

## **Persuading the Public to Lose Weight: An Analysis of a Decade (2001-2011) of Magazine Advertisements**

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### **Abstract**

Through cultivation and critical theories, this study examines a decade (2001-2011) of diet and weight loss advertising content in ten magazines that reach people of different sexes, races/ethnicities, and sexual orientations to provide a broad overview of how different groups are being persuaded to lose weight. Using abductive content analysis, this study finds that weight loss advertising primarily shows white/Caucasian women. Black and Hispanic individuals are underrepresented in the ads even though obesity and weight is a bigger problem among black and Hispanic men and women. Men in weight loss ads are often shown as active (e.g., exercising), and women are often shown as passive (e.g., just posing). Overall, weight loss is promoted more through diet food and drinks than through any other means. Findings of the study are discussed in terms of dominant messages and ideals of beauty, body, and weight that circulate in the larger culture. This study shows the similarities and differences in how people of different genders, races/ethnicities, and sexual orientations are persuaded to lose weight and the ways advertisers continue to reinforce hegemonic ideals of beauty and body through weight-loss advertising.

**Keywords:** Obesity, weight loss, magazine advertising, content analysis, cultural studies.

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## **Introduction**

In 2001, the Surgeon General of United States put out a call to action to decrease and prevent obesity in the US population. This call was made because obesity was on the rise, as were various obesity-related health problems, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some forms of cancer.<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than one-third of the US population, nearly 35.7 percent, is obese.<sup>2</sup> Even though obesity can affect everyone who has a sedentary lifestyle and poor nutritional habits, it has been found to be more prevalent in certain demographics. For example, the CDC notes: “Non-Hispanic blacks have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (49.5%) compared with Mexican Americans (40.4%), all Hispanics (39.1%) and non-Hispanic Whites (34.3%).”<sup>3</sup> Socio-economically, non-Hispanic black and Mexican American men with higher incomes are more likely to be obese than those with low incomes. Higher income women are less likely to be obese than low-income women.<sup>4</sup> Obesity is not only posing health risks to individuals, it is causing great financial strain to the US healthcare system, costing the US government nearly \$147 billion a year to Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers.<sup>5</sup>

Ever since the call to action, there has been an increased (or renewed) focus on weight reduction from the CDC and other organizations. Marketers, in particular, are capitalizing on the obesity epidemic. In 2011, the weight loss industry was worth \$60.9 billion.<sup>6</sup> Weight loss programs such as Weight Watchers and Nutrisystem have spent millions in advertising and celebrity endorsements. Weight Watchers spent \$117 million in 2010, and Nutrisystem spent \$297 million in 2009.<sup>7</sup> However, while government statistics may indicate which demographic markers appear to be at highest risk for obesity and weight problems, it is questionable whether advertisers market various weight loss products to different demographic groups equally.

Advertising is an important source of information about health and health benefits.<sup>8</sup> Advertising can also play a role in informing and persuading the public about weight issues, if they present information that is not misleading. Research has shown, however, that many of these diet solutions are misleading and have very little health benefit to the public.<sup>9</sup> But the mere fact that the weight-loss industry has continued to grow in the last decade,<sup>10</sup> in spite of misleading claims, calls for thorough examination of its content in order to understand its larger social and cultural impact in terms of beauty, body, and weight. While there is plenty of research on the social construction of the body and portrayals of thin bodies in advertising,<sup>11</sup> there are very few studies that examine the demographics of weight-loss advertising and marketplace solutions for the overweight and the obese.<sup>12</sup> In particular, few studies examine the ways in which this type of advertising cultivates, constructs, and reinforces idealized bodies. Thus, this study, using the frameworks of cultivation theory and critical cultural theory, examines through abductive content analysis a decade (2001-2011) of weight-loss advertising in ten magazines. These magazines reach people of different genders, races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations to better understand the overall messages, persuasive techniques, and solutions for weight loss in American culture. Including magazines targeted to diverse groups also helps to engage in a cross-reference examination to produce better understanding of messages, products, and solutions for different target groups. This study aims to address Kline's criticism of previous research, which she says “often limited analyses to media with a principle readership of that group.”<sup>13</sup> Other studies have not been as inclusive in examining broader audiences and overall messages of weight-loss advertising. Hence, this study looks to further inform the current research on weight-loss advertising by examining the difference between demographics and weight-loss messages and content over a ten-year period. This study does not aim to generalize

to the population. Instead, it aims to show how people of different genders, races/ethnicities, and sexual orientations are persuaded to lose weight and the ways advertisers continue to reinforce hegemonic ideals of beauty and body in the culture.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Merging Critical Cultural Studies and Cultivation Theory*

Even though cultivation theory falls under the empirical tradition of effects studies and cultural studies falls under the critical tradition, critical theory and cultivation theory share many commonalities, particularly in regards to their focus on limited depictions in media and a distorted reality among media consumers.<sup>14</sup> Cultivation theory posits that media cultivate, through repetition, limited social realities, which distort the perceptions of social realities among heavy viewers of media.<sup>15</sup> Critical cultural studies, on the other hand, deals with the symbolic environment created by mass media and the resulting cultural practices.<sup>16</sup> It “employs the concepts of dominant ideology and hegemony to explore media’s effects on constructing social reality, particularly in regard to race, class and gender.”<sup>17</sup> Together, both theoretical perspectives ultimately argue that cultural practice is key as it goes beyond the symbolic to address cultural impact.

#### *Culture, Body and Weight*

Like definitions of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, definitions of the ideal body are culturally constructed, and mediated images work to promote and influence those constructions. Viewing only culturally ideal bodies, specifically those that are thin, appears to influence perceptions that these are the only acceptable bodies.<sup>18</sup> Hendriks found that, for women in particular, these mediated body images are seen as the norm.<sup>19</sup> Cultivation studies has also examined the impact of stereotypical identity imagery<sup>20</sup> as well as the impacts that mediated images have on self-perception.<sup>21</sup>

Cultural and medical definitions of obesity, what is considered overweight, and what is deemed a thin body have changed over the decades.<sup>22</sup> Historically, in Western cultures, female attractiveness was associated with plump bodies, but by the nineteenth century, for European cultures, thinness was a sign of morality, class, control and balance, proper diet, and health.<sup>23</sup> The point was not to count calories but to know how to eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and avoid a sedentary lifestyle—without becoming so thin as to imply nervousness or illness.<sup>24</sup> Soon after, a consumer culture grew, dedicated to the maintenance of weight through medical fads and promises (tonics, bitters, and pill), exercise devices, and the management of body shape (corsets, bustles, and bustiers). The social construction of the ideal thin body continues to equate obesity to gluttony and deviancy,<sup>25</sup> passivity, and a taking up of too much space.<sup>26</sup> In addition, thinness in women and muscularity in men equals success in all walks of life, personally, professionally, and socially,<sup>27</sup> and is often a conscious decision in contemporary, Western society where food is plentiful. Hence, the desire to be thin and/or muscular is further emphasized as a cultural ideal.

