

How Advertisers See Black Women: Frequency and Depictions of African American Women in
Top Fashion Magazine Advertisements

Abstract

Advertisements found in the January through December 2008 issues of four top fashion magazines were examined to determine differences in frequency and representation of African American and Caucasian women. Data show that the thin body/image weight ideal was found for Caucasian models while the “average” or overweight image was found for African American models. Other significant research findings as well as the theoretical implications and directions for future research are discussed.

How Advertisers See Black Women: Frequency and Portrayals of African American Women in Top Fashion Magazine Advertisements

African American women spend \$7.5 billion annually on beauty products, but shell out 80 percent more money on cosmetics and twice as much on skin care products than the general market, according to research. That difference comes as African-American women sample many more products to find the ones that are most effective on their skin. She spends a lot, but there's little satisfaction. What keeps us buying is the hope that this product will do what it's supposed to do," said [celebrity makeup artist] Sam Fine.

The portrayal of African Americans in advertising has been of interest to advertisers and marketers for over half a century. However, few studies have spanned multiple decades and very few have extended into the 21st century. In recent years, African American women have made a presence in the area of advertising and advertising research, but regardless of these efforts, most images of African American women are those that appear either in a group where black women are in the minority, or where they are portrayed like animals, are depicted as being submissive or even dominated. Studying how African American women are presented in the media and to the American public is important because research can help begin to identify possible effects that exposure to the images may have on attitudes and behaviors. Portrayals of women in magazine advertisements may cultivate beliefs or expectations about physical appearance, skin tone, beauty, sexuality, self-objectification, relationships and/or even gender roles. Empirical research may be used to reveal how certain portrayals of African American women in media correlate with willingness (or lack thereof) to accept African Americans into our society's cultural mainstream.

Although the images of Caucasian women in beauty magazines have been the topic of much scholarly criticism, few studies have focused on the portrayals of minorities in top beauty and fashion magazines. Fashion magazines are believed to influence the beauty standard of most

women and encourage them to follow unrealistic standards of beauty. Although a content analysis cannot provide insights into the effects of exposure to these images, data obtained from a content analysis can identify the potential of influence that these images may have on young, vulnerable populations. This study is significant and relevant to the field of minorities and mass communication research in that it identifies progression of African-American representation in general interest and African-American targeted fashion magazine advertising.

Research Focus

The present study analyzed the frequency of representation of African-American females in fashion advertisements found in the top four most popular and read women's magazines (*Ebony*, *Essence*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Glamour*) in the span of one year (2008). The magazines were chosen in an effort to provide a comparison of the way African American women are presented in their own culture (predominately magazines aimed at African-American readers and in African-American female oriented magazines), and in general interest Caucasian magazines (magazines aimed at predominately Caucasian female readers). The year 2008 was chosen to add to and further prior research with more up-to-date images and data of the African-American female model used in fashion magazine advertisements. This study briefly discusses the background of African American representation in advertising and presents research parameters and findings.

The purpose of this study is to extend previous research regarding magazine advertising and portrayals of African Americans. The project will assess how modern day portrayals and frequencies compare to those of earlier decades. The specific research questions formulated for the current study are:

1. What is the frequency of use of African American models in top fashion magazine advertisements and has frequency improved over the years?
2. What is the ethnic composition of top mainstream fashion magazine advertisements portraying African American women and has that changed over time?

3. How are African American women used and viewed in top fashion magazines whose readership is aimed at a predominately Caucasian readership, and are the depictions different from those found in magazines aimed at predominately African American female readers?

Literature Review

Historical Overview of Roles and Representation in the Media

Roles: In the post-slavery era, African-Americans were initially featured in the roles they filled during slavery as cooks, maids, and other unskilled laborers. Shuey, King, and Griffith (1953) found that 95.3% of the African-Americans in ads from 1949-50 were depicted as unskilled laborers, with the remaining African-Americans presented as entertainers or athletes. Kassarian (1969) also found that in 1965, 60% of the ads with blacks featured them as sports or entertainment celebrities although African-Americans also began to be portrayed in professional occupations. The roles of African-Americans in ads increased in occupations of above-skilled labor from the '60s onward. Cox (1970) found that the stereotyping of African-Americans in ads as "below skilled labor" decreased from 75% in 1949-1950 (Shuey, King, & Griffith, 1953) to 8% in the '60s. Bush, Resnick, and Stern (1980) asserted that by the end of the '70s, 50.9% of ads featuring African-Americans portrayed them in major roles, though only 4.6% of the ads placed blacks in dominant power positions.

