STRONG WOMAN OR PRETTY GIRL?
EXPLORING THE FEMALE BODY POLITIC

by

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ABSTRACT

Females are exposed to conflicting and confusing messages that they should be thin but strong, firm but shapely, fit but sexy. Although they are exposed to images of powerful women, such as scholars and athletes, they cannot escape images of fashion models whose idealized body shape can rarely be matched by other women. Girls and women strive to mold their bodies in these idealized shapes by depriving themselves of nourishment necessary for good health. Despite highly publicized advertisements and health culture campaigns that emphasize the benefits of healthy bodies, there are cultural messages that promote the "beauty myth." The "beauty myth" promotes, among other phenomena, the idea that female bodies can be whatever women want them to be.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE .......................................................................................................................... ii
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................... iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................................ iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................................................. v
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................ vii
REFLEXIVE STATEMENT ............................................................................................................. viii

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................. 1

Social Bodies .............................................................................................................................. 1
Theoretical Influences on the Body ............................................................................................ 2
Media Influences ....................................................................................................................... 6
Print Advertisements .................................................................................................................. 7
Direct to Consumer Prescription Advertisements ................................................................. 8
Goffman’s Content Analysis ...................................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................... 12

Sampling .................................................................................................................................... 12
Measurements of Variables ....................................................................................................... 13
Scoring of Variables ................................................................................................................... 15
Inter-Coding Reliability ............................................................................................................ 17

CHAPTER III: RESULTS ............................................................................................................... 18

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS .......................................................... 25

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................. 30
TABLE OF FIGURE

FIGURE 1a: GENDER REPRESENTATION IN HEALTH MAGAZINE .......... 18

FIGURE 1b: GENDER REPRESENTATION IN SELF MAGAZINE .............. 18

FIGURE 2: NUMBER TO DTC PRESCRIPTION ADVERTISEMENTS ILLUSTRATED BY YEAR ......................................................... 22

FIGURE 3: GENDER REPRESENTATION IN DTC PRESCRIPTION ADVERTISEMENTS BY YEAR......................................................... 23
REFLEXIVE STATEMENT

I have always been fascinated when people would tell me to be “lady like.” Throughout my childhood, I wondered exactly what that meant. As I aged, I determined that being “lady like” meant not going places, not staying out as late, or not having as much responsibility as my brothers did. Being “lady like” meant restrictions.

I do not think that anyone would deny the importance of aesthetics in Western culture. How one is regarded is in part dependent upon how one looks. To an extent, we are concerned about our public “image.” We create and shape this “image” through interaction with the world around us.

I am intrigued by the inherent nature of visual imagery. I ponder the responses they elicit from viewers and question the impact they have on culture, society, and institutions. Advertisements not only serve as an economic means to sell products, but a way to convey messages of “appropriate” social roles.

One of my greatest challenges to date has been to explore the relationship between advertising and women’s understanding of themselves. Working in the fitness profession, I am constantly inundated with questions from women inquiring about looking like the women in magazines, yet remain healthy. I try to explain that we can rarely accomplish this, because the women in the magazines do not represent what most women look like. The models are usually underweight, and/or their photos have been altered to create a thinner look. The unfortunate aspect of my profession is recognizing the humiliation and frustration these women feel because they are not able to mimic the physical body of models.
I feel that sustaining gender bias advertisements will continue to hinder the growth of women, and Western society as a whole. I know that media is not wholly to blame, language, culture, school, and religions also help construct gender roles. By investigating one aspect of this establishment, I hope to disclose a part of our existence that is often taken for granted.

The concept for this investigation came from my personal struggles to assert my independence, yet feeling this has to be done according to male standards, definitions, and regulations. I hope by exhibiting the pageantry of females in advertisements, that more people will become involved in this crusade, and help redefine what it means to be "lady like."
CHAPTER 1
LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Bodies

People start to take notice of health and fitness magazines in January, the start of the New Year’s Resolutions. The magazines depict thin, typically white females demonstrating technique to perform particular exercises. They contain catchy titles, such as Tight Buns in Ten Days, to lure potential buyers. From the look of the models in the magazine, it is questionable if they eat much less work out.

Body image is how one perceives their body, and cultural norms typically define body image in societies. Ideals are perpetuated in physical body stereotypes. People affix stereotypes, based on assumptions of one’s attractiveness, and have a tendency to perceive these persons as being more successful and happier, commonly referred to as the “Halo Effect.” The internalization of this effect leads to “good body” images versus “bad body” images (Monteath and McCabe, 1994).