Currently, the medical community defines an adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 to be overweight, and an adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese.<sup>28</sup> Obesity is a complex problem “developing from the interaction of multiple genetic, cultural, socioeconomic, behavioral, physiologic, metabolic, cellular, and molecular influences.”<sup>29</sup> At the simplest level, it is an imbalance between caloric intake and energy expenditures.<sup>30</sup> Even though most Americans desire a thin body, attitudes towards weight differs among Caucasians and blacks; in the latter bigness is somewhat more acceptable.<sup>31</sup>

*Body, Weight, and Advertising*

In regard to advertising, critical theory recognizes that media, including advertisers, play an important role in maintaining dominant hegemonic ideologies through the circulation of specific patterns of media images and messages.<sup>32</sup> According to cultivation theory, the cultivation of certain cultural values and beliefs about weight and weight loss in advertising is likely to distort viewers' perceptions of what an ideal weight and body looks like and how it can be achieved.<sup>33</sup> Advertising's persuasive messages are further reinforced, as Hirschman and Thompson<sup>34</sup> and Van Vonderen and Kinnally<sup>35</sup> have argued, since broader media images create a specific frame of reference for the audience. Through this circulation, advertising highlights not only what is or is not valued in society in terms of body and weight but can also create differences in race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.<sup>36</sup>

In the United States as in other Western cultures, slim bodies are idealized and fatness is disparaged.<sup>37</sup> Media, particularly advertising, have been criticized for portrayals of ultra-thin models<sup>38</sup> and in cultivation of weight and thinness obsession among young women.<sup>39</sup> Andersen and DiDomenico note that in women's magazines there are ten times more articles and advertisements promoting weight loss than there are in men's magazines, which makes it possible for a relationship to exist between "sociocultural reinforcements promoting thinness and the incidence of eating disorders in any particular population group."<sup>40</sup> Other studies also blame advertising as a causal factor for creating unrealistic expectations and body dissatisfactions among women.<sup>41</sup>

A number of studies have also shown that, particularly for gay men, body image dissatisfaction is prevalent due to surveillance of the body by others, or objectification, which leads to bodily shame.<sup>42</sup> As a result, this causes greater psychological stress that in turn increases the "likelihood of risky Appearance Management Behaviors" such as dieting and liposuction.<sup>43</sup> Studies on representations of male bodies in advertising note the promotion of the "body-builder" image. This usually consists of images of men with low-fat hypermuscular bodies.<sup>44</sup> Pope et al. write that male bodies have "washboard abdominal muscles, massive chests and inflated shoulders . . . a combination of muscularity and leanness probably achievable only by drugs."<sup>45</sup> These bodies are used to sell a wide array of products from underwear to cars. It is thus not surprising to note that men often desire a "V shaped" muscular body as opposed to a thin body, and some go to great lengths to achieve the body they see in media, whether it is through extreme exercise or use of steroids. These heteronormative ideals of the body extend to LGBT bodies as well.<sup>46</sup> Schwartz and Andsager examined four decades of images in magazines targeted at gay men and found an increase in low body fat and the level of muscularity over time.<sup>47</sup> As with women, images of hypermuscular bodies of men in advertising are said to have a negative influence on men's self-image and self-esteem,<sup>48</sup> fuel ambivalence towards their bodies,<sup>49</sup> and increase body dissatisfaction.<sup>50</sup>

Advertising as an institution has had considerable influence on consumerism. Typical consumer advertising suggests solutions through consumption of a product or service. Advertising by its very nature is aimed at individuals and actions they can take in regard to their health and weight. Over the years, advertising has been criticized not only for promoting products that people do not need but also for promoting unrealistic standards of beauty and body for men and women that are embodied in thin, blond Barbies and muscular Ken dolls,<sup>51</sup> where thinness often equates to femininity<sup>52</sup> and muscularity to masculinity.<sup>53</sup> These standards of beauty and body presented in advertising are normally hard, if not next to impossible, for individuals to achieve, so they spend billions of dollars on consumption of products, pills,

lotions, cosmetics, diets, surgery, dentistry, etc. to reduce their weight. As a result, the market for diet and weight loss products has grown to more than \$60 billion.<sup>54</sup>

Advertising, as a part of media, constructs differences in race, gender, class, and sexuality, resulting in systems of inequality.<sup>55</sup> It also helps to construct differences in body and weight, as noted earlier. According to Frith, Shaw, and Chen, “[i]deally, for advertising messages to be resonant with a target audience, marketing theory holds that ads would need to reflect the social norms and cultural values of a given society.”<sup>56</sup> However, white heterosexual men, especially in managerial positions, have long dominated the institution of advertising, which has resulted in advertising that reflects the worldview of this dominant group,<sup>57</sup> or, as Wilson and Gutierrez have noted, advertising of non-whites is “filtered through Anglo eyes” to make them more palatable to a broader audience.<sup>58</sup> Thus, many scholars have criticized advertising for perpetuating stereotypes and maintaining the dominant ideologies of race, gender, class, and sexuality.<sup>59</sup> Others have noted that editorial appeals for weight loss differ among demographic groups, with more strategies for weight loss offered in mainstream magazines versus those aimed at African American women, for instance.<sup>60</sup>

Also of concern is the number of misleading claims found in weight loss advertising, despite strict guidelines set forth by the FTC. Avery et al. noted that while there was some success in the FTC's 2003 initiative to reduce extreme claims in weight-loss advertising, it only succeeded in the number of claims made, not in the number of people trying unsafe and potentially deadly products.<sup>61</sup> Also, they noted that while disclaimers were added, they were placed in type too small to read and were often overlooked by consumers.

