

THE COVERAGE OF WEIGHT AND BODY IMAGE IN MAINSTREAM AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S MAGAZINES: IS IT ALL JUST BLACK AND WHITE?

By

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To God, for the great things He has done

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A large body of research has been dedicated to the content in women's magazines and their effect on readers. Studies have found mass media messages about women and their bodies damaging to the psyche of many women, especially young women. These toxic messages have the potential to lead to negative internalized feelings and negative behaviors. However, similar studies have demonstrated that African-American women are not affected the same by the content in women's magazines. Although they were exposed to similar media messages about women and their bodies, body image issues and self-destructive behaviors less affected African-American women. According to research, African- American women and white women perceive weight and body image differently. This study's goal was to determine if this culturally specific difference translated in to how weight and body image was covered in African-American and mainstream magazines.

A content analysis was conducted of articles about weight and body image in two African-American women's magazine and two mainstream women's magazines. A sample of issues between 2008 and 2009 yielded 141 articles. The articles were analyzed to determine the how weight and body image were framed, the type of images used, the primary source of information, and the credentials of the authors. In addition, the articles were analyzed to determine if the coverage of weight and body image is different in mainstream vs. African-American magazines. Findings revealed the messages in women's magazines improved. The messages about weight and body images were based on sound medical advice and the messages were framed to promote health, not beauty. In addition, the coverage of weight and body image was similar in mainstream vs. African-American magazines; however, the type of images used differed. African-American women's magazines featured body types and sizes that reflected the majority of the female population. Unfortunately, the findings also revealed the lack qualified writers to pen articles about health related issues.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of weight is not foreign discourse among American women. This once private discussion has expanded into a public debate. TV commercials, television shows, radio voiceovers, and magazines all cover the topic. In lieu of the growing matter of obesity in the United States along with the pending changes to our health care system, it is less likely that this conversation will cease anytime soon.

When it comes to the issue of weight, the consensus is widespread- most women are unhappy with their weight. According to a 2009 Associated Press© “iVillage©” poll of 1,000 women, half of them reported dissatisfaction with their weight even when some of their weights were considered healthy ([www.msnbc.msn.com](http://www.msnbc.msn.com)). The issue of weight is universal among American women; however, their attitudes toward weight differ. This variance in attitudes about weight partially forms the concept of body image, and within America, the concept of body image differs among races.

A 2006 study in *The Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* revealed that although both white and black women wanted to lose weight, white women had a higher rate of body dissatisfaction (Roberts, A., Cash, T., Feingold, A., & Johnson, B., 2006, p. 1124). This study also discussed the connection between a positive body image and the perceived approval from the opposite sex. In this study, Roberts et al. (2006) stated, “White women believe (even to an inaccurate degree) that White men idealize and seek thin partners. Black women, on the other hand, accurately believe that Black men are attracted to heavier and shapelier women” (Roberts, et al., 2006, p. 1126).

One arena where the discussion of weight and body image is carried out is women’s magazines. According to Magazine Publishers of America’s © (M.P.A.) 2008-

2009 handbook, “85% of adult Americans read magazines” ([www.magazine.org](http://www.magazine.org)). Thus, despite the rise of Internet use, Americans still use magazines as a source for information. In addition, according to the Simmons’ Multi-Media Engagement Study (2007) cited by the M.P.A.©, magazines score significantly higher than other media channels, such as TV and the Internet in several engagement dominions including a measurement entitled “trustworthy” ([www.magazine.org](http://www.magazine.org)).

Considering white women and African-American women have different ideologies on weight and body image, it is possible that the dialogue between the two groups would differ as well. In addition, because this dialogue is carried out through women’s magazines, this study first seeks to determine what messages are given to women about weight and body image via mainstream and African-American magazines. Second, through the use of content and framing analysis, this study seeks to determine how weight and body image are framed in mainstream magazines and African-American magazines. Third, this research seeks to analyze the photos and illustrations that are used in the coverage of weight and body image in women’s magazines. Fourth, this study seeks to determine the main source for information on weight and body image in mainstream and African-American magazines. Finally, this research seeks to determine if there is a difference in the manner weight and body image are covered in mainstream versus African-American magazines. By unveiling current messages concerning weight and body image in women’s magazines and analyzing the manner in which these messages are relayed, this researcher seeks to propose possible solutions to improve the coverage of weight and body image in both mainstream and African-American women’s magazines.

Because magazines are widely used as a source for trusted information, including health information, the results of this study could greatly contribute to future researchers' understanding of the relationship between health messages and health behaviors. Despite the abundance of health information available in magazines, the truth remains that America is in bad shape. According to the 2005-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 34% of Americans (over 72 million) aged 20 and over were obese. Of this total, 35.3% of them were women (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/07newsreleases/obesity.htm>). Unfortunately, according to the same study, African-American women fared worse with 53.4% of them being obese ([www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/08.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/08.pdf)). If it is determined that there is in fact a difference in the coverage of weight and body image in African-American and mainstream magazines, this paper could assist future research in its attempt to develop group specific health education. As a result, health practitioners could diminish the health chiasm that separates the two groups.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Obesity in America**

One might say that the overall prosperity of a nation rests largely on the health of that nation. America, on many accounts is considered a prosperous nation when examining its much scientific, social, economic and political advancement. However, America's prosperous image could be threatened by the declining health of its people. Unlike some other less fortunate countries where the overall health of its people is adversely affected by poor drinking water, lack of affordable health care and delayed medical advancements ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)), America's decline in health is primarily a result of poor health behaviors and practices. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)®, the number one cause of death in America among men and women is heart disease ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). This statistic is unfortunate considering heart disease is highly preventable. The CDC® also notes obesity as the leading behavioral risk factor for heart disease ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). Given that the leading cause of death in America is preventable, it is possible that poor health behavior is at the root of America's declining health.

As mentioned, more than one-third of the United States population is obese. According to the CDC®, obesity is defined as any person having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). The BMI is a measurement of height and weight that correlates with the amount of fat a particular body. Obesity has been associated with premature death and is connected to several chronic diseases including, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)).

To exacerbate this problem, the health of adolescents and young adults is declining as well. According to the 2003-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 17.6% of 12-19 year olds are obese (www.cdc.gov). Just as a family heirloom is passed down from a father to his son, many young Americans have inherited the poor health behaviors and practices of their predecessors. Some obese children are affected by chronic illnesses usually found in late adulthood (www.cdc.gov). If the current trend continues, American children are at risk of having a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

The annual cost of obesity is hefty. Healthcare costs for obese Americans “accounted for 9.1% of total annual U.S. medical expenditures in 1998 and may have been as high as \$78.5 billion (\$92.6 billion in 2002 dollars) (Finkelstein, E., Fiebelkorn, I., & Wang, G., 2003, p. 219).” The exorbitant cost of healthcare for obese patients is in part a result of obesity’s link to several chronic diseases. These chronic diseases haunt most patients for a lifetime, resulting in constant healthcare costs. In addition, obese Americans accrue morbidity costs, which are defined as lost income related to decreased productivity, restricted activity, sick days, and absenteeism (Wolf, A.M. & Colditz, G.A., 1998).

Outside of money, obese Americans pay in other ways for their condition. In a society preoccupied with thinness, obese individuals face isolation, ridicule and discrimination as a result of their size. W. Charissee Goodman, author of "The Invisible Woman," stated, “It really doesn’t count if you’re smart, kind, funny, sweet, generous, or caring, because if you also happen to be heavy, you may find yourself on the receiving end of more credulity than you ever knew existed.” Obese persons are viewed as

unattractive, lazy, unintelligent, and lacking self- control (Crocker, J., Cornwell, B., & Major, B., 1993, p. 60). It is believed by many, including their doctors, that obese persons' present condition is a result of their own poor choices (Price, J.H., et al., 1987, p215). In all, obese individuals experience a decreased quality of life in comparison to those of normal weight.

### **Obesity among African-Americans**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services©, in comparison to any other group in the U.S., African-American women have the highest rates of being overweight and obese ([www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)). As a result, African-Americans lead in statistics related to heart disease, stroke and diabetes. There are several contributing factors that crown African-Americans with the dubious honor of leading in such negative health statistics. Two factors contributing to obesity among African-Americans are increased caloric intake and increased inactivity. Both can be modified by behavior with education, guidance and motivation. However, low socioeconomic status and decreased access to healthcare, are two contributing factors that are extremely complex and require a systematic/governmental approach to change. There is a correlation between low socio-economic status and obesity. Non-obese Americans typically come from a higher economic status, are well educated, and have access to health and dietary information. Obese Americans are typically from a lower economic level and do not have access to important health information (Maine, 2000, pp. 33-34). Also, in urban cities traditionally populated by African-Americans, there is decreased access to affordable, fresh foods. According to the 2004 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, 71,000 adults reported that it is a challenge to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood ([www.thefoodtrust.org](http://www.thefoodtrust.org)). The same survey

revealed that, “Black adults (31%) are more likely to report having fair or poor quality groceries in their neighborhoods compared to Latino (24%), Asian (15%), and White (11%) adults” (www.thefoodtrust.org). This survey reveals factors contributing to obesity in many urban, African-American neighborhoods.

### **Obesity among African-American Women**

A possible contributing factor for obesity among African-American women is decreased perceived risk. Because African-American women traditionally have a positive body image, regardless of their BMI score, they may not see the need to make the necessary lifestyle changes required to lose weight. In a 1993 study, Kumanyika, S., Wilson, J., and Guildford-Davenport, M., surveyed 500 African-American women about their body perceptions and attitudes. Forty percent (40%) of the women who fell into the overweight category, based on their BMI, rated their figure “attractive” and “very attractive” even though they were fully aware that they fell into the “overweight” category (Kumanyika, S., et al., 1993). As a result, self-esteem is preserved, but good health is jeopardized. Without perceived risk, even when faced with factual data, the motivation needed to make positive health changes is absent.

### **The Role of Body Image in Weight Loss**

Body image is an internal, subjective perception of how we appear to ourselves and others. Self-perception is a mixture of internal and external messages. Loved ones, culture, magazines, friends, belief systems, television, and internal voices, all contribute to the formulation of individual body image. Several studies have demonstrated that body image is culturally based. Generally, African-American women report higher levels of self-esteem and a more positive body image than white women (Roberts, A., Cash, T., Feingold, A., & Johnson, B., 2006). Although white women

reported a higher frequency of negative self-perception, at times, these feelings motivated them to change what they didn't like about themselves (Roberts, A., et al., 2006). Individual self-perception and body image can influence health behavior and health choices. For example, if you perceive you are gaining weight and this bothers you, you begin to make appropriate diet and health choices that you believe will stop and reverse the weight gain. However, using self-perception and body image as a motivating factor for health behavior and health choices can be a double-edged sword.

Generally, white women have a higher level of body dissatisfaction than African-American women. Furthermore, it is well documented in research the adverse effects a negative body image has on a woman's mental and physical health. Psychological disorders like bulimia, anorexia, and compulsive overeating can result in lasting physical injuries, including death ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)). However, current research suggests that a positive body image among African-American women may be their Achilles' heel in the battle against obesity. In a 2003 study, both African-American women and white women were rated on their perceived health versus actual physiological data. The results of this study found that although African-American women weighed more, consumed more fat in their diets, and were less active than their white counterparts, they perceived themselves just as healthy (Duncan, G.E., et al., 2003). This study suggests that this misperception of health might prevent African-American women from making positive health changes. If there is no perceived risk, what kind of motivation is present to foster change?

### **Weight Loss and Health Behavior Related Theories**

The goal of this researcher is to provide insight on health messages in women's magazines and provide suggestions that will help make health communications more

effective. The ultimate goal of this researcher is to improve health outcomes through effective health communication. However, a health campaign message can be perfect in its content and delivery; but, if the audience lacks a sense of perceived risk, then all efforts to communicate the need for change are futile. In addition, the opportunity for positive health behavior change is lost. As journalist and health professionals align their efforts to produce effective health campaigns, it is necessary to discuss several health behavior theories in conjunction with traditional communications theories.

Three theories are prevalent in the recent body of research with regard to issues relating to health behaviors and health outcomes: Health Literacy, Social Learning Theory and The Health Belief Model. At times, these theories are used in tandem to analyze, illustrate and discuss health behavior. All three have aided health providers as well as media experts in understanding the positive correlation between effective health communication and positive health behaviors.

### **Health Literacy**

Health literacy is defined as the relationship between a patient's literacy level and his or her ability to follow through with the prescribed intervention (Nutbeam, 2000). It is one thing for a person to be able to read and comprehend information (literacy), but health literacy is multi-dimensional and includes the person possessing the knowledge, skills, motivation, and ability to comply with medical advice. Due to our society's heavy media use, health consumers have various outlets from which health information is given. Long gone are those rows and rows of brochures hanging in the doctor's office. Today, people received their health information from health providers, billboards, television and radio commercials, the internet and magazines. Unfortunately, many of those received messages are misunderstood.

Poor health literacy is a under recognized problem in the health care arena. Many health providers are not aware of the level of miscommunication between them and their patients, and many patients hide their misunderstandings due to feelings of shame. In a 2000 paper, Parker describes the expansive implications of poor health literacy,

Unfortunately, for those with limited health literacy, as health care is becoming increasingly complex and health information is becoming more diffuse in the public domain, there is more reliance on written materials to educate and inform people about their health. This means that Americans need both functional and health literacy to make use of health information... Adequate health literacy is essential for primary prevention and health promotion. Many public health messages and education materials about recommended disease prevention and screening are inaccessible to those with low literacy. For example, those with low literacy may not read and understand messages about the value of mammography or flu shots that may be found in magazines, on billboards or on clinic posters. (Parker, R., 2000).

Thus, someone with poor health literacy may not understand the connection between a low carbohydrate diet and weight loss. According to Parker (2000), a patient's health literacy level can be accessed via a few tests, and compensatory techniques can be taught to improve overall health literacy (Parker, 2000, pp. 280-281). It is important for health providers to assess a patient's level of literacy so that both the provider and the patient can facilitate an environment for effective health communication.

Patients with poor health literacy not only misunderstand health messages, but also, they are less likely to carry out the appropriate health behaviors. This process of a patient not understanding a health message and failing to take the necessary actions provides insight on why patients given the same health message or information, respond differently. Ultimately, poor health literacy affects the quality of a person's health. Parker (2000), explains why individuals with poor health literacy have compromised health,

Health providers often give too much background information, rather than simple, essential information that helps the patient solve their problems. This inadequate communication may result in misinformation, misunderstandings and mistakes. Patients with poor health literacy report taking medications at the wrong dosage or frequency, and may not be aware of important treatment side effects or the need for follow-up testing (Parker, 2000).

Poor health literacy has cultural implications. In their 2002 study, Scott, Gazmararian, Williams, and Baker, assessed the health literacy of nearly 3,000 people treated in a managed care organization. Their findings revealed that of the 1,877 person who were rated "adequate" in functional health literacy, only 6.9% of those individuals were black (Scott, et al., 2002). According to Scott, et al., 20002, blacks also made up a significant portion of individuals who scored "inadequate" in their functional health literacy. The study went on to demonstrate that those individuals who demonstrated "inadequate" functional health literacy, were less likely to comply with preventative health measures like taking the flu shot or getting necessary health

screenings including pap smears or mammograms (Scott, et al., 2002). This study provides some insight on why health disparities exist among certain ethnic groups.

This paper seeks to analyze the health messages and information given in women's magazines. However, if the reader cannot understand the messages given, then the findings of this paper will be irrelevant. Health literacy is the key to increased positive health behaviors and health outcomes. Healthcare consumers cannot accurately act upon information they do not understand.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Understanding health information and messages is paramount if behavior modification is desired. Social Learning Theory (SLT) helps explain the mechanisms and thought processes behind such behavior. SLT also provides insight on how and why media messages affect people in a certain way. Previous research has demonstrated the impact media have on women, especially young girls. As the current research analyzes messages about weight and body image in women's magazine, an understanding of SLT might assist in demonstrating how certain health messages could influence health behavior.

The basis of SLT is the belief that people learn behavior by watching others and duplicating the observed behavior. Albert Bandura, the theory's originator stated, "Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura, 1977). In this equation of learning, there is a set model and vicarious learning (Bandura 2001). Because not all learning is first hand, observers can learn behaviors through another's

experience (vicarious learning). Given the outcome of the observed behavior, an individual will determine whether to replicate or model the observed behavior.

Through messages observed in magazines, readers vicariously learn the behaviors of others, such as celebrities and models featured in stories. As the messages increase in frequency, the targeted model for behavior becomes increasingly persuasive. This mechanism is called “the social prompting power of modeling” (Bandura, 2001). Magazines and other forms of media gain influence in our society as a potent forum for vicarious learning. The increased frequency and prevalence of certain models and behaviors increases the potency of the resulting modeled behavior. For example, if a celebrity is praised for her thin figure in several magazine issues, television and radio commercials and this celebrity is a spokesperson for “Jenny Craig,” then the incentives or motivations needed to replicate thinness is present.

According to a 1988 article, Social Learning Theory states that behavior is based on expectancies and incentives (Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988). If a particular outcome is expected and there is an incentive provided when that expectation is fulfilled, then there is a behavioral outcome. For example, if an individual expects to lose weight by following the weight loss advice of a celebrity and the incentive is an attractive figure, and if the incentive is significant to that person, then he or she will carry out the behavior. Knowing how to follow the celebrity’s advice is not enough, but expectancies and incentives must be high in order for there to be a behavioral outcome.

In tailoring their messages, health care professionals and journalist alike need to become familiar with what expectations and incentives move certain audiences to action. Many cogs support the wheel of modeled behavior. Understanding the

mechanism of SLT aids health and media researchers in developing messages that facilitate positive health outcomes and eliminate those that yield negative health outcomes.

### **Health Belief Model**

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a theory that has two components: perceived risk (motivation) and perceived ability to prevent the risk from occurring (self-efficacy) (Rosenstock, et al., 1988). (HBM) is similar to SLT in that there are certain expectancies and certain incentives for behavior. For example, with obesity prevention, a woman must perceive that she is at risk for negative health consequences as a result of being obese (motivation), and she must feel confident that she is able to prevent those negative health consequences from occurring by losing weight (self-efficacy). If either component: motivation or self-efficacy is missing, then there is a decreased chance of a positive change in health behavior. Thus, in order for health communication to be successful, today's health practitioners and journalists who report on health news and issues should be aware of what motivates a particular audience and what increases their confidence. By insuring that all of the components of Social Learning Theory and the Health Belief Model are in place, health care providers and health journalist can increase the incidence of positive health outcomes.

In their 2007 study, Gary et al., surveyed and observed a group of African-Americans who were receiving counseling for diabetes management. Of the men and women studied, 63% of the women had a family history of diabetes. The study revealed that the participants who had a family history of diabetes were aware of the risks related to the disease and they were more likely to comply with their diet than were the other participants in the group were (p. 908). The researchers concluded that the behavior of

those participants who demonstrated positive health behavior was best explained by the HBM pp. 910-911). Because of their family history of diabetes, these participants understood their perceived risk. To them, maintaining their diet was less of a risk than developing complications from diabetes. They were also confident that by maintaining their diet, they could prevent the negative health effects associated with diabetes. The successful health outcomes from this study further illustrates the effectiveness of the HBM. Motivation and confidence outweighed the group's limitations. In this study, positive health behaviors were evident in a group of people who primarily had a high school degree or less and poor health literacy. These findings are different from previous research, which demonstrated negative health behaviors among individuals with poor health literacy.

In order to change the health behaviors of a particular group, health care providers should discover what messages are best tailored for a this population and through what medium or alternate transmission route should this message be transmitted. Knowing the right answers to these questions will hopefully increase health literacy among African-American women and, in turn, prevent the negative health trends that are visible in this population.

### **Magazines as a Source for Health Information**

Even with other media options available, people still read magazines. According to the *Magazine Handbook 2010/11*© produced by the Magazine Publishers of America©, 93% of all adults and 96% of adults under the age of 35 read magazines ([www.magazine.org](http://www.magazine.org)). Also, this same report states, "Magazines provide superior reach compared to TV programs for major target audiences, including adults 18–49, women 18–49, African-Americans 18–49 and teens 12–17, when Carat's cross-media research

compared the top 25 prime-time TV programs and top 25 magazines,” p.10). In addition to entertainment, readers use magazines as a reliable source for health information. According to a 2010 Mediavest Print/Digital Study, magazines out ranked the Internet as a weekly source for healthcare information ([www.magazine.org](http://www.magazine.org)). Previous research also supports the idea that women frequently use magazines as their source for health information. In their 1995 study, Garton, M., Reid, D., Rennie, E., found that 66.5% of women who knew about osteoporosis and 76% of women who knew about hormone replacement therapy had obtained this information from magazines). When used effectively, magazines can serve as an effective tool to empower readers with knowledge; however, when used ineffectively, magazines can destroy its readers with misinformation and misperceptions.

### **Weight and Body Image Coverage in Women’s Magazines**

For some time magazines have been at the center of many debates concerning their negative effects on the self-esteem and mental health of many women and young girls. Mental disorders relating to weight and body image include anorexia nervosa (obsession with weight loss, excessive dieting), bulimia (binge eating followed by purging via self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, diuretics, or excessive exercise) and body dysmorphic disorder (the intense obsession with personal body image and appearance, “imagined ugliness”) (Hesse-Biber, S., Leavy, P., Quinn, C., & Zoino, J., 2006, p. 209). In addition to the mental toll eating disorders take, many women die as a result of these eating disorders. In their 1994 study on eating disorders and media effects, Stice and Staw stated that in addition to the societal and cultural voices that influence body image, mass media may be the strongest communicator of negative body image messages. Maine, 2000, explains her dislike of magazines,

“Today, from the racks of almost every grocery store, magazine covers taunt with misleading claims, such as ‘Lose Ten Pounds in Ten Days,’ ‘Look Great Naked: Build A Ready-to-be-Bare Body,’ ‘Burn Fat, Tighten Your Butt Fast,’ and ‘From Fat to Firm: Get Real Results in 10 Minutes A Day.’ In page after page of thin figures, they tease us with recipes for happiness and success, urging us to buy products and change our bodies to meet this month’s beauty standard. Magazines imply that we are not acceptable as we are; and each month, millions of Americans buy them, looking for transformation.

Even magazines dedicated to health feature cover stories reading, “Change Your Shape: Whatever Works,” “Look Younger in 5 Minutes,” and “The Best Way to Lose Weight,” (Maine, 2000, p. 95). Instead of offering health information to improve the inner workings of women's bodies, these “health” magazines often offered aesthetic tips to improve the outward appearance. In their 1999 study, (Moyer, C.A., Vishnu, L.O., & Sonnad, S.S.), demonstrated such findings. Of the women’s magazines reviewed, “Less than a fifth of the magazine articles dealt with health-related topics. Of those, a third dealt with diet, with the majority emphasizing weight loss rather than eating for optimal health,” p. 137). This study further concluded that the topics discussed in women’s magazines do not correlate with leading health concerns and health risks. The researchers determined that this type of information does not best facilitate health risk reduction and may lead women to focus on the wrong aspects of their health and health care, (Moyer et al., 1999).

### **Weight and body image coverage in African-American Magazines**

Research that focuses on the coverage of weight and body image in African-American magazines is scant. However, African-American magazines and their content are no strangers to controversy. In their 1996 study, (Pratt, C.A. & Pratt, C.B.,)

concluded that African-American magazines had a greater number of advertisement promoting risky health behaviors than their white counterparts. These advertisements promoted alcohol consumption and high caloric/high fat foods. Another study completed in 2001, determined that African-American magazines had four times fewer advertisements for pharmaceutical drugs than white magazines (Omonuwa, 2001). This lack of health information could further widen gaps in health literacy and prevention. Research demonstrates that white magazines and African- American magazines differ slightly in fitness and nutrition information. A 2007 study demonstrated that the information in the magazines were similar; however, “how” they were discussed differed (Hall, M., Folta, S.C., Goldberg, J. P., 2007). This study further concludes that in order to be effective, health messages should be tailored for specific populations (p. 39). For example, some groups may respond better to a message framed as a “weight loss diet” versus a “healthy diet.”

### **Framing Theory**

Because the coverage of weight and body image in women’s magazines is such a complex issue, it is important for both journalism and healthcare researchers who are concerned about this topic to get a clear understanding about the different ways this issue may be presented or framed in the media.

Framing is a term used by many disciplines. Entman (1993) sought to tie together various disciplines’ understanding of the concept in one, broad, definition:

“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52).

Framing's historical use in communications began in analyzing how political news stories were presented by the media (Goffman 1974). However, current research has acknowledged framing analysis as an essential part of developing effective health communications. Rothman, et al. (1999), stated that framing analysis “provides a theoretically based guide for the development of effective health messages” (p. 13). For the purposes of this study, the term “framing” refers to the way weight and body image are presented in women’s magazine.

In her book *Making News*, Tuchman (1978) described how news is framed and constructed by the media. She described factors that contribute to the media’s construction of news, including a focus on certain organizations, sources that are used or not used in a story, exchanges among co-workers at media organizations, and more. Ultimately, Tuchman argued, these and other factors lead journalists to describe an event or issue in a certain way, or “frame:”

But, like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard (Tuchman, 1978).

