and was a more niche magazine. A similar occurrence happened with *Vogue*, a niche fashion magazine, and *Teen Vogue*, a more general teen magazine. Taking circulation figures and top-ranked positions from within the teen genre into consideration, the teen titles studied are: *Elle Girl*, *Seventeen*, *Teen Vogue*, *Teen People* and *CosmoGirl!* The women's titles are: *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, *Self*, *Glamour* and *Allure*. Each magazine was selected for its high national circulation as recorded by the Audit Bureau of Circulation in 2005. Each selected magazine was on the top-100 list for all magazines in the United States during 2005, except for *Elle Girl*, which lagged slightly behind but still maintained a leading rank in the teen magazine genre in 2005.

Circulations for the teen magazines were: *Elle Girl* (about 1.2 million), *Seventeen* (2,034,462), *Teen Vogue* (1,410,609), *Teen People* (1,525,409) and *CosmoGirl!* (1,383,468).

Note: In 2006, *Elle Girl* and *Teen People* folded their print editions and published exclusively online. During 2005 and through the beginning of 2006, they were both still among the top-selling teen magazines in print.

For the women's magazines: *Cosmopolitan* (2,969,952), *Redbook* (2,412,882), *Self* (1,410,476), *Glamour* (2,371,986) and *Allure* (1,060,099).

A complete year (2005) of each title was examined. The year 2005 was determined as an appropriate year for study because of a number of important dietary and fitness studies published

in 2004 and early 2005. Studies done during this time frame provide the 2005 issues (1) information that would be timely and (2) enough time to make up for any production lag time (most magazines finish issues months before publication). Also, most of these studies are not done yearly, and the statistics they report were the most recent available at the time of this study.

The first study, which is conducted every five years, was released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture on January 12, 2005 (Dietary Guidelines, 2005). It reported on dietary guidelines that would “promote health and reduce the risk of major chronic diseases.” The recommendations focused on long-term health, which is a topic one would expect to find in the magazine articles. Second, a series of studies reported on by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health gave the statistics for 2004. The statistics focused on the obesity rate of adults and adolescents (NHANES, 2004; Prevalence, 2004). Similarly, the Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health published a study titled "Overweight and Physical Activity Among Children: A Portrait of States and the Nation, 2005," which reported on the low level of physical activity and increase in numbers of overweight children. Such studies would seem especially topical for diet and fitness coverage. The implications of all these studies, however, give further insight to the environment in which the articles were written. The studies point to an increase in obesity and a decrease in physical activity, and how magazines frame their stories could have contradicted or coincided with the national trends.

How the Articles Were Chosen

All magazine issues from the selected titles for 2005 were examined by perusing the table of contents and by flipping through cover-to-cover. All editorial items—feature articles, briefs, letters and Q&As—that focused on diet, nutrition, fitness and exercise were selected. Likewise, the adjacent ads—all-sized advertisements that appeared on the page before, after or in the

middle of diet and fitness stories—also were included in the study sample. For this study, it did most ads were one or more pages. Although it could be argued that smaller ads have less impact on readers than one- or two-page ads, separating the ads would not have made much of a difference.

How the Articles Were Coded and Interpreted

In order to determine the frames, a coding sheet was constructed to allow listings of the aspects mentioned before: keywords, phrases, sources, length, prominence, etc. (Appendix A). Each article was first read in its entirety to determine the main topic, secondary topics and any encompassing themes. The story was then read a second time line-by-line in order to determine sentencings, wording, phrasing and sourcing. Through a third scan of the story, the coder recorded the story's length, location within the magazine and visual images onto the code sheet. After completion, the code sheets were read and analyzed to determine repeated arguments, themes and occurrences.

Frames were not predetermined. Instead, they were found as the content was read. This was to ensure that all possible frames were found and to eliminate unintentional research bias by selecting only a limited range of frames. Colored pens were used to mark each frame and its corresponding themes on the article. For instance, words and phrases such as “fast,” “in only 10 minutes” or “quick steps for the busy, career-driven mom” denoted a quick, in-no-time frame. This frame was underlined in blue. Another frame, “sinister or scary,” was highlighted using a pink pen. At the end of coding all articles, the researcher was able to go through all the photocopied articles and see how often each color was used. The most used colors also reflected the most used frames. The number of articles in which each frame appeared, the number of times in each article they were referenced and a frame's location in each article (was it used at the beginning, middle, end?) all were recorded. In order to prevent items from being highlighted in

one color that later proved to reflect two separate frames, the researcher did not highlight immediately upon first reading the articles. Instead, the researcher first used pencil-written notes and then went back and highlighted. Advertisements were coded in a similar way. Each article's code sheet included questions related to the surrounding ads: the length, the product sold, a description of the photographs and a framing analysis of the textual content.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Chapter 4 outlines the results of the study. It reveals the statistics for diet and fitness content and graphics in teen and women's magazines, the frames of this content and the products advertised adjacent to the content.

Findings for Editorial Content

One hundred seventy-nine articles were identified and coded across the 10 magazines. One hundred twenty-three articles were found in the five women's magazines: *Cosmopolitan* (n=9), *Redbook* (n=21), *Self* (n=42), *Glamour* (n=23) and *Allure* (n=28). The other 56 articles were found in the teen magazines: *Elle Girl* (n=7), *Teen Vogue* (n=7), *Seventeen* (n=13), *Cosmo Girl!* (n=24) and *Teen People* (n=5). The lengths of the articles varied. The average women's magazine article had a slightly higher page count than its teen counterpart. The average diet and fitness article contained 2.25 pages of content for women's magazines and 1.85 pages for teen magazines. (Tables 4-1 and 4-2).

Most diet and fitness articles for both genres (n=53) were found in a health and nutrition section. This was true for about 23% (n=28) of all the coded women's articles and about 45% (n=25) of the teen articles. A difference in the two genres emerged in the second most-used section. Compared to about 12% (n=14) of the women's magazine articles found in food or eating right sections, about 20% (n=11) of the teen magazine articles appeared in a peer or real-life department. Both women's and teen magazines shared fitness and body sections as the third most used. In women's and teen magazines about 11% (women's, n=13; teen, n=6) of its diet and fitness articles appeared in such sections. Living sections made up the fourth most common section where 6.5% (n=8) of fitness and diet articles were found in women's magazines. For teen magazines, beauty sections came in fourth with 3.3% (n=4) of the articles. (Tables 4-4 and 4-5).

More women's fitness and nutrition content (n=41 or 33%) headlined on its magazine's front cover than on the teen covers (n=12 or 21%). Nine of the women's cover stories—about 7%—were the dominant headline. This was determined by typeface size. However, four of the teen articles—also about 7%—were the dominant headlines on the cover as well.

The two magazine genres differed little in the type of authors used. Most articles were written by staff writers or freelance journalists (women's n=54; teen n=34) followed by ordinary-person accounts (women's n=4; teen n=8). These first-person stories are by non-famous people who most commonly share how they shed a considerable amount of weight or about their struggle with eating. The third most common author type differed: experts advice such as registered dietitians or fitness professionals (n=2 or 2%) for women's magazines, and first-person celebrity stories (n=2 or 3.6%) for teen content. (Tables 4-4 and 4-5).

The top five sources used in women's magazines tended to be professionals. Dietitians were referenced in about 32% (n=39) of the articles, doctors in 28% (n=34), fitness experts in 25% (n=31), academic journals or research studies in 18% (n=22) and product and business owners in 13% (n=16). Teen magazines, on the other hand, were most likely to source peers and non-famous ordinary people. Peers were attributed in 41% (n=23) of the diet and fitness articles. This was followed by dietitians in 39% (n=22) of the articles, celebrities in 18% (n=10), product and business owners in 13% (n=7), and beauty experts in 3.5 % (n=2). (Tables 4-4 and 4-5).