Most negative, physical-based stereotypes center on obesity. Children as young as six years old have internalized the negative imagery associated with being overweight (Wolszon, 1998, p. 546). Children’s songs echo this type of stigma, “fatty, fatty, two by four, can’t even walk through the kitchen door.” Studies indicate that the majority of the women in the United States have negative feelings towards their bodies and over half of these women are trying to lose weight. “Feeling fat is a ‘normative discontent’ for women” (Wolszon, 1998, p. 545).

The male “ideal” body image runs congruent to their natural physique: a slight muscular build. Female perceptions of “acceptable” boundaries of fat and thin tend to be
more narrow than the male boundaries (Wolszon, 1998, p. 545). Women’s magazines have ten times as many articles pertaining to body image than men’s magazines (Monteath and McCabe, 1997, p.710). These results are statistically concurrent with the ratio of eating disorders between genders (Cusumano, 1997, p.702).

In addition, most women’s magazines equate fitness with beauty. Fitness magazines’ editorials and advertisements feature models that are typically under average female body weight. These magazines seldom feature true athletes or athletic builds because their body types are not compatible with the magazines’ subject matter. The magazines promote health and strength while displaying models that do not meet that criterion. The majority of female readers will never obtain a physique similar to the ones in the advertisements. The inability to reach these standards set by print media and advertisement cause women to have low self-esteem and negative body images (Women’s Sports and Fitness, 1994).

Theoretical Influences on the Body

Feminists contend that there is mounting evidence that these types of advertising practices aid in the oppression of women (Courtney and Whipple, 1979, p. vii). Warlaumont (1993) expands this argument by stating, “advertisers have the ability to construct and maintain existing visual grammars that represent the dominant patriarchal power discourse and ideology, whether consciously or not” (p. 26).

Feminist theory adopted the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984). He believed that body image was used as a device by society, through cultural norms, to oppress
women. These cultural norms are portrayed in advertisements. Michel Foucault uses the prison structure known as Panopticon in explaining the internalization of body image (Eskes, Carlisle, and Miller, 1998, p. 319). Panopticon is a type of prison structure in which prison cells encircle a control tower. The guard in the tower can see all the prisoners, but the prisoners are unable to see the guard in the tower. As Foucault explains, this method is used “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power”. Women internalize that they are under constant social supervision, therefore, will adhere to the patriarchal powers that define femininity (Duncan, 1994, p. 50).

Body image and “ideals” differ based on culture. In the United States, females have a very narrow perception of acceptable body image. Over time, the body image of females has become thinner and less curvy. In a study performed by Sheryl Monteath and Marita McCabe (1996), their research showed that appearances are heavily influenced by stereotypes. Overweight people have many negative stereotypes and are more dissatisfied with their physical bodies than women in other weight groups (p. 709). Being “fat” is stereotyped as being out of control with one’s life. Thinness and beauty are associated with more positive traits. Attractive individuals are assumed to be happy and successful. Women view attractiveness as a means to improve their social and economic condition (p. 710).

Linda Ridge Wolszon (1998) elaborates that stereotypes convey assumptions, such as a person’s age, gender, and SES. “Appearance based” stereotyping has influenced teachers in elementary schools. Attractive students have been given
more attention and positive influence than less attractive students, no matter what the intelligence level of the student. Since attractive people are stereotyped as being more successful, they tend to get promoted faster and earn more money than less attractive co-workers (p. 546).

Research in the area of eating disorders has increased. Studies are showing that women with eating disorders have grotesque images of their bodies. Women without eating disorders also suffer from poor body image. These studies seem to show that it is normal for women to feel overweight. The findings suggest that eating disorders lie outside the normal boundaries and are extreme examples of body image discontent (p. 542).

Susan Bordo (1989) analyzed Michel Foucault’s idea that the body is not only a biological representation but also cultural representation. The human body is shaped according to cultural norms, such as the desire for large breasts, narrow waist, and broad hips. According to Bordo, Foucault perceives the body as a “direct locus of social control” (p. 13). Things that may threaten cultural norms are suppressed through rituals and rites such as mannerisms, mores, and social constraints. This ideology illustrates the difference between what is done and what should be done. In this case, women know that it is not healthy to be very thin, yet they strive to be a certain weight.

Bordo applies Foucault’s theory to clarify how aspects of cultural norms influence bodies and define normative behavior associated with “masculinity” and “femininity.” Bordo states that Foucault refers to women as “docile bodies,” meaning that women are shaped externally. This external stimulation force women to constantly re-evaluate social
changes. For example, women frequently change their diet, fashion, hairstyles and coloring. It is a recurring cycle: external stimulation, internalization, and if necessary, modification; this type of constant control regulates female statuses in society. Oppressing women with these peripheral constraints render females powerless and preserves a patriarchal society (p. 13).