Thus, by merely collecting information (regardless of source) and processing that information into a story (giving an overall interpretation to isolated facts), it is impossible for a journalist to remain 100% objective and not insert a measure of unintended bias because framing is a byproduct of the news process. However, the plot thickens when considering today’s news model. This model contains shorten time frames, mega news

organizations, sources that supply the news media with information and no guarantee that the players involved have altruistic motives.

While Tuchman focused mainly on the media's influence on framing, Entman (1993) felt there were other players involved. Entman noted that "frames have at least four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture" (1993, p. 52). In order to bring clarity to framing theory and shed light on its possible effects, Entman believed that all incidences of framing in the communication process should be understood and assessed.

Framing allows a researcher to examine the latent messages in a text and extract patterns of words, phrases, and pictures to determine possible meanings. This type of research gives insight into specific interaction between the writer, the message, the reader and the reader's environment. As discussed earlier, African-Americans and Caucasian women have different ideas and opinions concerning weight and body image. By examining the communicator or source, and the text or message of the two different types of magazines (mainstream and African-American), a different type of interaction between writer and reader may emerge, resulting in divergent frames used toward weight and body image.

The *communicator* consciously or subconsciously decides what to present based on pre-existing frames called "schemata" (Entman, R.M., 1993). "Schemata" or "schema" is defined as, "a mental codification of experience that includes a particular organized way of perceiving cognitively and responding to a complex situation or set of stimuli" ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)). Ultimately, schemata or pre-existing frames guide the *communicator's* belief system. By simply thinking and analyzing data for a

story, a frame is produced. This inseparable connection between the *communicator* and frames has prompted this researcher to code the writer's credentials. Since schemata are based on past experiences, a writer's credentials (professional/personal background) may influence framing.

The *text* or message contains frames that emerge as a result of the skillful use of key words or culturally salient phrases, the omission of key words and phrases, the selection of sources, the use of quotes, sentence structure and stereotyped images (Entman, R.M., 1993). Additional textual frames would include loaded terms or images that evoke a visceral response. In the incidence of radio broadcasts, frames can emerge as a result of the sounds edited or left in the story. These sounds could be ambient noise heard in the background of an interview, bombs exploding during war coverage or music used in the story's introduction and/or exit. To capture textual frames, this paper will code selected articles for textual framing techniques, including images.

The *receiver* processes the message based on its own pre-existing frames or schemata. The *receiver's* processing and further interpretation of the message may or may not be influenced by the frames presented by the *communicator* or *text* (Entman, R.M., 1993). Entman clearly distinguishes the receiver as an active participant in the communication process, not one who is passive and under the complete control of the frames presented by the *communicator* and *text*; but, a worthy opponent who is able to interrupt the communication process and block any messages that does not coincide with their belief system. This phenomenon has great health communication implications. Since a message can be blocked, effective communicators must be

concerned with their side of the communication process as well as knowledgeable of the belief systems held by their intended audience. However, this study is solely an analysis of what messages are currently present in women's magazines and does not address the reader's perception of these messages.

The last location where frames exist in the communication process is the *culture*. According to Entman, *culture* is defined as "the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping," (1993, p. 53). Cultural frames are powerful because they are compounded over time and they are frequently reinforced by other members in the same group. Depending on whether a receiver is closely connected to a societal group and its belief system, cultural frames can help or hinder communication. In their 1992 study on body image perceptions and self-esteem among white and African-American women, Rucker III, C., & Cash, T., found that although both groups were exposed to negative media messages regarding their bodies, African-American women expressed a positive body image and reported high self-esteem more frequently than white women. The results of this study indicated that regardless of the frames presented in the messages, powerful cultural frames ultimately guided the receiver's belief systems.

### **Culture and Health Communications**

It should be noted that "culture" grouping is not solely restricted to ethnicity, race, sex, etc. However, the term represents any group in society that shares similar beliefs (based on myths and/or facts) and similar behavioral practices. For example, skateboarders have their own culture which shares the belief that wearing helmets while skateboarding is not cool. Unfortunately, this belief system leads to the collective practice of skateboarding without a helmet. The health implication of this behavior is

that approximately 1.6 – 3.8 million traumatic brain injuries (TBI's) occur in the U.S. while participating in sport/ recreational activities each year (Langlois, J., 2006). Without an effective health campaign, this trend will continue.

In the current research, African-American and white women represent separate cultural groups. In addition, women magazine readers represent a unique cultural group because within this collection of diverse individuals lies a culturally shared belief system and culturally shared behavior practices.

Health professionals as well as journalist have learned the importance of relaying culturally sensitive messages. As health disparities increase among cultural groups, the outcome of effective, culturally tailored messages and campaigns can facilitate positive health behaviors and ultimately save lives. In 2004, Kreuter and McClure examined the role of culture in health communications and offered recommendations to increase its effectiveness. Their research was based on William McGuire's (1989) communication/persuasion model and discussed only three of the five variables: source, message and channel. The researchers went on to explain that to increase communication effectiveness, first, a source must display expertise and trustworthiness.

It should be noted that a receiver's belief system or schema, determines which sources are deemed trustworthy or not. For example, health professionals are more likely to trust the health advice given from another health professional; however, a teenager or young adult may trust the health advice given by a celebrity solely because the receiver holds that individual in high esteem. Second, to increase the effectiveness of the message, four approaches should be applied: peripheral (packaging the message); evidential (supplying facts that directly impact that specific culture); linguistic

(relaying the message in a culture's dominant or native language) and socio-cultural (presenting the message in the context of social/cultural characteristics). Finally, to foster effective health communications, the channel or means a message is delivered should be considered. It should be determined whether a group has access to the channel from which the message is sent. As researchers become increasingly proficient in understanding what makes health communications more effective, the impact will hopefully turn around several cultural groups' negative health trends, especially that of African-American women. This paper's goal is to contribute to the body of research that will ultimately guide media and health practitioners in producing effective health communications. Thus, this researcher seeks to answer the following questions:

### **Research Questions**

- Question 1: How is the issue of body image and weight framed in articles found in women's magazines?
- Question 2: What types of images depicting "body image" and "weight" are used in women's magazines?
- Question 3: Who are the primary sources for information in the articles on weight and body image in women's magazines?
- Question 4: What are the credentials of the authors of the articles on weight and body image in women's magazines?
- Question 5: Is the coverage of weight and body image different in mainstream and African-American magazines?

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### **Design**

In order to best answer the research questions, this study required a quantitative method of analysis. The first aspect of this study was to simply report “what” messages and images are being presented on weight and body image in women’s magazines and “who” is relaying these messages. The second aspect of this study was to determine “how” the messages about weight and body image were relayed or framed in women’s magazines, and to determine if there was a difference in the presentation of these messages in mainstream versus African-American magazines. In order to accomplish these tasks, a quantitative content analysis was needed.

Quantitative content analysis is defined as, "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, O.R., (1969), p. 14). This definition of content analysis is not limited to textual data alone, but can also include illustrations, video footage, and audio. Through this method of analysis no weight or significance is placed on a particular category. The researcher simply records and categorizes what is seen in the sample. In this current research, categories quantitatively coded include: writer’s credentials, type of article, main topic of each article, frames presented, types of graphics, body type, attire, race, age, body size, classification of photographs used within the articles and on each cover and key words mentioned.

### **Sampling**

Print magazines were chosen as the research medium due to their enduring popularity, despite the emergence of other forms of media. As mentioned, the MPA’s©

research determined that people still considered magazines a trustworthy source for information and women look to magazines as a trusted source for information.

Because this study coded pictures and illustrations in addition to text, it was necessary for the researcher to use the physical magazine. Online search engines only displayed the text of the articles, omitting essential coding data; and the titles needed for this unique sample were not available online. In addition, due to budget restrictions and remodeling, several universities and public libraries stopped cataloguing back issues of magazines in their reference section. Therefore, the majority of the issues used were purchased online and some were donated. Since this study examined the coverage of weight and body image, it was necessary for the sample to include popular women's fashion magazines as well as women's health magazines for mainstream and African-American women.

### **Magazine Selection**

One mainstream fashion and one health magazine, as well as one African-American fashion and one health magazine were selected based on their circulation and the average age of their readers. In 2009 numbers demonstrated that the average age of magazine readers was increasing ([www.marketingcharts.com](http://www.marketingcharts.com)). Researchers have credited this trend to the increasing popularity of online versions for popular magazines. This researcher desired to sample magazines that targeted the general population, thus magazines whose average readers were noticeably older or younger were eliminated from the sample group. For example, *Cosmopolitan* magazine ranked the highest among women readers, but the age of its readers, which was very young, targeted one far end of the age spectrum (18-24 year olds). *Cosmopolitan's* inappropriateness for this study was further solidified by research presented in 2009 by

Mediamark Research and Intelligence© which stated, *Cosmopolitan* magazine had experienced a decline in the age of its readers ([www.marketingcharts.com](http://www.marketingcharts.com)). *Women's Health* was the most popular women's health magazine; however, 66% of its readers were over 35 years old and the average reader was 45.7 years old. Thus, *Cosmopolitan and Women's Health* readers do not represent the general population of women readers and were both eliminated from the sample. *Shape* magazine and *Glamour magazine* were chosen because they met the criteria for popularity and the average age of their readers best represented the general population.

Readership values were determined based on the information provided in each magazine's media kit as well as information provided by the Magazine Publication Association (MPA)©. The selected magazines for fashion were *Glamour Magazine* (mainstream) and *Essence Magazine* (African-American). The selected magazines for health were *Shape Magazine* (mainstream) and *Heart and Soul* (African-American).

Among African-American magazines, there are two pillars among readers' choice for beauty and fashion: *Ebony Magazine and Essence Magazine*. Although *Ebony* is the oldest, most circulated and successful black magazine ([www.ebonyjet.com](http://www.ebonyjet.com)), *Essence* magazine was the better choice. The majority of *Essence* readers were 18-34 years of age ([www1.essence.com](http://www1.essence.com)). *Heart and Soul* was selected for the African-American sample for women's health magazines by default because it is the only widely distributed health magazine marketed toward African-American women.

### **Time Frame Rationale**

The timeframe coded was August 2008 to July 2009. During this time frame, in the health arena, obesity had become a major health concern for all Americans, especially children. Government agencies as well as private insurance companies in

collaboration with high risk ethnic groups, initiated media health campaigns to target obesity. Thus being conscious about personal weight was a part of a universal consciousness. Also, in the early part of 2008, the controversy over airbrushing models and celebrities to make them look thinner was mounting in the U.S. as well as the U.K. The issue was covered heavily in the media and both countries were debating whether to formulate a ban on the editorial practice. In an online article written on April 2, 2008 in *Jezebel*, the author discussed the British Periodical Publishers Association's© desire to discuss the future banning of airbrushing. Such action was taken when a Model Health Inquiry from the previous year made accusations that editors who practiced airbrushing were behaving irresponsibly and promoting a "size zero" culture. May 1, 2008, a *Newsweek.com*© article written by Jessica Bennett highlighted the mental and physical health dangers of airbrushing and its possible long term effects on readers. She concluded in this article that constant exposure to airbrushed photos of celebrities and models made beauty unattainable to magazine readers. During this time, there were many photos of celebrities and models that were exposed as altered and many mental health and women's advocates yelled, "foul." In May 2008, the outgoing president of the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME)© and editor-in-chief of *Glamour Magazine*, Cindi Leive, responded to this uproar by stating, "Brides are airbrushing the red out of their eyes and getting rid of blemishes in their own wedding photos these days, so the technology's here to stay." "But the bottom line is that readers should not be misled" (newsweek.com).

In the midst of the airbrushing debate the ASME© met for its annual conference in June 2008. During this conference, a new president was inducted and "airbrushing"

was discussed. Unfortunately, the meeting adjourned with no final verdict on “airbrushing” or guidelines by which editors could abide. Nevertheless, reeling from the momentum of their recent gathering, the potential for change among magazine editors was present. This study seeks to discover if the messages and images about weight and body image evolved in a year’s time as a result of an open and critical discussion about the media’s skewed portrayal of women’s bodies.

To properly select a sample of magazines several things were taken into consideration. The production cycle of most magazines is 1-2 months ([www.atompublishing.co.uk](http://www.atompublishing.co.uk)). Each magazine was issued monthly except for *Heart and Soul*, which released only six issues in the year. At the time of the ASME© conference in early May 2008, the June/July issue of *Heart and Soul* was already on the newsstand. Therefore, the first issue was the August /September issue of *Heart and Soul* and the August issue of the other titles. From the yielded sample, each issue of every magazine was coded. To analyze one year, the timeframe coded was August 2008-July 2009.

### **Article selection**

Each magazine issue was physically viewed page-by-page. Any article, regardless of size that mentioned key words or phrases such as, "weight loss," "diet," "nutrition" and weight loss," "lose 10 pounds," "get killer abs," and any other synonyms, euphemisms, and colloquialisms were all included in the sample size. Subsequently, the sample size of articles was 141.

## Coding Procedure

A code sheet and detailed guidelines were formed to record and categorize each article. The coding instrument required notation of basic information about the articles, including: writer's credentials, type of article, key subjects like: weight, diet, fashion, health risk, etc. and themes. Also, direct and indirect quotes were recorded as well as frames and framing techniques to note any patterns. Next, pictures and illustrations were categorized in addition to the people and things featured in them. All of this information was placed into a Microsoft Excel© document to maintain and organize the data.

Many of the categories were self-explanatory; however, certain category terms were specifically named based on previous research to eliminate subjectivity. Body Type was described as thin/linear build, muscular/athletic build and heavy/stocky build. These terms were based on the historic body classification: Ectomorph= thin/linear build, Mesomorph=muscular/athletic build and Endomorph= heavy/stocky build (www.epigee.org). Race and age were categorized by the same standards used by the U.S. Census©. However, since race is difficult to determine solely by sight, the option of "unknown" was added to the coding book for researchers to use. Young adult represented ages 18-34; Middle-aged represented ages 35-54 and Senior represented ages 55-older (www.census.gov). Body size terms were based on the BMI research. In some of the articles, an individual's height and weight or BMI were revealed in the article. However, when the individual's stats were not available, the coders made a visual judgment on the body size.

Current research confirms the effects negative images have on young girls and women. Therefore, this study's goal was to see what images were presented on the

cover and in the articles of the magazines chosen. In their 1992 study Meyers, P., and Biocca, F., discussed the negative effects of advertisements and body distortion among young girls. In their study, they categorized media images as “body image oriented” and “body image neutral.” The image was considered "body image oriented" if the image was centered on the ideal, thin female body and that body was used as a visual message. In some cases, a certain part of the body was the focus. (For example, an article featuring new abdominal exercises included a picture of a thin young model wearing a cut-off shirt.) An image was considered "neutral image oriented" if it did not focus on the body type and size of a woman. (For example, an article on nutrition featured a woman doctor wearing a lab coat.) The image may contain an attractive woman, but her attractiveness was not the primary focus of the message.

Two researchers with similar research backgrounds and training in content analysis coded the sample of articles. Prior to coding, the coding guidelines were discussed and both researchers were trained in the specific definitions for each category. Also, both researchers practiced identifying coded material in the magazines to test compliance with the code book guidelines. The primary researcher coded 100% (141) of the articles and the second researcher, who was also trained in framing analysis, coded 10% (14) of the articles to establish inter-coder reliability. A pre-test was completed, and it was discovered that assessing body size without having height and weight was a challenge. Although body size has a set definition, visual, comparative norms and cultural norms determine individual interpretation of body size. As a result precise and detailed descriptions of body types were added to the codebook with

examples provided. The researchers also participated in discussions before and after every two articles to maximize the validity of the codebook and guidelines.

### **Reliability**

Following the final coding process, the primary researcher calculated the inter-coder reliability of this current research. To accomplish this task, Holsti's (1969) coefficient of reliability was used. According to Neuendorf (2002), a coefficient of .90 is desired; however, a reliability coefficient value of .75 to .80 is acceptable. Each close-ended question in the coding book was rated. The open-ended questions were not rated due to the variance in responses. Table 3-1 lists the reliability scores in detail:

### **Statistical Analysis**

Chi-square tests were used to compare data sets between mainstream and African-American magazines. SPSS software was used to calculate a Pearson's Chi-square and determine if statistically significant differences were evident. The results of these tests will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Table 3-1. Test Results For Holsti's Coefficient of Reliability

Overall score	.837
Individual categories:	
Writer's Credentials	.714
Type of article	.786
Is the article part of a series	.786
Subjects mentioned	.714
Main benefit of advice presented	.786
Graphics	1.000
Photographs	1.000
Body Type	.786
Attire	1.000
Race	.857
Age	.929
Body size	1.000
Classification of cover (Body Image vs. Neutral Image)	.857
Classification of article (Body Image vs. Neutral Image)	.786

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The final sample coded consisted of 141 articles taken from 48 different magazine issues. Each magazine title, *Essence*, *Glamour*, *Heart & Soul* and *Shape*, had six issues represented in the sample. The primary coder read cover to cover every article of each magazine issue to determine an article's appropriateness for this study. Only articles that discussed the following terms were selected for this current research: "weight," body image," 'diet/nutrition," "exercise," "health/health risks" and "fashion." Of the 141 articles sampled, 55% (n=78) were from *Shape*, 23% (n=33) were from *Heart & Soul*, 11% (n=15) were from *Glamour* and 11% (n=15) were from *Essence* (Figure 4-1). For each article, the coders were tasked with coding the writer's credentials, the type of article, the article's topics, framing techniques, main themes, sources of direct and indirect quotes, and pictures presented in terms of the subject's weight, age, race, body type, body size and attire. In addition, each photo featured in the articles, as well as the cover of each issue, was classified in terms of it being a Body Image Oriented Photo vs. Neutral Image Oriented Photo.

### **Types of Articles**

Of the 141 articles coded, 64% (n=94) were feature articles and 24% (n=35) were Q and A format/Advice columns. News mentions represented 6% (n=9) of the articles and were comprised of articles that briefly discussed research regarding one's health and nutrition. Columns represented 4% (n=5) of the sample, and 2% (n=3) were editorials. The researchers also coded for letters to the editor, however, the sample did not yield any such articles (Figure 4-2). In addition to being the most prevalent type of

article in the sample, feature articles were also the leading type of article used for both mainstream and African-American magazines.

### **Graphics**

For this study, the term “graphic” represented any cartoon illustration of people and things, or any photo of inanimate objects like exercise equipment or food. Of the images coded, the most represented type of graphic image used in women’s magazines was exercise equipment (n=22). Next was graphic images of people (n=14). The two least frequent graphics were images of food (n=8) and images of health icons (n=6). When comparing mainstream vs. African-American magazines, there was a noticeable difference in the frequency and type of graphics used. For example, the leading type of graphic used in mainstream magazines was exercise equipment (n=17) and the least used graphic was health icons (n=2). Among the African-American magazines, the leading type of graphic used was people (n=8) and the least graphic used was food (n=3) (Figure 4-3).

### **Race and Photos**

The race of each person photographed in an article was coded. Among the 133 photographs coded, the racial breakdown in women’s magazines is as follows: white (n=59, 44%), African-American (n=53, 40%), Hispanic (n=4, 3%) and Asian (n=2, 2%). When it was determined by the coders that a photo’s race could not be determined or the photo contained one or more persons of various races, the photo’s race was coded as unknown. Among the photos coded, 11% of them (n=14) were marked as unknown (Figure 4-4).

The dynamics of race representation differed among each individual magazine. Some trends and dynamics were expected due to a particular magazine’s target

audience. For example, the homogeneity of race representation was evident in *Essence and Heart & Soul Magazine*. Of the photos coded in *Essence* (n=15), 93% (n=14) were African-American and 7% (n=1) were Hispanic. There was no representation of white or Asian photos in these magazines (Figure 4-5). Similarly, though not as invariable, the racial breakdown in the photos coded in *Heart & Soul* (n=31) was 90% (n=28) African-American, 7% (n=2) unknown, and 3% (n=1) white. There were no Asian or Hispanic photos represented in this magazine (Figure 4-6).

Among mainstream magazines, there was some variety in regards to the representation of race in photos. In *Shape*, the breakdown of photos coded (n=73) were 75% (n=55) white, 12% (n=9) African-American, 8% (n=6) unknown, 3% (n=1) Asian and 2% (n=1) Hispanic (Figure 4-7). *Glamour* demonstrated the greatest level of diversity in regards to race representation. In all, 14 photos coded, 43% (n=6) were coded as unknown, 22% (n=3) were coded as white, 14% (n=2) as African-American, 14% (n=2) as Hispanic and 7% (n=1) as Asian (Figure 4-8).

### **Age**

Of the 137 articles coded for age, across the board, young adults were heavily represented in mainstream and African-American magazines. Young adult women were portrayed 67% (n=92) of the time, followed by middle-aged women 27% (n=37) of the time. Seniors were portrayed in women's magazines only 2% (n=2) of the time. In some instances due to the nature of the photo or the coders' inability to determine age, 4% (n=6) of the photos were coded as unknown (Figure 4-9). Of the four magazines sampled, *Heart & Soul* was the only magazine to portray seniors.

### **RQ1**

How is the issue of body image and weight framed in women's magazines?

Among the articles sampled, two major frames were present regarding the topic of weight and body image in women's magazines: "Improved Health/Well-being" and "Improved Attractiveness/Appearance." Of the articles coded, the improved health/well-being frame was present in 54% (n=78) of the articles and the improved attractiveness/appearance frame was apparent in 46% (n=67) of the articles coded (Figure 4-10). For example, the articles that featured the frame improved health/well-being highlighted quick and easy nutrition tips to prevent heart disease. In its April 2009 issue, *Shape* featured "guilt free hors d'oeuvres." The tagline stated, "You don't need to pass up party food." Another example of an article featuring the health/well-being frame included an article that provided research backed facts about obesity's impact on fertility. In its October/November 2008 issue, *Heart & Soul* featured a diabetes management article entitled, "Meeting the Challenges of Diabetes. This article quoted the American Diabetes Association and provided tips for living with the disease.

In contrast, the articles that featured the improved attractiveness/appearance frame gave exercise tips for getting your body "bikini ready." In its December 2008 issue, *Glamour* told its readers, "Get to Your Great-Sex Weight." This article warned readers, "Losing or gaining pounds could make a major difference in bed." Some articles featured a meal plan that would help flatten the reader's stomach. In its December/January 2008 issue, *Heart & Soul* featured an article that informed its readers about three ways to improve their rear view. The article was entitled "Bottoms Up" and it featured a large photo of a women's partially revealed, ample backside.

In order to obtain a more detailed analysis, each magazine title was analyzed separately for frame prevalence. The results yielded that 53% (n=8) of the articles in

*Essence* featured the improved health/well-being frame and 47% (n=7) of the articles featured the improved attractiveness/approved appearance frame (Figures 4-11 and 4-12). Among the *Glamour* articles, 60% (n=9) of the articles were framed as improved attractiveness/appearance and 40% (n=6) of the articles were framed as improved health/well-being (Figures 4-11 and 4-13). Among the *Heart & Soul* articles, 56% (n=19) were framed as improved health/well-being and 44% (n=15) were framed as improved attractiveness/appearance (Figures 4-11 and 4-14). Similarly, in *Shape*, 56% (n=45) of the articles were framed as improved health/well-being and 44% (n=36) of the articles were framed as improved attractiveness/appearance (Figures 4-11 and 4-15).

In summary, regardless of whether an article originated from a fashion magazine or a health magazine, the majority of the articles featured in *Essence*, *Heart & Soul* and *Shape* were framed as improved health/well-being. However, out of all of the *Glamour* articles sampled, the majority of the articles were framed as improved attractiveness/appearance. There were some variances noted regarding the types of frames used in mainstream vs. African-American magazines; however, these differences will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

### **Conflicting Messages**

Conflicting messages about health vs. attractiveness were present in the magazine issues coded. Although, the majority of its articles (n=45) featured messages about health and well-being, it was noted that all six *Shape* issues presented multiple conflicting messages within the same issue. Within one issue, readers were presented with both the improved health/well-being frame as well as the improved attractiveness/appearance frame. For example, in their June 2009 issue, one article is titled, "Kick off the Pounds." The article featured a kickboxing exercise routine and it

promised to make you "slim, sexy, and strong in just 30 minutes." The hook line from the cover states, "Take Your Belly from Fat to Flat in Just Minutes." In contrast, a health/well-being framed article entitled, "I Finally Made Time for Me," was a readers' account of how she was successful in losing 70 pounds through diet and exercise. Within the same issue, readers were encouraged to, "Get Summer Sexy by June 30<sup>th</sup>." This article was part of a summer series entitled "Bikini Body Countdown." Juxtaposed to this message was an article whose hook stated, "Taking shortcuts in the kitchen doesn't mean shortchanging your health..." This article touted the nutritional benefits of eating tomatoes. In *Shape*, the articles' themes vacillate from health/well-being to attractiveness/appearance at least six times per issue.