The photographs accompanying each article also differed slightly from women's to teen magazines. Most photographs in women's magazines consisted of pretty, thin fashion models (n=25), healthy food (n=24)—which for the purpose of this study encompassed foods found on the food pyramid: vegetables, fruits, grains, lean meats, etc.—thin women eating food (n=8), and products and accessories, such as shoes, watches and brand-name fitness equipment (n=8). Sexy

body parts, such as a close-up on a woman's buttocks, also ranked as some of the most prevalent photographs with n=7. (Table 4-3).

Teen magazines focused more on food. Junk and fast food, such as ice cream, hamburgers and French fries, were the most prevalent type of graphic (n=16). This was followed by celebrities (n=12) and pretty, skinny teen models (n=12), healthy food (n=9) and everyday, normal-looking peers (n=8). (Table 4-3).

RQ 1: How Did Women's Magazines Frame Information Related to Diet and Exercise, through Both Content and Graphics, during 2005?

The women's magazines included of 123 articles from *Redbook* (n=21), *Cosmopolitan* (n=9), *Self* (n=42), *Glamour* (n=23) and *Allure* (n=28). The average *Redbook* diet and fitness article was 2.19 pages, the average *Self* article was 3.33 pages, the average *Cosmo* article was 1.17 pages and the average *Allure* and *Glamour* article was about 2.28 pages. The main topics centered on (1) how-to information (n=37), which consisted of step-by-step exercise routines and diet plans, (2) beauty-centered stories (n=21) that promoted exercise and diet as a means to achieve a specific look, and (3) health news (n=20) that reported on recent studies, polls and relatively current events. The rest of the main topics were less frequent, including managing temptation (n=8), long-term health (n=6) and combating stress (n=4). (Table 4-4).

Through an analysis of headlines, subheads, written content and graphics, four media frames can be attached to women's magazine diet and fitness articles. They are (1) the fast-and-easy cheer, (2) the quest for beauty, (3) the doctor's visit, and (4) the sinister or scary frame.

The fast-and-easy cheer

One of the most prevalent selling points in women's diet and fitness headlines was expediency and ease. References to "easy," "fast" and related words and phrases like "quick," "in no time," etc. were found in 23% of headlines (n=28), 10% of subheads (n=12) and in 77%

of the text, pull quotes and other such written content (n=95). Promises of easy-to-do workouts and diets made up 44 percent of all content, while fast- or instant-results stories accounted for a third of all content.

The fast-and-easy cheer frame has a rah-rah tone. It encourages readers that they can achieve a desired body with little effort or loss of tasty foods as long as the prescribed exercise routine or diet regimen is applied. The fast-and-easy terminology is mixed with cheerleader-like optimism. This is seen with statements like “you’ll see results before Memorial Day,” “couldn’t be easier” and “losing weight is child’s play” (Yeager, March 2005, p. 30; Buchan December 2005, p. 226). The usual 20-minute workout section in *Redbook* was even “slashed . . . in half” to “10 minutes to a better body.” It states, “This quickie workout tones all of your trouble spots with just 3 easy moves” (Yeager, October 2005, p. 32). Some examples provide even more you-can-do-it spunk, such as an *Allure* article that states, “this is the year you’ll get healthy,” and a *Glamour* article promising, you too can “lose up six pounds a month” (Levine, January 2005, p. 42; Lyons, May 2005, p. 105).

Other instant-results framed stories include one from *Glamour* about a recent study done on diet injections that are supposed to reduce one’s desire to overeat. It reads, “A drug in development shows promise for weight loss . . . they ate 25 to 35 percent less per meal and lost an average of five pounds” (Health: Body News, December 2005, p. 130).

It is worth a note that most of the fast-and-easy framed stories came in the form of how-to articles, which provide step-by-step exercising methods or eating schedules. About a third of all the women’s diet and fitness articles contained a main or secondary topic with how-to information.

The quest for beauty

Fitness and diet articles often referenced losing weight, staying fit and eating right as a means to achieve beauty or to enhance how one looks. Primping and beauty terminology was often used throughout such stories. One *Allure* article included weight loss in its “Insider Guide Total Makeover,” which advocated readers to loss weight for a more beautiful body by “Thinking Thin” (Devash, February 1, 2005, 95). In describing one woman’s quest for thinness, it states, “Since beginning the makeover a month ago, Lichota rewards herself with a manicure or massage instead of candy.”

The beauty frame appeared 37 times, in fact, in all content areas. Beauty was also the leading frame for headlines (n=23) and the top frame for subheads (n=12). Further, it was the main topic in 13% (n=16) of all stories.

A *Cosmo* piece, for instance, discussed the importance of eating habits in relation to one’s breast size. It reads: “Breasts are made up of mostly fat, and any excess pounds practically go straight to your chests. Unfortunately, when you lose weight, boob flab is among the first to be shed . . . repeatedly gaining and losing pounds forces the delicate skin on your set to expand and contract over and over again. The result: harmless (but unwanted) red or white streaks on your girls” (Nemec, June 2005, p. 254). Another *Cosmo* article claims “If you do 10 to 15 reps of each exercise three times a week for just two weeks and follow our detox diet . . . the temperature won’t be the only thing getting H-O-T-T-E-R” (Buchan, July 2005, p. 43). Again, the focus is on appearance rather than “the temperature is rising so you need more water.”

Likewise, *Self* has a fitness department called “20 minutes to a better body” and had published a stories that remarked, “the best look-great-fast trick” or the way to “look instantly thinner” (Yeager, December 2005, p. 26; Schipani, May 2005, p. 38). *Cosmo* titled one of its articles “Look Hot in Shorts.” It gave three steps of content and demonstration photos outlining

how to “transform your thighs” for summer attire (Buchan, June 2005, p. 254). A *Glamour* article was titled, “The great glamour body plan. (exercises for weight loss)” (Lyons, May 2005, p. 105). No matter whether it is to maintain youthful skin or to get a slimmer body, the emphasis and wording of these articles exhorts readers to exercise for looks and not for health.

The doctor’s visit

In contrast to the beauty frame is the use of diet and fitness articles to promote healthy living. This appears somewhat less frequently. Long-term health benefits and consequences are apparent in 21 articles. It is seldom used, however, as a main topic. One exception was an article titled “10 (fun!) ways to reduce your blood pressure” in the December 2005 edition of *Self*. The article lists diet and exercise choices that promote a heart-healthy lifestyle. The long-term health subject is more commonly added into a story, however, as a secondary topic. For instance, “You are what you drink” is a June 2005 *Redbook* article about rampant sugar in non-alcoholic, everyday drinks. Although it is first about calories, it also discusses Type 2 diabetes and its ensuing heart and kidney damage.

The doctor’s visit frame resulting from the long-term health subject has a medical informational tone. It uses popular jargon and definitions to inform and is similar to how a doctor speaks to a patient. For example, one article touted, “antioxidant-rich foods, which are believed to protect against some cancers and other diseases,” and one article suggested “aerobic exercise of medium intensity three or five days” to lessen the symptoms of depression (Health: Food News, June 1, 2005, p. 126; Fitness News, June 1, 2005, p. 138).

Even the food for boobs story in *Cosmo*—mentioned as an example in the beauty frame section—offers health information in its last paragraph. It reads: “Studies suggest that overweight women increase their odds of developing breast cancer fivefold. The reason: Fat cells

produce estrogen—a known breast-cancer trigger. The more fat cells you have, the greater the amount of estrogen circulating in your bloodstream” (Nemec, June 2005, p. 254).