Bordo (1989) believes that feminists should use Foucault's belief: power is not individualistic, but rather embedded in "networks" or institutions in society to maintain oppression of women (p. 18). Practical releases for female oppression have included neurasthenia, hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia. Bordo recommends that feminists focus on the forces within these institutions that are changeable and not repressive. She gives the example of masculine influences on female body image: control, aggressiveness, and power. Females use the eating disorder anorexia as a means of exhibiting masculine traits in the form of appetite and physique control. Women feel they may not have much control over their lives, but they control what they eat and how they look (p. 18). Bordo looks at these types of female disorders as a form of individual protests. She claims that hysteria is an external sign of protest. She cites Carroll Smith-Rosenberg to explain,

By preventing the woman from functioning in the wifely role of caretaker of others, of 'ministering angel' to husband and children, hysteria 'became one way in which conventional women could express-in most cases unconsciously-dissatisfaction with one or several aspects of their lives' (p. 21).

Bordo notes that the medicalization of eating disorders may be a way of shifting the focus from a social phenomenon, to a biological problem. She feels the issue of poor
body image is not properly being assessed, since these types of disorders and images can be found in preschool children. She found young girls with normal body weight concerned with their physique (p. 26). Bordo concludes with a grim social awareness and impact of these problems and feels they remain so to maintain the power structure (p. 28).

**Media Influences**

"Society has ingrained in us the message that thinner is better" (Women's Sports & Fitness, 1994, p. 67). Women compare themselves to images they see in print and television advertisements. They compare themselves to models and actresses who are the thinness women in America. This means that 95 percent of American women are dieting to reach a goal, which is virtually impossible to attain (Wolszon, 1998, p. 545). Eskes et al. (1998) analyze women's fitness magazines. Fitness magazines maintain exercise is a viable method of empowerment. The magazines encourage women to take control of their bodies and ultimately over their lives.

Too often, the fitness industry is associated with beauty. The models are usually physically attractive and underweight. They inform readers that a woman's life will dramatically change with weight loss. From these magazines, women assume weight loss will get them a new boyfriend/girlfriend, better jobs, and more friends. Eskes et al. (1998) cite the "Success Stories" section of Shape Magazine. Readers submit stories about victories over their weight "problems" and how much happier and empowered they feel (p. 318).
Pirkko Markula (1995) examines the dichotomy between thin yet strong bodies. She adds to Eskes et al.'s argument that magazines and television depict thin women while at the same time encourage them to build muscles. Women, who attempt to mimic the strong yet thin body, increasingly resort to diet, exercise, and cosmetic surgery, such as liposuction (p. 425). The "ideal" female body type has recently changed to a slight athletic build. This body image could dramatically effect cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. As Markula explains, "the muscularity could indicate women's liberation from the narrow definition of the female body as frail, whereas the thinness of this ideal restores the connotation to traditional femininity" (p. 426-427).

**Print Advertisements**

Print advertisements can communicate information and knowledge to a vast audience. This information can be diffused quickly and quite efficiently (Warlaumont, 1993, p. 25). People are exposed to six billion displays and classified advertisements each day. Advertising is a $50 billion dollar per year business (Bogart, 1993, p. 1). Although some may feel that this practice is costly, most Americans agree that it is necessary. In 1983, a national survey found that 90 percent of Americans believe that advertising is vital to the economy. Exposure through advertisements creates a highly competitive climate (Bogart, 1996, p.2). Although Americans have a high approval rating for advertising, the content of the advertising has not always been conventional. Calvin Klein has depicted advertisements with children barely clothed, wearing no more
than underwear. Public protest forced Klein to remove the advertisements, not before thousands of viewers were exposed to them on television programs. By creating offensive advertisements, Klein’s advertisements reached audiences, which may have never seen them.

Sexton and Haberman (1974) analyzed pictures in three time periods, 1950 – 1951, 1960 – 1961, and 1970 – 1971. The study found no significant change in advertisements portraying women in traditional roles. Women in decorative roles still occurred, rising 6 percent through the years. These results would substantiate feminists’ arguments that women were being depicted in traditional roles, such as housewife or mother. In contrast, men were often portrayed in authoritative roles and a wide variety of occupations.

Direct to Consumer (DTC) Prescription Advertisements

DTC prescription advertisements were established in the early 1980’s (Parker and Delene, 1998, p. 29). Pharmaceutical companies market their products directly to the public. Previously, pharmaceutical companies would exclusively advertise to physicians in medical journals. Pharmaceutical companies recognized, by increasing awareness of drug choices, consumers would be better informed about drug choices (Parker and Delene, 1998, p. 29).