### **Polarized Frames**

It is possible to polarize improved health/well-being and improved attractiveness/appearance frames and label them as "good" vs. "bad." However, there were instances within the sample where articles that were framed as improved attractiveness/appearance covered the issue of weight and body image in a non-objectifying manner. For example, in its February 2009 issue, *Glamour* ran a "how-to" article that illustrated how one can dress for their body type. The article featured models of various sizes including "pear shapes," "big busts," "petites" and "plus sizes." In addition, the article featured samples of clothing that would best suit each individual body type. Another example is *Essence's* reoccurring article, "Perfect Fit." In its December 2008 issue, this article featured holiday party clothing for women sizes 14-18+. The article encouraged readers to "Turn heads this holiday season in short glam dresses."

Although these examples are framed “improved attractiveness /appearance,” they have potential to influence well-being by making the readers feel good about their weight and body image. However, if poorly done, an article intended to support positive weight and body image falls flat when the models chosen are not appropriate. For example, in its April 2009 issue, *Glamour* tells the reader to “accentuate an hourglass figure” and “celebrate your curves” by wearing different styles of skirts. However, all of the models present in the article are tall and thin.

### **Photographs**

In terms of textual frames, photographs play a key role in how the subject of weight and body image are covered in women’s magazines. Photographs were coded for body type, body size and clothing attire. In addition, the subject of each photograph was coded to determine whether it was a celebrity, model or featured person from the article.

Photographs (n=127) were coded for three subject types: featured person, model and celebrity (Figure 4-16). Out of this sample, 44% (n=56) were photographs of individuals featured in the article. For example, *Shape* had a reoccurring feature entitled, “Success Stories,” which featured a “real woman’s,” first-hand account on how she achieved weight loss success. In each issue, a “before and after” photo of the person being featured was placed in the article. The next subject type coded was pictures of models, which are commonly used in women’s magazines. These types of photographs comprised of 40% (n=51) of the photographs coded. For example, *Glamour* has a “health and beauty” section in every issue, and the subject pictured is always a model. In its October 2008 issue, a health article titled, “Why Your Weight Isn’t Such a Big Deal,” featured a normal sized model eating a candy bar. Finally,

pictures of celebrities were coded and they represented 16% (n=20) of the sample. Every magazine within the sampled featured pictures of celebrities; however, *Shape* used its celebrity photos as a training tool for exercise techniques. For example, in its June 2009 issue, Indy car driver, Danica Patrick shared her “Swimsuit Shape-up” workout in a “how-to” format. This article contained photos (n=12) of Danica Patrick demonstrating the proper form and technique for each exercise.

### **Body Type**

Body type is a measurement of the human shape. This measurement takes into account a body’s composition. The guidelines used for coding the body types were gleaned from W.H. Sheldon’s classification system (1970). The three main categories include “Ectomorph,” which represents a thin and linear build, “Mesomorph,” which represents a muscular/athletic build and “Endomorph,” which represents a heavy/stocky build. According to Sheldon, a few people are a combination of two categories. Images that fell in this category were coded as “combination.” For photographs where there was a tight shot and the subject’s body was not visible, these photos were coded as “unknown.” In total, 133 pictures of different body types were coded. Muscular/athletic body types represented 36% (n=48) of the images coded and combination body types represented 30% (n=48) of images. Thin/linear body types represented 17% (n=23) of images portrayed in women’s magazines, while heavy/stocky body images represented only 9% (n=12). Of the sample, 8% (n=10) were coded as unknown (Figure 4-17).

The kind of body types photographed in women’s fashion magazines vs. women’s health magazines varied. Among the photographs coded in women’s fashion magazines, 57% (n=16) were pictures of combination body types, 21% (n=6) were pictures of heavy/stocky body types, 14% (n=4) were muscular body types, 4% (n=1)

were thin body types and 4% (n=1) were unknown (Figure 4-18). Among the photographs coded in women's health magazines, 42% (n=44) represented muscular body types, 23% (n=24) represented combination body types, 21% (n=22) were thin body types, 9% (n=9) were unknown body types and 6% (n=6) were heavy/ stocky body types (Figure 4-19). Differences between the body types seen in mainstream vs. African-American magazines were noted and will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Body Size**

In addition to body type, the body sizes of images presented in women's magazines were analyzed. Body size is a measurement of the human body that is directly correlated with weight. To code body size, guidelines used for weight assessment by the (CDC) were used. Body size was coded using the following four categories: underweight, normal, overweight and obese. Of the images coded (n=121), a normal body size was presented most frequently (n=100). Presented less frequently were overweight (n=17) and underweight (n=4). There were no images of obese women portrayed in this sample of women's magazines (Figure 4-20). When comparing women's fashion magazines and women's health magazines, the results were similar. Among the images seen in women's fashion magazines, a normal body size was most prevalent (n=11). Overweight body sizes were seen less frequently (n=9), and the least frequent body size seen was the underweight body size (n=1) (Figure 4-21). Among women's health magazines, the largest number of body types seen were normal body sizes (n=89), followed by overweight body sizes (n=8). Underweight body sizes (n=3) were seen the least in women's health magazines (Figure 4-21). Neither women's health nor women's fashion magazines contained obese body sizes.

Interestingly, in regard to body size representation in this sample, women's health magazines presented more underweight body sizes than women's fashion magazines (Figure 4-21). Also, overweight body sizes were seen more often in women's fashion magazines than women's health magazines (Figure 4-21). Although these nuances are visible, they are not statistically significant. There were differences noted between body sizes seen in mainstream vs. African-American magazines; however, these differences will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Clothing Attire**

The clothing worn by the subjects in each photo were coded using the following categories: swimsuit, workout, business, casual, formal and other. Of the images coded (n=131), the most frequent type of clothing worn was workout attire (n=58). For the category of workout attire, 79% (n=46) of those images came from *Shape* magazine. Next in frequency were images featuring casual attire (n=22), followed by swimsuit attire (n=12), formal attire (n=8) and business attire (n=7). Images coded other (n=24) represented photos of nude women or images where more than one style of clothing was presented in one photo (Figure 4-22).

### **RQ2**

What types of images depicting "body image" and "weight" are used in women's magazines?

Images used on the cover of each magazine (n=24) and images used in the articles (n=134) were categorized as "body image oriented" and "body image neutral." Meyers and Biocca (1992) coined these terms. An image is considered "body image oriented" if the image is centered on the ideal, thin female body and that body is used as a visual message. An image is considered "neutral image oriented" if the image

used does not focus on the body type and size of a woman. In regard to the images on the cover of women's magazines, every issue of *Essence* featured "neutral image oriented" photos. These photos featured male and female celebrities, fully dressed in designer clothing. Its December 2008 and June 2009 covers featured separate close-ups of Jada Pickett-Smith and Jennifer Hudson. These shots highlighted the subject's face and their bodies were barely seen. In contrast, every cover of *Shape* featured "body image oriented" photos. All six celebrities featured have their mid-section exposed. With the exception of Venus Williams, featured on its August 2008 cover, the other celebrities were wearing bikini tops. The majority of *Heart & Soul* covers featured "neutral image oriented" photos (n=5). *Glamour's* cover featured both "body image oriented" (n=2) and "neutral image oriented" (n=4) photos (Figure 4-23).

### **Images Seen in Articles**

Across the board, the majority of the articles inside women's magazines featured "body image oriented" photographs (n=86) (Figure 4-24). Unlike the previous analysis of photos from the covers, each magazine title scored similarly concerning the proportion of "body image oriented" photos vs. "neutral image oriented" photos present in the articles (Figure 4-24 and Figure 4-25). *Glamour* had the highest percentage of "body image oriented" photos, 69% (n=9). Followed by *Essence*, 67% (n=5), then *Shape*, 64% (n=27) and *Heart & Soul* 62.5%, n=20. *Heart & Soul* had the highest percentage of Neutral image oriented photographs, 37.5% (n=12). Followed by *Shape*, 36% (n=27), then *Essence*, 33% (n=5) and *Glamour*, 31% (n=4) (Figure 4-24 and Figure 4-25).

A typical example of a "body image oriented" photo was seen in *Glamour's* August 2008 issue. In its reoccurring section, "Body by *Glamour*," the article discussed "The

Six Ways to Flatten Your Belly.” It featured a model, with flat abs, wearing a bathing suit, working-out on an exercise ball. The image is “body image oriented” because the woman’s body was used to convey the message, “Follow this advice and get similar results.”

Although not overtly objectifying, many of the articles in *Heart & Soul* and *Shape* featured “before and after” pictures. The nature of the comparison caused the person’s body to be the focus of the article. Such pictures were coded as “body image oriented.”

An example of a “neutral image oriented” photo was seen in the June/July 2009 issue of *Heart & Soul*. This article featured a lacrosse player who shared her workout routine. One picture seen in the article showed her playing lacrosse in her uniform. Another photo was a head shot of the woman featured. These photos were coded “neutral image oriented” because her body, what size it was, or what it looked like was not the focus of the article. In fact, one photo was just a picture of her face. Another example of a “neutral oriented image” was found in the October 2008 issue of *Essence*. The article was entitled, “The Plus Size Sister’s Guide to Good Health” and it listed health ailments associated with being obese and overweight. The photo in the article featured the legs and feet of a woman preparing to step on a scale. This article was coded as a “neutral image oriented” because although the article explicitly discusses weight, the subject’s body size is left a mystery.

## **2008 vs. 2009**

When the types of photos seen in women’s magazines in 2008 were compared to the types of images seen in 2009, the results were interesting. By July of 2009, the percentage of “body image oriented photos had decreased from 68% (n=52) to 59%

(n=34). In addition, the number of “neutral image oriented” photos seen in women’s magazines had increased from 32% (n=24) to 41% (n=24) (Figure 4-26).

### **RQ3**

What are the credentials of the authors of the articles on weight and body image in women's magazines?

Every communication process begins with the communicator. In order to obtain insight on the message, it must be determined “who” is the originator of the message. A writer’s background and experiences influence the manner in which any topic is covered, including weight and body image; thus, the writers’ credentials were coded (Figure 4-27). Writers coded were placed in the following categories: general staff writer (45%, n=66), freelancer (21%, n=30), medical/health writer (14% n=20), “average Joe” (5%, n=8), medical/public health expert (4%, n=6), celebrity writer (1%, n=2) and fitness expert (1%, n=1). If the article’s writer lacked credentials or the writer’s credentials did not fall in the previously mentioned groups, then the writers were coded as “other” (9%, n=13). Some examples of writers who fell in the “other” category included contributing editors, fashion editors, editor-in-chief and special projects editors. *Heart & Soul* and *Shape* were the only titles that used medical/health writers and medical/public health experts to write their articles. Also, the only article written by a fitness expert appeared in *Glamour* (Figure 4-28).

### **Direct and Indirect Sources**

The articles were coded for sources of direct and indirect quotes using the following categories: celebrity, medical expert, fitness expert, researcher/research study, real women and other. Among sources of indirect quotes in women’s magazines, the top three categories were researcher/research study (n=27), fitness expert (n=8)

and medical expert (n=7) (Figure 4-29). Among individual titles, *Heart & Soul* and *Shape* had the most diverse grouping of indirectly quoted sources.

The top three categories of direct quotes used in women's magazines were fitness expert (n=37), real women (n=36) and medical expert (n=29) (Figure 4-30). However, each individual magazine title varied in the hierarchy of which categories were directly quoted. In *Essence*, the top category for direct quotes was medical expert (n=7). In *Glamour*, there was a three-way tie among medical expert, celebrity and fitness expert (n=3). Real women were the top group directly quoted in *Shape* (n=20). Finally, the category most directly quoted in *Heart & Soul* was fitness expert (n=12).

#### **RQ4**

Who are the primary sources for information on weight and body image in women's magazines?

#### **The Writer's Voice**

The sample articles in this study were primarily feature articles written in a conversational tone. These articles were designed to provide the reader with information, evoke emotion, and solicit a response. While analyzing the articles, a pattern of storytelling was identified as a means to relay various messages about weight and body image. In addition, a type of tone or "voice," set by each writer surfaced. Each voice is a source for information. The final analysis yielded four major tones or voices: "celebrity voice" (n=21), "practical voice" (n=59), "real woman voice" (n=37) and "expert voice" (n=39) (Figure 4-31).

For example, in *Shape*, a young woman disclosed to the readers how she struggled for years with her weight and self-esteem, had an "Ah-ha" moment, became a marathon runner and gave the readers steps on how they could do it too. The tone of

this article is the “real women’s voice” because the story is told by a layman who had struggles like many other readers, and overcame them.

An example of the “celebrity voice” was visible in *Heart & Soul*. One article featured well known, R and B artist, Angie Stone who shared with readers her past battle with Type II Diabetes. In the article, she gave nutritional, spiritual and emotional advice on what one must do to stay healthy. According to framing theory, the importance of the message and the effectiveness of its delivery are associated with Angie Stone’s celebrity status. Because she is a popular musician in the African-American community, just as readers are open and receptive to her music, they are open and receptive to her healthcare message. The fact that Angie Stone has no medical or nutritional training may have little impact on the weight of her words.

The other group of articles in this sample was “how-to” articles. They provided the reader with simple, systematic instructions on how to perform an action or behavior. For example, *Essence* had a reoccurring article that taught its readers how to appropriately dress for their body type. This type of article demonstrated the “practical voice.” In each article, easy to follow steps were given and examples were provided. In its April 2009 issue, readers are schooled, “A flirty tulip hemline is ideal for shapely hips...,” and a picture of a model standing arms akimbo, demonstrates why.

Articles that portray the “expert voice” contain an instructional tone and are full of direct and/or indirect quotes from experts in a particular field. In an article entitled, “Heartache,” *Heart & Soul* readers are warned about the subtle symptoms of heart attacks in women. Indirectly quoted were statistics from the American Heart Association and the National Institute for Health. Hard facts are provided in this type of

article and a clear and precise plan of action is given to ward off negative consequences.

The frequency of the different types of voices used in women's magazines was coded per magazine title. When compared, the prominent voice in all of the magazines, except for one was the practical voice. The practical voice or tone was most present in *Essence* (n=10), *Glamour* (n=6) and *Shape* (n=30) (Figure 4-32). However, the prevailing tone used in *Heart & Soul* was the expert voice (n=17) (Figure 4-32). The least common tone used in every magazine title, except for one was the celebrity voice. This tone was least used in *Essence* (n=1), *Heart & Soul* (n=6) and *Shape* (n=11) (Figure 4-32). In *Glamour* magazine, the real woman voice was used the least (n=2).

#### **RQ5**

Is the coverage of weight and body image different in mainstream and African-American magazines?

#### **Frames in Mainstream vs. African-American Magazines**

When comparing mainstream magazines vs. African-American magazines, and the prevalence of the two major frames, for both groupings, the majority of the articles were framed as "improved health/well-being." Among mainstream magazines, 53% (n=51) of the articles were framed as "improved health/well-being, while 47% (n=45) were framed as "improved attractiveness/appearance" (Figure 4-33). In comparison, 55% (n=27) of African-American Magazines were framed as "improved health/well-being" and 45% (n=22) of the articles were framed as improved attractiveness" (Figure 4-33). When compared to mainstream magazines, African-American magazines have a greater percentage (2%) of "improved health/well-being" framed articles. A Chi Square analysis was conducted to see if a significant difference in the use of frames in

mainstream vs. African-American magazines was evident (Table 4-1). Via Chi-square analysis, it was determined there was no significant difference ( $\chi^2 = .051$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p \leq .821$ ).

### **“Neutral Image Oriented” vs. “Body Image Oriented” Photos**

In terms of neutral and body image oriented photos from the magazine articles, mainstream and African-American magazines presented the same percentage wise. For both types of magazines, 64% of the photos found in the articles of women magazines were body image oriented and 36% of the photos were neutral image oriented.

Specifically, for mainstream magazines 64% ( $n=56$ ) were body image oriented and 36% ( $n=31$ ) were neutral image oriented (Figure 4-34). In the African-American magazines 64% ( $n=30$ ) were body image oriented photos and 36% ( $n=17$ ) were neutral image oriented photos (Figure 4-35). A Chi Square analysis was conducted to see if a significant difference existed in the use of neutral image oriented photos vs. body image oriented photos in mainstream and African-American magazines (Table 4-2).

Pearson’s Chi-square analysis determined there was no significant difference ( $\chi^2 = .004$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p \geq .05$ ).

For the types of photos used on mainstream and African-American magazine covers, 92% ( $n=11$ ) of covers from the African-American magazines featured neutral image oriented photos and only 8% ( $n=1$ ) of the magazine covers featured body image oriented photos. In contrast, only 33% ( $n= 4$ ) of the mainstream magazines covers portrayed neutral image oriented photos while 67% ( $n=8$ ) of the mainstream magazine covers featured body image oriented photos (Table 4-3). A Chi Square analysis could not be performed to determine statistical significance between the types of photos used

in mainstream and African-American magazine covers because the data set did not meet all of the assumptions of a chi square test. One assumption of a chi square test is that all frequencies are greater than five (Field 2005). Unfortunately, this particular data set contained frequencies less than five (Figure 4-3).

### **Photographs used in Mainstream vs. African-American Magazines**

Photographs were coded for three subject types: featured person, model and celebrity. When the categories were compared between mainstream vs. African-American magazines, it was noted that the person featured in a story was the most common type of picture used in mainstream magazines (n=39, 47%) (Figure 4-36). In contrast, among African-American magazines, pictures of models (n=19, 43%) were most frequently used (Figure 4-37). Between both magazines genres, pictures of celebrities were the least frequent type of photo used in women's magazines. In mainstream magazines, this picture was used 14% of the time (n=12); and in African-American magazines, this type of picture was used 18% of the time (n=8) (Figure 4-36 and Figure 4-37).

### **Body Types in Mainstream vs. African-American Magazines**

Between the two genres of magazines, the muscular/athletic body type was mostly seen. In mainstream magazines, this body type was seen 31% of the time (n=27) and in African-American magazines, this body type was seen 45% of the time (n=21) (Figure 4-38 and Figure 4-39). However, an interesting finding was noted when the presence of thin/linear and heavy/stocky body types were compared between the two types of magazines. In mainstream magazines, the thin/linear body type was represented 25% of the time (n=21). In contrast, this body type was only represented 4% of the time (n=2) in African-American magazines. Conversely, the heavy/ stocky

body type was seen 17% of the time (n=8) in African-American magazines, but was only seen 5% of the time (n=4) in mainstream magazines.

### **Body Sizes in Mainstream vs. African-American Magazines**

Among mainstream magazines, normal body sizes were seen 86% of the time (n=69), underweight 5% of the time (n=4) and overweight 9% of the time (n=7) (Figure 4-40). Among African-American magazines, normal body sizes were seen 76% of the time (n=31) and overweight body sizes were seen 24% of the time (n=10) (Figure 4-41). There was no representation of underweight body sizes in African-American magazines. Also, there were no images of obese women portrayed in this sample of women's magazines.

### **Attire in Mainstream vs. African-American Magazines**

The top three categories of clothing worn by the subjects in mainstream magazines were workout (54%, n=46), casual (15%, n=13) and other (13%, n=11) (Figure 4-42). Similar, yet more balanced results were found in African-American magazines, other (29%, n=13), workout (27%, n=12) and casual (20%, n=9) (Figure 4-43). The "other" category represented pictures of naked people and group shot where more than one type of clothing was being presented. In terms of workout clothing, the choices worn were different in mainstream vs. African-American magazines. In African-American magazines, the workout uniform varied from a jogging suit to a sport bra and shorts. In mainstream magazines, the makeup of the workout outfit is consistently a sports bra only and shorts.

### **Voices in Mainstream vs. African-American Magazines**

The top three voices emerging in mainstream magazines are practical (38%) (n=36), real woman (27%)(n=25) and expert (20%)(n=19) (Figure 4-44). The top voices

in African-American magazines are practical (37%) (n=23), expert (32%) (n=20) and real woman (20%) (n=12) (Figure 4-45). Both types of magazines had the voice of the celebrity represented least. This comparison did not yield significant differences.

## Percentages of Articles in Women's Magazines

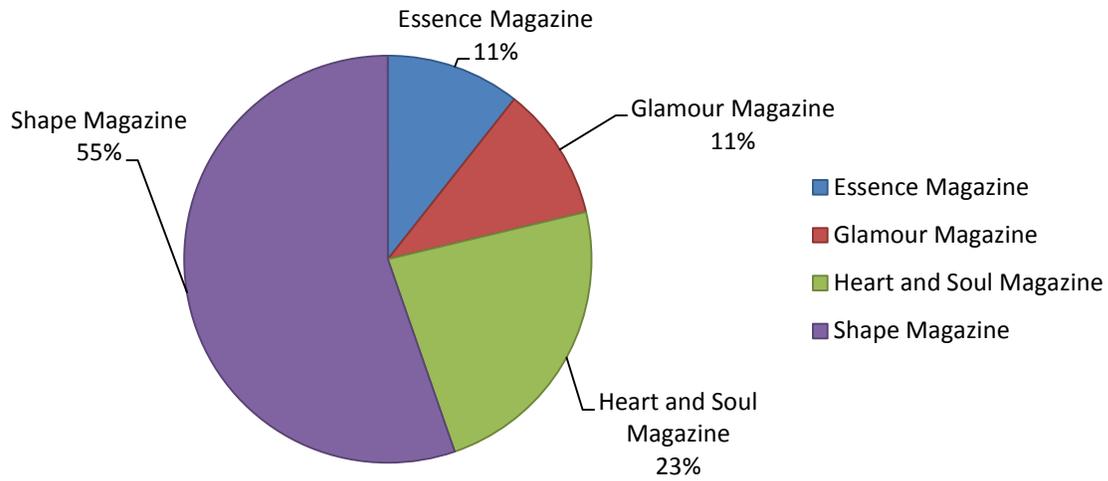


Figure 4-1. Percentages of articles in women's magazines during August 2008-July 2009.

## Types of Articles Found in Women's Magazines

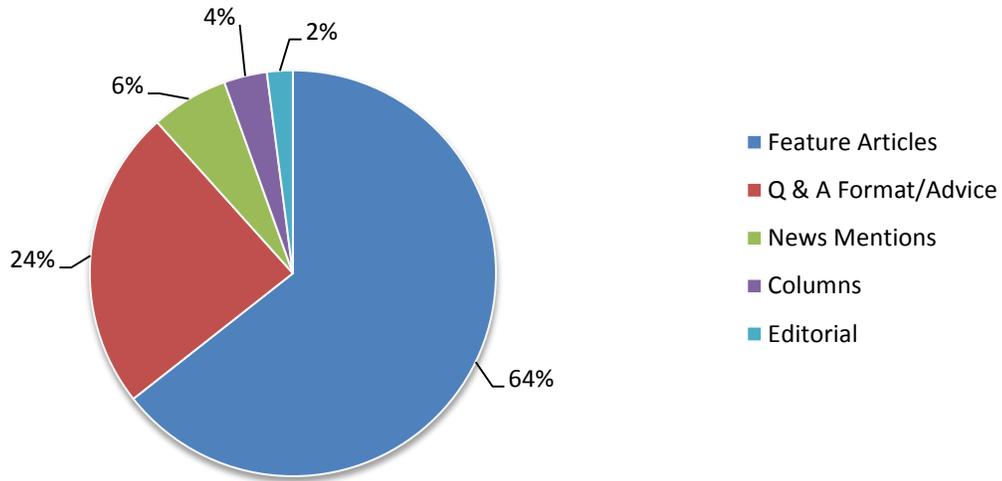


Figure 4-2. Types of articles found in women's magazines.

## Graphics Used in African-American Magazines vs. Mainstream Magazines

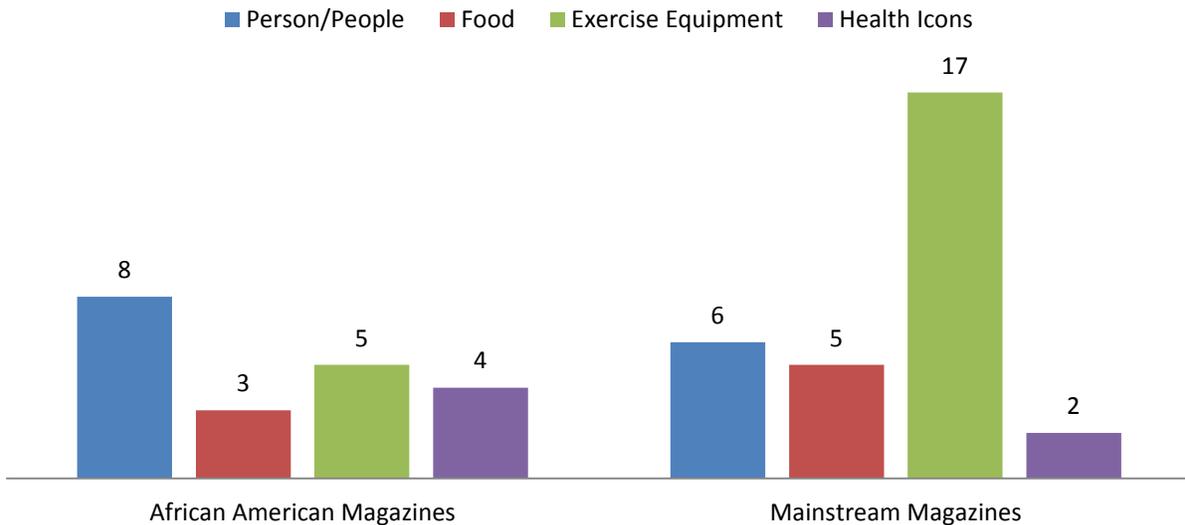


Figure 4-3. Graphics used in African-American vs. mainstream magazines.