In spite of the prevalence of diet and weight-loss advertising in the United States and misleading claims within them,<sup>62</sup> there are very few studies that have exclusively and systematically examined the content of weight-loss and diet advertising and the effects of weight-loss ads on consumers.<sup>63</sup> The one exception, however, is the examination of advertising and black audiences.<sup>64</sup> No other study has compared the content aimed at different demographics from a critical cultural lens. Given the limited literature on diet and weight-loss advertising, this study examines the following research questions:

- RQ 1: Which group/s (race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation) is/are targeted in weight-loss and diet advertising?
- RQ 2: How are bodies represented in weight-loss advertising?
- RQ 3: What are the products or solutions provided by advertisers to tackle weight and obesity?
- RQ 4: What claims and appeals are used in diet and weight-loss advertising?

## **Method**

### *Magazines and Sample*

A multimodal content analysis of weight-loss and diet advertising appearing in ten prominent magazines published in the United States between 2001 and 2011 was undertaken. This period was chosen in response to current public discourse and legislation. The period begins in 2001, when the Surgeon General of the United States made an official public declaration about the importance of weight loss and the problem of obesity, and it follows a decade of policy initiatives and marketing initiatives. This multimodal approach examines the frequency of the weight-loss and diet advertising cross-culturally.

The study uses a combination of cultivation and critical theories. Cultivation analysis often involves content analysis of media content to understand what is being cultivated. The use of content analysis, while not traditionally a methodology associated with critical and cultural studies, has been suggested and undertaken by cultural studies scholars using some form of content analysis.<sup>65</sup> Thus, in order to examine the demographic characteristics and message characteristics inherent in weight-loss advertising as well as the hegemonic cultural functions and repetitions of symbolic cultural practice, content analysis was used. For this study, a close reading of the results was performed and inferences were drawn through abductive reasoning.<sup>66</sup>

In an effort to address weight-loss advertising to various groups, ten magazines were chosen to assure a comprehensive cross section of publications that encompassed multiple age groups, genders, ethnicities, and races as well as sexual orientations. Magazine titles were evaluated in Mediamark Reporter according to circulation, index,<sup>67</sup> and composition figures. For a broader examination, *Readers Digest* and *People* were chosen as both are high-circulating magazines with relative diversity in audience age and gender. To examine advertisements aimed at women, the sample included *Cosmopolitan* magazine, which indexes very high for adult females ages 18-24 and secondarily for women 25-34. *Ladies Home Journal* indexes very high for women 50 and older and has also had a consistently high circulation for the last decade. *Self* magazine was also chosen as an example of a publication that focuses on women's health and exercise and has a high composition<sup>68</sup> of women 25-54 (66 percent). To examine advertisements aimed at a male audience, *Men's Journal* and *Gentlemen's Quarterly (GQ)* were included as they index high for many male age segments and have high circulations. The publications chosen to ensure a more comprehensive audience sample included *Latina*—a high circulation magazine aimed at Hispanic and Latina women; *Out*—one of the most prominent magazines aimed at gay and lesbian individuals; and *Ebony*, which is the highest-circulating publication aimed at male and female black/African American audiences of many age groups.

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of magazine issues; January and June issues of each year of each magazine were selected for the study. The January issues were selected because there is a renewed focus on losing weight and fitness as a part of New Year resolutions for many people,<sup>69</sup> and so it was expected that magazines would focus on the topic. The June issues were selected because June is the middle of the year and an early part of the summer season when people go to the beach, swim, and do outdoor activities, so it was expected that June issues of the magazines would focus on body and losing weight and thus provide a relevant sample for the study. A few issues of the magazines were missing from the library and thus could not be included in the sample. These were: *Ebony*, January and June 2002, January and June 2003, and June 2006; *Ladies Home Journal*, January 2005; *Men's Journal*, January 2001, January 2002, and June 2002; and *Out*, January 2005, June 2005, and June 2007.

The units of analysis were full and partial page ads of weight-loss products or services from the selected issues of the magazines. Ads that were a part of the marketplace section in the backs of the magazines were not included, as they are very small and often overlooked. A total of 878 ads in all ten publications made up the sample for the study. The numbers of diet and weight-loss ads in each publication were as follows: *People*,  $n = 340$ ; *Reader's Digest*,  $n = 24$ ; *Cosmopolitan*,  $n = 122$ ; *Ladies Home Journal*,  $n = 112$ ; *Self*,  $n = 138$ ; *GQ*,  $n = 17$ ; *Men's Journal*,  $n = 60$ ; *Latina*,  $n = 24$ ; *Out*,  $n = 31$ ; and *Ebony*,  $n = 10$ .

#### *Coding Categories*

The demographic variables *gender* and *ethnicity* were measured in the weight-loss and diets advertisements. In addition to these demographic variables, *pose*, *body representation*,

*product category, claim made, persuasive appeal, and ad message* were analyzed (see table 1). The product categories and ad messages were determined after doing a cursory look at magazines from the year 2012, including the ten publications included in this study. The list of claims made and persuasive advertising appeals were garnered from an FTC study done previously that noted the most frequently used claims and appeals.<sup>70</sup>

**Table 1.** Coding Scheme

| Variables         | Coding categories  |
|-------------------|--|
| Gender            | Male only, female only, both male and female.  |
| Ethnicity         | White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Pacific Islander, other, unable to detect.  |
| Pose              | Active (i.e., if people in the ad are shown as actively exercising, biking etc.), passive (e.g., just standing, posing, or sitting).   |
| Body              | Full body, body parts (chest, bottom, abdominals, legs, etc.).   |
| Product category  | Weight-loss drugs FDA approved, weight-loss supplements, diet foods, diet drinks, diet regimens/programs, health spas, gyms, exercise books/videos, exercise equipment, other.   |
| Claim made        | Lose weight without diet/exercise, lose weight permanently, rapid weight loss, consumer testimonials, safe/all natural, scientifically proven/doctor endorsed, encourage weight-loss discipline, drink/eat this—lose weight, buy equipment to exercise at home, other.   |
| Persuasive appeal | Price, benefits, demonstrative, testimonial, problem/solution, fear, sex appeal, before/after, shock, other.   |
| Ad message        | Low calorie—lose weight, low fat—lose weight, both low calorie/low fat—lose weight, exercise is way to better body, plant extract offers fast weight loss, drugs offer fast weight loss, nutrient supplement offers weight loss, clothing will help lose weight, doctor/procedure can help stubborn fat loss, it’s all about exercising discipline, other. |

*Coding Procedure*

Two coders were trained to examine the ads. Each coder independently looked at the ads and assigned values associated with each variable. For example, for the gender category, 1 was assigned if the ad had only a male model in it, 2 was assigned when only a female model was present, and 3 when both males and females were present in the ad. If the ad showed no model and displayed only the product, 0 was assigned. The intercoder reliability kappa calculated using thirty units of the sample during final coding<sup>71</sup> was found to be high.<sup>72</sup> The kappa values were as follows: gender (k=1.000, p<0.000), ethnicity (k=0.955, p<0.000), body (k=1.000, p<0.000),

pose ( $k = 0.931$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), product category ( $1.000$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), claim made ( $k = 0.945$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), persuasive appeal ( $k = 0.814$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), and ad message ( $k = 0.758$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). The frequency was calculated for each of the variables.