Managed Care Organizations (MCO) typically limit drug choices through formulary lists. These lists contain prescription medicines the MCO will cover for
payment. MCO’s influence the sale of specific drugs by restricting options to physicians and its members (Peyrot et al, 1998, p. 28).

In 1993, almost forty-five percent of drug prescriptions were paid entirely by consumers, an estimated $48.8 billion dollars. Mail order prescription products and purchasing prescriptions via the Internet, have also increased. Because of this growth, there has been heavy competition among pharmaceutical companies for consumer-directed business (Peyrot et al, 1998, p. 28).

Consumer advertisement budgets for DTC advertisements have increased dramatically. The pharmaceutical industry spent approximately $80 million dollars in 1993, and $200 million dollars in 1994 on DTC advertisements (Peyrot et al, 1998, p. 27). This number expanded to over $1 billion dollars in 1995. Among all industries, it was the fourth largest consumer advertisement budget.

In addition to easing restrictions on DTC prescription advertisements in 1997, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decreased exclusivity time. Historically, drug companies had roughly eight years before competing drugs were introduced. Currently, prescription drugs have approximately three months (Barrett, 1999, p. 95).

Prescription advertisements have not been immune to gender bias advertising. King (1980) found that females were repeatedly depicted as patients in advertisements. They also tended to be depicted as being emotional or irrational (p. 136).
Several studies conducted in the 1970’s, consistently showed women in stereotyped roles, which could affect medical analysis. These studies identified a relationship between advertisements and physicians’ diagnoses.

Seidenberg (1972) determined that women in advertising for prescription drugs were shown to have a higher degree of emotional problems, whereas, men were more likely to exhibit occupational/employment related stresses. In addition, Mant and Darroch (1975) found that women were more likely to be featured in advertisements for mood altering prescriptions. This practice could reinforce the stereotype that women are emotional, and justify treatment with these drugs. For example, Christenson and Swanson (1974) reported the following:

Sixty percent of all drugs prescribed in 1967 were for women, including 71% of all antidepressants and 80% of all amphetamines. With the advent of the women’s movement, literature dealing specifically with women and drug use has become more common. Some studies link high drug use among women to drug advertising, which reinforces dependent, irrational, emotional, and complaining stereotype of women (Courtney and Whipple, 1979, p. 26).

Goffman’s Content Analysis

Agents such as schools, religions, and languages assist in teaching and reinforcing appropriate gender behavior. Print advertisements have been establishing the same reputation (Belcamp, 1991, p. 103). Erving Goffman (1979) believed that people align themselves with the messages of advertisements, because it helps construct their social reality; this is the way they should look or act. Reality is constructed by interaction and exposure to people and things. From his content analysis of magazines, Goffman
concluded that advertisements portray cultural ideals, sometimes quite obvious, and other times discreetly (p. 9).

Goffman's sampling technique in the content analysis has been the topic of many discussions. A random sample was not performed, rather he selected advertisements, which fit his criterion. His population was chosen to show differences of women and men in print advertisement, not to identify generalizations.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The purpose of this study is to identify changes, if any, advertisements communicate about women to society, based on Goffman’s original content analysis study in 1979. The unit of measurement for this study was advertisements in women’s fitness/health magazines.

Although this study utilizes similar coding techniques from Goffman’s 1979 Gender Advertisements content analysis, the method of collecting the sample differed. As noted previously in Chapter I, Goffman, in his content analysis, intentionally chose ads that were representative of his categories and their definitions. To avoid the same type of debate, this study’s sample size will include all advertisements, which contain adult human subjects.

The sample size was collected from two popular women’s fitness/health magazines for the years 1995 - 1999. These years were chosen because they were the most recent five-year span, from the current date. Within these years, the issues representing the months of April and November were chosen for this content analysis. These months were chosen because they correspond with seasons of change, the spring season for April and the holiday season for November. In addition, November is traditionally sweeps month in media realms. Monthly issues from the Self and Health correspond to accurately analyze the data, ten issues per magazine.

Self and Health magazines were selected, because they are two of the top selling women’s fitness/health magazines, according to the 1999 Ulrich's International
Periodicals Directory. It states that each magazine has a subscriber circulation of over one million. Therefore, the high subscriber circulation was a main standard for choosing these magazines.