## Race of Photos Used in Women's Magazines

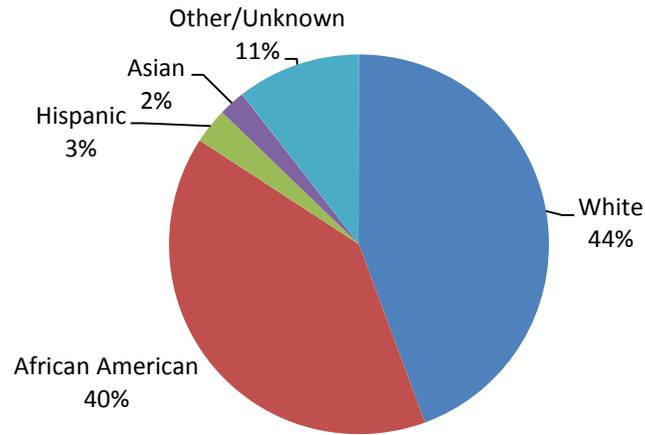


Figure 4-4. Percentage of photos by race in women's magazines.

## Race of Photos in *Essence* Magazine

■ White ■ African American ■ Hispanic ■ Asian ■ Other/Unknown

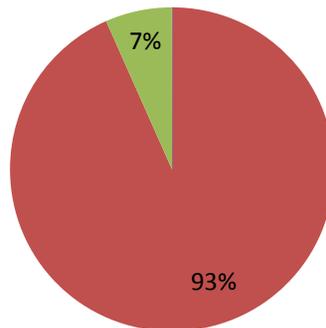


Figure 4-5. Percentage of photos by race in *Essence* magazine.

## Race of Photos in *Heart & Soul* Magazine

■ White ■ African American ■ Hispanic ■ Asian ■ Unknown

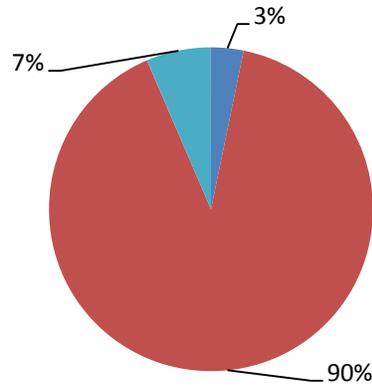


Figure 4-6. Percentage of photos by race in *Heart & Soul* magazine.

## Race of Photos in *Shape* Magazine

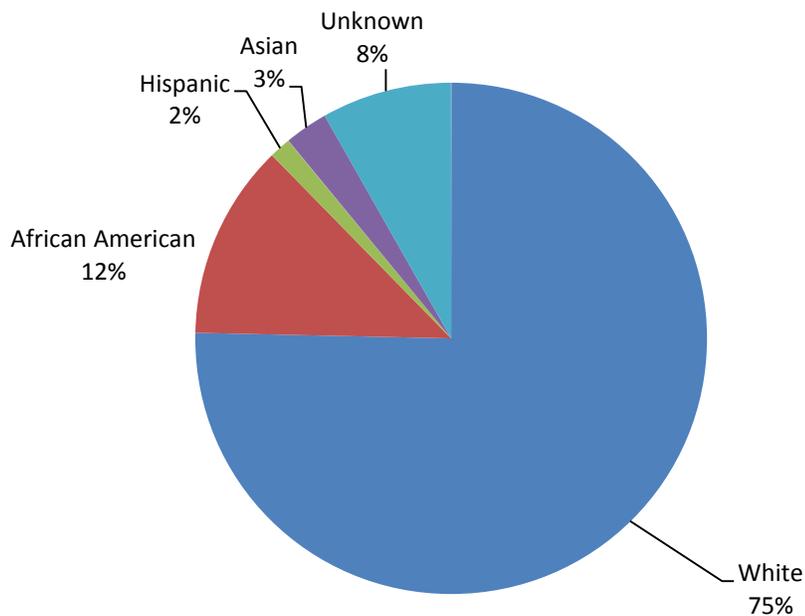


Figure 4-7. Percentage of photo by race in *Shape* magazine.

## Race of Photos in *Glamour* Magazine

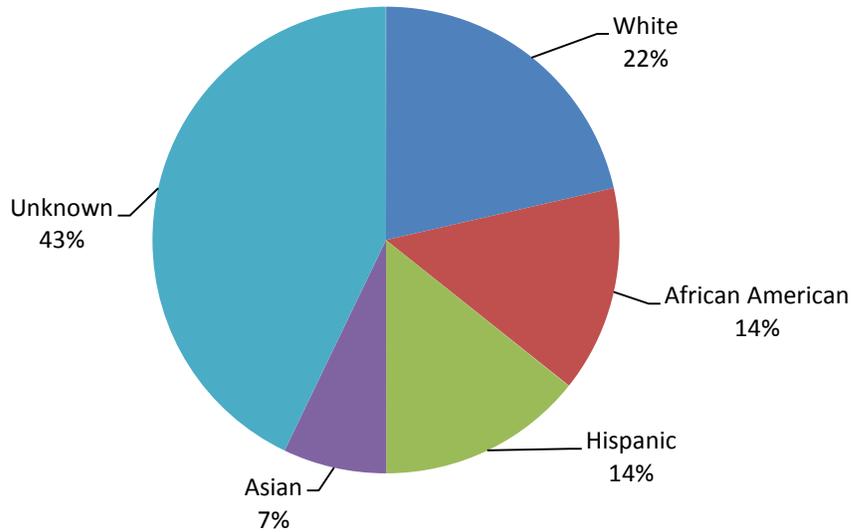


Figure 4-8. Percentage of photo by race in *Glamour* magazine.

## Age of Women in Women's Magazines

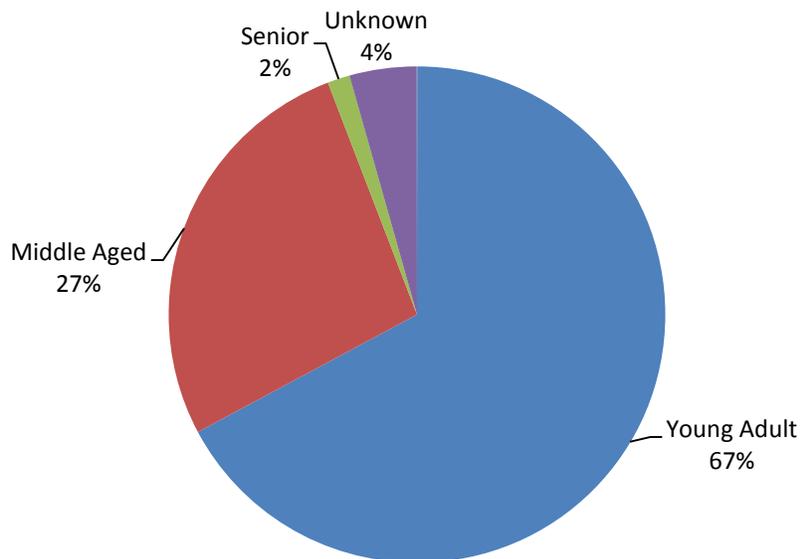


Figure 4-9. Age of women in women's magazines.

## Main Frames of Advice Given in Women's Magazines

■ Improved Health/Well-being   ■ Improved Appearance/Attractiveness

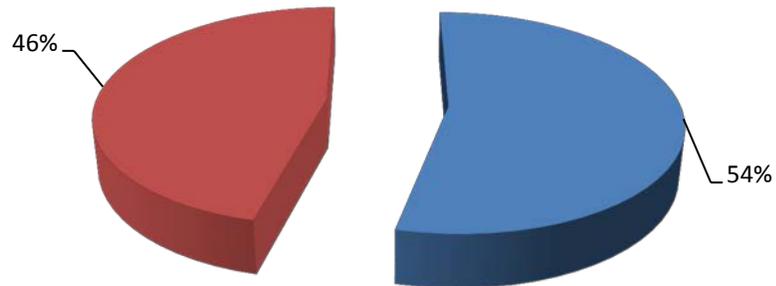


Figure 4-10. Frames in women's magazines.

## Improved Health/Well-being vs. Improved Attractiveness/Improved Appearance Frames

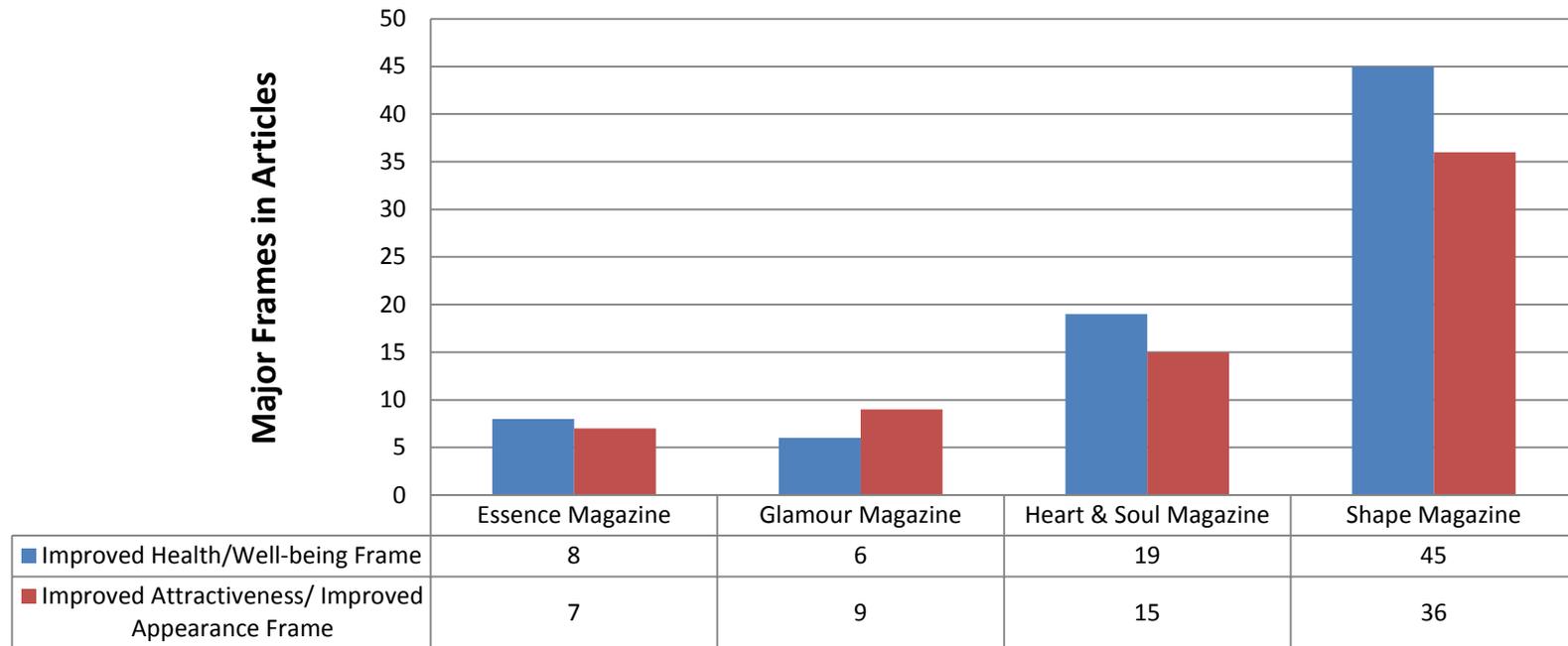


Figure 4-11. Improved health/well-being vs. improved attractiveness/improved appearance frames.

## Frames Found in *Essence* Magazine

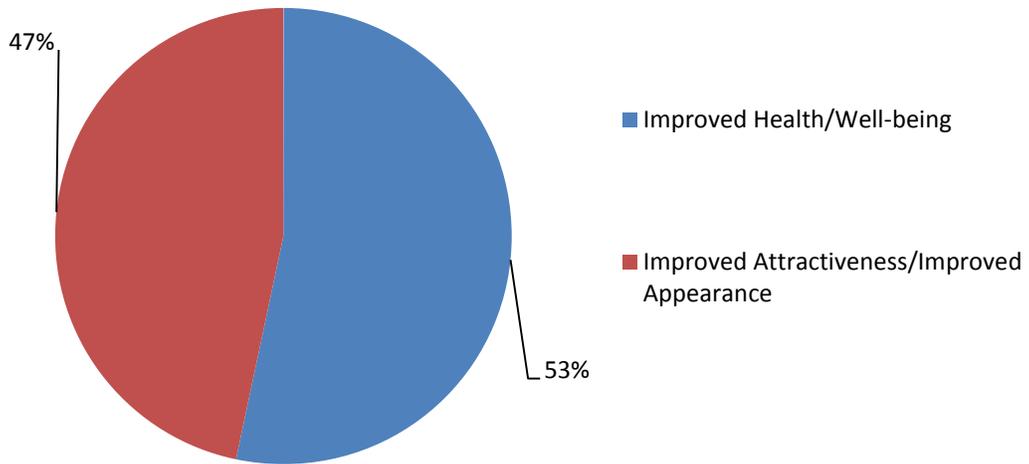


Figure 4-12. Frames found in *Essence* magazine.

## Frames Found in *Glamour* Magazine

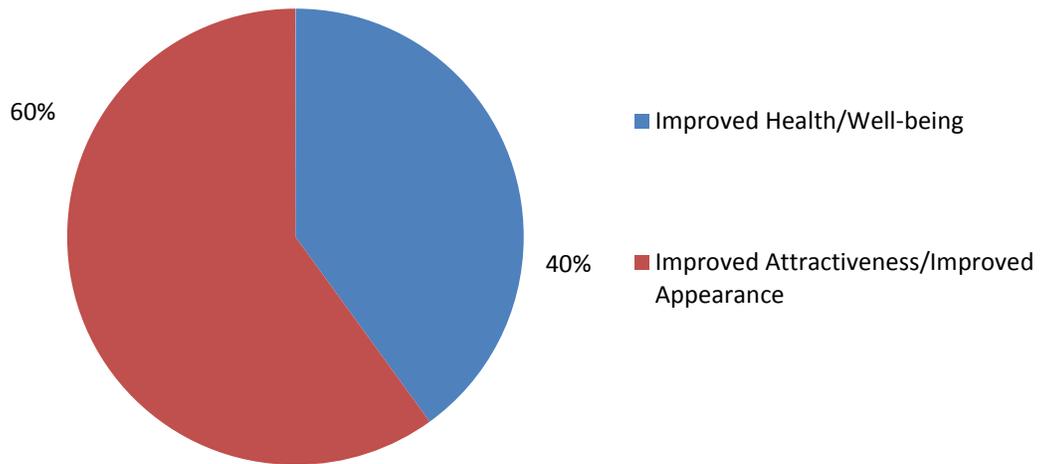


Figure 4-13. Frames found in *Glamour* magazine.

## Frames Found in *Heart & Soul* Magazine

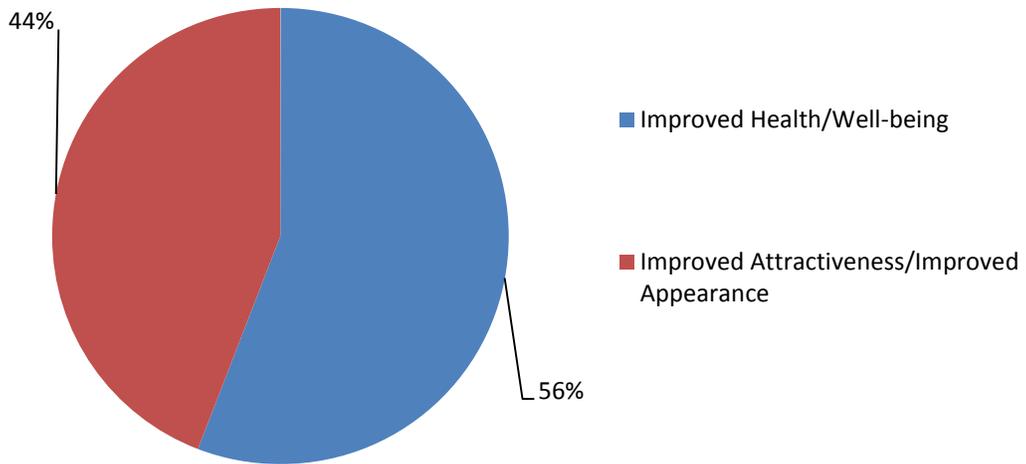


Figure 4-14. Frames found in *Heart & Soul* magazine.

## Frames Found in *Shape* Magazine

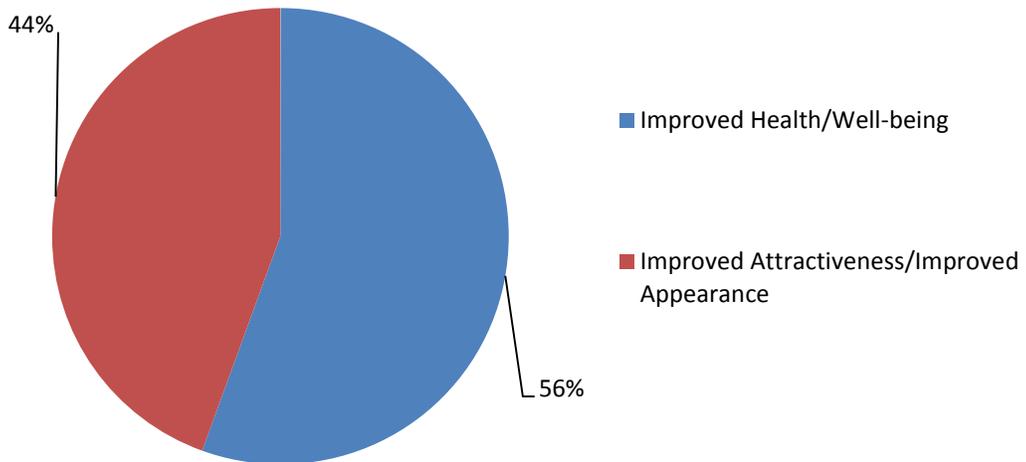


Figure 4-15. Frames found in *Shape* magazine.

## Photos Used in Women's Magazines

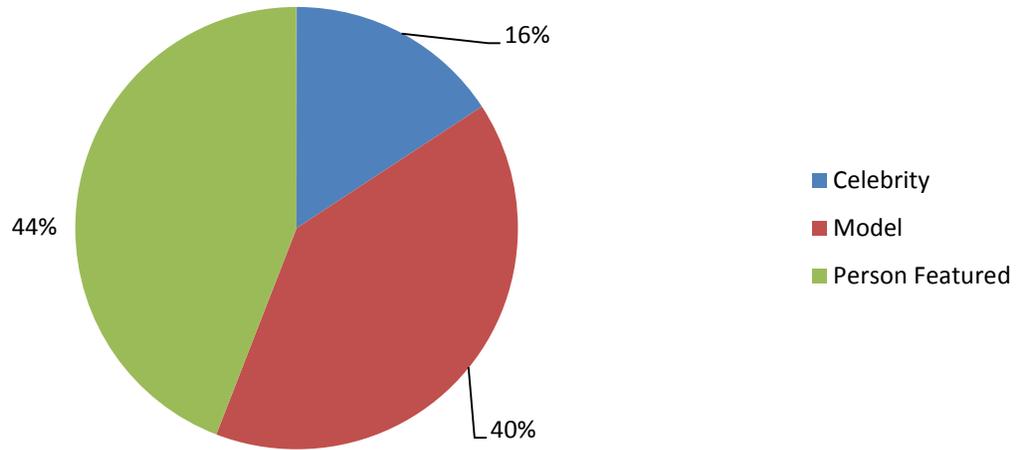


Figure 4-16. Photos used in women's magazines.

## Body Types Presented in Women's Magazines

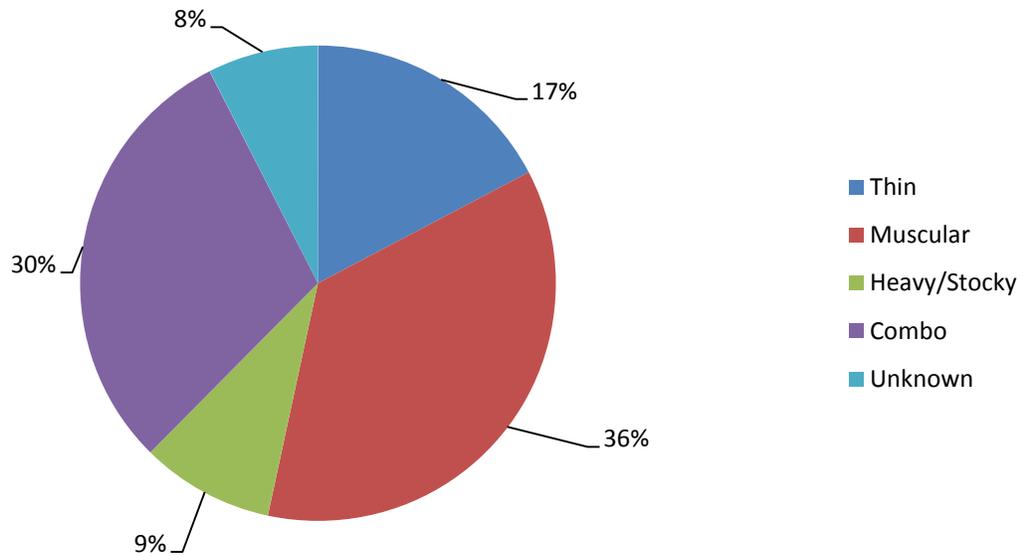


Figure 4-17. Body types in women's magazines.

### Body Types Presented in Women's Fashion Magazines

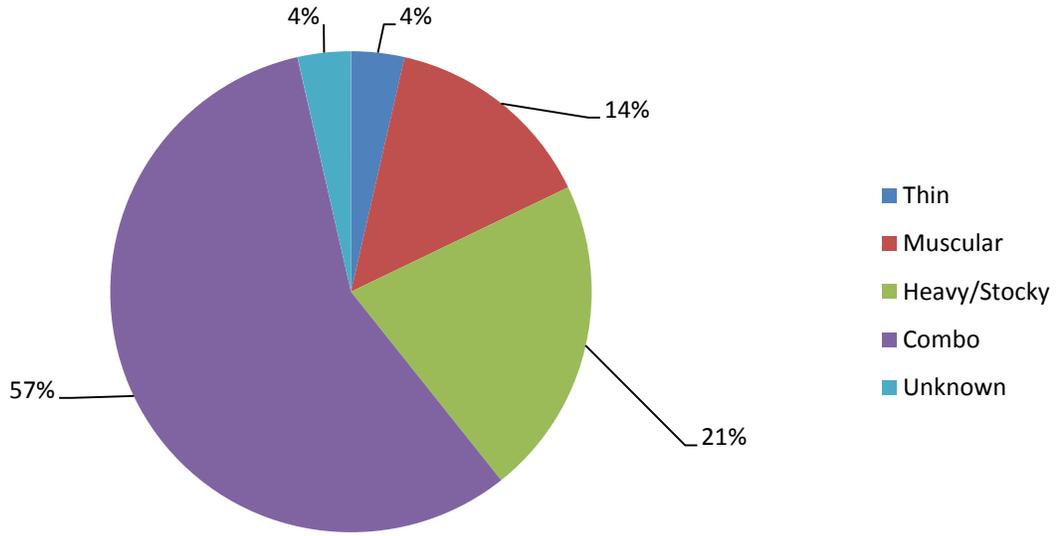


Figure 4-18. Body types presented in women's fashion magazines.

