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WHITE BEAUTY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYALS OF
MINORITIES IN TEEN BEAUTY MAGAZINES

by

Micaela Choo Banks

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Communications

Brigham Young University

December 2005

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Micaela Choo Banks in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

WHITE BEAUTY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYALS OF MINORITIES IN TEEN BEAUTY MAGAZINES

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Department of Communications

Master of Arts

This content analysis examines the representations of minorities in the two most popular teen beauty magazines: *Seventeen* and *YM*. Nine issues for 2003 constituted the sample frame yielding a total of 620 advertisements containing human models. After setting up a theoretical framework of the new racism and White beauty, this study investigates the portrayals of minority models. Overall, when compared with earlier studies the number of minority models used in mainstream magazine advertising rose and the portrayals of minority models in prominent roles increased. Yet, the subtle nature of the new racism was reinforced in the following findings: Prominent models were more likely to be light skin than medium skin or dark skin; Black and Hispanic models appeared in more expensive advertisements than Asians and Whites; minority models were less likely to be seen in the workplace than whites but more likely to be portrayed in

leisure places and school than whites. Chi-square analysis ($p < .000$) revealed a significant difference between a model's skin tone and body exposure.

A textual analysis reinforced the findings of the new racism in teen magazine advertising. It also led to additional perspective on racial hierarchy, long standing stereotypes in the mass media and the White standard of beauty.

Although a content analysis cannot be used to determine media effects, this study adds to the body of research on the portrayals of minorities in advertising, White beauty and the new racism. It suggests a number of further issues to examine.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review.....	2
Whiteness Theory.....	6
The History of the Black Female Body.....	8
African American Portrayals in Advertising.....	9
Latino Portrayals in Advertising.....	13
Asian American Portrayals in Advertising.....	14
Native American Portrayals in advertising.....	15
Teen Magazine Advertising.....	16
White Beauty Standards.....	17
CHAPTER III: Research Questions and Methodology.....	23
Research Questions.....	23
Methodology.....	25
Reliability.....	27
Data Analysis.....	27
Textual Analysis Guidelines.....	28
CHAPTER IV: Results.....	29
Minorities Represent.....	29
Light Skin Models Up Close.....	31
Modeling Bougie.....	31

Minorities Chillin’ But They Go To School.....	33
Minorities Models Exposed.....	35
White Beauty Displayed	36
CHAPTER V: Discussion.....	38
Importance Behind Study.....	38
Meaning Behind Results.....	43
Limitations.....	45
Suggestions for Future Research.....	46
REFERENCES.....	47
APPENDIX A.....	62
APPENDIX B.....	63
APPENDIX C.....	65

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Scores Assigned to Each Exposed Body Part.....	26
Table 2 – Categories Assigned to Each Model’s Exposure.....	27
Table 3 - Minority Representation in Census Data vs Teen Magazines.....	30
Table 4 - Product Category for Light Skin Minority Models.....	32
Table 5 - The Setting: Minority Models Compared With White Models.....	33
Table 6 - A Model’s Skin Color and Body Exposure.....	35
Table 7 - White Standard of Beauty and Skin Tone of Minority Models.....	37

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Racism in the mass media today has a new look. The civil rights movement led to a shift in social norms such that overt expressions of racism and those who engage in overtly racist rhetoric are not accepted - and are even condemned - within society (Coover, 1995). In post civil rights era of political correctness, Whites claim they are color blind and do not think about race issues (Lewis, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, Forman, Lewis & Embrick, 2003, Frankenberg, 1993). Yet, phrases such as “I’m not racist, but...” are frequently used as polite excuses for racist rhetoric (Van Dijk, 1984, p 120).

Collins (2004) suggests “the new racism” draws its strength from the mass media by presenting hegemonic ideas while claiming racism is a thing of the past. The mass media takes an overt stance by denouncing traditional racism¹ and publicly endorsing civil rights. For example, the news media uses politically correct terms such as African-American and marks Martin Luther King Day with coverage of the annual holiday. At the same time, a more covert expression of racism that emphasizes racial difference and hierarchy is perpetuated by the mass media. This new racism slips under the radar of most people who view a minority presence as they turn on the television, watch a movie or flip through the pages of a magazine.

Collins (2004) clearly notes the color-blind ideology racism is:

Blackness must be *seen* as evidence for the alleged color blindness that seemingly characterizes contemporary economic opportunity. A meritocracy requires evidence that racial discrimination has been eliminated. The total absence of Black people would signal the failure of color blindness. (p. 178)

¹ Acts of meanness of one race towards another that are popular.