Self-magazine produces 12 issues per year, one per month. Health produces eight issues per year, four single month issues and then four issues where two months are combined into one issue. Due to this process, the months of March and April are combined in one issue for the years 1995 and 1996, and November and December are combined into one issue in the years 1995 and 1999. The rest of the samples for this study, in Health magazine, comprise of single month issues.

The results were a total sample size of 701 advertisements. The sample size from Self magazine was 482 and the sample size from Health magazine was 219.

Measurement of Variables

Five of Goffman’s six original classifications for coding advertisements were utilized for this study. The sixth classification, the family, was not considered because of the intentions of the research. Goffman’s sixth classification is to investigate differences in advertisements among men and women, not the role of children in advertisements. In addition, the number of children found in advertisements, which would fit the criteria set forth by Goffman's family category, was of little significance in these fitness/health magazines. The category schemes and definitions are as follows:
1. Relative Size. Based on what Goffman termed, "social weight," relative size is based on one's power in social situations. Males typically carry more social weight, meaning they are physically greater in size or directing female in some manner.

2. The Feminine Touch. Women are more likely to be using their hands in pictures. They use their hands to hold objects, cradle objects, or outline the objects. Self-touching is also included under this category.

3. Function Ranking. This category measures social roles performed by the models. Males are more likely to be portrayed in higher executive/occupational positions.

4. The Ritualization. Depicts a subordinating position of the body. This includes lowering of the head and lying down when deemed improper. In contrast, erect posture usually symbolizes authority or power.

5. Licensed Withdrawal. Females are more likely to be portrayed looking away from the camera or with a gaze that makes them seem at a loss; they are mentally disconnected from the scene. Goffman characterizes this as creating a sense of hopelessness and dependency.

In addition, the five Goffman categories, I will use two additional categories developed and used in a study conducted by Mee-Eun Kang (1997). These two categories were devised to collect additional information to measure body pageantry and the degree of female empowerment in magazine advertisements. Women in advertisements typically expose more body parts, such as legs, back, and breasts. In addition, fitness wear is usually tighter and more revealing than regular clothing. Consideration is given to the appropriateness of fitness apparel or other specialty clothing.
items in certain situations. For example, if a person is portrayed as exercising, they are more likely to wear less or lighter clothing items.

The categories utilized in Mee-Eun Kang's (1997) study are as follows:

6. Body Display. It will determine the degree of clothing or nudity displayed in the advertisement. This includes clothing and full nudity or partial nudity. Clothing includes mini-skirts, shorts, cropped tops, and bathing suits. Nudity includes underwear/lingerie. Females are more likely to have wear tight, revealing or less clothing.

7. Independence and Self-Assertiveness. This category will examine the advertisement's ability to empower females and feature them in assertive roles. This includes if women are in control of situation and are featured in non-conventional roles.

Scoring of Variables

These seven coding schemes will use the definitions/criteria set forth by the original authors of that category. It should be noted that not all of the advertisements would be applicable to these coding schemes. Many advertisements do not feature both men and women. For example, in category one, Relative Size, only advertisements, which feature men and women together in the same ad, will be used for analysis. For the purposes of this study, it would be ineffective to attempt to determine a "social weight" comparison among advertisements that do not contain both genders. For the remaining categories, all advertisements containing adult humans will be considered.

Scores were assigned to the coding schemes for each category. In category one, if the man had more "social weight" than the female, it was given a score of one, and if he
did not, it was given a score of two. For all other categories, a score of one was given if the advertisement met the criteria/definition of the category, and a score of two was given if the advertisement did not. The scores for each category were summed up and the frequency of occurrence was determined.

In addition, demographic/biographic data was collected on the models featured in the advertisements. These variables include the number of people, gender, and race/ethnicity of the models in the advertisements. For gender, males were given a score of one, females a score of two, and both genders in the advertisement were given a score of three.

Identifying the race of the models relied on visual identification only. Race/Ethnicity was scored as follows: White was scored with one, Black was scored with two, Hispanic was scored with three, Asian was scored with four, two or more races/ethnicities present in the advertisement was given a score of five, and unknown or unidentifiable races/ethnicities was scored with six.

Scoring for the "number of people" variable was equivalent to the its numerical value, up to five; one person in the ad was given a score of one, two people in the ad were given a score of two, and so on. A score of five was given to five or more people in the advertisement.