### Body Types Presented in Women's Health Magazines

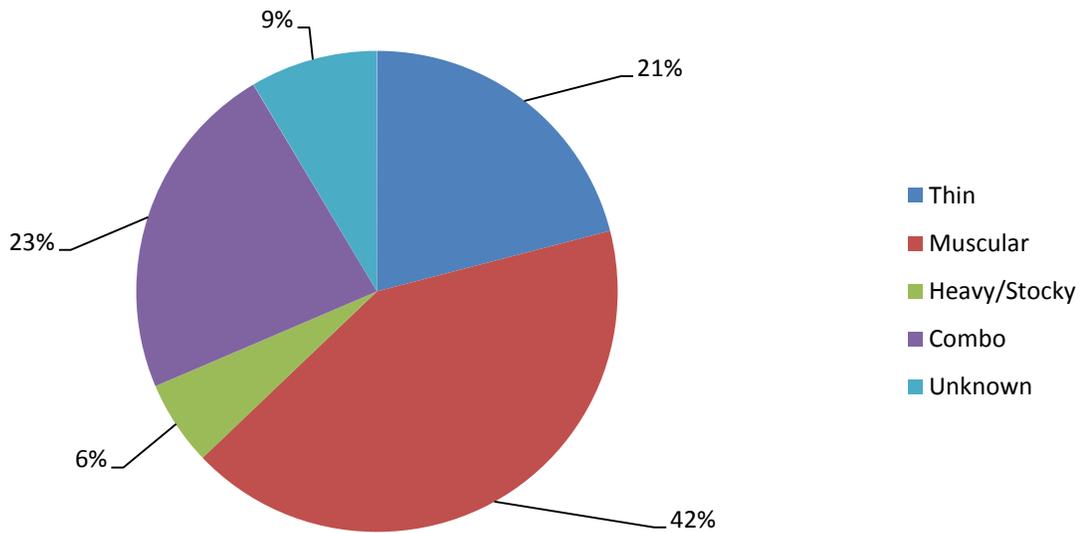


Figure 4-19. Body types presented in women's health magazines.

## Body Sizes Presented in Women's Magazines

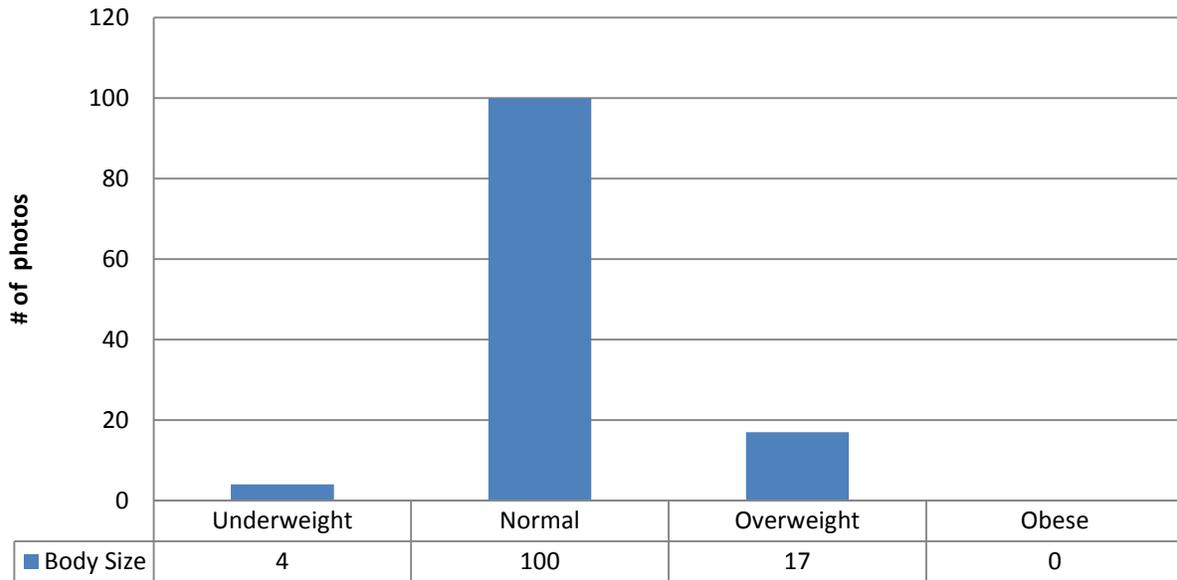


Figure 4-20. Body sizes in women's magazines.

### Body Sizes in Fashion Magazines vs. Health Magazines

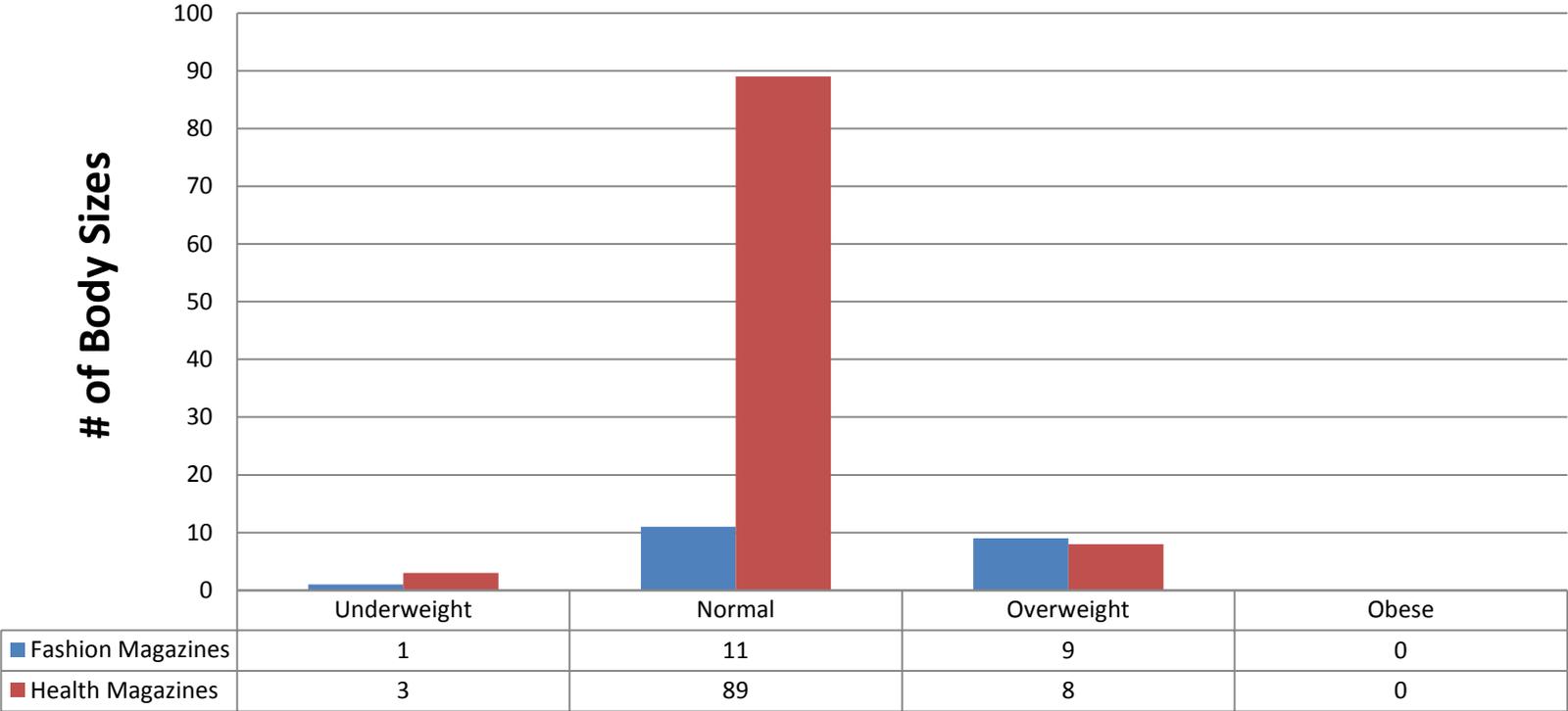


Figure 4-21. Body sizes in fashion magazines vs. health magazines.

## Attire Worn by Women in Women's Magazines

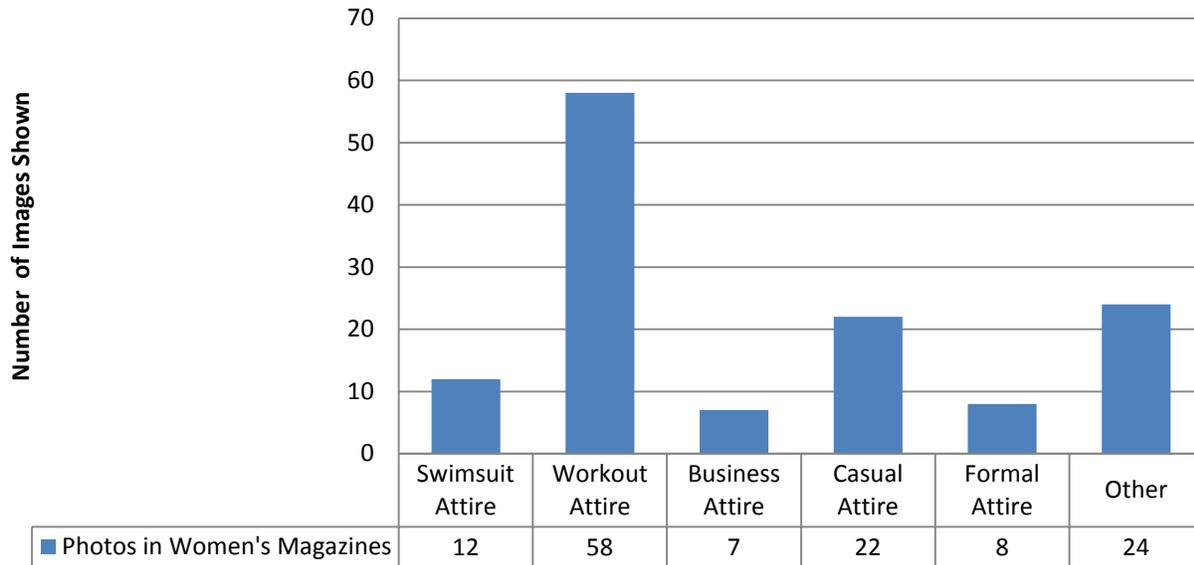


Figure 4-22. Attire worn in women's magazines.

## Types of Images Seen on The Cover of Women's Magazines

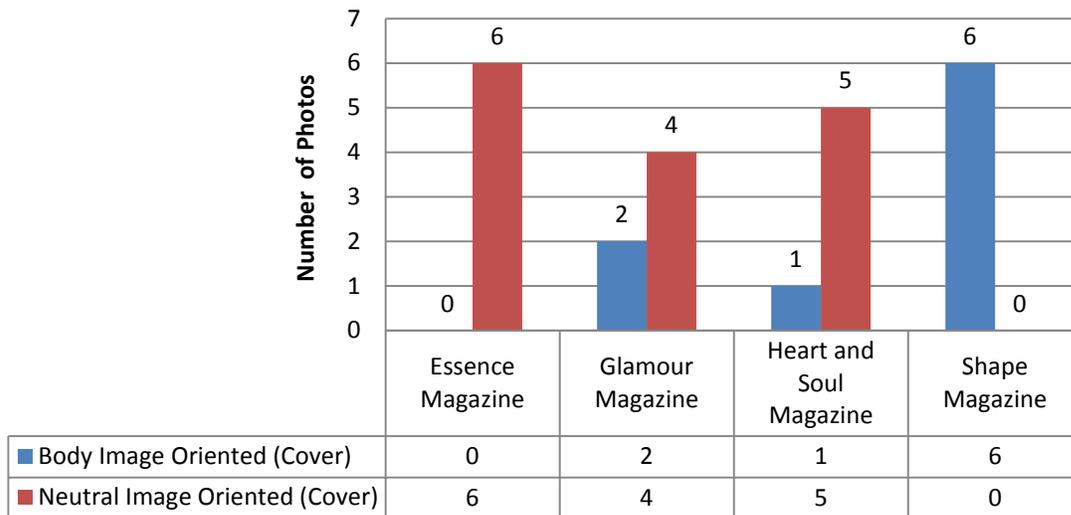


Figure 4-23. Images on magazine covers.

## Neutral Image Oriented Photos vs Body Image Oriented Photos in Women's Magazine Articles

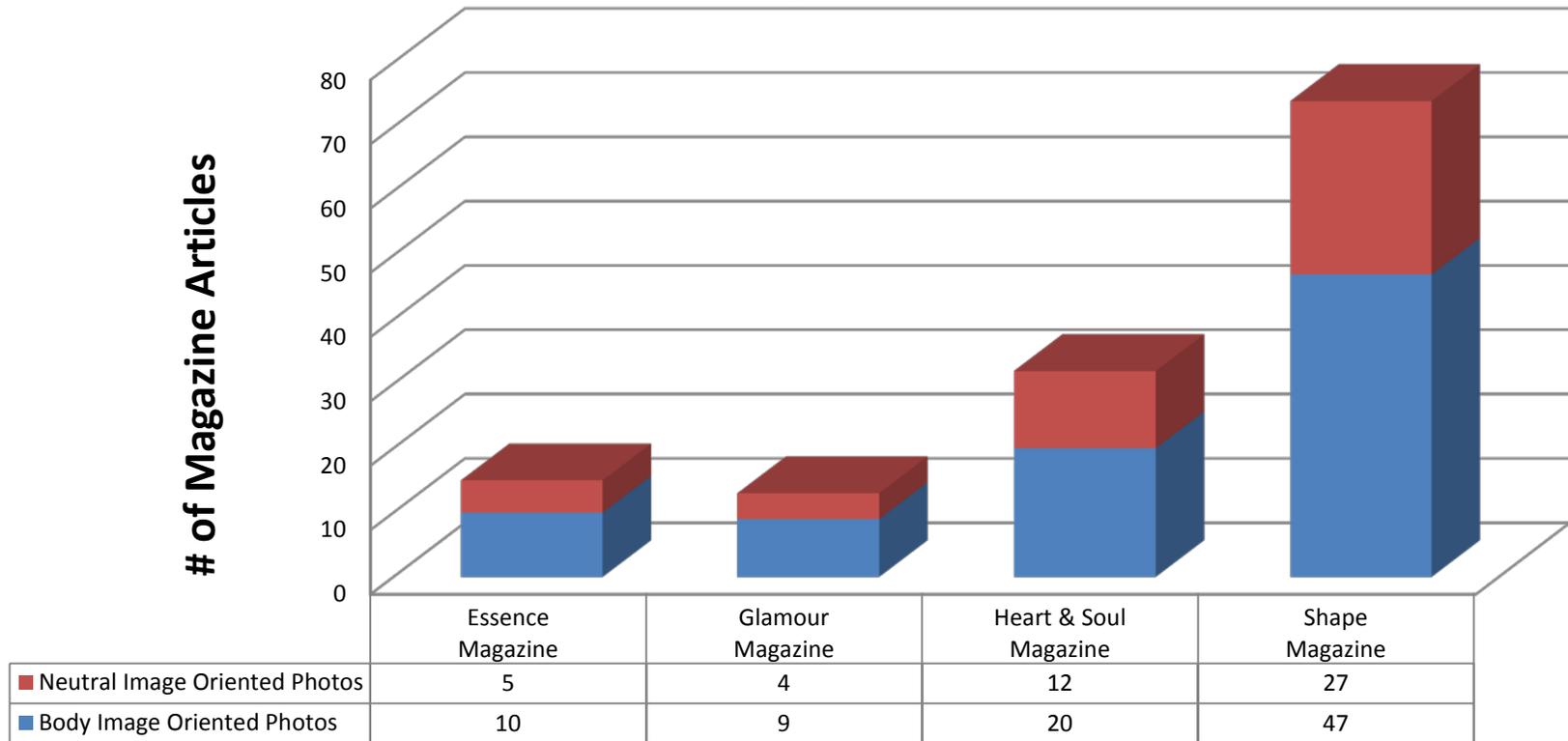


Figure 4-24. Neutral image vs. body image oriented photos in women's magazine articles.

## Percentages of Neutral Image Oriented Photos vs Body Image Oriented Photos in Women's Magazine Articles

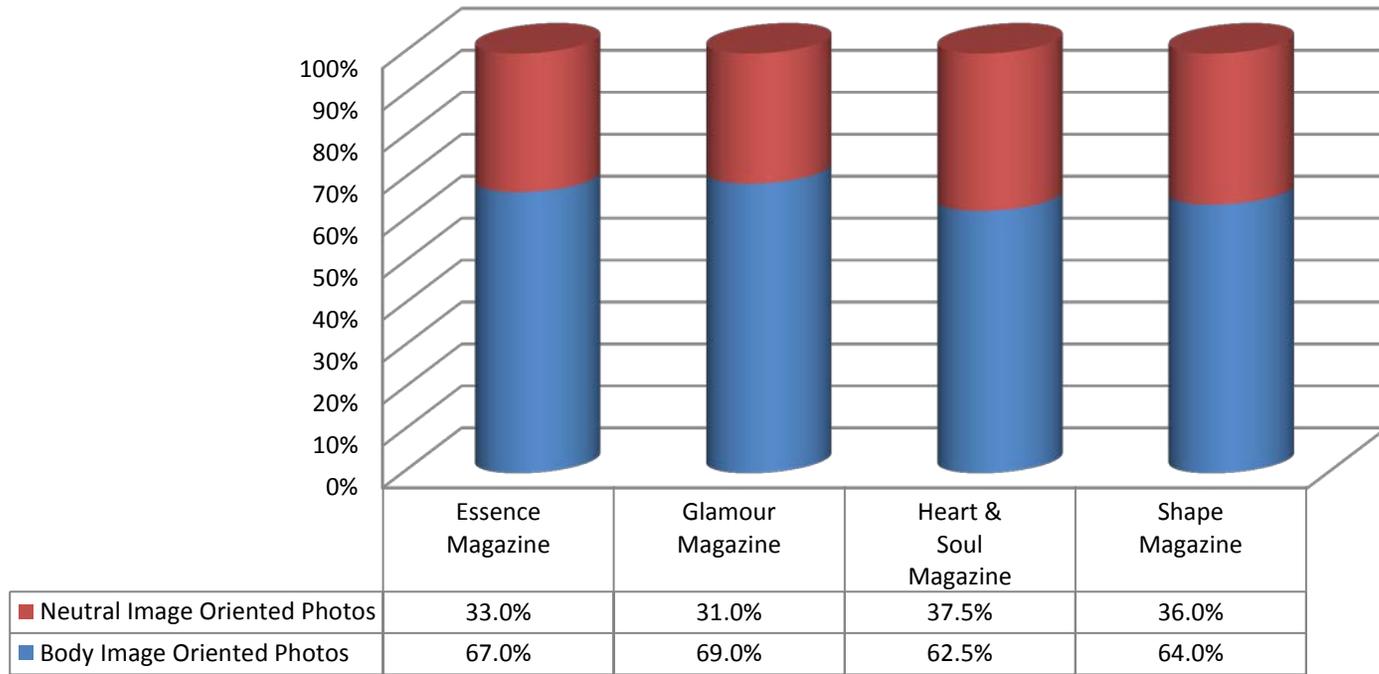


Figure 4-25. Percentages of neutral vs. body image oriented photos in women's magazine articles.

## Comparison of Images Seen in Women's Magazines Between 2008 and 2009

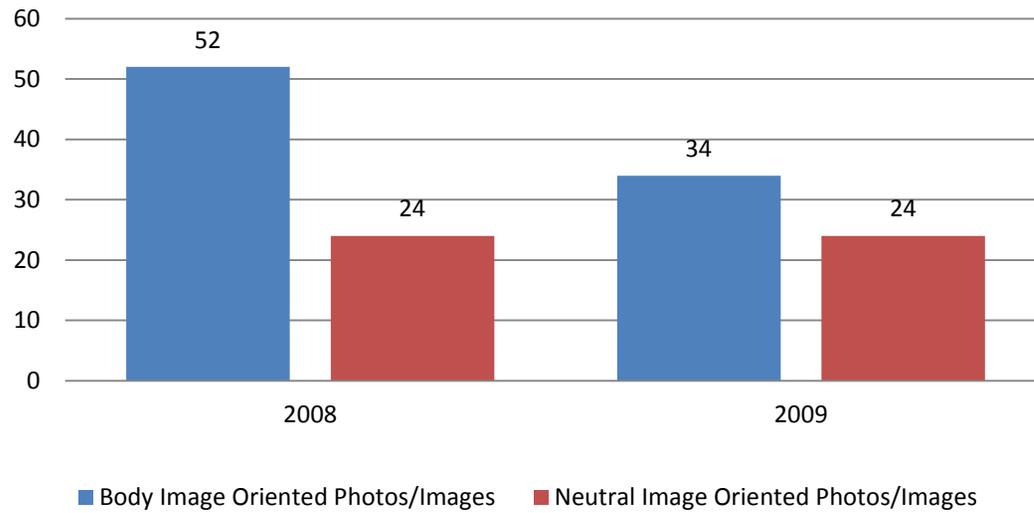


Figure 4-26. Photos seen in women's magazines in 2008 vs. 2009.

## Percentage of Writers' Credentials in Women's Magazines

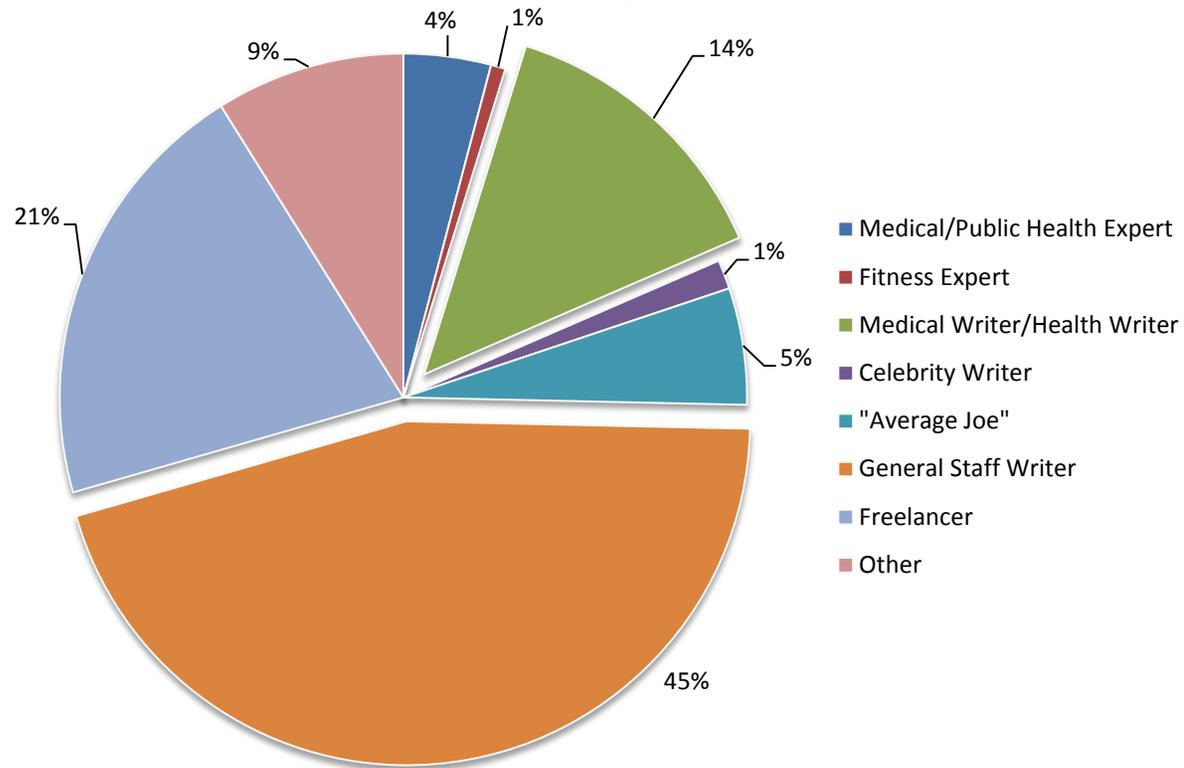


Figure 4-27. Percentages of writers' credentials.