### Results

The number of diet and weight-loss advertisements varied widely in the magazines. *People*, a magazine targeted at a general audience, had the most diet and weight-loss ads ( $n = 340$ , 38.7 percent), followed by *Self* ( $n = 138$ , 15.7 percent), *Cosmopolitan* ( $n = 122$ , 13.9 percent), and *Ladies Home Journal* ( $n = 112$ , 12.8 percent), all magazines primarily targeted at women. In contrast, diet and weight-loss ads targeted at men and other minority groups were very few (see table 2).

**Table 2.** Number of Diet and Weight-Loss Ads in Each Magazine

| Magazines                  | Ads focusing on diet and weight loss | Percentage |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Readers Digest</i>      | 24                                   | 2.7        |
| <i>People</i>              | 340                                  | 38.7       |
| <i>Cosmopolitan</i>        | 122                                  | 13.9       |
| <i>Ladies Home Journal</i> | 112                                  | 12.8       |
| <i>Self</i>                | 138                                  | 15.7       |
| <i>Men's Journal</i>       | 60                                   | 6.8        |
| <i>GQ</i>                  | 17                                   | 1.9        |
| <i>Latina</i>              | 24                                   | 2.7        |
| <i>Ebony</i>               | 10                                   | 1.1        |
| <i>Out</i>                 | 31                                   | 3.5        |
| Total                      | 878                                  | 100        |

Percentage calculated based on advertisements with people in them ( $n = 506$ ).

#### Demographics Presented in Diet and Weight-Loss Advertising

Across all of the publications, people were shown in a total of 506 ads. The rest of the ads ( $n = 372$ , 42.4 percent) just showed the product for diet and weight loss. Out of 506 ads with people, 76.9 percent ( $n = 389$ ) had only women in them, 11.9 percent ( $n = 60$ ) had only males, and 11.3 percent ( $n = 57$ ) had men and women together (see table 3). *Men's Journal* had the largest number of weight-loss ads with only men in them ( $n = 25$ , 56.8 percent of the *Men's Journal* ads), though proportionally, *GQ* ( $n = 9$ , 75 percent) and *Out* ( $n = 12$ , 60 percent) had greater numbers of weight-loss ads with only men in them. Only 5.8 percent ( $n = 9$ ) of weight-loss ads in *People* magazine had only men in them. Weight-loss ads with only women in them were highest in *People* ( $n = 142$ ), followed by *Self* ( $n = 82$ ), *Cosmopolitan* ( $n = 68$ ), and *Ladies Home Journal* ( $n = 64$ ). Proportionally within the magazines, *Self* had the largest number of weight-loss ads with only women in them (95.3 percent,  $n = 82$ ), followed by *People* ( $n = 142$ , 92.2 percent). Weight-loss ads with both men and women in them were found to be highest in *Cosmopolitan* ( $n = 16$ ) and *Men's Journal* ( $n = 13$ ). Proportionally within the magazines, *Out* had the largest proportion of its ads with both men and women in them (40 percent,  $n = 8$ ) and *People* had the least (1.9 percent,  $n = 3$ ). *Latina* and *Reader's Digest* did not have any weight-loss ads with only males in them, and *Out* and *GQ* did not have any ads with only females in them.



**Table 3.** Overall Gender Represented in Diet and Weight-Loss Advertising in the Sampled Magazines

| Gender               | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Male only            | 60        | 11.9    |
| Female only          | 389       | 76.9    |
| Both male and female | 57        | 11.3    |

Percentage calculated based on advertisements with people in them ( $n=506$ ).

Overall, the people in the advertisements were overwhelmingly white/Caucasian (80.2 percent,  $n=406$ ), regardless of publication audience (see table 4). Black/African Americans were shown in only 7.9 percent ( $n=40$ ) of the ads with people in them. Asians appeared in only four ads (0.8 percent) and Latinos in thirteen ads (2.6 percent). Multiple ethnicities were shown in 26 ads (5.1 percent), and in 3.4 percent ( $n=17$ ) the model's ethnicity was difficult to guess. The proportion of different ethnic groups varied across magazines: 100 percent ( $n=10$ ) of *Reader's Digest* models were white, as were 97.7 percent ( $n=43$ ) of *Men's Journal* models, 94.1 percent ( $n=80$ ) of *Cosmopolitan* models, and 86 percent ( $n=74$ ) of *Self* models in weight-loss advertising. Overall, the highest number of white/Caucasian models were found in *People* ( $n=118$ ), followed by *Cosmopolitan* ( $n=80$ ), *Self* ( $n=74$ ), *Ladies Home Journal* ( $n=61$ ), and *Men's Journal* ( $n=43$ ). In general, there were very few diet and weight-loss ads targeted at minorities. The highest number of black/African Americans was found in *People* ( $n=21$ ), followed by *Self* ( $n=7$ ) and *Ladies Home Journal* ( $n=6$ ). Proportionally, blacks were found to be highest in *Ebony* (66.7 percent,  $n=4$ ), which can be expected, followed by *People* (13.6 percent,  $n=21$ ). Only black models were completely absent from *Latina*, *Out*, *GQ*, and *Reader's Digest*. *Out* had the highest number of ads with a multiethnic group in them (55 percent,  $n=11$ ). Asians were seen only in *Cosmopolitan* ( $n=2$ ), *People* ( $n=1$ ), and *Ladies Home Journal* ( $n=1$ ). Latino/Hispanic models were confined to the *Latina* magazine ( $n=11$ , 61.1 percent of *Latina* ads), while *Out* and *Self* each had only one ad with a Latino/Hispanic model. It is also important to note that 33.3 percent ( $n=2$ ) of *Ebony's* weight-loss ads models and 22.2 percent ( $n=4$ ) of *Latina's* were white.