By 1986, African-Americans were depicted in managerial and professional roles in 50% of the ads that featured them (Stevenson, 1991). In regard to African-American women in advertising in African-American magazines, some studies have found that black women have been presented less often in familial roles (Kim & Lowery, 2005) than they were nearly 20 years earlier when family-marriage was "the second most frequent appearing product appeal subtext" (Thomas & Treiber, 2000). African-American women were also most often found to be in ads for personal care products (most often hair care) and clothes, with two African-American magazines (Ebony/Essence) advertising hair care products in higher frequency than other products (Thomas & Treiber, 2000).

Frequency and Representation of Blacks in Ads: A published study by Humphrey and Schuman (1984) on the frequency and portrayal of African Americans in advertisements found that Blacks were underrepresented in ads in the 1980s. Only 5.7% of the total number of people shown in the ads, at that time, were Black, compared to approximately 12% of Blacks in the general population. In addition, some studies have focused on African-American female body images or roles in advertisements (Baker, 2005; Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Frisby, 2004; Thomas & Treiber, 2000).

Historically, African-Americans have been underrepresented in mainstream advertising. “The large number of appearances of African Americans in minor and background roles and the converse—their relative infrequency of appearance in major roles—suggest an unwelcome tokenism” (Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995). In a study of portrayals of African Americans in magazine and television commercials, Zinkhan, Qualls, and Biswas (1990) found an upward trend in portrayals of African American characters and actors in both magazine and television advertisements. This upward trend was also confirmed in another related study which shows that African-Americans now account for approximately 25% of characters or actors depicted in advertisements (Wilkes & Valencia, 1989). Thus, it appears as if the frequency of African-American portrayals in the media is improving or has it stayed the same since the early 1990s?

Stevenson (2009) conducted the most recent and thorough investigation of the examined the frequency of black portrayals as well as the occupations and racial compositions employed in ads depicting blacks in four mass circulation consumer magazines over four decades. Through the use of content analysis, Stevenson (2009) analyzed more than 1500 ads for the years 1975, 1985, 1995, and 2005 and found that there were significant increases in the numbers of blacks portrayed in the magazines. Stevenson (2009) also determined that where blacks were portrayed in occupational roles, most depictions were “above skilled labor,” and, most portrayals utilized mixed peer rather than non-mixed peer depictions. Some researchers, however, have suggested that portrayals that utilized African Americans with mixed peers and surround them with Caucasian models may be an “unintentional” strategy designed to avoid creating an association

that links a product or service with Black culture.

Representation Along Gender Lines

African-American men tend to be frequently represented in ads for clothing and shoes in hip-hop, African-American general interest, and other general interest magazines than for any other product (Bailey, 2006). Of interest is the fact that Bailey (2006) found that African-American men often are not featured in occupational settings. As with previous research, Bailey found that African-American males in occupational roles in hip-hop magazines were most often presented as entertainers or athletes (32.3%), followed by professional roles (1.7%). Though these ads may have been designed and placed in an effort to blend in to the magazines, which promote a segment of the entertainment industry, it is still important to note the potential overrepresentation of African-Americans in these roles. African-American men were presented frequently as entertainers or athletes in other magazines as well (19.8%), followed by depictions as professional employees (14.7%).

In contrast to the negative or stereotypical depictions of African-Americans as a whole and African-American men in particular, some studies have found African-American women to be presented in positions of power in magazine advertisements. When comparing gender images in ads placed in African-American targeted magazines to those in magazines targeted at Caucasians, McLaughlin and Goulet (1999) found that African-American magazines featured more ads where women were in places of power than did Caucasian magazines. McLaughlin and Goulet (1999) also found that African-American women were more often placed in positions of submission in advertisements in magazines targeted at Caucasians. The researchers attribute the latter to advertiser manipulation of articles to appeal to the audience to which they are advertising in ethnic versus non-ethnic magazines. According to McLaughlin and Goulet (1999), “advertisers are still relying upon their subordination as a tool in the attempt to sell a wide variety of products” (p. 67).