Glamour described a diet plan “that can help in making smarter choices to lower risk of heart disease by nearly eighty percent” (Laliberte, February 2005, p. 200).

The sinister or scary frame

The last major frame found in women’s magazines for diet and fitness coverage is the sinister or scary frame. This frame implies that danger or evil awaits anyone who is overweight or who does not follow a prescribed fitness/dietary regimen. Words and phrases included “risk,” “scary,” “drowning” and “devilish” (Birnbaum, June 2005, p. 122). The sinister or scary frame was found in 13% of the stories (n=16). Eight of those articles focused on satanic words, six on danger or beware terminology and two on fear.

One example of the satanic-themed word usage is “The Top Diet Sins . . . and How to Fix Them” in *Redbook* (Kuzemchak, February 2005, p. 56). The article details five common food blunders and how one can take steps to avoid them. In this article, eating too much chocolate equated to committing a mortal, immoral wrongdoing, while following its diet method was associated with salvation. This *Redbook* article about “top diet sins,” also includes health topics (although in the last two paragraphs) about multiple health-enhancing nutrients and benefits like fiber and antioxidants. These topics, however, did not have the same medical-informational tone found in the doctor-visit frame. Instead, they were paired with danger and evil words like “blunder” and “sin” (Kuzemchak, February 2005, p. 56).

One article in *Allure*, outlined a recent study about how married women were more jealous of other women with a certain female body type – with “a small waist-to-hip ratio and a high ratio of shoulders to hips” (Health: Mood news, December 1, 2005, p. 133). Words were used included “threatened,” “potential rivals” and “intimidating.” A *Glamour* article is titled “The diet

that can save your life,” which suggests that your life may be in danger and needs saving (Laliberte, February 2005, p. 200).

Women’s graphics in review

Content photos from the five women’s magazines tended to be of pretty, thin models (n=44 or 36%), healthy food (n=25 or 21%) and everyday women (n=22 or 18%). Everyday women were non-famous, ordinary people with less-than-perfect bodies. Such photos accompanied stories such as “The top diet sins,” which included a photo of a middle-aged woman relaxing on a couch watching TV and eating a healthy mini-meal (Kuzemchak, February 2005, p. 56). Thin models, however, were used more often in fitness articles, such as the how-to shape-up stories. Depictions of healthy food items, coded as a food that would appear on the food pyramid such as fruits, vegetables, lean meat, outnumbered fast food and junk food (n=6) by six stories or about 5%.

In sum: Women’s magazines focused on four frames: the fast-and-easy cheer, the quest for beauty, the doctor’s visit and the sinister or scary frame. The content’s graphics, on the other hand, showed thin models, healthy food and everyday women. (Table 4-3).

RQ 2: How Did Female-Oriented Teen Magazines Frame Such Content?

Teen magazines had 56 fitness and diet articles from *Cosmo Girl!* (n=24), *Seventeen* (n=13), *Elle Girl* (n=7), *Teen Vogue* (n=7) and *Teen People* (n=5). The average article length for all five magazines was 1.85 pages. The main topics centered on how-to information (n=18 or 32%), food recipes (n=7 or 13%) and beauty (n=6 or 11%). Three other main topics followed closely, including celebrity diets (n=5), sports (n=5) and weight loss (n=5). Ordinary people were the most often quoted (n=23 or 41%), followed by dietitians and nutritionists (n=22 or 39%) and celebrities (n=10 or 18%). (Table 4-5).

Through an analysis of headlines, subheads, written content and graphics, four media frames were found in teen diet and fitness articles. They are: 1. The quest for beauty, 2. Celebrity star-power, 3. The great you and 4. Eating-disorder frame (overeating and under-eating).

The quest for beauty frame

Just as in women's magazines, a dominant theme in teen diet and fitness articles is health for beauty's sake. The focus on looks was found in 48% (n=27) of all coded teen articles with beauty being the main topic 11% (n=6) of the time. The headlines also used look-better wording the most (n=8 or 14%). An *Elle Girl* example comes from an article about a weight-loss boarding school. One of the students stated: "I've been called ugly for so long that I believe it. There's this one girl who has dropped a lot of weight, and I think she is so pretty, but she doesn't think so. There's no such thing as a pretty fat girl" (Brashich, March 2005, p. 106). Although there are some body image implications in the quote, the focus is on students losing weight to achieve good looks.

Many articles perpetuate this lofty goal. Exercise workout plans stress "toning" and "slimming down." One *Seventeen* article headline promised to help readers "get leaner with cardio" with its "waist-trimming workout" (get leaner, August 2005, p. 42). The cover headline for this article touted that users will "Get a tiny waist." Another *Cosmo Girl!* workout plan explains that its routine is perfect for "pre-swimsuit activity" (Goldstein, May 2005, p. 100). And while a *Teen People* article was prefaced with "Of course, it's what's inside that counts," it was directly followed by "But if you ever feel that what size jeans you wear or how big your boobs are is a huge deal, you're not alone" (How Do You Feel About Your Body? August 1, 2005, p. 186).

The beauty frame doesn't relate only to body size, however. Another *Elle Girl* article listed hair growth as a reason why one should stock up on his or her nutrients, and *Teen Vogue* recommended going organic (with food) to prevent breakouts.

The celebrity star-power frame

The celebrity star-power frame used phrases and words that referenced fame and the famous and equated it to weight loss, fitness or dieting. One article references music star Fergie from the band Black Eyed Peas by stating “Ab fabulous! Want a stomach like Fergie's?” (*Cosmo Girl*, February 2005, p. 74). The article then gives ten moves it says will make the reader look like a rock star.

Celebrity first-person accounts made up 4% (n=2) of all coverage, and celebrity references were found in another 38% (n=21) of the stories. These young, famous stars were even found in 21% (n=12) of all photos. Many of these star-studded photos had little to do with the actual content of the story. For instance, two *Teen Vogue* articles about reading nutrition labels and staying away from fad diets showed five candid shots each of celebrities shoveling down fast food. The headlines read: “Not all celebs are afraid of food” and “These celebs can’t resist a trip through the drive-through” (*Value Mean*, April 2005, p. 179; *Salad Daze*, May 2005, p. 151). The celebrities in the photos also tend to be the extremely thin kind such as Mischa Barton, Nicole Richie and Paris Hilton. A *Cosmo Girl!* article, in the same issue, shows a series of stars and supermodels stuffing their faces with food. The headline reads, “Cram session: in Hollywood these days, it's less Atkins, more napkins!” (*Cosmo Girl*, February 2005, p. 183). One caption for a photo of Kelly Osbourne consuming a bag of potato chips reads, “Osbournes sure have trouble keeping their mouths shut!” and another caption for a photo of supermodel Gisele sloppily eating a large roast beef sandwich reads, “Even supermodels like it supersized!” (*Cosmo Girl*, February 2005, p. 183). Another *Cosmo Girl!* article reads, “So what if you'll never

be a movie star? You can still eat like one with these healthy recipes!” (Celebrity bites, June/July 2005, p. 82).

Elle Girl also features a list of food requests for rock band Fall Out Boy’s bus tour. Items include Doritos chips, Mountain Dew soda, Wonder Bread and Gushers fruit snacks. The subtitle reads: “After this, you’ll never understand how Fall Out Boy keep their girlish figures” (Fall Out Food, November 2005, p. 107).