**Table 4.** Overall Race Represented in Diet and Weight-Loss Advertising in the Sampled Magazines

| Race                   | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| White/Caucasian        | 406       | 80.2    |
| Black/African American | 40        | 7.9     |
| Asian                  | 4         | 0.8     |
| Latino/Hispanic        | 13        | 2.6     |
| Pacific Islander       | 0         | 0.0     |
| Multiple ethnicities   | 26        | 5.1     |
| Unable to detect       | 17        | 3.4     |

Percentage calculated based on advertisements with people in them ( $n=506$ ).

### Presentation of the Bodies

Advertisements were also coded for presentation of the body, specifically whether the individual(s) in the ads were shown as passive or active and whether the entire body was shown, or if only parts of the body such as abdomen, thigh, butt, and so on were shown. In the ads that showed bodies, passive bodies—those just posing and not engaging in any form of moving activity—were overall the norm (83.4 percent,  $n=422$ ). Active bodies, people exercising, biking, and so on were present in only 16.6 percent ( $n=84$ ) of the ads that had people in them. The distribution of active and passive bodies by magazine is presented in table 5. In *Reader's Digest*, 100 percent ( $n=10$ ) of the models were shown as passive. In *Ladies Home Journal*, 90.1 percent ( $n=64$ ) of the bodies were passive and only 9.9 percent ( $n=7$ ) were active. A similar kind of ratio can be seen for other magazines such as *People*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Latina*, and *Ebony*. *Men's Journal* was the only magazine that had equal numbers of active and passive bodies (50 percent,  $n=22$ ).

**Table 5.** Active or Passive Models in Diet and Weight-Loss Advertising

| Magazine               | Active | Percentage within magazine | Passive | Percentage within magazine |
|------------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| <i>Latina</i>          | 2      | 11.1                       | 16      | 88.9                       |
| <i>Ebony</i>           | 1      | 16.7                       | 5       | 83.3                       |
| <i>Out</i>             | 5      | 25.0                       | 15      | 75.0                       |
| <i>GQ</i>              | 3      | 25.0                       | 9       | 75.0                       |
| <i>Reader's Digest</i> | 0      | 0.0                        | 10      | 100                        |
| <i>Cosmopolitan</i>    | 9      | 10.6                       | 76      | 89.4                       |
| <i>People</i>          | 16     | 10.4                       | 138     | 89.6                       |
| <i>LHJ</i>             | 7      | 9.9                        | 64      | 90.1                       |
| <i>Men's Journal</i>   | 22     | 50.0                       | 22      | 50.0                       |
| <i>Self</i>            | 19     | 22.1                       | 67      | 77.9                       |
| Total (506)            | 84     | 16.6                       | 422     | 83.4                       |

Overall, full bodies were shown more often (73.7 percent,  $n=373$ ) than partial bodies (26.3 percent,  $n=133$ ) in ads that had people in them. The distribution of full body and partial body displayed by magazine can be seen in table 6. The proportion of full body and partial body varied across the magazines. The largest difference between a focus on full body versus body parts was noted in *People* (82.5 percent,  $n=127$ ) and *Ebony* (83.3 percent,  $n=5$ ), and the smallest difference was noted in *Self* magazine, which had 61.6 percent ( $n=53$ ) full bodies and 38.4 percent ( $n=33$ ) of ads that focused on body parts.

*Type of Products/Solutions for Weight Loss*

In order to understand which product category was most advertised, various product categories were coded. The largest and most prominent product categories found were for diet foods (32.6 percent,  $n=287$ ) and diet drinks (25 percent,  $n=213$ ), followed closely by non-FDA approved weight-loss supplements, such as Hydroxycut and TrimSpa (20.2 percent,  $n=177$ ), and then weight-loss programs, such as Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers (9.3 percent,  $n=82$ ). The category with the fewest number of advertisements was for FDA approved weight-loss drugs, like Alli (1.6 percent,  $n=14$ ), and exercise equipment (5.1 percent,  $n=45$ ). Gyms accounted for only four of the total ads, and cookbooks, diet, or exercise books and videos accounted for seven

of the ads (0.8 percent). The other category included various ads on weight-loss surgery, TV shows (on Discovery and *Biggest Loser*) and so on (5.5 percent,  $n=48$ ). The proportion of various product categories varied across the magazines.

**Table 6.** Body Display in Magazines

| Magazine               | Focus on full body | Percentage within magazine | Focus on body parts | Percentage within magazine |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Latina</i>          | 14                 | 77.8                       | 4                   | 22.2                       |
| <i>Ebony</i>           | 5                  | 83.3                       | 1                   | 16.7                       |
| <i>Out</i>             | 13                 | 65.0                       | 7                   | 35.0                       |
| <i>GQ</i>              | 9                  | 75.0                       | 3                   | 25.0                       |
| <i>Reader's Digest</i> | 8                  | 80.0                       | 2                   | 20.0                       |
| <i>Cosmopolitan</i>    | 63                 | 74.1                       | 22                  | 25.9                       |
| <i>People</i>          | 127                | 82.5                       | 27                  | 17.5                       |
| <i>LHJ</i>             | 47                 | 66.2                       | 24                  | 33.8                       |
| <i>Men's Journal</i>   | 34                 | 77.3                       | 10                  | 22.7                       |
| <i>Self</i>            | 53                 | 61.6                       | 33                  | 38.4                       |
| Total (506)            | 373                | 73.7                       | 133                 | 26.3                       |

#### Claims, Appeals and Messages

Various claims were noted in diet and weight-loss advertising. A majority of the ads for diet foods and drinks often claimed that eating or drinking the product would encourage weight loss (60.8 percent,  $n=534$ ). Nearly 15.9 percent ( $n=140$ ) of the ads used multiple claims, reinforcing the overall need for the product. Other claims were less frequent (less than 5 percent) except for rapid weight loss claim, which was slightly higher at 6 percent ( $n=53$ ). Very few claims encouraged weight-loss discipline (4.1 percent,  $n=36$ ), the idea that the individual just needed help staying on track and could manage their own weight-loss goals. Though gyms were rarely advertised, exercise equipment ads did make claims that their products could help the person lose weight at home (4.6 percent,  $n=40$ ). These ads, however, were highest in *Men's Journal*, a magazine targeted at men, at 30 percent ( $n=18$ ). This percentage was proportionally much less in all other magazines. For example, *Self*, a fitness magazine for women, had 138 diet and weight-loss ads, but only 5 percent ( $n=7$ ) were for exercise equipment and 60.9 percent ( $n=84$ ) of its ads encouraged or made the claim that eating or drinking something would help lose weight. The proportions of types of claims varied across magazines.