Differences in Representation by Gender and Ethnicity

African American women, throughout history, have been largely ignored by the

advertisement industry. What is not known is whether or not advertisements with African American models reflect “real-world” images of black women (i.e., curvy and average in weight). Are advertisers starting to see Black women the way they want to be seen? There are many examples these days of black people presented in middle-class environments and engaged in a variety of mainstream activities. Are these environments reflected in the advertisements aimed at black women? It is possible that the use of overweight black women in media (i.e. ads and situation comedies) might suggest a welcome change that reflects a broader acceptability of African Americans in the media and perhaps in our culture.

Studies have shown that Caucasian women suffer from lower self-esteem and are more prone to eating disorders than African American women are, despite the fact that African American women are often times more overweight. African American women throughout history have been known for undying perseverance, high self-esteem, confidence, and high personal regard (Frisby, 2003 and 2006). However, research that shows that these attributes are visible and portrayed in advertisements is largely nonexistent.

Statement of Purpose

The present study seeks to compliment and extend research on the portrayals of African-American women in magazine advertising. Analysis and research in this area is important because of the impact such images have on the African-American community and on society at large. African-American women have traditionally been featured in unfavorable stereotypical roles on a mass scale. West (1995) explicated three of the roles most often attributed to African-American females: Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel, of which Mammy and Jezebel are most illustrated in print advertisements. Perhaps the most prominent figure associated with the Mammy image is Aunt Jemima. In more recent years, advertisements appear to be bombarded by African-American female entertainers cast as Jezebel types (see Frisby and Aubrey, 2010), promoting a hypersexual image of the black woman, bolstering the stereotype of the African-American as the natural-born musician, the perfect entertainer, and incredible athlete.

Research Questions

As with Bailey's (2006) study, the present research focuses on the frequency of depictions of African-American females in print advertisements. The frequency of the depictions is important because cultivation theory asserts that the more people see certain images, the more likely they are to accept them as reality. Thus, this study seeks to answer the questions asked by Bailey in his earlier work:

RQ1: What is the frequency with which African-American females are depicted in the ads of magazines targeted to both Caucasians AND African-Americans?

RQ2: With what kinds of products and product categories are African-American females associated in magazine ads?

RQ3: What is the nature of the relationship in which African-American female models are involved (i.e., alone, in groups or in pairs)? This can serve as a measure of the level of integration in advertising (Bailey, 2006; Wilkes & Valencia, 1989).

Method

Selection of Advertisements

The sample consisted of the January through December 2008 issues of Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Essence, and Ebony. These magazines were selected to represent women's magazines and were on the list of 100 bestselling U.S. magazines provided by the Simmons Market Research Bureau 2007. They all had high index numbers on female readers. All of the advertisements appearing in each of the four magazines were coded in terms of: 1) ethnicity of the model (Caucasian, African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Other), 2) number of models featured in the ad (one, two, three, four, five or more), 3) type of product advertised (alcohol/cigarettes, direct-to-consumer pharmaceuticals, hair care, clothing, make-up/skin care, household products, weight, food, other) 4) camera shot (face only, full body, face plus partial body (identify body part), body only (no face), side view, other).

Coding Reliability

The coding instrument was pretested to work out any coding problems. A composite reliability coefficient was computed using Holsti's formula. Inter-coder agreement was computed

by dividing the number of agreements by the number of ads in the pretest sample (ex. 45 agreements/50 ads = .90). For this research, the average inter-coder agreement was 0.90 (45/50 = .90), and the composite reliability was 0.98.

Measurement of Variables

For each coding categories, different scores were assigned; the score of 1 if it is an observed image/behavior (e.g., face only, etc.) and the score of 0 if it was not observed. By adding up the scores, the overall "frequency score" for each advertisement was measured. A big score indicates more frequency and a little score indicates less frequency and appearance of the model. The coders looked at many different aspects of the images utilized in the advertisements (see appendix A). Within each of the above categories were subcategories. With respect to "body image," coders reviewed and analyzed the type of expression on the model's body type. The body image subcategories were:

1. Very thin. Very thin was when many bones sticking out, and the model was skeletal looking.
2. Thin. Thin was when the model was less than average body weight; a few bones may be visible, but she was not skeletal.
3. Average. Average was when the model was not overly plump, curvy, overweight, broad, thicker boned.
4. Overweight. Overweight was when the model was plump, curvy, broad, and thicker boned.