The great you frame: Confidence and body image

The great-you frame focuses on inner beauty and accepting oneself. It has a comforting tone, letting the reader know she is not alone and that she too can gain confidence. A *Cosmo Girl!* article, titled “Hey, Beautiful! That’s YOU we’re talking to,” stated that “And we know you like hearing it, because who doesn’t? The problem is, we’ve all become obsessed with looking good . . . all of your CG! sisters are marching alongside . . . You feel confident, you feel strong” (Hey, Beautiful! April 2005, p. 105).

Confidence and body image references were found most often in the written content (n=21 or 38%) and were often part of a personal account of being overweight. The subjects dealt with feeling poorly about oneself, gaining confidence or learning how to accept and love one’s inner self. *Seventeen*, for instance, published a first-person story of a girl who lost 116 pounds. Throughout the article, the girl recounted being teased and how she felt like she “was too fat to ever make friends” (real life, April 2005, p. 123). At the end of the article, she stated: “Maintaining my weight is still a struggle—after school I’m tired and don’t want to exercise. But then I remember that being healthy—and feeling happy about who I am—makes it all worth it” (Real Life, April 2005, p. 124).

Another article in *Teen Vogue* gave celebrity Kelly Osbourne’s first-person perspective on being “fat” in Hollywood. She stated: “I was definitely different. And in Hollywood—much like

in the average American high school—being different is not a good thing,” and “when you feel ugly and everyone’s telling you that you are ugly, well, you tend to believe it” (L.A. Story, June/July 2005, p. 141). At the end, she responds to such teasing with the inner strength and confidence she’s earned. She stated, “But I’ve learned to get on with my life” (L.A. Story, June/July 2005, p. 142).

A *Cosmo Girl!* back-to-school workout plan focused on exercise for the sake of being cool, calm and feeling confident for the new school year. It stated that exercise “makes you feel good by increasing your energy level, reducing tension, and even making you happier in general . . . improve your mood” (Cosmo Girl, September 2005, p. 112).

Teen People also contained the confidence frame. One article quoted a reader as saying, “My friends are tiny compared to me, and listening to them complain about having to lose weight makes me feel even fatter” (Insecurity, October 1, 2005, p. 64). Another article described the struggles of a high-school student who weighed 280 pounds. It stated, “I was extremely self-conscious. I wouldn’t talk in class because my classmates could be mean. One time these guys compared me to an elephant and started chanting, ‘Obese! Obese!’ That killed me” (Herr, Roan, April 2005, p. 61). After losing 105 pounds, she exclaims, “I have so much more confidence now.”

Eating-disorder frame

Closely linked to the body-image topic, eating disorders—used in this case to mean extreme, uncontrollable overeating and severe under-eating like starving oneself or purging—was referenced 15 times or in about 27% of the stories. This topic was often accompanied with a struggle tone. All five magazines use words like “binge” and “disorder” frequently. One article found in *Elle Girl*, for example, quoted a girl who attended a boarding school for obese teens. She stated: “I would tell myself, I don’t have a problem . . . I’m not one of those girls you see on

TV who has an eating disorder. Maybe I like food, that's all.' But Jessica says that at AOS (the school), she's realized that liking food too much can be an eating disorder" (Brashich, March 2005, p. 104).

An article in *Teen Vogue* looked at obese teens who attended weight-loss camps. Many of their sources confessed to trying everything beforehand to lose weight, including "just not eating at all." A *CosmoGirl!* article about getting fit said, "More people these days are suffering from eating disorders and obesity than ever before. It's time we put a stop to this epidemic!" (Hey, Beautiful, April 2005, p. 105).

Graphics for teen magazines

Photos from the five magazines tended to be of junk or fast food (n=16 or 29%), pretty, thin models (n=12 or 21%) and celebrities (n=12 or 21%). Often the junk food was shown alongside a calorie-counting story and was described as food to avoid. Healthy food was 18% less likely than junk food to be shown in such stories (n=9).

In sum: Teen magazines focused on four frames: beauty, celebrities, body image and eating disorders. The graphics, on the other hand, displayed fattening foods, thin models and celebrities.

RQ3: What Types of Advertisements Were Placed Adjacent to Such Content in Both the Teen and Women's Magazines?

Three hundred seventy-one advertisements appeared directly before, after or in the middle of the fitness and diet coverage for all 10 magazines. Two hundred ninety-five ads were found in the five women's magazines: *Cosmopolitan* (n=16), *Redbook* (n=106), *Self* (n=90), *Glamour* (n=37) and *Allure* (n=46). The other 76 advertisements were found in the teen magazines: *Elle Girl* (n=5), *Teen Vogue* (n=5), *Seventeen* (n=18), *Cosmo Girl!* (n=39) and *Teen People* (n=9). The majority of ads for all magazines in both genres were one-page long – 59% (n=45) of the

teen ads and 77% (n=227) of the women's ads were on a single page. The average women's magazine ad had a slightly higher ad page count than its teen counterparts with more two-page and foldout advertisements (n=24) of women's magazine ads with more than one page compared to n=4 for teen magazines). In teen magazines, 13% (n=10) of advertisements were half a page or less, while in women's magazine ads 15% (n=44) were half a page or less.

A fairly even mixture of placements—before and after diet and fitness coverage—was found in both teen and women's magazines. About 34% (n=26) of the teen advertisements were placed before the content and 25% (n=19) were placed after it. Only about 11% (n=8) of the ads were placed in the middle, but this simply could be because much of the diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines consisted of either a single page or a two-page spread (two consecutive pages facing each other). Again, the average length of diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines was 1.85 pages. Women's magazines also had a fairly even mixture: before (n=84), middle (n=112) and after (n=84). The rest of the ads were between two fitness stories.

Teen and women's advertisements differed slightly in the products they sold. Women's magazines contained far more food and drink ads (52% or n=152) than teen magazines (5.3% or n=4). The top five products sold next to diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines were (1) beauty products (26% or n=20), (2) Fashion, such as clothes and shoes (16% or n=12), (3) entertainment, such as television shows, movies CDs and DVDs (11% or n=8), (4) electronics and technology (6.6% or n=5) and (5) pads and tampons (5.3% or n=4) and drinks – two milk ads, a soda ad and a sugary fruit juice ad (5.3% or n=4). The top five products for women's magazines were (1) food advertised as low-fat, healthy, light or organic (26% or n=76), (2) food not advertised as healthy (19% or n=56), (3) beauty products (14% or n=40), (4) medicine (6.8% or n=20) and (5) drinks advertised as healthy (6.8% or n=20).

Photos also differed somewhat between the two genres. Both teen and women's magazine ads tended to feature people, but central photographs of the products were found more prominently in women's magazines. The top advertisement photographs used in teen magazines were of (1) celebrities (24% or n=18), (2) pretty, skinny fashion models (14% or n=11), (3) romantic embraces or implications between a girl and guy (9.2% or n=7), (4) skinny cartoon people (7.9% or n=6) and (5) everyday-looking peers (5.2% or n=4). The top five photo types for women's magazines were (1) food (46% or n=136), (2) fashion models (27% or n=80), and parenting or children (5.4% or n=16). Sexy men, normal-looking women and cleaning supplies were also frequently found (each n=12).

Findings for Advertisements

The top ad frames for teen magazines were (1) the sexy temptress, (2) being beautiful, (3) the fun life, and (4) romance.