Most advertisements included a persuasive appeal. In diet and weight-loss advertisements, benefits of the product were by far the most frequently used appeal, at 60.3 percent ( $n=529$ ). A large percentage of the ads did use a combination of appeals such as sex appeal, benefits, and before and after photographs (28.4 percent,  $n=249$ ). Other single appeals that were present included sex appeal (3.2 percent,  $n=28$ ), demonstrations (3.1 percent,  $n=27$ ), problem and solution claims (2.2 percent,  $n=19$ ), before and after photos (1.7 percent,  $n=15$ ), testimonials (0.9 percent,  $n=8$ ), and price (0.2 percent,  $n=2$ ). While benefits and multiple persuasive appeals were the most commonly occurring appeals across all magazines, sex appeal was proportionally higher in *Cosmopolitan* (12.3 percent,  $n=15$ ) followed by *Ladies Home*

*Journal* (6.3 percent,  $n=7$ ). *Reader's Digest* ads had a proportionally higher number of problem-solution appeals (20.8 percent,  $n=5$ ). The proportion of appeals varied across the magazines.

The last coding criterion was the message the advertisement wanted to impart to its readers. Consuming low calories (32.1 percent,  $n=282$ ) and pharmaceuticals for fast weight loss (14.5 percent,  $n=127$ ) were two of the most frequent messages in the advertising. Consuming fewer calories and less fat was highlighted in 14 percent of the ads ( $n=123$ ), followed by consumption of nutrient supplements (8.4 percent,  $n=74$ ), low fat (7.7 percent,  $n=68$ ), doctor's procedures (6.4 percent,  $n=56$ ), and exercising (5.7 percent,  $n=50$ ). Messages of consuming plant extracts or using clothing as a way to lose weight or look thinner were infrequent. Messages of lowering calories for losing weight were proportionally highest in ads in *Out* (74.2 percent,  $n=23$ ), followed by *People* (45.6 percent,  $n=155$ ), *GQ* (41.2 percent,  $n=7$ ), and *Ebony* (40 percent,  $n=4$ ). Exercise as a better way to lose weight was proportionately higher in *Men's Journal* (35.0 percent,  $n=21$ ) than in any other magazine. Messages of consuming low fat and low calories (25 percent,  $n=6$ ) and about exercising discipline (25 percent,  $n=6$ ) were proportionally higher in *Reader's Digest* than any other magazine. Messages of using diet pills to lose weight were highest in *Cosmopolitan* (35.2 percent,  $n=43$ ). The proportion of message categories varied across the magazines.

### Discussion

Magazines in general are targeted at specific demographics, and previous researchers focused solely on magazines targeted at specific races or genders when studying advertising messages. This is useful but limited in terms of providing the bigger picture and the dominant messages and ideas that circulate in the larger culture. It also does not take into account cross-readership of magazines. For example, many men read *Cosmopolitan*, a magazine targeted at women,<sup>73</sup> and *Men's Journal* and *GQ* are read not only by white men, but by men of different ethnicities. By examining magazines targeted at different demographics, this study provides a broad overview of who is represented in diet and weight-loss advertising overall and how people are persuaded. This study has looked beyond a single demographic to better understand the ways in which there are similarities and differences in how individuals of differing gender, race/ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation are persuaded to lose weight and the ways advertisers continue to reinforce cultural norms, ideals, and behaviors.

By examining ten of the highest-circulation magazines in the last decade, this study was able to show that diet and weight loss is promoted far more among women than men. This finding is consistent with Andersen and DiDomenico's study.<sup>74</sup> In terms of race and ethnicity, white women were overrepresented in the diet and weight-loss ads. This can be problematic for a number of reasons. It can act to cultivate and construct obesity and overweight as a primarily white women's problem, even though this does not meet the objective reality of today's society, where greater proportions of black and Hispanic men and women are overweight or obese.<sup>75</sup> The representations in weight-loss advertising seem to be quite different from the news media images, where there is overrepresentation of non-whites as overweight or obese compared to actual prevalence rates.<sup>76</sup>

This then raises the question of why white bodies are overrepresented in weight-loss advertising and what it means for the larger society. For advertisers, white women have historically been an important consumer group because of their purchasing power<sup>77</sup> and also because of the cultural pressure that they feel to be thin. Advertisers seem to be exploiting this desire to sell more weight-loss products to white women. The other reason for overrepresentation

in weight-loss advertising is the racial and cultural ideology that sees white bodies as controllable, desirable, and beautiful and black bodies as uncontrollable and deviant,<sup>78</sup> and thus white bodies are presented as the symbols and model of success and successful dieters,<sup>79</sup> and other racial/ethnic bodies are ignored. By over representing white bodies, weight-loss advertisers continue to circulate and reinforce cultural attitudes and beliefs about stereotypes attached to body and race. The results of this study are consistent with Kim and Lennon's study, which also found prominence of white models in weight-loss advertising.<sup>80</sup>

The number of diet and weight-loss advertisements targeting men in general was less than the number targeting women. Within this, white men dominated the ads. As with women, these ads act to promote the Caucasian ideals of beauty, body, and weight. In the context of men, the ads continue to value the image of the Grecian hyper-muscular bodybuilder as discussed by Morgan.<sup>81</sup> The Caucasian ideal is the model promoted to men of non-white ethnicities who also tend to read *GQ*—which has a non-white readership of 21 percent according to GfKMRI Reporter (2012) and to readers of *Men's Journal*.<sup>82</sup>

Weight-loss advertising of today not only promotes norms surrounding the white, Eurocentric, thin, healthy body promoted since the nineteenth century, it also reinforces gender ideals of the passive feminine body and the active masculine body. *Men's Journal* had a greater number of ads where men were shown as active, biking, exercising, etc., and women were shown as standing, posing, and showing off their bodies. LGBT bodies were often shown as passive, for display, which is similar to the ways in which women's bodies were portrayed. However, gay men's bodies were also shown as muscular and having less fat. By looking more muscular, gay men are read as masculine and therefore virile and male. Ads showing individual gay/lesbian/bisexual women were absent in *Out*, supplanted instead with ads featuring a group of women. Here too there seems to be a play of traditional gender stereotype, which reinforces independent men and dependent women. These instances further support Sender's and Branchik's work on gay identities and advertising.<sup>83</sup> LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) bodies were balanced between femininity and masculinity as a way to make their sexuality more mainstream, despite the fact the ads were targeting an LGBT audience. Gay and lesbian advertising was, however, the most multicultural. In this case, one might posit that advertisers showing their support of LGBT audiences choose to extend this support to marginalized ethnicities. Regardless, it is notable that advertisements clearly targeting LGBT consumers were only evident in *Out* magazine.<sup>83</sup> Although not coded in this study, ads in *Out* were noted making LGBT identity visible through rainbow iconography, which may have been intentional so as not to offend non-LGBT audiences by disrupting the body through stance and/or sexual interaction.<sup>84</sup> (Branchik, 2007; Penelozza, 1996; Tsai, 2012).