# Writers' Credentials

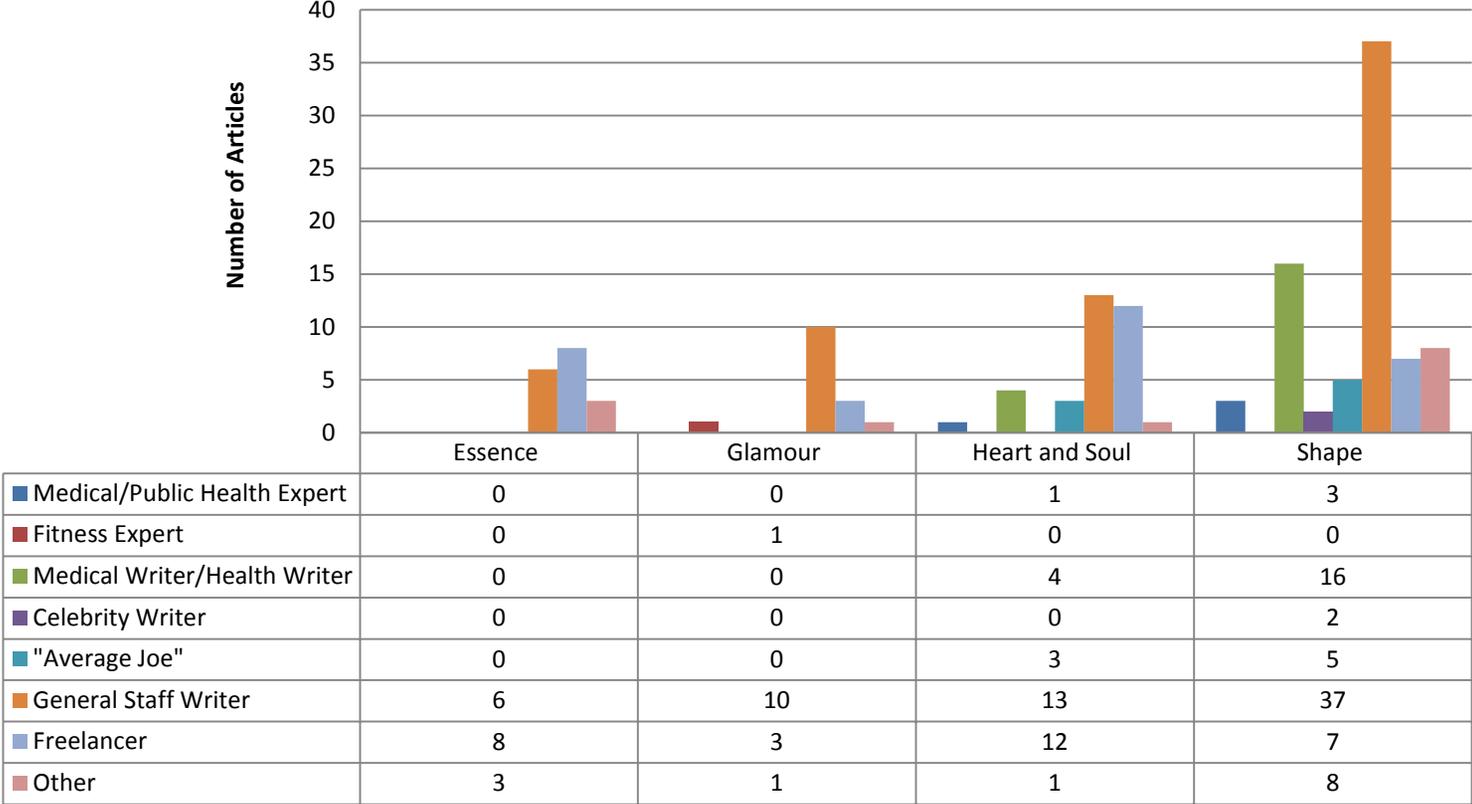


Figure 4-28. Writers' credentials in women's magazines.

## Sources of Indirect Quotes in Women's Magazines

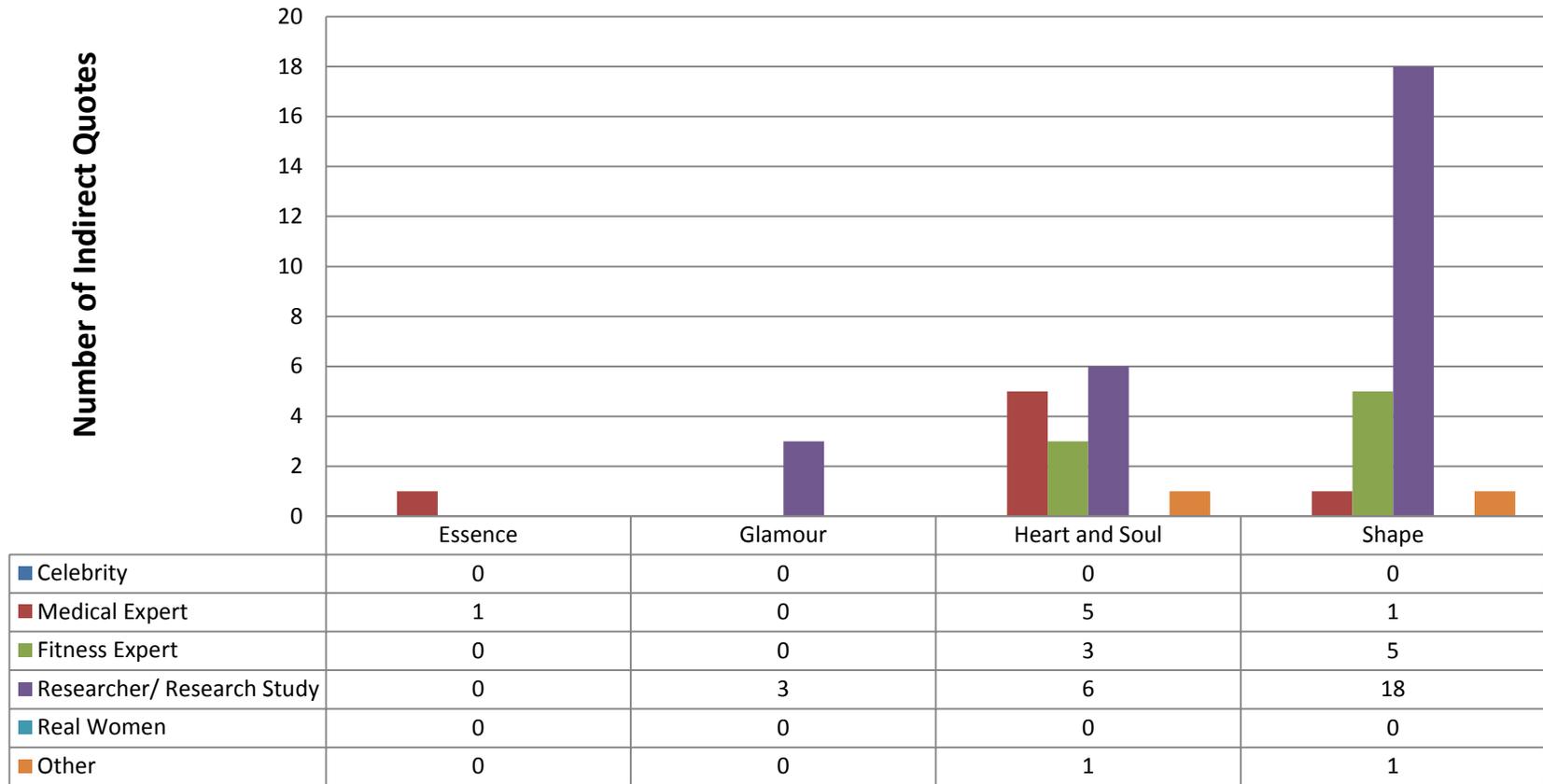


Figure 4-29. Sources of indirect quotes in women's magazines.

## Sources of Direct Quotes in Women's Magazines

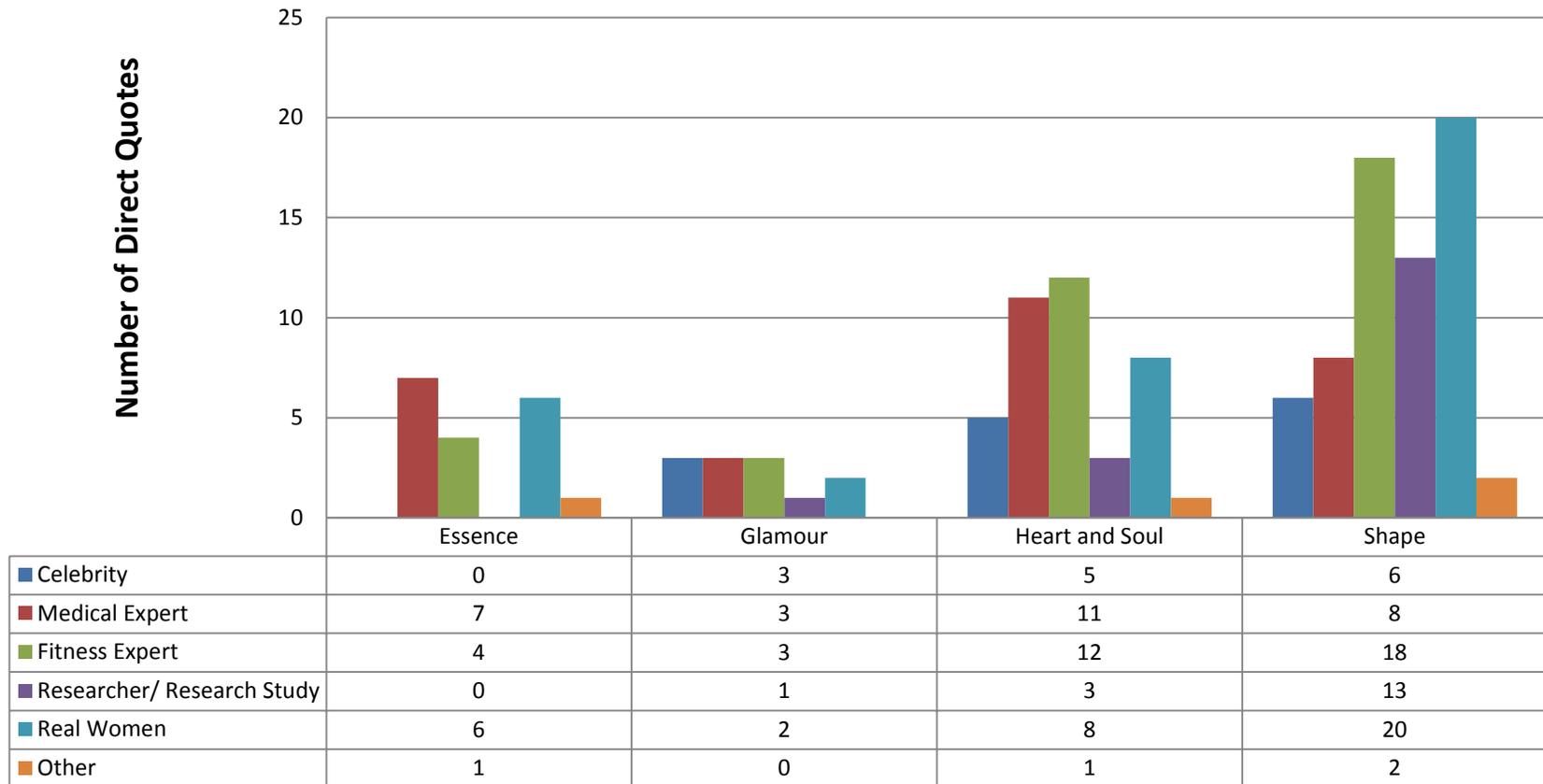


Figure 4-30. Sources of direct quotes in women's magazines.

### Voice Types in Women's Magazines

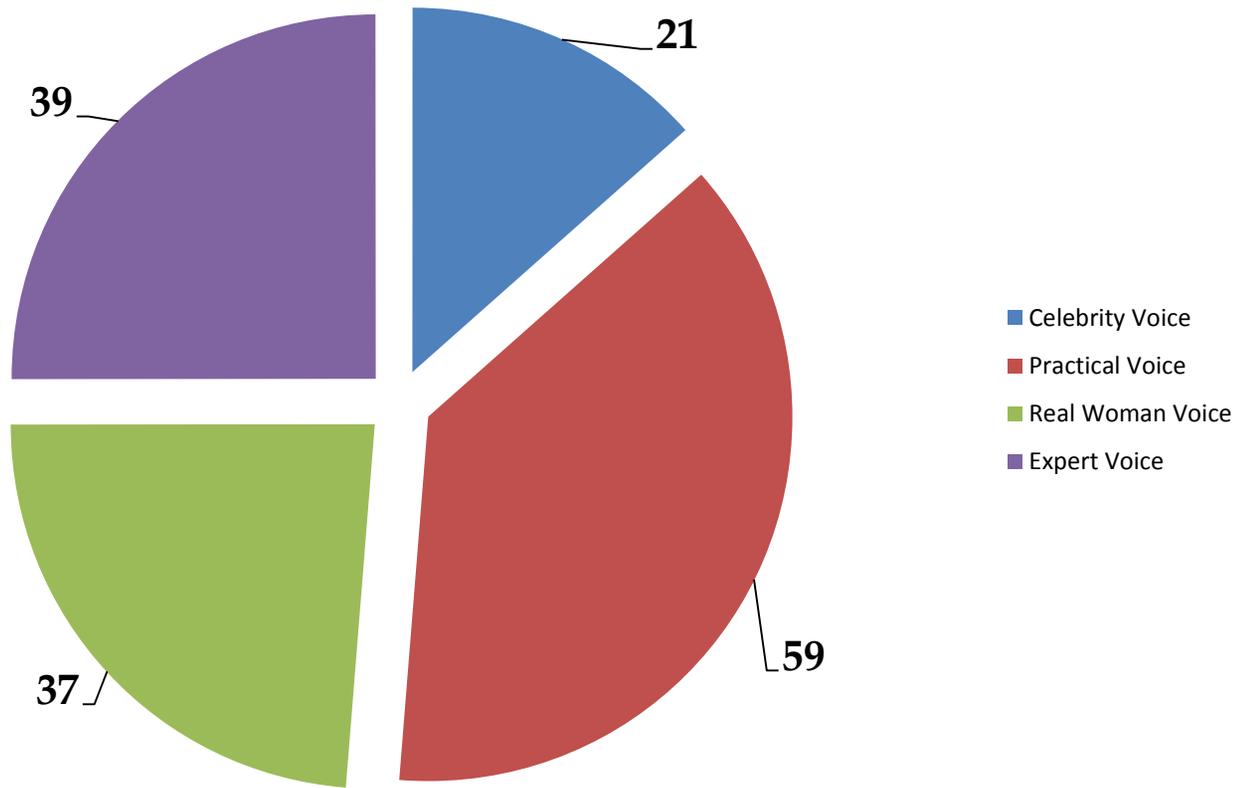


Figure 4-31. Voice types in women's magazines.

## Voice Types in each Magazine

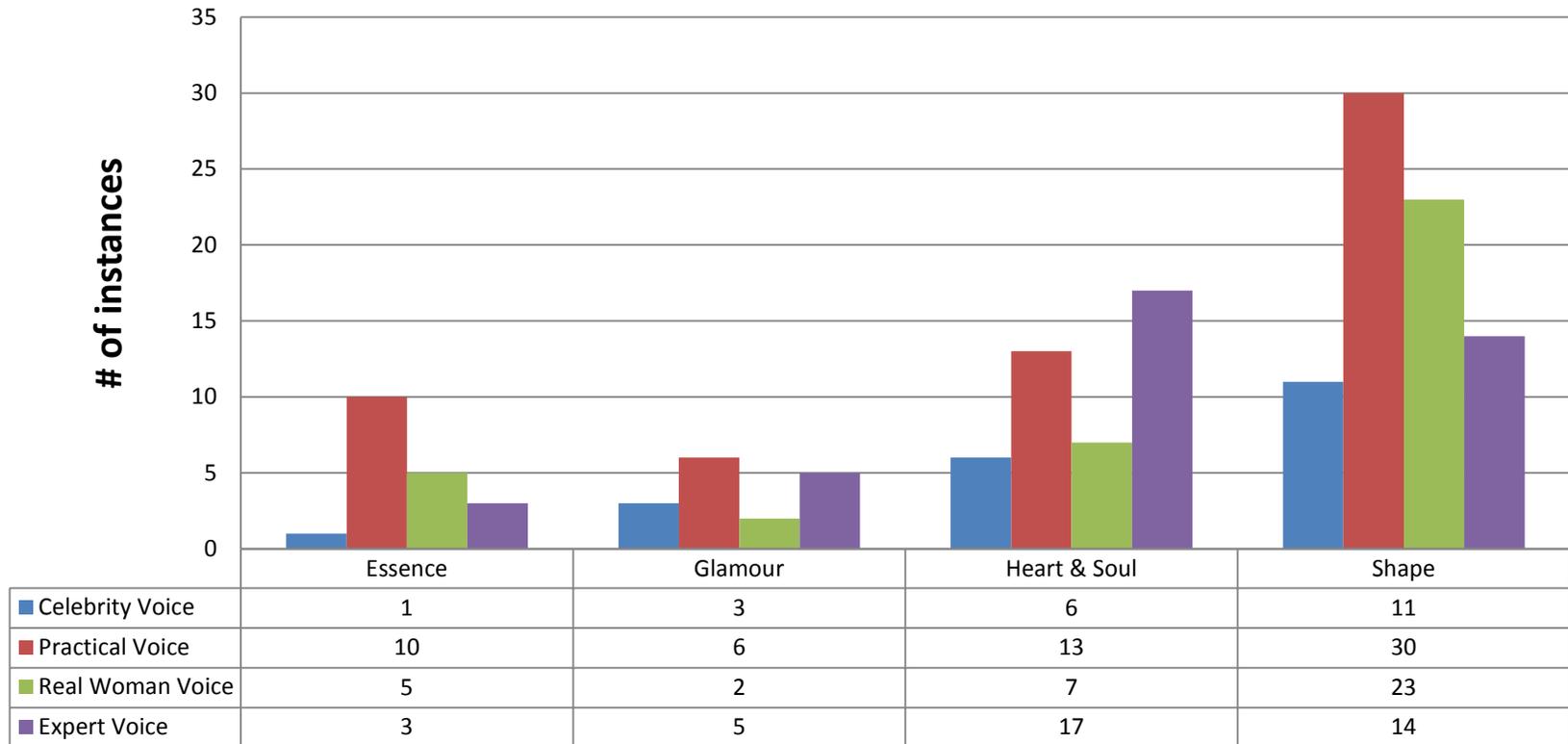


Figure 4-32. Voice types in each magazine.

### Percentage of Main Frames in Mainstream vs. African-American Women's Magazines

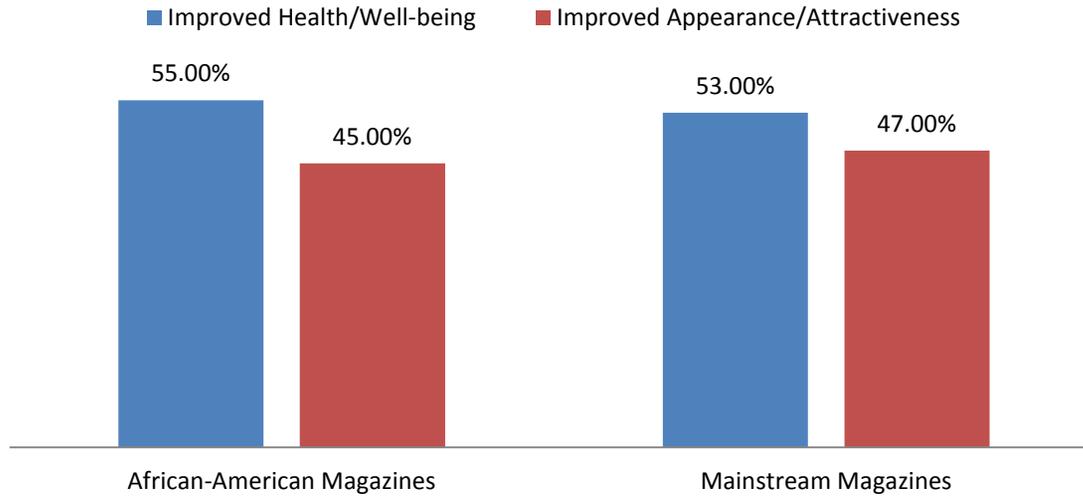


Figure 4-33. Percentages of main frames in main stream vs. African-American magazines.

Table 4-1. Women's magazine and frames.

	Health/ Wellness Frame	Beauty/Attractiveness Frame	Total
African-American	27	22	49
Mainstream	51	45	96
Total	78	67	145

## Percentage of Neutral Image Oriented Photos vs. Body Image Oriented Photos in Mainstream Magazine Articles

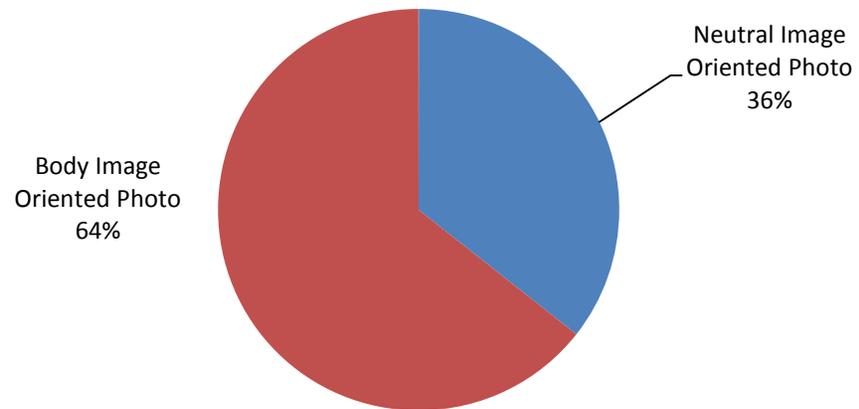


Figure 4-34. Neutral image oriented vs. body image oriented photos in mainstream magazines articles.

## Percentage of Neutral Image Oriented Photos vs. Body Image Oriented Photos in African- American Magazine Articles

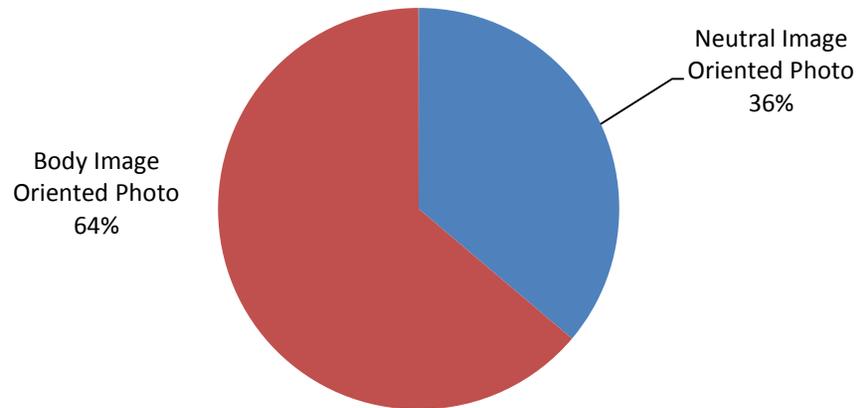


Figure 4-35. Neutral image oriented vs. body image oriented photos in African-American magazine articles.

Table 4-2. Women's magazine articles and types of photos used.

	Neutral image oriented photo	Body image oriented photo	Total
African-American	17	30	47
Mainstream	31	56	87
Total	48	86	134

Table 4-3. Women's magazine covers and types of photos used.

	Neutral image oriented photo	Body image oriented photo	Total
African-American	11	1	12
Mainstream	4	8	12
Total	15	9	24

### Photos Used in Mainstream Women's Magazines

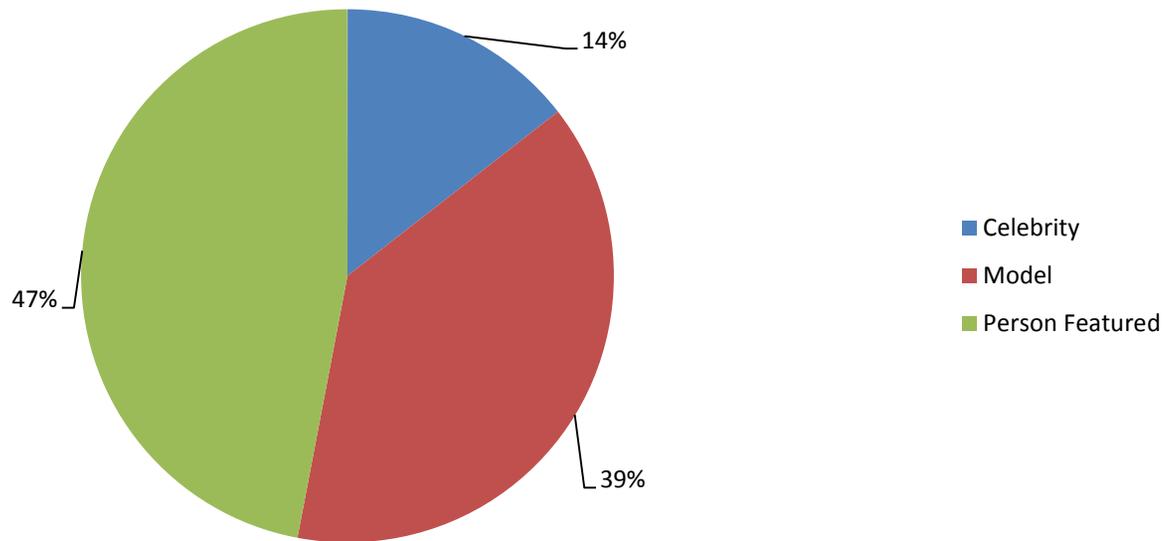


Figure 4-36. Photos used in mainstream magazines.