The most common frame in teen advertisements was that of the sexy temptress. Such ads were found next to 13% (n=10) of all diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines. They usually included sexy wording, suggestive body poses and close-ups of fit body parts. One example in *CosmoGirl!* pictured pop star Jessica Simpson with a large lollipop. The ad was for her line of beauty products. Its heading read, "Be luscious all over!" and later "Get head-to-toe yummy . . . in tantalizing fragrances . . . irresistibly kissable all over" (*CosmoGirl*, Oct. 2005, p. 61). Another *Seventeen* ad, for Skechers Footwear, featured two photos of pop princess Christina Aguilera. One photo was of her as a scantily-clad cop dangling hand cuffs, and the other was of Aguilera bent over a car, presumably getting arrested by her alter ego, with her rear end jutting out (*Seventeen*, July 2005, p. 87). The non-celebrity variety of sexy temptress was also found. An ad in *Teen Vogue* for perfume displayed a smoky-eyed fashion model giving a come-hither look. The words read, "the luscious new feeling in fragrance . . . pleasures exotic" (*Teen Vogue*,

October 2005, p. 51). Another ad from *Teen Vogue*, selling jeans, featured two young models with their rear ends facing the camera. One girl has her hand deep inside her jean pocket. The text reads, “Juicy girls shine on” (*Teen Vogue*, June/July 2005, p. 74). Lastly, a *Teen People* ad selling shoes focuses on a pair of long, female legs dangling from a man’s lap. His hand is placed high on her thigh. The brand name is the only text that appears, “red hot” (*Teen People*, October 2005, p. 33).

The second most common frame in teen advertisements was beauty. This was found in 12% (n=9) of the ads. The beauty frame consisted of wording and phrases that exuded the “you too can be beautiful” tone—as long as you use the product, of course. These ads were often paired with beautiful, Cover Girl-type models. Examples included beauty products like facial cleansers, makeup and fashion. One St. Ives facial cleanser ad in *Teen People* shows a close-up of a beautiful face. It reads, “You scrub. You exfoliate. You fight blemishes. You glow” (*Teen People*, June/July 2005, p. 37). The words “you glow” are accented with a different color font.

A fun frame tied as the second most frequent frame, and was also in 12% (n=9) of the stories. Content and photos portrayed a full life and adventure. One Sea Breeze facial cleanser ad stated, “Keep it clearer hours longer. For days that never stop” (*Cosmo Girl*, May 2005, p. 53). Another, found in *Teen Vogue*, was for sunless tanner. Two girls in party dresses are laughing and taking photos of each other. The text reads, “celebrate” (*Teen Vogue*, June/July 2005, p. 41).

The fourth frame from the teen ads was romance, which consisted of a boy and girl model—always thin, fit and attractive—usually touching (an embrace, cuddling, holding hands) or exchanging a suggestive glance. Although these models also sometimes portrayed with a somewhat sexy look, they usually were more wholesome and dealt more with love and relationships. The ads using the sexy temptress frame mainly pictured only girl models.

The romance frame was found in 11% (n=8) of the ads next to diet and fitness coverage. One example, found in multiple magazines, is for Sea Breeze facial cleanser. The photo shows a teen girl and boy in close proximity on a sailboat. One presumes they are looking out toward the ocean, and both have large smiles (Cosmo Girl, May 2005, p. 53). Another ad, again for Skechers Footwear, is of American Idol pop star Carrie Underwood. She is surrounded by handsome, male shoe salesmen all offering her pairs of shoes. She gives a shocked, blushed expression with her hand just inches from her mouth (Seventeen, Oct. 2005, p. 83). Lastly, a Snapple ad states prominently, "It's spring . . . and luv is in the air!" Two Snapple juice bottles are placed next to each other with a heart in the background. The content touts, "everyone wants a lotta luv!" (Elle Girl, March 2005, p. 165).

The top ad frames for women's magazines were (1) taste, (2) feeling good/having a good life, (3) beauty and (4) sex and/or romance.

Taste was the most frequent frame – it was found in 33% (n=96) of women's ads. This frame featured words like "scrumptious," "delicious" and "flavorful," and focused on how the product, usually a reduced-fat or healthier food, tasted. One ad for Tostitos in *Redbook* showed a female hand scooping salsa into a chip. The ad stated, "All the taste with 0 grams of trans fat. Your family won't know the difference, but you will ... still taste great" (Redbook, February 2005, p. 166). Likewise, an Extra gum ad touts that its product is "mouthwateringly cool ... flavor and beyond," and a Nicorette ad promises that it is "the best tasting nicotine gum" (Redbook, November 2005, p. 181; Glamour, November 2005, p. 96).

The good-life frame was found in 28% (n=84) of the ads one page before, after and in the middle of diet and fitness coverage. Such ads portrayed a carefree, happy lifestyle. Terms such as "smile," "fun" and "adventure" were often used. One example comes from a series of Ritz

cracker ads featured throughout the year in *Redbook*. One shows three regular Ritz crackers with Kraft cheese spray spelling the word "fun" (Redbook, November 2005, p. 183). The text reads, "create smiles . . . let your imagination run wild." Another ad shows Ritz sticks dipped in a salsa-like sauce with text reading, "the world of dipping is now a happier place," and another Ritz ad reads "real food. real fun" (Redbook, June 2005, p. 201; Redbook, February 2005, p. 97). A Kashi cereal ad in *Self* also has a adventurous, happy tone. Its text reads, "feel good again. It's one big, crunchy, honey-toasted, wonderful cycle. See how far it takes you" (Self, April 2005, p. 115). The ad also reads, "I can make this fun" and uses words like "passion."

The beauty frame is similar to the beauty frame found in teen magazine ads. This frame was found in 30% (n=88) of the coded ads. It focuses on getting approval for your outer looks, such as in a perfume ad with the word "reaction" printed across a beautiful fashion model's chest. The smaller text reads, "get reaction" (Cosmo, May 2005, p.121). Another ad, for Reebok shoes, shows a beautiful, thin woman stretching before a run. The text reads, "I am running for my skinny jeans" (Self, April 2005, p. 127). Beauty products especially convey this frame. One Jane cosmetics ad, which pictures a beautiful fashion model, reads, "Not a plain jane."

A fourth frame is that of sex/romance. These ads usually focus on a male and female in provocative, suggestive poses and use terms such as "provocative" and "alluring." Such frames were found in 20% (n=60) of women's ads. For example, a Yasmin birth control ad shows a beautiful woman on top of a man in bed (Self, August 2005, p. 68-69). And a perfume ad shows actress Catherine Zeta-Jones in a sexy black dress. The text reads, "men will melt" (Glamour, October 2005, p. 131).

Table 4-1. List of articles and advertisements found in diet and fitness editorial content for teen magazines.

Magazine title	Number of articles	Number of advertisements
CosmoGirl!	24	39
Elle Girl	07	05
Seventeen	13	18
Teen People	05	09
Teen Vogue	07	05
Total	56	76

Table 4-2. List of articles and advertisements found in diet and fitness editorial content for women's magazines.

Magazine title	Number of articles	Number of advertisements
Allure	28	46
Cosmopolitan	09	16
Glamour	23	37
Redbook	21	106
Self	42	90
Total	123	295

Table 4-3. List of top four editorial frames, photographs and advertisement products in diet and fitness coverage for teen and women's magazines

Magazine genre	Editorial frames	Editorial photographs	Advertisement products
Teen	A quest for beauty	Junk/fast food	Beauty products
	Celebrity star-power	Pretty/thin fashion models	Fashion: clothes, shoes, accessories
	Great you: confidence/body image	celebrities	Entertainment: Music, movies, TV
	Eating disorder		Electronics/technology Female hygiene products
Women's	Fast-and-easy cheer	Pretty/thin fashion models	Food advertised as healthy
	A quest for beauty	Healthy food	Food NOT advertised as healthy
	Doctor's visit, long-term health	Everyday looking women	Beauty products Medicine
	Sinister/scary		Drinks advertised as health

Table 4-4. List of characteristics found in diet and fitness coverage for women’s magazines.