In weight-loss advertising in the last decade, the full body was shown more often than body parts, regardless of gender. This emphasizes the product's holistic benefits, benefits for the whole self. In many ways, this is better than an advertiser's focus on body parts, which further objectify and sexualize men and women.

Advertisers promote a wide variety of products for weight loss, but overall diet foods and drinks are promoted much more heavily than any other means of controlling weight. It is clear that a person cannot eat their way to weight loss, but advertisers seem to be promoting just that in order to increase their profitability. In addition, one also notices differences in the focus on products for different sexes. Weight loss in men is promoted through active methods such as exercising and through exercise equipment, though this was seen only in *Men's Journal*, as *GQ* had very few ads and, of those, even fewer with people. Among women, passive dieting methods

are promoted through the use of diet food or drinks, diet pills, and supplements. This was highly evident in every publication targeting women as well as more mainstream targeted publications. In addition, gay and lesbian consumers were clearly thought by marketers to be interested only in looking thin while also having a good time, namely drinking alcohol, as most of the ads aimed at this audience were for diet beer and had a single message: drink this, fit in, and look great while doing it. This follows similar findings in previous studies about LGBT audiences, where they are considered the dream market because they are often double income with no kids<sup>85</sup> and have the time and money to party without responsibility.<sup>86</sup> Promoting alcohol and weight loss together is problematic as it gives consumers a false sense of consuming a product that is good for them and at the same time increasing the consumption of product that is detrimental to one's health. This is particularly important, as research has suggested that alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use is higher among LGBT populations because of an increased need to feel acceptance and increased social stressors.<sup>87</sup> Advertisers then are complicit in continuing the use of alcohol as a product for relief as well as a product for weight control.

According to the FTC, "physical activity appears to be a very important treatment component for long-term maintenance of a reduced body weight. To lose weight and not regain it, ongoing changes in thinking, eating, and exercise are essential."<sup>88</sup> Advertisers in general need to show more women and men as active and exercising in order to communicate that products themselves are not adequate for weight loss and that being active and exercising is important to managing one's weight. There is no doubt that advertisers' primary goal is to sell products. However, advertisers can do this in a responsible way by not exaggerating the claim so much so that the use of the product and its ineffectiveness results in a public that is less motivated to take action. Diet and weight-loss advertising can be an important source of information and can motivate and persuade the public to lose weight and thus can be an important partner in the fight against obesity. Ad messages need to present the complexity of weight gain and loss and persuade diverse groups in their pursuit of health and body. Most importantly, advertisers need to persuade diverse groups without promoting and reinforcing hegemonic ideals of body and weight. The advertising literature on efficacy of ads show that model ethnicity affects response to the ads.<sup>89</sup> Thus, in order to engage a diverse group of people to lose weight, advertisers need to include diverse representation.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of the following limitations. The study examined 878 ads, a large sample; however, it did not examine all the ads in all the magazines in a given year. Women's magazines (*Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies Home Journal*) and *People*, a general magazine, had disproportionately higher number of weight-loss ads than ads in other magazines, thus the generalization of the findings may be limited. In addition, some issues of the publications were not available, thus they could not be included in the study.

Future research should examine additional publications targeted at multi-cultural audiences to see if there are other correlations or discrepancies. This is particularly important with regard to LGBT audiences and black/African American audiences. Latin and Hispanic audiences could also be researched further. Research that looks at how these advertisements compare to health news articles related to obesity and other healthy weight suggestions would also allow for a more inclusive and comparative look at the public health message as opposed to simply examining how marketers are connecting to consumers.

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<sup>3</sup> “Adult Obesity Facts,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified September 21, 2015, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>. See paragraph two.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> MarketData, “U.S. Weight Loss Market Worth \$60.9 Billion,” *PRWeb*, May 9, 2011, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/5/prweb8393658.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Olsen, “Diet Companies Promote New Ways to Reduce,” *New York Times*, January 6, 2011, New York edition.

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<sup>10</sup> MarketData, “U.S. Weight Loss Market Worth \$60.9 Billion.”

<sup>11</sup> Susan Bordo, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault,” in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Allison Jaggar and Susan Bordo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 13-33; Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Renee Botta, “Television Images and Adolescent Girls’ Body Image Disturbance,” *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 2 (1999): 22-41; Renee Botta, “The Mirror of Television: A Comparison of Black and White Adolescents’ Body Image,” *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 3 (2000): 144-59; John Germov and Lauren Williams, “Dieting Women: Self-Surveillance and the Body Panopticon,” in *Weighty Issues, Fatness and Thinness as Social Problems*, ed. Jeffrey Sobal and Donna Maurer (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 117-32; Karen Henwood, Rosalind Gill, and Carl MacLean, “The Changing Man,” *The Psychologist* 15, no. 4 (2002): 182-86; Jean Kilbourne, *Slim Hopes: Advertising & the Obsession with Thinness* (1995), DVD; Maggie Wykes and Barrie Gunter, *The Media and Body Image: If Looks Could Kill* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005).

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<sup>51</sup> Anthony Cortese, *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Kilbourne, *Slim Hopes*.

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<sup>53</sup> Jackson Katz, "Advertising and the Construction of the Violent White Masculinity: From Eminem to Clinique for Men," in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text Reader*, ed. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 349-58.

<sup>54</sup> MarketData, "U.S. Weight Loss Market Worth \$60.9 Billion."

<sup>55</sup> Tracy Ore, *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Katherine Frith, Ping Shaw, and Hong Cheng, "The Construction of Beauty: A Cross-cultural Analysis of Women's Magazine Advertising," *Journal of Communication* 55, no. 1 (2005): 59.