"View" or body angle was based on the amount of the model's face that was portrayed in the advertisement. The extent to which the face and/or body parts were coded according to the following scheme:

1. Whole Face. Whole Page meant the model's face was taking up the whole ad.
2. Most Of Face. Most Of Face was when the models face was taking up at least 50% of the ad.
3. Less Than Half. Less Than Half was when the models face was taking up less than 50%

of the advertisement and her body or body parts were emphasized.

4. Face Not Visible. Gaze Not Visible was when the models gaze was not visible. This coding category consisted primarily of those depictions that focused on objectification of the female body.

The other two categories were social environment/relationships and product type. The social environment/relationship variable consisted of coding relationships portrayed in the ads (alone, in pairs, or in groups). The product types coded for study were make-up/skin care products (lip gloss, foundation, eye shadow, mascara, aging creams, soaps, and so forth), hair care products (shampoo, conditioners, hair color, etc.), clothing, food, cigarettes and alcohol, diet pills and other weight loss products, health care and other. Some of the subcategory findings weren't significant independently so they were combined with other similar subcategory/subcategories such as nude and scantily dressed.

Procedure

The magazine ads were chosen randomly. Three females ranging in age from 19 to 21-years-of-age coded the advertisements. The 19 year-old female was enrolled in the Business School and majored in Finance. One 21-year-old Hispanic college student; and one 21-year-old Caucasian student both enrolled in upper level communication classes served as coders for the study. Advertisements were coded as a group with an agreement between the three coders.

Repeated ads were not selected for the sample because a diverse range of advertisements was important for this study. For example, more than one Revlon ad using the same visual found in more than one magazine was not selected. This resulted in a total of 74 magazine advertisements that were selected and coded from the four magazines and used for the sample of this research.

RESULTS

In all, a total of 754 advertisements were coded from the four magazines. Table 1 contains the frequencies of African American and Caucasian American females in the ads of the four magazines for 2008. Consistent with predictions, African American females were

infrequently found in the advertisements of mainstream leading fashion magazines.

Table 1

Frequencies of Caucasian and African American women in fashion magazines advertisements

	Cosmopolitan	Glamour	Essence	Ebony	Total
Caucasian Women	296	302	53	48	699
African American Women	4	5	25	23	57
Totals	300	307	78	71	756

Table 2 provides an overall summary of the amount of diversity in advertising across ethnic group lines. As the data reflect approximately 15% of the advertisements in top fashion magazines aimed at Caucasian women contain images of African American females. Of the 754 advertisements studied, data reveal that Caucasian models are used in advertisements aimed at Caucasian female readers while African American models are frequently depicted in ads placed in fashion magazines with a high concentration of African American female readers.

Table 2:

Frequencies and Percentages of Advertisements with Caucasian and African American Models

	Caucasian Women's Fashion Magazines	African American Women's Fashion Magazines
Caucasian Females	598 (85.6%)	101 (14.4%)
African American Females	9 (15.8%)	48 (84.2%)

Note: Each percentage is based on a sample of 754 advertisements. For example, of the 607 advertisements drawn from Caucasian Women's Fashion Magazines, 15.8% contained at least one African American female.

Portrayal of Weight and Body Images

The weight coding was divided into categories of thin and average. Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine if the two categories were independent of the ethnicity of the model. As Table 3 shows, a significant association was observed between the portrayal of body

weight and ethnicity of the model, $X^2(4, N=748) = 17.5$, $p < .002$, suggesting that differences in body image of models differ based on ethnicity of the model. Thin portrayals of women were presented in magazines aimed at Caucasian women while portrayals of average body weight for women were represented in African American magazines. Thus, it appears, portrayals of thin women were more frequent in Cosmopolitan and Vogue and portrayals of average sized women were most frequent in Essence and Ebony. Of the advertisements that contained African American women, 82.5% presented their full bodies and the presentation was often seen as an average or overweight body type.

Table 3:

Frequencies and Percentages of Models Body Image by Ethnicity of the Model

	Caucasian	African American
Thin	230 (76.8%)	26 (17.5%)
Average/Overweight	70 (23.2%)	122 (82.5%)

Amount of Face/Body Portrayed

The amount of face and body shown was divided into two categories of whole face/most of face and less than half or face not visible. Chi square tests were conducted to determine if the amount of face/body shown was independent of the model's ethnicity. A significant association was determined between portrayal of face and body by ethnicity, $X^2(4, N=743) = 229.6$, $p < .01$. The highest percentage of ads with models showing their whole face was found in magazines aimed at Caucasian women (see Table 4).