Magazine section, percentage of articles	Sources, percentage of articles where sources are quoted	Authors of story, number of articles	Main topics, number of articles
Health and Nutrition, 23	Dietitians, 32	Staff or freelance journalists, 54	How-to information, 37
Food or eating-right, 12	Doctors, 28	Ordinary person (first-person), 4	Beauty-centered stories, 21
Fitness and body, 11	Fitness experts, 25	Expert (dietitian, doctor, fitness expert), 2	Health news, 20
Living, 6.5	Academic journals or research studies, 18		Managing temptation, 8
Other,	Product or business owners, 13		Long-term health, 6
No department, Total, 100			Combating stress, 4

Table 4-5. List of characteristics found in diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines.

Magazine section, percentage of articles	Sources, percentage of articles where sources are quoted	Authors of story, number of articles	Main topics, percentage of articles
Health and nutrition, 45	Peers and non-famous ordinary people, 41	Staff or freelance journalists, 34	How-to information, 32
Peer or real life, 20	Dietitians, 39	Ordinary person (first-person), 8	Food recipes, 13
Fitness and body, 11	Celebrities, 18	Celebrity (first-person), 2	Beauty, 11
Beauty, 3.3	Product and business owners, 13		Celebrity diets, n=5
Other, No department, Total,	Beauty experts, 3.5		Sports, n=5 Weight loss, n=5

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Framing Differences in Teen and Women's Magazines

Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings, points out some weaknesses of the study and suggests future research on magazine diet and fitness coverage.

This study revealed some differences and some similarities in the major frames and topics in the two genres for diet and fitness coverage. The differences: The women's magazines focused on primarily fast-and-easy techniques, beauty, long-term health and sinister scare tactics. The teen magazines, on the other hand, centered more on beauty, celebrities, confidence and body image, and eating disorders. Therefore, the teen magazines dealt with outer appearances (fame, beauty) and inner struggles (confidence, eating disorders), whereas the women's versions contained more of a focus on motivation (speed/ease, scare tactics) and long-term health benefits. (Tables 5-1 and 5-2).

The sources used are also an interesting point of difference. Women's magazines quoted more professional sources, with the top one being dietitians and nutritionists (32% or n=39). Teen magazines, on the other hand, used more ordinary people or peers (41% or n=23). Photo types also varied. Women's magazines had a higher percentage of healthy food (20% or n=25) than teen magazines, which tended to carry more junk or fast food photos (29% or n=16).

However, there are also some similarities between the two genres. All of the frames, for instance, are self-centered. They serve the interest of the reader and do not call for the reader to help others or society. For instance, the celebrity frame evokes this by showing readers how to be more like the stars, and the doctor's visit frame informs the reader of how to better her health for a long, fulfilling life. Few stories were found discussing the obesity epidemic or societal factors, and only two stories mentioned helping other members of one's family. This contradicts with

what the government research was saying about the trends of dieting and fitness in the United States. These studies pointed to an epidemic and showed a massive, societal increase in obese children, teens and adults and a decrease in physical activity (Dietary Guidelines, 2005; NHANES, 2004; Prevalence, 2004). Such studies, it would seem, would spur stories on national trends and the implications for long-term health in the country not self-centered stories framed around beauty, celebrities and ease.

Staying fit and healthy for beauty's sake, in fact, is the only constant theme between the two genres. Beauty and pretty, thin models were the only significant common factor in all editorial frames, advertisements and article photos for both teen and women's magazines. (Tables 5-4 and 5-5). For the women's magazines, the beauty frame was found about equally in advertisements and editorial content. For teen magazines, editorial content had a higher percentage of units with a beauty tone than did ads, but beauty was a top frame for both. However, it is worth a note, that staying fit for beauty is not necessarily bad, since the reader is motivated, despite reasoning, to stay fit. Undoubtedly, staying fit to look good has the same health benefits as staying fit for health reasons.

One exception to the all-beauty dominance could be the inner-struggle theme in the teen magazines, which could be seen as a long-term effort to improve one's health. This would make it more like the women's magazine doctor's visit frame. However, the women's magazines focused on physical health benefits of diet and exercise (reduced risk of diabetes and heart disease, for instance). Body image and eating disorders deal more with mental health and how one feels about oneself.

What the Diet and Fitness Frames Tells us About Eating Disorders

Eight million women and teens are affected with eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and compulsive overeating (Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999). Pairing this

with the fact that dieting is the single most important predictor of such eating disorders, one would expect that editors and journalists working on magazine dieting and fitness content would be extra cautious not to promote or even insinuate routines or fad diets that could lead to body frustrations (Boschi et al., 2003). However, the framing data proves that this is not the case. First off, diet and fitness coverage in women's magazines was framed as fast and easy. This tells the reader that an ideal body is obtainable in a short period of time with little effort. Such promises have little merit, and many of the dieting and fitness regimes in the women's magazines required strict rules that are hard to maintain. This is not easy. Moreover, safe, permanent weight loss often spans over a long period of time. Contradictory to what the magazines are saying, it is not a fast process. Overall, the fast-and-easy frame found in the text falls short of its promises and this—according to the literature review—could cause the reader body frustration. Although weight frustration doesn't necessarily equate to an eating disorder, the fast-and-easy frame does create a diet yo-yo effect described in the literature review. Readers strictly follow the proscribed diet, but the restrictions are too hard to follow for a long period of time, so they give up. Clearly, the editorial content is hardly concerned with disordered eating in women.

Secondly, to make sure that the reader does not blame the diet and fitness routines—and the magazine itself—the sinister or scary frame is in place. The reader is basically made to feel guilty for her failure to achieve the ideal body. In essence, this frame creates the feeling of being a bad person for abandoning the proscribed diet and fitness plan—even though realistically this plan is much too strict. Like the fast-and-easy frame, the sinister or scary frame could lead to body frustration and even anger with oneself. Again, the escalating statistics on eating disorders seem not to be a concern when writing diet and fitness coverage in women's magazines.

Another point of note is the number of articles actually addressing adult women eating disorders. Although teen magazines tackled the issue quite frequently, eating disorder stories only appeared about twice in the women's magazines. This is despite a study in 2005 that showed an increase in adult treatment for anorexia in women older than 40 and a study that ranked weight gain as a major fear in adult women as they grow older (Adult Anorexia, June 2005; Wilson & Blackhurst, 1999). It concludes, then, that if women's magazines are not willing to cover eating disorders at the broader level (stories about adult eating disorders), it is hard to fathom that they'd improve how they frame the text at a more detailed or micro level.

Teen magazines tended to be slightly more socially conscious when it came to eating disorder coverage. Numerous diet and fitness articles brought the issue to the forefront and no advertisements were placed around such stories. Also, as discussed in the literature review, none of the magazines had any actual dieting content. Instead, they opted for nutrition and fitness. The goal of eliminating dieting coverage in these magazines, as discussed previously, was due to research that linked thin models, dieting content and increased eating disorders. However, the magazines only cut dieting content without looking at the broader picture. This study found that thin models still made up a considerable portion of the graphics, and nutrition and fitness articles still insinuated the ideal image with a focus on beauty.

The beauty frame veers from being socially conscious of girls and eating disorders, since it creates a fixation with appearance and not health. It tells the reader that she should look a certain way by proscribing to a particular fitness workout for the sake of being beautiful. The beauty frame encompassed every aspect of the nutrition and fitness coverage—in the text, in the graphics and in the advertisements—making it an almost obsessive message. With about 75% of adolescent girls saying they feel fat, the magazines do little to curb the infiltration of the ideal

image in the diet and fitness coverage (Bishop, 2001). The magazines may not be saying to lose weight with dieting, but they are implying it with thin models, a focus on beauty and a disregard of long-term health.