## Photos Used in African-American Women's Magazines

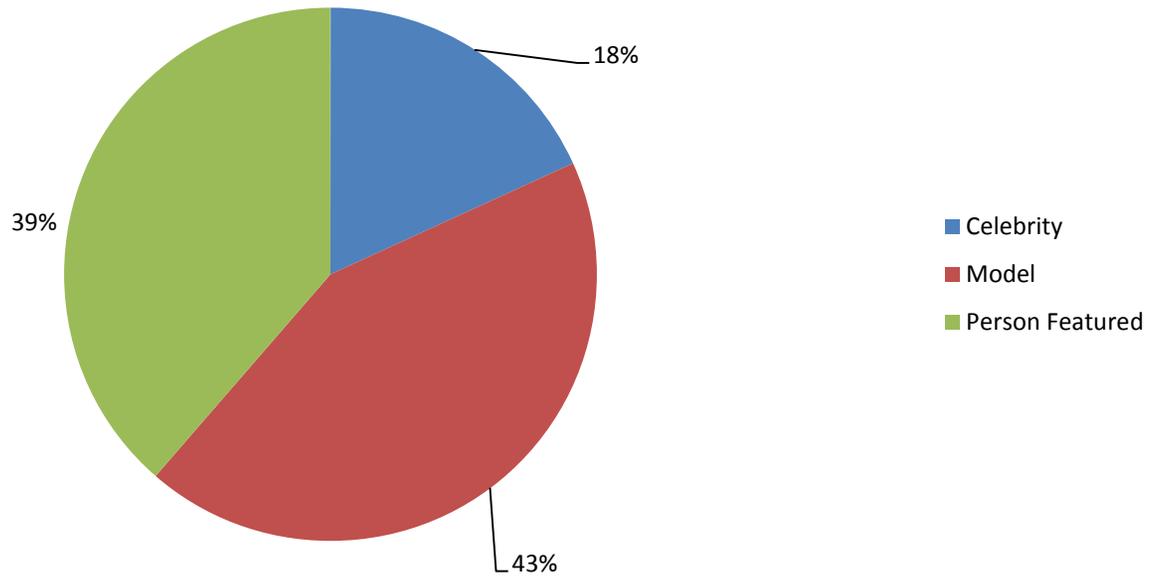


Figure 4-37. Photos used in African-American magazines.

## Body Types Presented in Mainstream Magazines

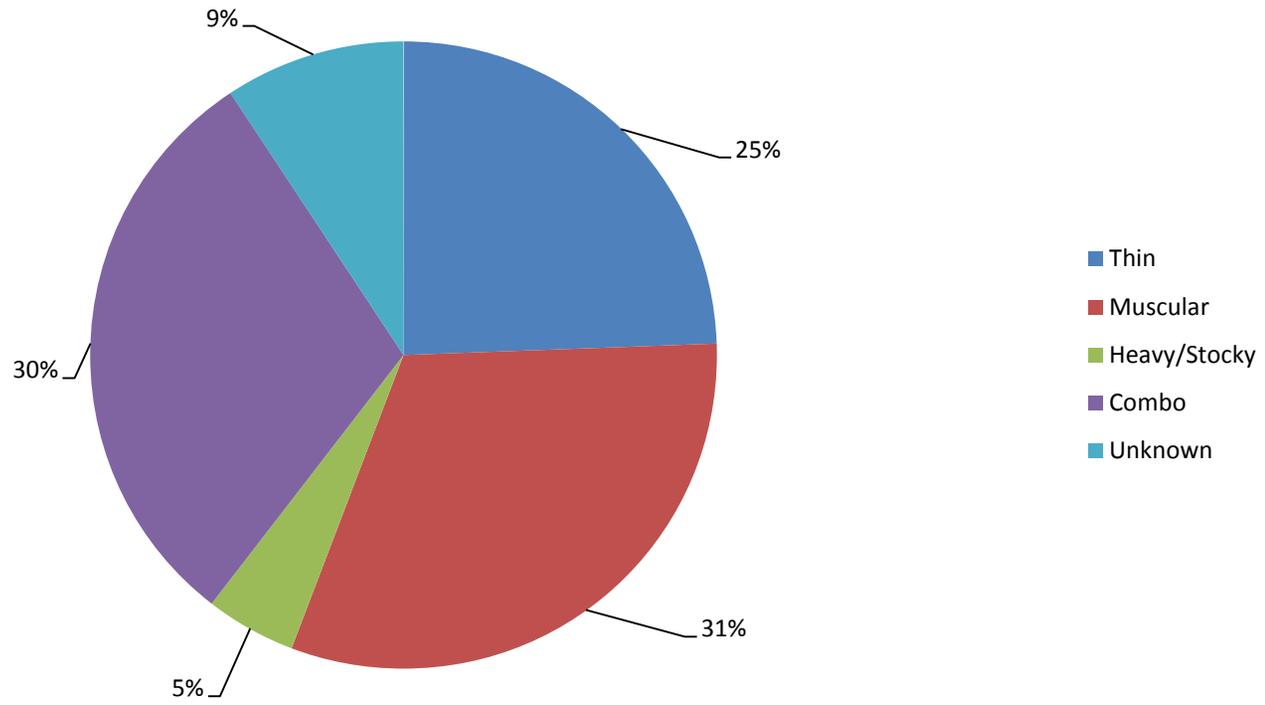


Figure 4-38. Body types in mainstream magazines.

## Body Types Presented in African-American Magazines

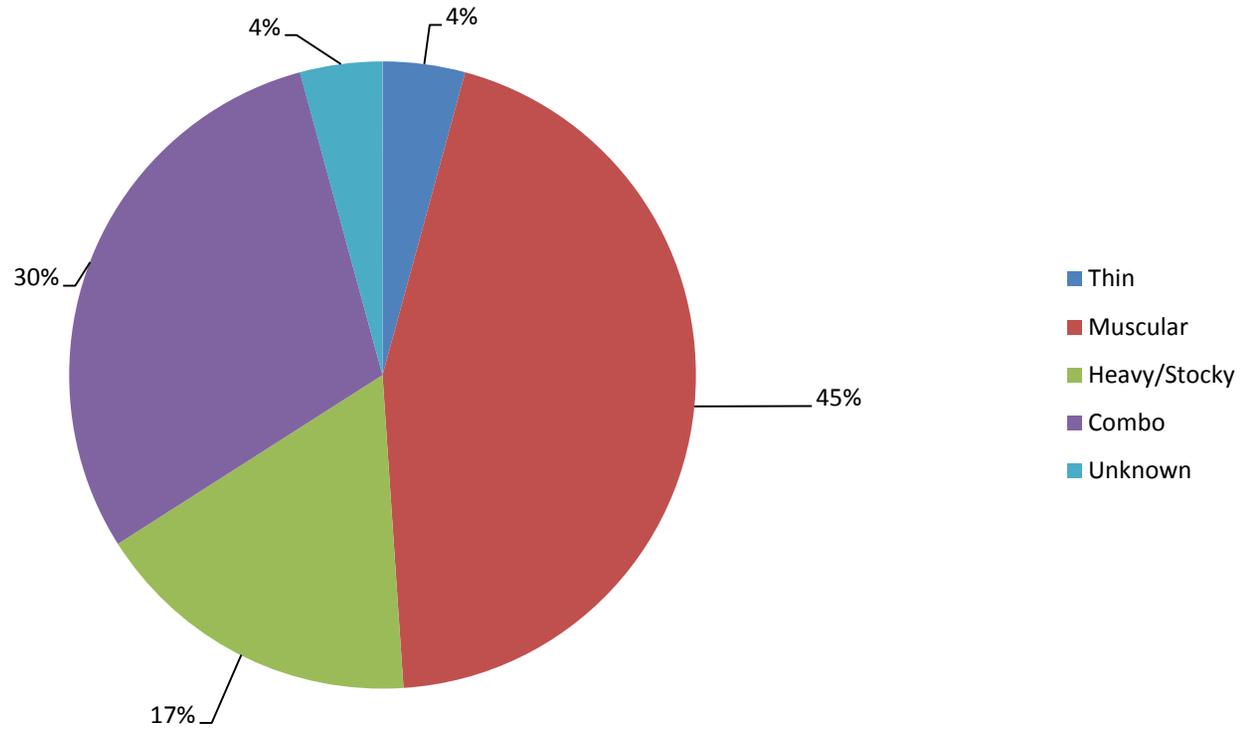


Figure 4-39. Body types in African-American magazines.

## Body Sizes Protrayed in Mainstream Magazines

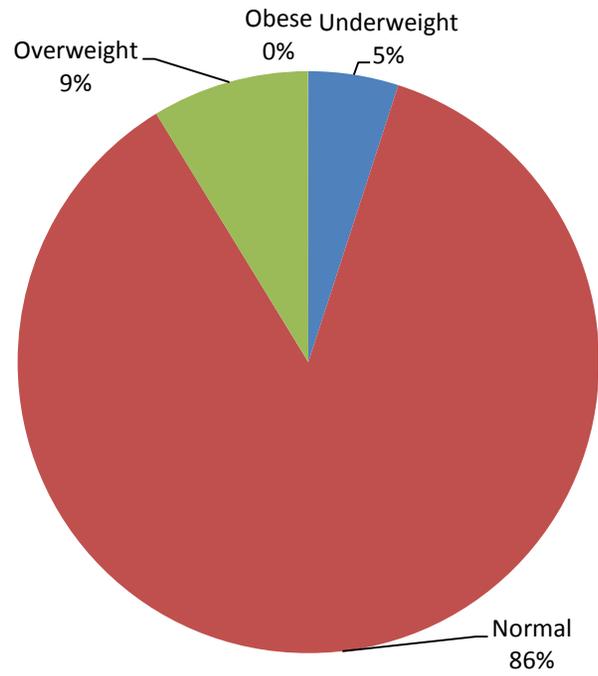


Figure 4-40. Body sizes in mainstream magazines.

## Body Sizes Protrayed in African- American Magazines

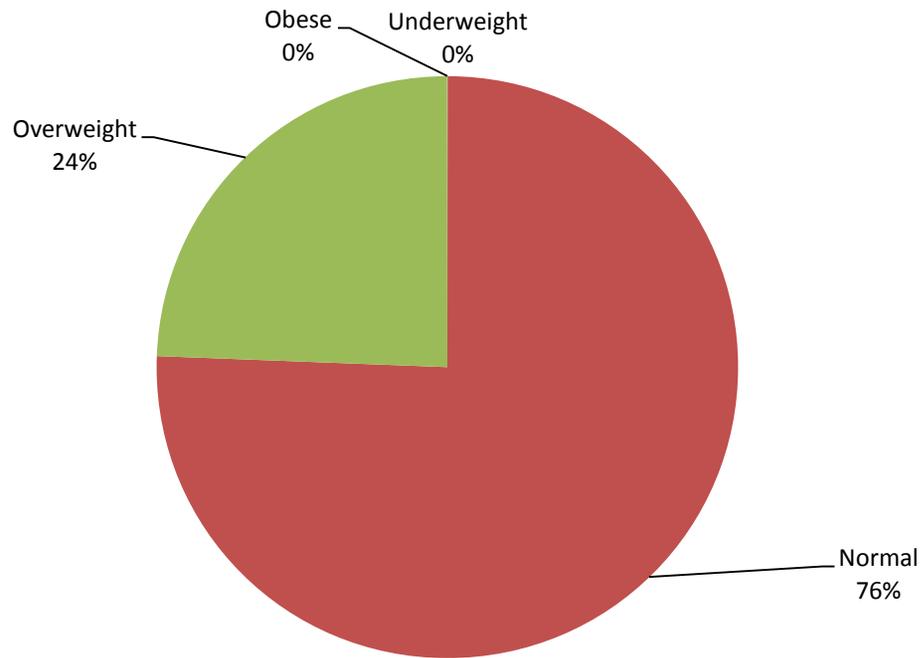


Figure 4-41. Body sizes in African-American magazines.

## Women's Attire Shown in Mainstream Magazines

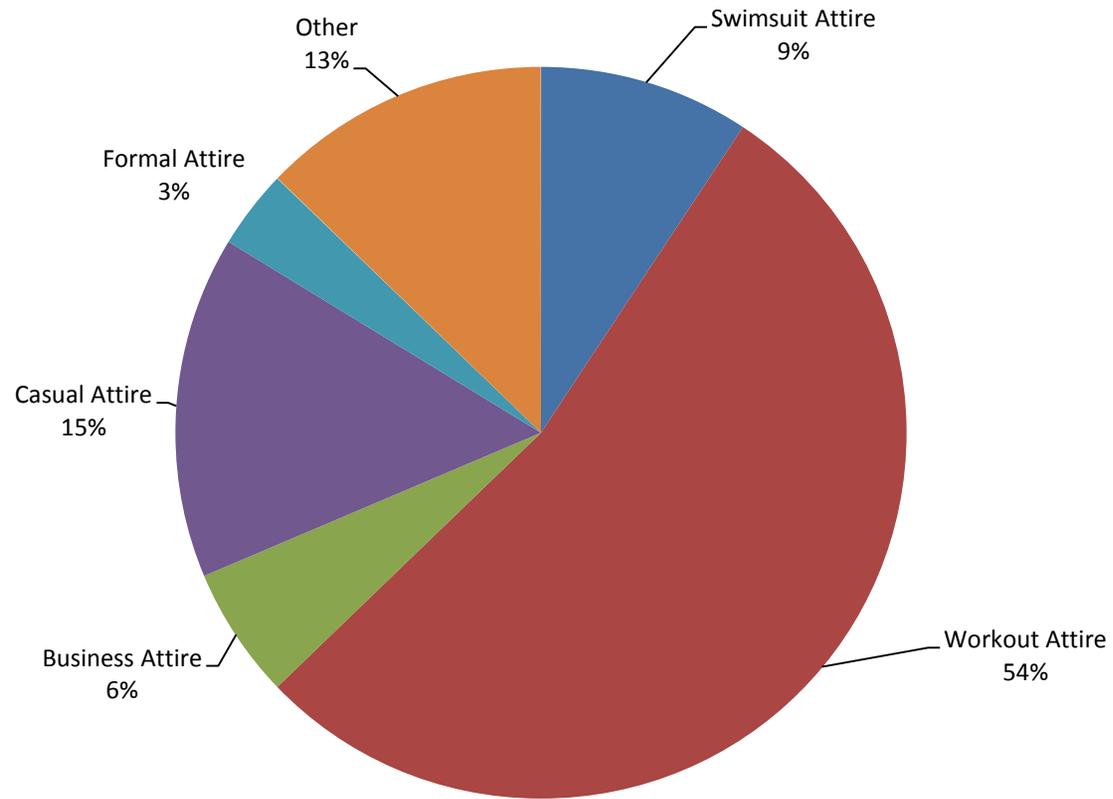


Figure 4-42. Women's attire in mainstream magazines.

# Women's Attire Shown in African-American Magazines

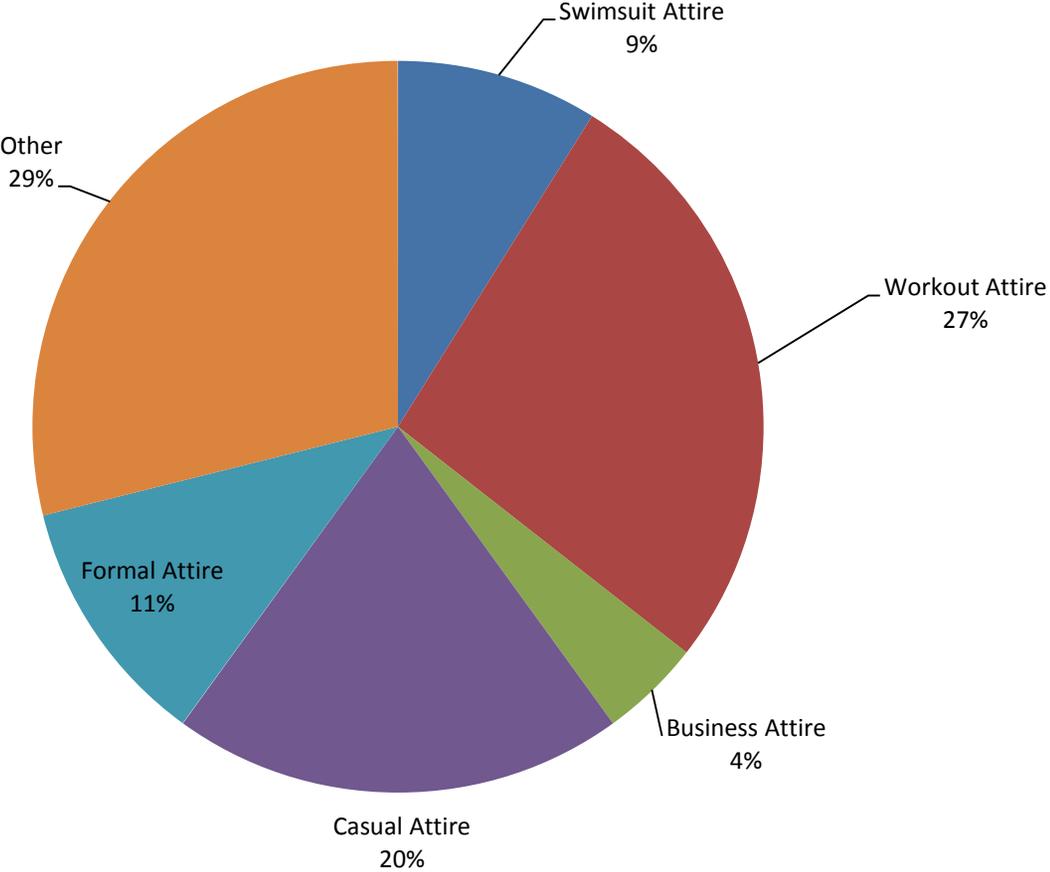


Figure 4-43. Women's attire in African-American magazines.

# Percentages of Different "Voices" Found in Mainstream Magazines

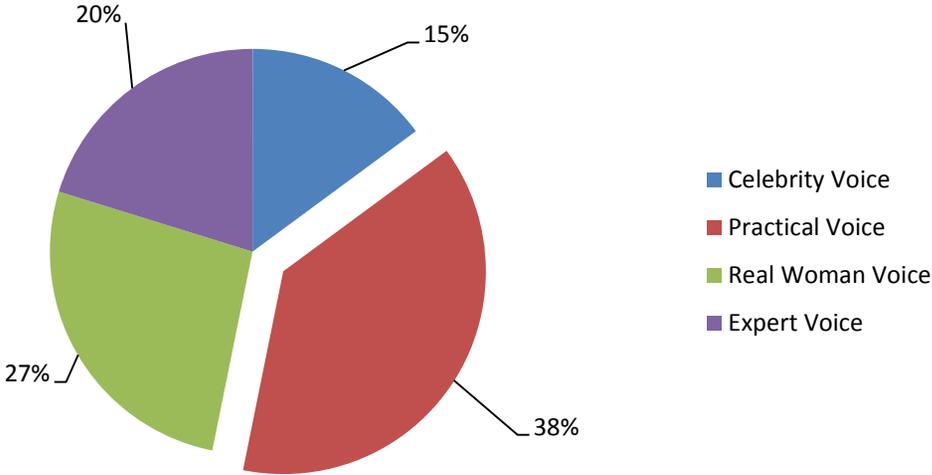


Figure 4-44. Voices in mainstream magazines.

## Percentages of Voices found in African-American Magazines

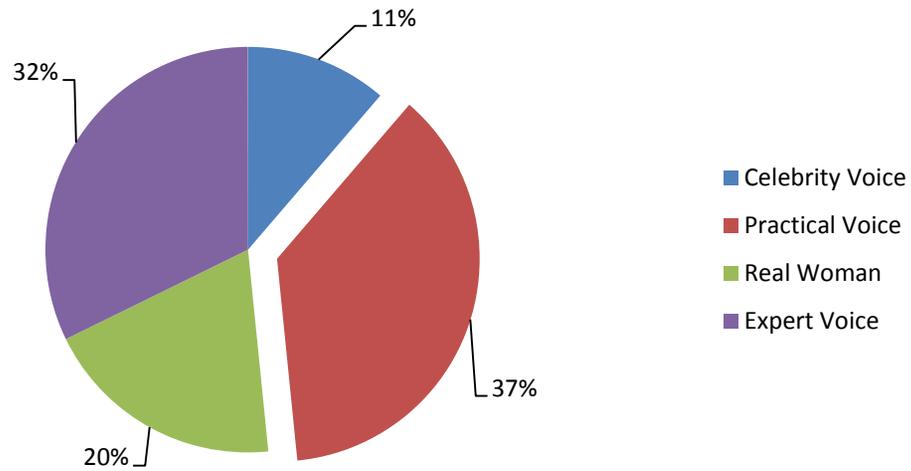


Figure 4-45. Voices in African-American magazines.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### **Goals of the Study**

The goal of this study was to determine the manner in which weight and body image are covered in women's magazines, and from there determine if weight and body image are covered differently in mainstream vs. African-American magazines.

Previous literature has determined that weight and body image are both topics frequently covered in women's magazines. In addition, previous literature has determined that the manner in which weight and body image is perceived and emotionally processed is culturally specific to white and African-American women.

To accomplish the goals of this study, four women's magazines were analyzed. One set of fashion and health women's magazines came from the mainstream sector (*Glamour* and *Shape*) and one set of fashion and health women's magazines came from the African-American sector (*Essence* and *Heart & Soul*). This study examined the types of photos used, the writer's credentials, the frames used when advice was given, clothing, age, race and origin of information cited. The results of this study revealed that, in general, the coverage of weight and body image in mainstream and African-American women's magazines was similar. However, there were a few distinct differences that could have social, theoretical and practical implications in the future. In addition, this study and others like it can possibly aid transdisciplinary efforts among journalists and health professionals to decrease healthcare disparities among minorities; and in turn, potentially improve healthcare outcomes.

## **Frames Used in Women's Magazines**

Two major frames were present in this analysis of weight and body image in women's magazines. When these topics were discussed, the information was framed as either "Improved Health/Well-being" or "Improved Attractiveness/Appearance." Of the articles coded, the improved health/well-being frame was present in 54% (n=78) of the articles and the improved attractiveness/appearance frame was apparent in 46% (n=67) of the articles coded.

These findings are different from a previous study conducted on health messages in women's magazines. Moyer, C.A., Vishnu, L.O., & Sonnad, S.S., (1999) discovered, "Less than a fifth of the magazine articles dealt with health-related topics. Of those, a third dealt with diet, with the majority of the articles emphasizing weight loss rather than eating for optimal health," (p. 137). This study further concluded that the topics discussed in women's magazines did not correlate with leading health concerns and health risks. The researchers determined that this type of information did not best facilitate health risk reduction and may lead women to focus on the wrong aspects of their health and healthcare (Moyer, et al., 1999).

The current study found that a variety of health related topics were covered in this sample women's magazines. In addition, many of the topics discussed were significant health concerns for women, including heart disease, obesity, diabetes and pregnancy. This positive change in the coverage of weight and body image in women's magazine may signify a positive change in health outcomes for women who look to magazines as a reliable source of information.

When compared to mainstream magazines, African-American magazines contained 2% more improved health/well-being framed articles. A Chi Square analysis

was conducted to see if a significant difference in the use of frames in mainstream vs. African-American magazines was evident. However, the sample size was too small to determine a significant difference.

Although the pool is small, previous studies that compared African-American magazines with mainstream magazines found a lack of healthy messages in African-American magazines. However, the present study revealed a change in that pattern. Although by a slight margin, the proportion of messages framed as improved health/well-being was greater in African-American magazines than mainstream magazines.

#### **“Neutral Image Oriented” vs. “Body Image Oriented” Photos**

In terms of neutral and body image oriented photos from the magazine articles, mainstream and African-American magazines yielded the same percentages. For both types of magazines, 64% of the photos found in the articles of women magazines were body image oriented, and 36% of the photos were neutral image oriented. These findings agreed with previous studies that warned about the negative images presented in women’s magazines and that they were likely unhealthy to the self-esteem of readers. In their 1996 study, Tiggeman and Pickering stated:

“Only the very thinnest 5–10% of all American women can actually acquire and easily maintain the supermodel's salient and most desired feature: her fat-free body. The remaining 90–95% of American women have fallen prey to the message that they are abnormal: that they improve their lives and selves only if they diet, exercise, and lose weight” (Williamson 1998, p. 65).

Previous research has not only warned against the dangers in the type of pictures used in women's magazines, it has also warned against the possible consequences of

frequent exposure. As with most poisons, continual exposure to a noxious stimulus will result in a more potent and lasting effect. These statements are the premise of Gerbner's cultivation theory (1986). Consistent exposure to super thin bodies breeds feelings of decreased self-worth. One study examined the media's effect on body image and eating disorders in women. The study found that women who are exposed to super thin images also have feelings of body dissatisfaction (Thompson and Heinberg, 1999). These feelings damage the effectiveness of health education and coaching via the Health Belief Model. When negative internalized feelings exist, motivation and self-efficacy diminishes. Also, as a result of negative internalized feelings, the potential for positive health behaviors decreases significantly. According to another study, women who are exposed to such images are more likely to engage in a variety of self-destructive behaviors, which include eating disorders, binge drinking, substance abuse and unprotected sex (Cohen 2006).

Interestingly, the current study revealed an improvement in the words used to cover weight and body image in women's magazines; however, the pictures used in the discussion of weight and body image in women's magazines still mimics the objectifying and emotionally degrading images exposed in past studies. However, all hope is not lost. Thompson and Heinberg felt that media had the same potential to help as it did to harm (1999). Ultimately, it is up to journalist and health professionals to govern what images are projected.