Table 4:

Frequencies and Percentages of Amount of Face Shown by Ethnicity of the Model

	Caucasian	African American
Whole/Most of Face	439 (72.6%)	113 (76.1%)
Less than Half/Face Not	166 (27.4%)	36(24.9%)

Visible		
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Product Type

The frequencies of the model's ethnicity in advertisements by four product types was tested using Chi-Square tests of Independence. As data in Table 5 shows, African American women were more likely to appear in ads for make-up and skin care than in ads for clothing, r hair care ads, $X^2 (4, N=708) = 178.6, p < .001$. Data show that both Caucasian and African American female models were equally likely to appear in ads for perfume, diet pills, health care, and other products and services. Caucasian female models were equally more likely to appear in hair care and clothing ads and were three times more likely to appear in clothing ads than their African American counterparts

Table 5:

Frequencies and Percentages of Advertised Product by Ethnicity of the Model

	Caucasian	African American
Makeup/Skin Care	148 (24.5%)	79 (53.0%)
Hair Care	196 (32.4%)	30 (20.1%)
Clothing	212 (35.0%)	18 (12.1%)
Health Care/Direct-to-Consumer	7 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)
Perfume	22 (3.6%)	4 (2.7%)
Cigarettes/Alcohol	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.3%)
Diet	10 (1.7%)	4 (2.7%)
Food	14 (2.3%)	12 (8.1%)

Alone, In Pairs or In a Group

Table 6 shows the frequencies of Caucasian and African American female models presented in advertisements either alone, in pairs (with men or another woman) or in a group (3

or more people in the ad/same or mixed sex). Both Caucasian and African American females were more likely to appear alone in advertisements than in pairs or in groups, $X^2(4, N=708) = 10.37, p < .05$. Data revealed that both Caucasian and African American female models tend to be portrayed alone in ads while Caucasian women were often featured in pairs or with men and African American women featured in groups more than ads featuring them alone. Data also seem to suggest that African American female models are more likely to be presented in groups than are Caucasian female models. This finding may support the hypothesis that advertisers and marketers prefer to distance African Americans from the product (Colfax & Sternberg, 1972).

Table 6:

Frequencies and Percentages of Presentations of Models alone, in pairs, and in groups by Ethnicity of the Model

	Caucasian	African American
Alone	223 (36.9%)	57 (38.2%)
In Pairs	247 (40.8%)	4 (2.7%)
In Groups	135 (23.3%)	88 (59.1%)

DISCUSSION

The buying power of African Americans/Blacks rose 166% in 17 years, from \$318 billion in 1990 to \$845 billion in 2007. By 2012, the buying power of African Americans/Blacks is projected to grow to more than \$1 trillion, according to the University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth. The potential of the African-American/Black market has advertisers dedicating major dollars to reach them—and those dollars are growing at a significant pace. In 2002 advertisers spent \$457.9 billion to reach African Americans/Blacks through African-American/Black media properties. In 2006, that spending increased by 72.8%, totaling \$791 million. Growth occurred across all categories, ranging from Direct Response, Personal Hygiene

& Health to Media & Advertising and Audio & Video Equipment.

According to the American Health and Beauty Aids Institute, African-American women spend up to five times more on personal care products than the average consumer. Prior research shows, however, that 71% of black women feel that they are portrayed worse than other women in media and advertising (Frisby, 2003, 2006). African-American women come not only in various colors, but with various mindsets, interests and attitude. Future research should determine if advertisements containing African American women reflect this variety in the ads in all products and services? Do advertisements utilizing people of color for products other than personal care products exist? Future research should seek to answer this question.

Data obtained in this study seem to support the idea that frequency of African American females in top fashion magazine advertisements is improving. Data show no significant differences in which African American females were presented in the four magazines, Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Essence, and Ebony. Among the 754 ads sampled from leading magazines, 149 (19.7%) contained African American female models. Although this number is shows improvement in representation, market research shows representation could be better. African-American females – who comprise 55% of the black population, compared to 52% females in the overall U.S. population – are much more influential than the general female population in consumer transactions. In fact, black females make the lion's share of buying decisions among African-Americans.