DTC Advertisements for prescription medicines were also collected. This was included to note if there was any increase in DTC advertisements since its inception into consumer magazines in 1995. If the advertisement was a DTC prescription advertisement, was given a score of one, if not, it was given a score of two.
Inter-Coding Reliability

To measure the reliability of the sample, a pretest was conducted. Four graduate students were given eight advertisements to code, using the category scores listed above. These advertisements were chosen from the twenty issues of Health and Self magazines. Based on Holsti’s formula, the inter-coder agreement and reliability were devised by dividing the scores (180) by the attempted total score (224). This produced an inter-coding agreement was 80 percent, and the composite reliability was 85 percent.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

This study has shown little significant difference in stereotyping women in advertisements from Goffman's original study from 1979. Even with the achievements and attainments women have made in society, mass media is a medium in which stereotypes are still supported and perpetuate gender oppression. Although some of the advertisements did not qualify for all the categories, the majority of the advertisements support the summation of Goffman's work.

There has been some progress in occupational/professional differences between men and women. Even with this small attainment, social change in advertising has been rather slow. In over twenty years, only a small amount of discrimination has been altered. Women are still portrayed in conventionally inferior roles.

![Graphs showing gender representation in Health and Self magazines.](image-url)

Figure 1a. Gender representation in Health magazine. Figure 1b. Gender representation in Self Magazine.
Figure 1a and 1b provide a descriptive representation of gender in Self and Health magazines from 1995 through 1999. In all, women constituted 81.7 percent of all humans in the advertisements. Men made up only five percent and 13.3 of the advertisements contained both genders. Eighty-three (83) percent of advertisements contained only one person. Two person advertisements comprised 11.7 percent of the sample, and less than 6 percent of advertisements contained more than two people.

In reference to the race/ethnicity, 85.3 percent of the humans were White and 6.3 percent were Black. Hispanics and Asians comprised less .5 percent of the sample. There are approximately 2.4 percent of advertisements, which contained more than one race. Unknown or unidentifiable races/ethnicities encompassed 5.3 percent. The results are illustrated under the specific categories.

1. Relative Size. A little over half, 51.6 percent of advertisements containing men and women displayed men with a higher "social weight." Although there is not much difference statistically, it does not mean that there is evidence that men still carry more "social weight" than women. Some of the advertisements, which contained men and women, were difficult to judge. In some instances, the models were posed in unusual positions (See Appendix A). Because of this, it was not viable to score the man having more "social weight."

Kang (1997) detected that Relative Size appears irregularly in her results. She rationalized that since this category was found so seldom, they may no longer be appropriate for application. I believe that Relative Size may have decreased, but still does appear in advertisements (See Appendix B).
The results run statistically parallel to Kang's (1997) results from her 1979 sample. According to her study, the mean score for that year was 51 percent. For the year 1991, *Relative Size* had dropped to 46 percent. There was no notable change from 1995 to 1999.

2. *Feminine Touch*. Women were frequently objectified in advertisements and demonstrated in decorative roles. They used their arms and hands to hold an object, or more so, to touch themselves in some fashion. This was found in 56.1 percent of the advertisements. Some of the more general poses including caressing other people in the advertisement, covering their mouth, putting their hands on their hips, or clasping their fingers together (See Appendix C).

Among advertisements, which only contained females, it occurred in 60 percent of the advertisements. In comparison, 25.7 percent of male only advertisements displayed men touching themselves or objects. In advertisements that featured both men and women, self-touch or object-touch among women occurred 43 percent of the time. Frequently in these advertisements, the men were usually depicted with his arms around the woman, and the woman was touching herself or an object.

3. *Functional Ranking*. There was no statistical significance found in this category. Although women are still portrayed in stereotypical roles, there were no indications that they were in less operational roles than men. There was also little inference in *Functional Ranking* when advertisements contained both men and women. These results are statistically similar to Kang (1997) and Belknap and Leonard (1991). Kang goes so far as to say that *Functioning Ranking* may no longer be applicable.
4. **Ritualization of Subordination.** The outcomes support Goffman’s view that women are portrayed in subordinate roles. From this study, the results show that larger proportions of women were depicted in inferior positions than men. Only one advertisement showed a man in a subordinate pose. Men were almost always shown in sitting or standing positions. In contrast, advertisements showed women in awkward and unnatural positions (*See Appendix D*). Women would pose with their knees bent, or were lying down at inappropriate times or in bed. Women were also portrayed in demeanor poses depicting some sort of emotional shame. They would cover their entire faces, or have extremely painful looking expressions.

From 1995 to 1999, the overall means for this category dropped from 31 percent to 15 percent. However, there is no difference in means when making comparisons between males to females. There is still a higher rate of women in subordinate positions.

5. **Licensed Withdrawal.** The results correspond to Goffman’s original study that women are “detached” from the photo or scene by gazing away (*See Appendix E*). There are only two advertisements, which show men with a gazed look. In addition to looking away from the camera, women were found to close their eyes. These associations remained unchanged throughout the five-year period.