Implications from the Research Questions

RQ1: The Framing of Diet and Fitness in Women's Magazines

The high frequency of diet and fitness coverage in women's magazines is evident with the amount of articles (n=123). Of those articles, the most common frames were the fast-and-easy cheer, the quest for beauty, the doctor visit and the sinister or scary frame. Three aspects can be concluded from the results. First, as discussed in relation to eating disorders, diet and fitness coverage in women's magazines is telling the readers that a thin, ideal body is obtainable through fast-and-easy means. However, if the reader finds the process hard or slow—which will almost always be the case because the articles promote strict, hard-to-maintain methods—the reader must be lazy. This feeling of guilt stems from the sinister or scary frame, which implies negative stereotypes and evil to being unfit. Therefore, as found in previous literature, the reader is caught in a bind where, on the one hand, she is receiving cheerleader-like motivation to lose weight but, on the other hand, she is scolded and made to feel immoral for failing to maintain the strict routines.

Secondly, another frame tells the readers that the ultimate goal is beauty. The text implies that the ideal body should be sought after to essentially look like the models, and once achieved, the reader will no longer be immoral (as being told through the sinister or scary frame). Good is then equated with beauty.

Third, the doctor's visit frame is a redeeming aspect of diet and fitness coverage in women's magazines. The frame has a tone that is purely informative, describing jargon and listing medical rationale as a reason to follow a proscribed diet or fitness method. It is similar to

how a doctor would speak to his or her patient. However, beauty and the fast-and-easy cheer frames were more frequent than this long-term health focus. Although valuable information is getting to the reader in an informative tone, this information could be offset by the influx of the ideal-body message. If one's main concern is with how one looks, health would only be a secondary concern—if a priority at all.

So what does all this mean? The literature review found the proliferation of the ideal, impossible-to-mimic body in graphics, advertisements and in the general content of stories. This study narrows the focus to diet and fitness text—where the ideal, impossible-to-mimic body was also found. The text alluded to such an image through its most common frames: beauty, fast-and-easy and sinister or scary. This is possibly one reason why dieting content—according to the literature review—causes eating disorders. The ideal image is ingrained into the reader from every aspect of the magazine, even the actual framing of the diet and fitness text. Paired with the fact that the text provides false information (in regard to being fast and easy) and hard-to-maintain routines, it is easy to see that body frustration and possibly eating disorders would result.

RQ2: The Framing of Diet and Fitness in Teen Magazines.

The results of the diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines also have an element of the ideal, impossible-to-mimic body. Similar results to the women's magazine were found with a beauty frame. Again, the ultimate goal is appearance and not health. In fact, teen magazines had far fewer long-term health references, which may expand the power of the beauty rationale.

This focus on superficial looks can be broadened to the next most common frame: celebrity star-power. A great deal of focus was put on success through fame—achievable only by a certain look. From a marketing standpoint, celebrities probably sell more magazines. The focus here, however, is not on placing Jessica Simpson on the front cover, but on referencing fame and the

famous and equating them to weight loss, fitness or dieting. Articles stating “Want a stomach like Fergie’s (rock singer)?” are following the exact pattern found in the women’s magazines: promising results that are probably unrealistic. These two frames could lead to body frustrations just like the women’s magazines. Although teen magazines put up a better appearance of being more socially conscious in regard to body image (more stories addressing eating disorders, less ads around nutrition and fitness content, no dieting content, etc.), they still have to fix the way they frame the articles. If not, the teen magazines will continue to portray the ideal image and risk the possibility of readers becoming frustrated with their bodies and developing eating disorders.

On a side note, the-great-you frame focusing on confidence and body image is a redeeming quality in the teen magazines, but like the doctor’s visit frame in women’s magazines, it may be overshadowed by the larger, overall ideal-body message.

RQ3: Advertisements Adjacent to Diet and Fitness Articles

The advertising aspect was placed in the study to see if there was a conflicting message being sent between fitness, diet text and the adjacent ads. For both teen and women’s magazines, the ideal image was reiterated. Beauty and being sexy for men (often through thinness) were framed in both magazine genres.

For women’s magazines, food was a major theme. The top ad frame was taste and the top product being sold was food and drinks (52% of all women’s ads coded). The implications—when paired with the text that insinuates the reader should have an ideal body—is that the readers will be tempted and persuaded by the food advertisements. This could cause overeating, which furthers body frustration. The following two sections provide further implications of the advertisements and how they relate to the text. However, some of these food advertisements were for healthy food options, low-calorie orange juice, power bars and whole-grain cereals. It is

just as likely that food advertisements of this sort could actually lead to a healthier lifestyle through the promotion of healthier foods.

The Big Picture: Women's Magazines

By looking at all three components—editorial content, advertisements, graphics—three things can be concluded about women's magazine coverage of dieting and fitness. First, the ideal is beauty and excessive thinness. Stereotypical thin models were the most frequent graphic in the articles, and a beauty frame was found in both the editorial content and the content of the advertisements. Second, the look seen in the photos is perceived to be obtainable through fast-and-easy means (editorial content) and healthy food products (graphics and advertisements). Third, having an undesirable weight or look leads to bad things (the editorial content's sinister/scary frame). Therefore, what this study concludes about women's coverage of diet and fitness coverage is consistent with what the literature review showed. The magazines portray an unrealistic image that is supposedly fast-and-easy to obtain, but then magazine advertisers tempt readers with fatty foods (the magazines' second most advertised product). The reader is exposed to an ideal image, promised that such a body can be attained and subjected to an influx of food ads.

The Big Picture: Teen Magazines

The overall focus of diet and fitness coverage in teen magazines does not seem to be too far from its adult counterpart. The overall message is of making oneself look better through superficial means. The top two products sold through the ads are beauty products and fashion, while beauty and celebrities frames are also frequent in the editorial content. (However, one might argue, that these are the things teens are interested in and not things that are pushed on teens through magazines). As for the main graphics, they include pretty, excessively thin models and celebrities. What does all this say? Looking like the models or celebrities is an obvious goal

for the reader. This creates the impossible-to-mimic ideal image discussed in the literature review.

However, unlike women's magazines, food advertisements play almost no role. A few sugary drink ads and a couple of gum ads were about all of the food products that were found next to diet and fitness coverage. One interesting aspect, though, was the amount of food pictured in the editorial graphics. The number one graphic in teen diet and fitness coverage was junk and fast food. This was an especially intriguing point in editorial photos showing celebrities and fashion models—who had the ideal image—stuffing their mouths with fatty foods. This creates the same lose-weight-to-look-good but eat-fatty-foods dilemma found in women's magazines.

Theory

Framing Theory

The main theory used in this study was framing, which is defined as “a number of thematically related attributes related to a topic or news event that affects the pictures in our heads relating to that topic or event” (Zoch, 2001, p. 196). In other words, *how* we perceive an issue or event is shaped by the wording, phrasing, metaphors, exemplars, etc. that the readers are exposed to through the context.

Although people learn about diet and fitness from a broad array of sources, magazines are the top source for dietary supplement and nutrition information (Kava et. al, 2002). So in the case of this study, how we picture diet and fitness in our heads is greatly shaped by how the content is written in the women's and teen magazines. Therefore, teen and women's magazine readers perceive diet and fitness to be (1) all about beauty and obtaining the ideal image, (2) critical of people who do not match the ideal look, and (3) somewhat concerned with long-term health or inner strength/confidence.

Since this follows much of the previous research recorded in the literature review (which were done through other methodologies and used other theories), it is safe to say that this study upholds framing theory.