Content analysis is a powerful tool for quantifying media portrayals and changes in those portrayals overtime. One limitation of content analysis as a research method is that the results are correlational and open to many interpretations and criticisms. Reviewers might argue that data obtained in the current study might reflect advertisers sensitivity toward minorities, and unlike prior research, are now starting to associate more products with African Americans. This explanation is plausible, however, it does not take into account the skin tone of the models or the physical features of the African American models.

Data obtained in the present research project indicated that when African American

models are utilized in ads, they are often portrayed differently than their Caucasian counterparts. African American female models, according to the data, are more often portrayed as “average” or “overweight,” and are typically depicted in advertisements for products like make-up and skin care rather than in advertisements for clothing, hair care, and skin care products. Advertisements utilizing African American women for other products were not found, however. Not only were African American women absent in advertisements for diet products, health care, insurance, automobiles, investment marketers, and health care, Caucasian women were also not well represented in advertisements for these products or services. The health care industry, specifically, needs to do a better job of advertising and educating African American women on what it is that they need to do to remain healthy. Research shows that African-Americans think of their bodies differently than Caucasian women do. Research also shows that curves are a sign of real beauty in the black community. African American women, research suggests tend to be a little heavier but often do not regard themselves as being “unhealthy.” Research in this area needs to focus on theories and ways that advertising and other persuasive messages might be used to educate black women about the importance of health care.

Further, data show that African American models are more often presented in full-face views, which is an appropriate view for advertising make-up and skin care products. Caucasian women, data suggest, are equally found in ads that show full body and face only views. This may suggest that facial close ups of African American women may match the cultural beauty standard of the larger culture and perhaps it shows advertisers growing sensitivity to diversity in advertisements. Future research should test the validity of this interpretation by examining the skin tone and other physical features of the African American model to determine if advertisers are willing to show black models with “ethnocentric” features.

Research also revealed that both African American and Caucasian female models were more likely to appear alone in advertisements. However, data also shows an interesting finding: African American models are two times more likely to be presented in groups than were Caucasians. This finding lends one to hypothesize that advertisers are still using an intentional

strategy that may distance African Americans from a particular product. Future research should examine the relationship between portrayals of black women in groups and the type of product advertised. Such research may be used to provide insights into the type of products in which advertisers feel compelled to rely on black women in groups and will also help to show if there is in fact an intentional strategy being used by advertising copywriters and art directors. This finding alone begs for future research. Are there benefits or liabilities to using Black models in groups? This is a question for future research to answer.

Although the present study shows improvement in representation of African American women in ads, it is worth noting a few of the study's limitations that need to be considered while interpreting the findings. First, the present study focused exclusively on top fashion magazines and advertisements. This research procedure leads one to wonder if differences would have been found if other magazines and/or ads found in newspapers might also show improvement in representation.

The present study investigated a relatively restricted set of categories, ignoring stereotypes (i.e., African American women portrayed in animal print) and other variables that might have also yielded positive, significant results. Further, each coding category was represented with only four magazines suggesting the importance of replicating this study with additional magazines, more measures, and perhaps a longer time period.

Theoretical Significance and Implications

Social Learning Theory

According to the tenets of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, we pay attention to what we see in the media and retain this information, which presents itself in our attitudes and behavior. As such, the subservient and overly sexual images of African-American women depicted in magazine advertisements can paint a picture in the mind of the male or non-African-American reader of the typical interaction with such females. As a result, negative depictions produce and perpetuate negative stereotypes of African-American females. This may lead to certain social expectations in the mind of the reader that will not be met in an actual interaction.

It may be hypothesized that certain stereotypes presented in the media can have a negative influence on the audience's daily interaction with others. Likewise, the positive portrayal of African- American females in magazine advertisements can create a positive image in the mind of consumers. According to social learning theory individuals are more likely to imitate behaviors that are engaged in by models to whom the observer feels similar [and] who have qualities that the observer finds attractive.

Effects of exposure to the ideas about how women should act, look, are valued do not appear or affect behaviors over night. The gender roles and dehumanization of women, namely women of color, is a process that is accomplished with a great deal of time, quantity of exposure, and repetition. When an individual is surrounded, daily, with depictions of unrealistic images, it can be theorized that he/she will begin to associate their own personal identity with the media images, in some manner. As social observational learning theory suggests, young black girls exposed to models in black fashion magazines may inadvertently learn that make up and skin care products will make one lighter skinned and more beautiful. Data obtained in the current study may shed some light and begin discussions on what types of images women are exposed to as well as how frequently those images appear in top magazines.