6. **Body Display.** Advertisements continuously showed women with more nudity and revealing clothing (*See Appendix F*). Even in advertisements, which depicted both genders, the women were frequently less clothed, proving seductive and provocative advertising exists and is prevalent in women’s health/fitness magazines.
7. *Independence or Self-Assertiveness.* The majority of the advertisements did not show women in independent or self-assertive ways. The sample shows that only 4.6 percent of the advertisements portray women in affirmative roles.

Athletic wear/gear were the most common advertisements in which women were shown to be strong and aggressive (See Appendix G). However, the depiction was frequently paired with a more demeaning or passive image. In this case, there would be a photo of a woman being assertive and empowered. Sequential photos would show the same woman in an obedient or compliant pose. Other photos showed women competing against men, rather than other women.

In reference to the Direct to Consumer (DTC) prescription advertisements, there was no significant difference in means from 1995 - 1999. There were 56 DTC prescription advertisements, totaling 8 percent of this study.

![Number of DTC prescription advertisements from 1995 - 1999](image)

Figure 2. Number of DTC Prescriptions Advertisements illustrated by year.
The findings in Figure 2 reveal the continual increase of DTC prescription advertisements in women’s fitness/health magazine. The steady increase supports the literature that DTC prescription advertising increasing, making more people aware of options and choices in prescription drugs.

Figure 3 gives a more accurate description as to who is featured in these advertisements. Women only advertisements encompassed 78.6 percent. Advertisements that featured both genders constituted 12.5 percent. Women were significantly over-represented in all five years of this study. In 1995, there were only three DTC prescription advertisements in the sample. This number increased tri fold, to nine in 1996. By 1999, this number had doubled, indicating a clear and influential presence of DTC prescription advertising.

Figure 3. Gender Representation in DTC Prescription Advertisements by year.
In 1995 and 1996 the number of women only DTC prescription advertisements remained steady at 66.6 percent. However, that number escalated to over 80 percent in 1997 through 1999. DTC prescription advertisements containing both genders remained low for the five-year span.

Women were pictured in DTC prescription advertisements as being emotional or maladjusted. In contrast men were depicted as having independence or assertiveness (See Appendix H). There were also high proportions of advertisements for menopause and birth control pills.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the last twenty years, there has been little change in stereotypical roles of females in advertisements. The ramifications of this phenomenon are profound. It effects the actions, activities, and the collective reality of women. As Goffman stated, it does not depict women as they are, but as they should be. Creating unattainable goals and realities, for women, will ensure a patriarchal dominated society.

Media biases will remain a means through which the inferiority of women is sustained. This powerful medium creates and continuously regulates deceitful and coercive procedures internalized by female readers. The practice of depicting hyper-slim models in advertisements establishes a fallacious dependency since the majority of women will never look like the models; it sets women up for failure and poor self-esteem. Health conditions, such as anorexia nervosa, will persist due to deceptive imagery in the media.

The results of this study remarkably complement Goffman’s outcomes. A statistical comparison was impossible, because Goffman’s analysis was done on a non-random sample. Even with this consideration, the findings in this study support Goffman’s concept of identity. Through imitation, women form their perceptions of femininity; women do not need verbal cues to determine what is feminine, they ascertain it through apparel, body positions and movements, facial expressions, and behavior.

The Functional Ranking category was not as extensive as found in Goffman’s study. This seems to indicate progress in occupational/professional equality in
advertisements. Although recent studies contend that Relative Size has decreased, no substantial evidence was revealed in this study.

Direct to consumer (DTC) prescription advertisements will continue to expand in the general public. Even with managed health care, many people are still paying for the entire costs of their prescriptive medicines. In addition, an increasing number of people are purchasing prescriptions on the Internet. Competition among pharmaceutical companies will intensify public marketing and advertising. There is serious concern about the influence of stereotyping women in these types of advertisements. The assumptions that women are neurotic, emotional, or depressed may increase the number of individuals requesting medicines for these symptoms. The overall effect for physicians to prescribe these drugs based on requests by patients is unknown by consumer groups.

With the results of this research, it is important that health care providers analyze their own assumptions about gender-specific behaviors. DTC advertisements are extremely vague as to its use and effects. Health care providers will have to taken into consideration the influence of DTC stereotypical advertisements on the patient, the viability of prescribing this medicine, as well as personally having behavioral assumptions about their patients. Stricter guidelines need to be implemented by the Food and Drug Association (FDA), the governmental agency that oversees consumer product safety.