<sup>57</sup> "White Men Continue to Dominate Advertising Agencies: A Study of the Super Bowl 2011 Ads," *Tidesport.org*, 2011, [http://www.tidesport.org/MadAve/MadisonAvenue2011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tidesport.org/MadAve/MadisonAvenue2011_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Clint Wilson and Felix Gutierrez, "Advertising and People of Color," in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text Reader*, ed. Gail Dines and Jean Humez (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 284.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Cash and Robin Roy, "Pounds of Flesh: Weight, Gender, and Body Images," in *Interpreting Weight: The Social Management of Fatness and Thinness*, ed. Jeffery Sobal and Donna Maurer (New York: Walter de Gruyter, Inc., 1999), 209-28; see also Cortese, *Provocateur*.

<sup>60</sup> Shelly Campo and Teresa Mastin, "Placing the Burden on the Individual: Overweight and Obesity in African American and Mainstream Women's Magazines," *Health Communication* 22, no. 3 (2007): 229-40.

<sup>61</sup> Avery, Cawley, Eisenberg, and Cantor, "Raising Red Flags."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; FTC staff, "Weight-Loss Advertising: An Analysis of Current Trends," (2002): <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/reports/weightloss.pdf>; Sohn, "To Substantiate or Not to Substantiate?"

<sup>63</sup> Clinton Amos and Stacy Landreth Grau, "Does Consumer Skepticism Negate the Effects of Visceral Cues in Weight Loss Advertising?" *International Journal of Advertising* 30, no. 4 (2011): 693-719; Clinton Amos and Nancy Spears, "Generating a Visceral Response," *Journal of Advertising* 39, no. 3 (2010): 25-38.

<sup>64</sup> Kean and Prividera, "Communicating About Race and Health"; Pratt, Pratt, Montague, Salazar, and Graves, "Do Popular Magazines Promote Weight-Control Messages?"

<sup>65</sup> David Deacon, "Why Counting Counts," in *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*, ed. Michael Pickering (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 89-104.

<sup>66</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> An index is an audience measurement that indicates the percentage of the target audience that will or will not engage in a specific behavior or a specific medium.

<sup>68</sup> Composition refers to the percentage of a particular demographic of readers out of the total readers of a publication.

<sup>69</sup> Kayla Webley, "Top 10 Commonly Broken New Year's Resolutions," *Time*, January 1, 2012, [http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2040218\\_2040220\\_2040221,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2040218_2040220_2040221,00.html).

<sup>70</sup> FTC staff, "Weight-Loss Advertising."

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<sup>71</sup> Stephen Lacy and Daniel Riffe, "Sampling Error and Selecting Intercoder Reliability Samples for Nominal Content Categories," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73 (1996): 969-973.

<sup>72</sup> J. Richard Landis and Gary Koch, "The Measurement of Observer Agreement for Categorical Data," *Biometrics* 33 (1977): 159-74; Matthew Lombard, Jennifer Snyder-Duch, and Cheryl Bracken, "Intercoder Reliability," *MatthewLombard.com*, <http://matthewlombard.com/reliability>.

<sup>73</sup> "Why Men Read Cosmo," *Cosmopolitan.com* video, 2:56, July 20, 2010, <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/videos/why-men-read-cosmo-video-24410875001>.

<sup>74</sup> Anderson and DiDomenico, "Diet vs. Shape Content of Popular Male and Female Magazines."

<sup>75</sup> "Adult Obesity Facts."

<sup>76</sup> Sarah Gollust, Ijeoma Eboh, and Colleen Barry, "Picturing Obesity: Analyzing the Social Epidemiology of Obesity Conveyed through US News Media Images," *Social Science & Medicine* 74, no. 10 (2012): 1544-51.

<sup>77</sup> Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012).

<sup>78</sup> Firth, "Healthy Choices and Heavy Burdens."

<sup>79</sup> Natalie Boero, "All the News that's Fat to Print: The American 'Obesity Epidemic' and the Media," *Qualitative Sociology* 30, no. 1 (2007): 41-60.

<sup>80</sup> Minjeong Kim and Sharron Lennon, "Content Analysis of Diet Advertisements: A Cross-National Comparison of Korean and U.S. Women's Magazines," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 24, no. 4 (2006): 345-62, doi:10.1177/0887302X06293029.

<sup>81</sup> Tracy Morgan, "Pages of Whiteness: Race, Physique Magazines, and the Emergence of Public Gay Culture," in *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Anthology*, ed. Brett Beemyn and Michele Eliason (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 280-97.

<sup>82</sup> *Men's Journal* did not have any statistics on its racial demography. A similar magazine, *Men's Health*, has a non-White readership of 26 percent, according to *GfkMRI Reporter*, "Media Demographics - Respondent [data set]" (2012): <http://ureporter.mriplusonline.com/selectdemo.asp>

<sup>83</sup> Sender, "Selling Sexual Subjectivities"; Branchik, "Queer Ads."

<sup>83</sup> The online subscription web page for Here Media Inc., parent company of *Out*, describes the publication as "the world's leading source for gay fashion, style, and culture. Issue after issue, *Out* enriches your gay experience with thoughtful writing, stunning visuals, and authoritative coverage of fashion and design," 2015, <http://www.heremediamagazines.com>.

<sup>84</sup> Branchik, "Queer Ads"; Lisa Peñaloza, "We're Here, We're Queer, and We're Going Shopping!: A Critical Perspective on the Accommodation of Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Marketplace," in *Gays, Lesbians, and Consumer Behavior: Theory, Practice, and Research Issues in Marketing*, ed. Daniel Wardlow (New York: Haworth Press, 1996), 9-42;

Tsai, "Political Issues in Advertising Polysemy."

<sup>85</sup> Anthony Freitas, Susan Kaiser, and Tania Hammidi, "Communities, Commodities, Cultural Space, and Style," *Journal of Homosexuality* 31, no. 1-2 (1996): 83-107.

<sup>86</sup> Peñaloza, "We're Here, We're Queer, and We're Going Shopping!"

<sup>87</sup> Michele Eliason, "Environmental Prevention Strategies to Address LGBT Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use," *LGBT Tri-Star: Best Practices Report Series* (2010):

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<sup>89</sup> Brett Martin, Christina Kwai-Choi Lee, and Feng Yang, "The Influence of Ad Model Ethnicity and Self-Referencing on Attitudes: Evidence from New Zealand," *Journal of Advertising* 33, no. 4 (2004): 27-37; Jeremy Sierra, Michael Hyman, Ivonne Torres, "Using a Model's Apparent Ethnicity to Influence Viewer Responses to Print Ads: A Social Identity Theory Perspective," *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising* 31, no. 2 (2009): 41-66.