Since the civil rights movement, the presence of minorities in the media has dramatically increased with the number of people of color occupying a variety of roles in the film, television and advertising industries. Pressure from activist groups outside the media industry and professional groups within the industry have led to an increase in the numbers of Blacks on television who are portrayed in a positive manner (Montgomery, 1989). It is now quite common to see situation comedies and dramas that feature Blacks as lead characters or reoccurring characters. This paints an illusory picture of racial inclusion. Dates and Stroman (2001) concluded that when television drama programs revolve around the lives of African Americans, the programs are short lived, lasting only a season or two. During the 1980s, the Black working class vanished from the television screen. Entman and Rojecki (2000) found that a shift in the pattern of relationships in the media occurred as society changed. In the early history of television, Blacks were subordinate to Whites. By 1996, 70% of all African American characters had management or professional positions. The authors referred to this phenomenon as a “utopian reversal” of Black portrayals in the media (p.152). However, the mass media has been resistant to completely revamp images that are challenged by African Americans. Realistic and representative imagery of African Americans usually go together with traditional stereotypical images. Hence, the media will depict an African American middle class mother and in the same television show include an African American woman who conforms to stereotypical images (Jewell, 1993). In the color-blind politics of the new racism, the increase in Black portrayals indicates that Blacks are given equal opportunity.

Hall (1986) posits:

Racism and racist practices and structures frequently occur in some but not all sectors of the social formation; their impact is penetrative but uneven and their very unevenness of impact may help to deepen and exacerbate these contradictory sectoral antagonisms. (p. 435)

While mainstream advertisers are actively trying to court the minority audience, some scholarly work indicates that portrayals of minorities are still a cause for concern. When Blacks appear in advertisements they are usually outnumbered by Whites (Entman & Rojecki, 2000) or they are demoted to background roles (Bowen & Schmid, 1997). While White women face issues regarding sexism in advertising, the burden of prejudice and stereotyping is doubled for Black women because they are Black and female (Collins 2004; Feagin, 2000, hooks, 1992). Black women can never measure up because they are not White males. Instead, their femininity is overstated as biracial women have a tendency to appear in sexualized images in magazine advertisements while posing in animal-like, mannequin and subservient positions (Plous & Neptune, 1997; hooks, 1992). Although the advertising industry and civil rights groups are making an effort to eliminate stereotypes and exhibit proportional racial representation, the industry needs to increase its efforts to fairly depict each race.

As one of the most powerful media institutions of U.S. popular culture, advertising plays a key function in transmitting a dominant racial ideology. For example, Paek and Shah (2003) found in their quantitative analysis of U.S. magazine advertising that Asian Americans are frequently portrayed as affluent, highly educated and proficient with technology. Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) suggest that although progress has

been made in the portrayals of Latinos, many images are vestiges of deep-rooted media stereotypes. The authors found that Latino men and women were depicted as lazy and less articulate than Blacks and Whites. Although scholarly research on Native Americans is limited, Merskin (1998) found that film portrayals of Native Americans were more realistic and positive compared with television portrayals. Green (1993) identified three primary Native American images in advertising: the noble savage, the civilized savage and the blood thirsty savage. These controlling images maintain the hegemony of the mass media when they continue to stereotype minorities.

In the new era of color-blind racism, the meaning attached to skin color, facial characteristics and hair type, is undergoing a metamorphosis within multicultural America (Collins, 2004; Bonilla-Silva et al, 2003). Bonilla-Silva et al. posit that the United States will progress into a tri-racial society similar to Latin America with “Whites” at the top, a classification of “honorary Whites” similar to coloreds in South Africa during formal apartheid – and a non-White group or the collective Black at the base. The authors included data on skin tone, income, poverty, educational, occupational and opposition to interracial marriage to formulate their racial stratification order. (See Appendix C) For many Black women, Blackness can be adapted in numerous ways (Collins, 2004). For example, Halle Berry and Thandie Newton are both light skin biracial actresses who portray a beauty that is not 100% Black. They have played the roles of Black women along with roles that could have easily have been cast to White or Latino actresses. This new flexible mosaic is reflected in the 2003 U.S. Census data profiles that now ask respondents if they are “two or more races” or “some other race” in

addition to the categories of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian.