Cultivation Theory

According to Gerbner's cultivation theory (1986), we shape our world view from the depictions we see in the media. In this vein, "an audience's repeated exposure to mediated images will lead to the audience members' beliefs and attitudes being shaped by the mediated messages" (Bailey, 2006, p. 88). Not just focusing on out-group media recipients, cultivation theory also implies that "the depictions that groups of consumers see of themselves in the media may come to shape how they perceive themselves and relate to others" (p. 88). In other words, advertising images of African-American females do not just have an impact on readers of other races. These portrayals, whether classified as positive or negative, when reinforced over time, can have a resounding effect on the self-perception of African-American females and perceptions of the African-American community, manifesting itself in community interaction behaviors. A

closer look at the frequency of African-American females in advertisements and the images reflected in those advertisements can lend insight into cultural impact that may be far-reaching.

CONCLUSION

This study was important because it showed the different ways in which women are portrayed. Data show that the thin body/image weight ideal was found for Caucasian models while the “average” or overweight image was found for African American models. This result alone poses another important research question for future research: what is seen as a healthy body image/weight in today’s new millennial society and culture?

One limitation of the study is that of the coding scheme. The data may have been different if there were other coders; individual differences and the way one person codes an ad may have been different than the way another person coded the ad—even given the fact that the coding categories were specifically defined. Another limitation was the coding itself. Coders could have coded and data could have been analyzed by ethnicity by magazine type. This change in the procedure may have yielded different results.

Future research in this area might be used to look specifically at how women are used how African American women view beauty products. Research in this area might continue to explore the beauty myth and beauty standard and determine how this standard varies based on consumer ethnicity and background. Research could employ different age and gender groups of coders and ask them to code a magazine geared toward their age, gender, and ethnic group and one not geared towards their respective groups. A study utilizing this research approach may allow investigators to ask questions that will help to determine if “coders” who are actually participants react different to ads and models in magazines aimed at their age group compared to magazines that are not aimed at them. This research could also be used to determine if minority groups see themselves in the ads.

Future research might also examine how racial and gender differences interact in the portrayal of models in fashion advertisements. This line of research, might, for example, investigate differences in portrayals of the relationship among African American women,

Caucasian women and men, as well as African American men. Research might be used to help explain if African American women are portrayed in submission roles relative to Caucasian women and men prior research suggests (see for example, Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Courtney & Whipple, 1983).

Research has examined the frequency and percentage of advertisements with minority representation. The current study sought to expand prior research to determine if representation of African American women has improved or stayed the same. The current study sought to examine the extent to which advertisements depicting African American women were segregated along ethnic lines (i.e., higher percentages of African American women appearing in magazines that are read mainly by Caucasian and/or African American women, and so on). Future studies might replicate this exploratory and descriptive study by identifying specific differences between male and female portrayals and the images that are associated with each.

Advertising continue to be segregated so much so that there are now separate advertising and modeling agencies who have specialized in African American, Hispanic/Latina, and Asia models. And although there are a number of significant positive changes in terms of portrayals of African Americans in advertising since the 1950s, it does not mean that portrayals are and should no longer be a source of concern for researchers. We still do not know if Caucasian standards of facial beauty are being imposed on women of color. We still do not know how portrayals of “average” or “overweight models affect women, especially women of color. We still do not know if the increase in portrayals is positive or viewed positively by the ethnic market. We still do not know if skin tone is an issue among the African American population, and if it is, the extent to which media portrayals and advertising images contribute to the issue. We still do not know why African American female models are two times ore likely to appear in ads than their Caucasian counterparts. Perhaps we should start with asking advertisers “how do you see black women?”

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APPENDIX A

Coding for Bridal Images in Bridal Magazines

1. Coder: ____1 ____2 ____3
2. Name of Magazine _____
3. Month _____
4. Year of publication _____
5. Total number of ads in magazine _____
6. Total number of ads with women only _____
7. Ethnicity:
____Caucasian
____African American
8. Face:
____Whole face
____Most of face
____Half face
____Face not shown
9. Weight:
____Very thin
____Thin
____Average
____Overweight
10. Advertised Product:
____Makeup/Skin Care
____Hair care
____Clothing
____Health care/direct to consumer
____Perfume
____Cigarettes/alcohol
____Diet
____Food