In past years, physicians have prescribed high rates of depressants and amphetamines to females. The concern is that this practice may extend into new
prescription medicines, all being based on gender bias advertisements found in popular magazines.

*Health* and *Self* magazines were examined due to their emphasis on fitness and health. Yet, only a small number of advertisements pertained to that subject. Most of the advertisements were for “beauty” products such as perfumes, hair products, and makeup products. The association is still being made between health and beauty. Out of the two magazines, *Health* magazine did have more advertisements pertaining to health and fitness products, but it also contained more DTC prescription advertisements. Efforts need to be made to redefine the connection between health and beauty.

Women have made extraordinary professional advances in the academic and economic realms of society. These successes occur within the limits of the male hegemony. It is imperative that the discourses surrounding the definitions of being “feminine” and “masculine” change as women make more progress towards equality. Without these modifications, change will remain as slow as it has over the last twenty years. Consequently, the embeddedness of gender bias in advertisements will continue to have a profound impact on the status of women’s lives.

**Recommendations**

Additional research should be completed to support the findings of this study that gender biases in advertisements are pervasive. The research was limited to twenty women’s health/fitness magazines over a five-year period. Research was conducted on a specific population, and general magazines may have differing degrees of gender biases.
The following are suggestions to guide future research to get inclusive insight into gender-bias advertisement:

1. *What impact will Baby Boomers have stereotyping of the elderly in advertisements?*  
   America has traditionally alienated older populations. The portrayal of older female adults in magazines has typically been the “granny” or “frail” stereotype. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, how will they redefine what it means to be “old,” and will these changes intersect advertising? Due to their amount of capital, Baby Boomers will control a large portion of the economic market, including purchasing of goods. Advertisers increasingly have to appeal to these older populations.

2. *How are various cultures depicted in advertisements?* With the emergence of a global economy, are trends towards greater diversity in advertisements or will they remain targeted to specific groups. Is it possible stereotypes about various ethnic groups are declining to bring awareness to cultural sensitivity?

3. *How are men depicted in advertisements in men’s health/fitness magazines?* A content analysis conducted on men’s health/fitness could reveal differences between the depiction of men and women in advertisements. Would the men’s health/fitness magazines contain the same amounts of beauty product advertisements? Would the proportion of advertisements containing both men and women be higher?

4. *Will the increased emphasis on women’s professional sports increase athleticism or physical activities in advertisements?* As more women identify themselves as athletes, will a realistic depiction of an athlete be represented in advertisements? Is it possible that
traditional definitions of women and men will continue to advertise slender, feminine women, while emphasizing masculine traits, such as strength?

5. Are women stereotyped in electronic media advertisements? This medium is less regulated than mainstream media sources. Although there is less control over electronic media, is it possible that the same type of gender biases in advertisements exists?

6. Will stereotyping in DTC prescription advertising affect the health of the public? As the public is increasingly exposed to drugs based on behaviors and symptoms, will depiction of women in medical advertisements increase the likelihood to being misdiagnosed? What is the possibility of pharmaceutical companies targeting menopause-age women as having emotional problems? Is it possible that popular demand for certain drugs will alter Managed Care Organizations' (MCO) policies on which drugs they will pay for?
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A
Relative Size. Based on one’s power in social situations. Males typically carry more social weight, meaning they are physically greater in size or directing female in some manner.

Women have as many different outfits as they have moods.
Men have khakis.
Appendix B
Relative Size. Below are two advertisements for the same product. The advertisement depicting the female has her own fingers in her mouth. The advertisement with the male has a female's finger in his mouth.
Appendix C
The Feminine Touch. Women are more likely to be using their hands in pictures. They use their hands to hold objects, cradle objects, and outline the objects. Self-touching is also included.
Appendix D
The Ritualization. Involves a subordinating position of the body. This includes lowering of the head and lying down when deemed improper.
Appendix E
Licensed Withdrawal. Females are more likely to be portrayed with a gaze that makes them seem at a loss; they are mentally disconnected from the scene.
Appendix F
**Body Display.** The degree of clothing or nudity displayed in the advertisement. This includes clothing and full nudity or partial nudity. Clothing includes mini-skirts, shorts, cropped tops, and bathing suits. Nudity includes underwear/lingerie.
Appendix G
Independence and Self-Assertiveness. This category will examine the advertisement’s ability to empower females and feature them in assertive roles. This includes if women are in control of situation and are featured in non-conventional roles.
Appendix H
DTC Prescription Advertisements. Women are depicted as emotional, anxious, and nervous. Men were portrayed as being liberated by the drugs.

"Now I don't have to give up another day to a migraine."

Ahh! Allegra!