Social-Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory was used for the graphical components of the study. This theory dictates that individuals compare themselves to the images they see (either as similar or dissimilar to themselves) in the media. Usually with magazine images—which often consist of thin, ideal model bodies—this means an upward comparison of physical appearances leaving the individual doing the comparing feeling inferior. For instance, in this study, teen magazines frequently used photographs of beautiful, thin celebrities. Because teens often use fashion magazines for “the purposes of self-evaluation and self-improvement,” photographs of celebrities act as an important comparison group (Thomsen, Weber & Brown, 2002, p.15). This could lead the individual to feel that their bodies are not adequate because they do not match the bodies of the celebrities. Ultimately, upward social comparison could lead to body dissatisfaction and even pathological weight control practices.

Overall, women’s and teen magazines promote an upward comparison, frequently using photographs of thin models and celebrities. When pairing these aspects of the social comparison theory to the framing theory results (text promoting an ideal body), the result is scary. The text paints a picture of a need for beauty, while the photographs let readers compare themselves to the ideal. Certainly magazines cannot be concerned about their readers developing eating disorders.

Conclusion

Overall, the frames were different: teen magazines offered more inner and outer struggles and women’s magazines revealed more of the go-and-do-it focus. The advertisements revealed a

message of self indulgence and looks—sexuality, fun, romance and beauty in teen ads, and taste, feeling good, sex and beauty in women’s ads. The overall message for the two genres, however, was very much the same: You can obtain this ideal image, but you should indulge in food, too. This could lead to body frustrations and does little to remedy the problem of eating disorders. Lastly, very few of the stories, graphics and advertisements addressed the obesity epidemic or lack of physical activity.

Additional Research and Suggestions for Magazine Editors

One problem with the study’s methodology was using women’s magazines that were not more alike. *Cosmopolitan*, for instance, seemed to target a younger, college-aged market than *Redbook*, and *Self* had a more fitness feel to it than the fashion-centered *Glamour*. This caused some disparity in the frames. Some titles contained more of one frame, while others had more of another. A better procedure—for women’s magazines—would have been not just to look at circulation but also the target age of the audience. It would be more interesting, perhaps, to look at magazines with readers about the age of a teenage-girl’s mother.

This topic would also be a great starting point for a meta-analysis project, where data from several previous studies would be compiled to reach new conclusions. The information on editorial content, advertisements and graphics used in magazines is so expansive that it is difficult to research it all. However, by taking bits and parts of previous research, one may be able to get the complete picture of diet and fitness coverage in magazines that this study attempted to find. It may also be beneficial to look at men’s magazines and see how they frame diet and fitness.

Recommendations for magazine editors include: 1. Educate magazine reporters on the framing theory and on the diet and fitness frames found in this study, 2. Educate the writers about the impacts of dieting content and eating disorders, 3. Reduce the number of photographs

of excessively thin models in the editorial content sections, and 4. Generate new topics and angles for covering diet and fitness that focus less on empty promises and more on practical solutions.

Table 5-1. List of top frames for diet and fitness editorial coverage in teen magazines.

Frame	Frequency of articles frame was found (%)	Frequency a similar frame was found in women's magazines (%)
The quest for beauty	48	30
Celebrity star power	38	22
The great you	38	05
Eating disorders	27	02

Table 5-2. List of top frames for diet and fitness editorial coverage in women's magazines.

Styles	Frequency of articles frame was found (%)	Frequency a similar frame was found in teen magazines (%)
Fast-and-easy cheer	77	11
Quest for beauty	30	48
Doctor's Visit	17	20
Sinister/Scary	13	16

Table 5-3. List of top advertisement frames for teen magazines.

Dominate ad frame	Frequency of ads frame was found (%)	Frequency a similar frame was found in teen editorial content (%)
Sexy temptress	13	0
Beauty	12	48
Fun	12	3.8
Romance	11	14

Table 5-4. List of top frames advertisement frames for women's magazines.

Ad frame	Frequency of ads frame was found (%)	Frequency a similar frame was found in editorial women's content (%)
Taste	33	0.8
Beauty	30	30
Feeling good/good life	28	6.5
Sex/romance	20	3.3

APPENDIX
COPY OF CODE SHEET AND DIRECTIONS USED FOR STUDY

ITEM ID # _____

1. Magazine name:

2. Date ____/____
Month/Year

3. Page number(s)

4. Section (if applicable)

5. Mentioned on the cover?

5a. Is it the largest headline on the cover?

Y N

6. Approximate length of article (in inches)

7. Story type (circle one)

Feature

Brief

Letter from reader

Q&A

Other

8. Types of graphics (circle all that apply and give brief description)

Photograph(s) _____

Graph _____

Illustration _____

Pull Quote _____

Other _____

9. Headline

10. Sub-head (if any)

11. Lead (main points)

12. Main topic

13. Secondary topic

14. Sources

15. Products advertised next to article

16. Describe graphics of ad

17. Describe message of the ad's text

18. Framing analysis coding on photocopied article

Coding guidelines. The following is a list of guidelines used when coding each magazine article. The idea was to make sure all articles were coded using the same rules.

Identifier: Magazine ID number – number to represent one magazine – number to represent article in magazine. Example: 1-01-01

1. Magazine name: Elle Girl, Teen People, CosmoGirl!, Seventeen, Teen Vogue, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Allure, Self
2. Date of publication
3. Page number(s): pages where article is found
4. Section (if applicable): department name
5. Mentioned on the cover: Is the article listed on the cover
 - a. Is it the largest headline on the cover: Is it noticeably the dominate headline with the largest text/font.
6. Approximate length of article (in pages): Count the pages of the article including pages with graphics. For pages with a portion of ads and a portion of text, estimate the portion of text (one-third, one-half).
7. Story type: circle the type of story. Feature articles are non-department stories that are one page or longer. Briefs are less than one page and are often in a magazine department.
8. Graphics: circle all that apply and briefly describe.
9. Headline: Write the main headline
10. Subhead: Write any sub-headline if applicable
11. Lead: write the main points of the first few graphs (or the opening of the story).
12. Main topic: This is the primary focus of the article. Whichever topic has the most paragraphs devoted to it, is probably the main topic.
13. Secondary topics: List any other topics that the article covers, but that aren't the main topic.
14. Sources: list any people that are quoted or paraphrased in the story. List the person with his or her title only once (even if they are used throughout the story).
15. Products advertised next to articles: list the products in the advertisements one page before, one page after and all the ads in between an article.
16. Ad graphics: list each graphic found in an ad and briefly describe.
17. Ad text: describe briefly what the ad is saying. List any frames.

18. Framing analysis coding on photocopied article: Read the article in its entirety and then go back and reread the article. During this second reading, code for the frame. The framing techniques should include the following:
- a. Mark words and phrases that are repeated or that have common themes. “Costs,” “increased taxes” and “feasibly unsound” could be seen as words with a common theme. Make sure to cover all text, including the headline, subhead and any graphics.
 - b. How are the sources used? Are they presented in a credible manner? Do some sources that present one side of the argument tend to be seen as deviant (or outside the norm)? Are any sources left out?
 - c. What is the overall tone of the story? Does it report on a grand mission or does it focus more on the financial issues? Visual images, metaphors and symbols all may contribute to this.
 - d. Are there any significant points left out? Are any downplayed?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Wood graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor of science in journalism at the University of Florida in May 2005. She graduated with a Master of Arts in Mass Communications also at UF and in December 2006. Her work in journalism comprises of several internships including ones with Time Inc., The Gainesville Sun, Ocala Star-Banner, The Daily Commercial and INsite magazine. She has also held leadership roles—president and vice president—with the university chapter of Society of Professional Journalists. She hopes to use these experiences to become a news reporter.