Photos used on mainstream and African-American magazine covers were distinctly different. For example, 67% (n=8) of the mainstream magazine covers featured body image oriented photos while only 8% (n=1) of the African-American

magazine covers featured body image oriented photos. The majority of the photos on the cover of mainstream magazines featured celebrities with their mid-sections exposed. Some of these photos featured celebrities in provocative poses. In contrast, the majority of the photos on the cover of African-American magazines featured headshots, where the body of the celebrity was not visible. If the cover did reveal the entire body of the celebrity, the person was fully dressed, standing in a confident pose.

The differences in the presentation of images on the cover of women's magazines coincide with each individual group's value system. Among mainstream magazines, it appeared that the female body was the product being marketed. Thus, the majority of the covers highlighted and exposed different aspects of the female body. In contrast, among the African- American covers, it appeared personality and attitudes were the products being marketed. Thus, these covers featured the person's face or personality expressed in a pose. Previous research has demonstrated that white women value a thin frame above all other characteristics, while African-American women, who do value a nice physique, place greater value on personality traits (Roberts, et al., 2006).

When the frequency of body imaged oriented photos vs. neutral image oriented photos seen in 2008 were compared to 2009, the findings revealed that within that one year, the number of body image oriented photos in women's magazines had declined and the number of neutral image oriented photos had increased. This finding further demonstrates that the type of photos used to discuss the issue of weight and body image in women's magazines maybe improving. Further research is needed to determine why this improvement is occurring. Despite the visual shift in photo usage

from 2008 to 2009, the majority of the images seen in women's magazines from this sample were body image oriented photographs. Thus, there is still room for improvement.

### **Body Types**

Between the two genres of magazines, the muscular/athletic body type was seen most often. In mainstream magazines, the thin/linear body type was represented 25% of the time. In contrast, this body type was only represented 4% of the time in African-American magazines. Conversely, the heavy/ stocky body type was seen 17% of the time in African-American magazines, but was only seen 5% of the time in mainstream magazines.

The body types used in the different magazines are consistent with the body types valued by each respected magazine's readership. However, body types are not exclusive to one particular culture or race. Just as there are overweight white women who read women's magazines, there are underweight African-American women who read women's magazine. Thus, one must ponder the possible implications of a reader not feeling well represented and isolated from the images seen in women's magazines. Does an overweight white woman buy in to the health advice offered to her, although no one in the magazine looks like her? Do feelings of isolation and internalized negativity cause her to reject the health advice given to her? Does the reader feel any health efforts would be futile since she never did look like the other women in the magazine? Future qualitative studies are required to investigate these questions.

### **Body Sizes**

Among both types of women's magazines, normal body sizes were seen the majority of the time. There was no representation of underweight body sizes in African-

American magazines and there was a small representation (9%) of overweight women portrayed in this sample of mainstream women's magazines. Interestingly, in this magazine sample, when fashion and health magazines were compared, overweight body sizes were seen more often in fashion magazines (29%) than in health magazines (8%). The majority of these images came from *Essence* magazine. These findings demonstrated how African-American fashion magazines are leading the pack in presenting a variety of body sizes in a positive and purposeful light. Every month, *Essence* showed women of all sizes that they can look beautiful. This was accomplished by the series, "Dress for Your Body." Each issue featured practical steps and images that helped guide plus-sized women in finding a look most suitable for a larger body size. *Glamour* made attempts to feature fashion advice for women of different body sizes. Unfortunately, in one article entitled, "A Skirt for Every Body," all of the models featured were thin and did not represent a cross-section of the female population. Thus, in order to stop the vicious cycle of exposure to negative images, feelings of worthlessness, followed by negative actions, all women's magazines editors must evaluate what they are writing about and how the image connected to it enhances or contradicts their desired message.

### **Photographs used in Women's Magazines**

Photographs were coded for three subject types: featured person, model and celebrity. In women's magazines, the photo type most frequently used was of the women featured in the article. This type of photo was used 44% (n=56) of the time. The photo type used the least in women's magazines was of celebrities. These findings demonstrated an improvement from results found in previous studies. Stice and Staw (1999) stated that mass media may be the strongest communicator of negative body

image messages (p. 289). However, from this sample of women's magazines, the majority of the photos presented were of "everyday" women who were featured in the articles as a result of weight loss success. Many of these pictures were amateur shots submitted by the featured person, which is in stark contrast to professional, airbrushed photos of celebrities.

### **Credentials of Authors**

A writer's background and experiences likely influence the manner in which any topic is covered. Within women's magazines, the articles that discuss weight and body image were primarily written by general staff writers (n=66) (45%). Thus, general writers with no apparent expertise in health or fitness sciences created and relayed health and fitness messages to the masses. Interestingly, medical/health writers only authored (14%) (n=20) of the articles, while medical/public health experts on authored (4%) (n=6) of the articles in women's magazines. *Heart & Soul* and *Shape* were the only titles that used medical/health writers and medical/public health experts to write their articles. In addition, out of the entire sample only one article was written by a fitness expert. It appeared in *Glamour*.

The concern over who is dispensing health information in mass media is growing. In a 2009 *Newsweek*® article, "Live Your Best Life Ever," Weston Kosova blasted Oprah Winfrey for using her show and monthly magazine as a platform for faulty health advice (newsweek.com). He harshly criticized several celebrities and renowned health professionals for disseminating incorrect and potentially dangerous health information. With each case, he demeaned their credentials and debased their ideas. For example, although Jenny McCarthy is an autism activist who is against childhood vaccinations, Kosova highlighted that Ms. McCarthy was a *Playboy*© model and actress. This tactic

of character assassination continued when Kosova discussed Dartmouth- educated ob-gyn, Dr. Christiane Northrup and her beliefs concerning the HPV vaccination. In addition to mocking her professional opinion, he attacked her spiritual beliefs. In the article, Kosova included direct quotes from professionals who shared his opinion and he cited several research studies to back his point. Ironically, while Kosova was ripping the qualifications of established journalist and health professionals, and beseeching the reader to question everything they read and hear, he himself lacked certain qualifications. Interestingly, Weston Kosova did not have a degree in journalism, nor did he have a health science background. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a B.A. in political science (thedailybeast.com).

Undoubtedly, Mr. Kosova is intelligent and gifted, and the health advice of any celebrity or professional should be tested. However, one could question the manner in which his article was framed. Did Kosova have the skill and knowledge to determine which frames were most appropriate for this topic? Kosova cited several articles, but did he have the skill and knowledge to question the methodology of these studies and verify their validity? Did he have the skill and knowledge to research the funding sources of the studies he choose in order to detect conflict of interest? Further research is needed to determine the answers to these questions, and they are questions worth asking.

According to Entman (1993), the writer consciously or subconsciously decides what to present based on pre-existing frames called "schemata." However, if the writer is discussing a topic that is foreign to him, then the schemata (frame) is distorted according to Entman. These pre-existing frames guide the writer's belief system and

ultimately what they write. Unfortunately, if a message is warped from its origin, it is likely to be ineffective and ultimately harmful, especially if the information presented is incorrect. In the case of Weston Kosova, regardless if the information he disperse is correct or not, savvy readers may question his credibility and the trustworthiness of his articles.

### **The Writer's Voice**

While analyzing the articles in women's magazines, a pattern of storytelling was identified as a means to relay various messages about weight and body image. In each story, a type of tone or "voice," surfaced and each voice was a source for information. The final analysis revealed that the "practical voice" was represented most often (n=59). Articles that had a practical voice provided advice that was concrete, simple to follow, suitable to everyday living and malleable to realistic expectations. Another major tone or voice seen was the "expert voice." These articles were written from a professional's point of view and they featured researched based information (n=39). Articles that featured the "real woman voice" were articles written from a layman's point of view and they featured personal stories of health/weight loss success (n=37). Finally, articles that featured the "celebrity voice" were articles written from a famous person's point of view and they featured "trade secrets" for maintaining a superb appearance, while being under the public's scrutiny (n=21). These finding were different from previous studies that blasted women's magazines for their negative effects on women's self-esteem and their lack of meaningful health information (Moyer, C.A., Vishnu, L.O., & Sonnad, S.S., 2001). This 2001 study determined that the health information in women's magazines was not based on credible sources, nor did it address the legitimate health concerns of the majority of women. In contrast, this present study observed an increase in articles

that directly and indirectly cited scholarly studies and national health organizations. Also, a decreased occurrence of celebrity based quick fixes for health and beauty was noted. Instead, the articles featured real women offering practical advice about health and techniques for reaching attainable goals.

The basis of Social Learning Theory (SLT) is the belief that people learn behavior by watching others and duplicating the observed behavior (Bandura, 1977). According to SLT, the use of real women who were successful in positively affecting their overall health and/or appearance may increase the effectiveness of a health message. For example, as women read an article about a successful mother of three who worked full time, and yet was able to lose 50 pounds, those readers may be inspired to do the same. The readers relate to the featured woman's weight loss struggles, and her success has the potential to motivate the readers to make the same positive behavior choices. This phenomenon is called vicarious learning (Bandura 2001).

Since magazines continue to be a source for health information among women, the increase in quality and frequency of science based advice, may eventually help lead to improved health outcomes among women. Thus, it is imperative that journalists and health professionals alike continue to analyze the types of messages that are present in women's magazines to ensure that a positive trend for change continues.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings from this study reveal a lack of trained health and fitness writers for women's magazines. This lack of skilled writers for women's magazines may negatively impact readers' health literacy, which is defined as the relationship between a patient's literacy level and his or her ability to follow through with the prescribed intervention (Nutbeam, 2000). If a reader is successfully following through with health behaviors

based on incorrect information, then positive health outcomes are less apparent in society. An example of the potential harmful effects of misinformation was seen in the 1988 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. In an article titled, "Reassuring News about AIDS," Dr. Robert Gould, a psychiatrist, not a medical doctor, claimed that heterosexual women did not need to worry about contracting HIV if they were having vaginal sex with a man (apps.nlm.nih.gov). By today's knowledge, this information is ludicrous. However, there is no way of knowing how many women were infected with HIV as a result of following this poor advice.

Journalists and health professionals must be wary of cultivating celebrity endorsements. It is common practice among journalist and healthcare providers to highlight a celebrity or public figure who is personally affected by sickness and disease. This practice is effective in bringing awareness to a disease or sickness which, depending on the popularity of the celerity or public figure, will eventually spawn public discussion, facilitate activism, initiate possible research and potentially alter policy. Nevertheless, journalists and health professionals alike must uphold moral, ethical and professional standards that foster media integrity. Journalist and health professionals must be prepared to challenge questionable information and have access to current and accurate data.

This study determined that there were more realistic body sizes; types and images used in African-American women's magazines than there were in mainstream women's magazines. Previous studies have linked the viewing of unattainable bodies with the development of negative self-body image, which results in low self-esteem (Rucker III, C., & Cash, T., 1992). Although positive images are propagated throughout

African-American magazines, and black women are culturally known to have positive body images and high self-esteem, these feelings of self-acceptance may undergird efforts to be healthy. The results of a 2003 study revealed that although African-American women weighed more, consumed more fat in their diets, and were less active than their white counterparts, they perceived themselves just as healthy (Duncan, et al.).

Traditionally, African-American women possess a self-image suit of armor that has shielded them from the detriments of media's harmful portrayal of women. However, this hardness may be the link to determining why, on a whole, African-American women fail to initiate and maintain good health behaviors. This question was proposed in a 1998 study on body image and obesity risk among African-American women. This study proposed, "How women see their bodies (perceptual body image) and feel about their bodies (attitudinal body image) in the context of their cultural values may influence what they do with their bodies," (Flynn, K.J., & Fitzgibbon, M., 1998). Thus, for African-American women, it is culturally acceptable to be larger sized. Conversely, it is culturally unacceptable to be too thin. Although thinness is valued among white women, among African-American women, it is a sign of sickness and poverty (Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1998, p.13). The cultural values about weight and body image are powerful because they are compounded over time and they are frequently reinforced by other members in the same group. Depending on whether a receiver is closely connected to a societal group and its belief system, cultural frames can help or hinder communication. Therefore, in order to crack the code concerning African-American women and health behaviors, journalists and health providers must not

exclude the significance of deep-rooted cultural beliefs. Also, journalists and health providers must acknowledge the significance of the communicator of a message. Previous studies have revealed that the best person to deliver an effective message regarding behavior change is someone from the same cultural group.

These implications could affect the manner in which health providers coach their patients into making positive health behavior changes (i.e., lose weight). The Health Belief Model is one of the most prevalent theories used in the healthcare arena to encourage change. It is composed of two forces: motivation and self-efficacy. However, if an African-American woman is not motivated to lose weight because she perceives herself as attractive, and this perception is reinforced by the media she consumes, she is less likely to carry out a prescribed behavior change. In addition, an outsider's attempt to request such a change may be perceived as a threat. For some African-American women, a white doctor's suggestion to lose weight may be inaccurately acknowledged as a racist attempt to impose the white standard of beauty on the receiver. The receiver's pride in her culture and her deep rooted value system about her body causes her to dismiss the provider's statements as invalid to her particular health condition. Unless these dynamics are addressed, African-American women will continue to demonstrate a lack of positive health behaviors.

### **Limitations**

As with all studies, this work has limitations. The first limitation noted in this study was that there was only one health magazine marketed to African-American women nationally. With only one such magazine, the equal cross comparison to mainstream magazines was limited. Another limitation noted in this study was the one- year time frame used. A longer observation of the magazines would have yielded a larger sample

size and perhaps a significant difference in the coded data. Another limitation noted was the possible difficulty of this study being reproduced in the future. This study required the use of each tangible magazine because the pictures in each article and the pictures on each cover were analyzed. In times past, researchers could obtain hard copy, past issues from a university's library or a public library; however, because of budget restraints and limited space, many libraries disposed of past issues or recycled them. In addition, many libraries stop subscribing to less popular magazines. Thus, it was difficult for this researcher to obtain the magazines needed for this study. Some magazines were given by solicitation, but the majority was purchased from the Internet via eBay©. All of the *Heat & Soul* issues were purchased from the publisher directly. It could be inferred that anyone attempting to reproduce this research in the future would have an even more difficult time locating the magazines needed for this study.

### **Future Research**

This study was a content analysis of the messages present in women's magazines; however, future research is needed to determine how these messages affect health outcomes. Thus, focus groups are needed to determine how certain messages make women feel and behave. In their study on self-image and eating disorders (Roberts, A., et al., 2006), researchers used survey methods to determine how certain mass media images made women feel about their bodies and their corresponding health behaviors.

Future research is needed to determine if, in fact, negative self image is a motivator for weight loss and positive self-image is a deterrent for weight loss. Previous studies suggest this correlation. In a 2006 study, it was suggested that although white women reported a higher frequency of negative self-perception, at times, these feelings

motivated them to change what they didn't like about themselves (Roberts, A., et.al, 2006).

Because there continues to be a gap between the health behaviors and health outcomes of white and African-American women, further research is needed to determine if deep cultural belief systems can be changed and if so, how. In their 1992 study, Rucker III, C., & Cash, T., found that although both groups were exposed to negative media messages regarding their bodies, African-American women expressed a positive self-body image and reported high self-esteem more frequently than white women. The results of his study indicated powerful cultural frames ultimately guided the receiver's belief systems regardless of the images to which they were exposed.

### **Conclusion**

In general, the manner in which weight and body image are discussed in mainstream and African-American magazines is similar. In addition, these messages have demonstrated an improvement from previous studies. This trend has translated to practical use. For example, in 2009, *Glamour* featured a photo of a plus-sized model, Lizzie Miller, in the nude in the September issue (Figure5-1). In January of 2010, *V Magazine*® released its "Size Issue," which featured several pictures of plus sized models in haute couture (Figure5-2 & Figure 5-3).

The controversy surrounding the use of photoshopped images in women's magazines was previously discussed, and the debate of this hot topic at the ASME conference in May of 2009 initiated the timeline of this study. However, in July of 2011, Britain's Advertising Standards Authority began to take action against the use of photoshopped images in their magazines. As a result, L'Oreal's® advertisements

featuring Julia Roberts and Christy Turlington were banned. Jo Swinson, a member of Parliament who first alerted the officials of this advertisement stated,

There's a big picture here which is half of young women between 16 and 21 say they would consider cosmetic surgery and we've seen eating disorders more than double in the last 15 years. There's a problem out there with body image and confidence. The way excessive retouching has become pervasive in our society is contributing to that problem. (2011)

Currently, the coverage of weight and body image in women's magazines is, for the most part, health oriented. The advice given is practical and from an "average Joe" point of view. However, the images used to discuss weight and body image are different in mainstream vs. African-American magazines. For the most part, the images in African-American magazines depict female body sizes and types that are realistic. Also, African-American magazine covers portray neutral image oriented photos, while in contrast; mainstream magazine covers portray body image oriented photos. Nevertheless, African-American women still lead with negative health outcomes and the quality of their lives is decreasing. To preserve the well-being of a group of people and ultimately our country, future research is needed to determine that balance among media content, culturally tailored messages and accurate health education. The solution to this problem will have to be transdisciplinary, requiring input from health professionals, journalists, psychologists and behavior specialists.



Figure 5-1. Lizzie Miller in *Glamour* magazine ([www.news.com](http://www.news.com)).



Figure 5-2. *V Magazine* curve issue featuring plus sized models (Solve Sundsbo/*V* magazine)



Figure 5-3. *V Magazine* curve issue featuring plus sized models side by side (Solve Sundsbo/V magazine).

APPENDIX A  
CODING SHEET

1. Item ID # \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1a. Coder's initials
  
2. Name of magazine
  - 2a. Glamour Magazine
  - 2b. Essence Magazine
  - 2c. Shape Magazine
  - 2d. Heart and Soul Magazine
  
3. Publication date  
Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Writer's credentials
  - Medical/public health expert
  - Fitness Expert
  - Medical writer/health writer
  - Celebrity writer
  - "Average Joe"
  - General staff writer
  - Freelancer
  - Other
  
5. Type of article:
  - Feature article
  - Q and A format/advice column
  - News mentions
  - Columns
  - Editorial
  - Letter to editor
  - Other
  
6. Is this article part of a series?
  - 6a. Yes
  - 6b. No

7. Main topic of article

8. Secondary topic of article

9. Were the following subjects mentioned?

- Weight
- Body image
- Diet/Nutrition
- Exercise
- Health/health risks
- Fashion

10. How is the advice presented framed?

- Improved Health/Well-being
- Improved Appearance/Attractiveness

11. Sources of direct quotes and their credentials

12. Sources of indirect quotes or paraphrases and their credentials

13. Graphics

- Person/People
- Food
- Exercise equipment
- Health Icons (i.e., heart monitor, medical chart, pill bottle, etc. . .)

14. Photograph(s)

- Celebrity
- Model

- Person/Persons featured in story
15. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Body Type
- Thin/Linear Build
  - Muscular/Athletic Build
  - Heavy/Stocky Build
  - Combination
  - Unknown
16. Photograph(s)/ Illustration(s): Attire
- Swimsuit
  - Work-out/Exercise Attire
  - Business Attire
  - Casual Attire
  - Formal Attire
  - Other
17. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Race
- White
  - African-American
  - Hispanic
  - Asian
  - Unknown
18. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Age
- Young adult
  - Middle-aged
  - Senior
  - Unknown
19. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Body Size
- Underweight
  - Normal
  - Overweight
  - Obese
20. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Classification (Cover)
- Body Image Oriented
  - Neutral Image Oriented
21. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Classification (Article)
- Body Image Oriented
  - Neutral Image Oriented
22. Other things to note?

APPENDEX B  
CODING GUIDELINES

**Coding Guidelines**

1. Item ID #- copy from story in upper right corner
  - a. Coder's initials
2. Magazine name- Write the name of magazine in which the article appears.
  - 2a. GL = Glamour Magazine
  - 2b. ES = Essence Magazine
  - 2c. SH = Shape Magazine
  - 2d. HS = Heart and Soul Magazine
3. Month and year of publication- List the month and year.
4. Writer's credentials- who wrote the story? Was it a staff writer, a celebrity, a freelancer?
5. Type of article- was this a feature article, a letter to the editor, or a column?
6. Part of a series- Is it part of a series that appears in two or more consecutive months? Articles that are part of a series will usually have a notation indicating what number in the series it is and sometimes how often the series runs.
7. Main topic of article- The main topic is the primary issue or event that has the focus in the article. Write the main topic here.
8. Secondary topic of article- Identify other key topics in the article.
9. Were the following subjects mentioned-Check all subject listed that apply
10. How is the advice presented framed? (health vs. appearance) Is the goal of the article for the woman to gain health or is the goal of the article for the woman to increase physical attraction?
11. List sources directly cited in the article and their credentials- Was it an expert, opinion poll, etc. . .
12. List sources indirectly quoted or paraphrased and their credentials- Was it a layman, a celebrity, or the editor, etc...

13. Graphics- describe the image used. Is it food, people, a place

14. Photograph(s)- is the picture a celebrity, a model, or a featured person

15. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Body Type-describe the body type of the images used.

Body Type is described as "thin/linear build," "muscular/athletic build" and "heavy/stocky build." These terms are based on the historic body classification:

Ectomorph= "thin/linear build"

Mesomorph="muscular/athletic build"

Endomorph= "heavy/stocky build"

<b><i>The ECTOMORPH</i></b>	<b><i>The MESOMORPH</i></b>	<b><i>The ENDOMORPH</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitive "Hard Gainer"</li> <li>• Delicate Built Body</li> <li>• Flat Chest</li> <li>• Fragile</li> <li>• Lean</li> <li>• Lightly Muscled</li> <li>• Small Shouldered</li> <li>• Takes Longer to Gain Muscle</li> <li>• Thin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletic</li> <li>• Hard Body</li> <li>• Hourglass Shaped (Female)</li> <li>• Rectangular Shaped (Male)</li> <li>• Mature Muscle Mass</li> <li>• Muscular Body</li> <li>• Excellent Posture</li> <li>• Gains Muscle Easily</li> <li>• Gains Fat More Easily Than Ectomorphs</li> <li>• Thick Skin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft Body</li> <li>• Underdeveloped Muscles</li> <li>• Round Physique</li> <li>• Weight Loss is Difficult</li> <li>• Gains Muscle Easily Like the Mesomorph.</li> </ul>

(Sheldon, W., 1970)

### **Combinations of Body Types**

Few individuals fall purely into one of the three main body type categories. Frequently, individuals are a hybrid of the three. Some are "ecto mesomorphs," or "endo mesomorphs," where primarily, their body type characteristics are mesomorph, but they also have traits of the ectomorph body type (such as small joints or a trim waist), or traits of the endomorph body type (such as a tendency to gain fat easily) (Sheldon, W., 1970).

16. Photograph(s)/ Illustration(s): Attire-describe what the image is wearing

17. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Race-describe the image's race. Race for this study falls into four categories: white, African-American, Hispanic, Asian and unknown. Below are pictures that depict each race:



White



African-American



Hispanic



Asian

18. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Age- describe the image's age. Young Adult =18-34; Middle Aged= 35-54; Senior=55 and up. These ranges are based on the CDC's categorization of age. Age is difficult to determine visually, however, look for "tell-tell" signs of each category. Some examples include: Someone in the "Young Adult" category would be characterized by firm skin and a clear, smooth complexion; Someone in the "Middle Aged" range may have the early signs of graying hair and present with fine lines on their face; Someone in the "Senior" category would be characterized as having substantial wrinkles on face and progressed graying of their hair.

19. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Body Size- describe the image's body size. Look to see if the person appears underweight, normal, overweight or obese. For examples, see image below:



Underweight



Normal



Overweight



Obese

20. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Classification (Cover) - the image is considered "body image oriented" if the image is centered on the ideal, thin female body and that body is used as a visual message. In some cases, certain part of the image's body is the focus. (For example, a health/fitness magazine cover includes a picture of a thin young model wearing a cut-off shirt.) An image is considered "neutral image oriented" if the image used does not focus on the body type and size of a woman. (For example, a health/fitness magazine cover features an attractive woman doctor wearing a lab coat.) The image may contain an attractive woman, but her attractiveness is not the primary focus of the message.

21. Photograph(s)/Illustration(s): Classification (Article) - the image is considered "body image oriented" if the image is centered on the ideal, thin female body and that body is used as a visual message. In some cases, certain part of the image's body is the focus. (For example, an article featuring new abdominal exercises includes a picture of a thin young model wearing a cut-off shirt.) An image is considered "neutral image oriented" if the image used does not focus on the body type and size of a woman. (For example, an article on nutrition features a woman doctor wearing a lab coat.) The image may contain an attractive woman, but her attractiveness/body is not the primary focus of the message.

22. Make mention of anything of significance. Add here any additional information you would like to note concerning your findings.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Armenthis Y. Lester earned a Bachelor of Science degree in occupational therapy from the University of Florida (2000) in Gainesville, FL. In the spring of 2007, she joined the University of Florida's graduate school program in the College of Journalism and Communications. While there, she worked full-time as Transition Patient Advocate for combat veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Gainesville, FL, practiced Occupational Therapy in the local community and served as an adjunct lecturer in the College of Occupational Therapy. Her research interests include framing, health communications and public health disparities.