Although the images of White women in beauty magazines have been the topic of much scholarly criticism, few studies have focused on the portrayals of minorities in beauty magazines, particularly teen magazines. Teen magazines are believed to influence the socialization of girls to follow unrealistic standards of beauty, yet there are major racial differences in the interpretation of a thin, White ideal. This content analysis attempts to expand the research on minority portrayals in teen beauty magazines in several ways. First, the study analyzes the White standard of beauty in terms of the skin tone, hair type and body shape of the all minority models in the sample of teen beauty magazine advertisements. Second, the study quantitatively analyzes the portrayals of minorities and then takes a qualitative look in the textual analysis of the depictions. Third, the study compares the frequency of minority representation in the teen beauty magazine sample to the U.S. census data as it pertains to the populations in the U.S.

While media effects cannot be determined from a content analysis, such data sheds light on the potential influence on teenage consumers when viewed from the perspectives of whiteness and black feminist theories.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Whiteness Theory

Whiteness theory emerged from a foundation of work laid by African Americans such as W. E. B. Dubois' "Dark Water," Toni Morrison's "Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination," and James Baldwin's collection of essays beginning with "Notes of a Native Son." Over the past 15 years, scholars from various fields such as sociology, women's studies and cultural studies, have developed a significant body of literature in the study of whiteness. Color-blind ideology posits that U.S. society is structured along a race-neutral formation. Raka Shome (1996) defines whiteness as the subtle, covert and unacknowledged practices that discursively secure the power and privilege of White people but strategically remain unmarked, unnamed and unmapped in contemporary society. It is a symbol of positive characteristics and privilege in the social, political and cultural arenas (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, Shah, 1999; Fine, Weis, Powell & Wong 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Pieterse, 1992; Goldberg, 1990; Andersen, 2003; Shome, 1996; McIntosh, 1989). Yet the criteria for inclusion and exclusion for this symbol is flexible and elusive. In addition, Dyer (1997) states that the elasticity of whiteness allows relatively easy policing of who will and who will not be considered White and enjoy the power and privilege associated with this designation.

This fluid notion of whiteness laid the foundation for affirmative action politics among Whites that being White is a handicap although a system of White privilege remains firmly intact (Andersen, 2003). Whites are carefully taught not to recognize

white privilege while carrying “an invisible knapsack” of advantages such as a better opportunity for education, legal and medical assistance, decent housing and employment.

Peggy McIntosh (1989) notes:

It seems to me that obliviousness about white advantage, like obliviousness about male advantage, is kept strongly inculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is available to all. Keeping most people unaware that freedom of confident action is there for just a small number of people props up those in power in the hands of the same groups that have most of it already. (p. 10)

Whiteness gains its strength through a history of binary oppositions that date back to the Middle Ages when blackness was identified with baseness, sin, the devil and ugliness, and whiteness with virtue, purity, holiness and beauty (Jordan, 1968). The way in which language constructs meaning is the foundation of binary oppositions. Binary oppositions are the simplest way to mark difference when a meaning of a concept or a word is often defined in relation to its direct opposite – as in black and white. However, binary oppositions are problematic because they reduce everything to the lowest common denominator. This racialized discourse leaves no room for many other, fine differences such as shades of black or hues of white (Hall, 1997).

Whiteness theory has constructed ‘Others’ (other than White) while also building itself into the structure of U.S. society (Andersen, 2003). Collins (2000) states that in a binary opposition, “blue-eyed, blond, thin White women could not be considered beautiful without the Other – Black women with African features of dark skin, broad noses, full lips and kinky hair” (p. 89). Critical scholars have long argued that race is a social constructed myth because it stems from social relations that began during colonization when Africans were described as “heathen” “infidel” and “negro.” These terms were attempts by Europeans to separate themselves from the people they conquered

by assigning a political status to them. By the mid-1600s, English colonists positioned some Africans in a status distinguishable from European indentured labor (Gotanda, 1991).

The History of the Black Female Body

Hall (1997) suggests there are three encounters that shape Black representation today: the contact between European traders and slaves from West Africa, the European “colonization” of Africa and the post World War II migration of Africans to Europe and the United States. Victorian explorers laid the foundation for African female sexuality when they conquered African women in the “heart of darkness” – mother Africa (Conrad, 1960). These explorers created a world view centered on the myth of race and racism that upheld white supremacy and the total domination of Black people (Omolade, 1994). For centuries before the Elizabethan era, the standard for acceptable beauty was a complexion of rose and white. Negroes did not fit the definition because they were not white – they were an ugly, direct contrast of blackness (Jordan, 1968).

Their Blackness was created out of the vantage point of white identity (Andersen, 2003). It then became crucial for European explorers, geographers and missionaries to “explain” everything about the dark skin African savages they encountered including their physical characteristics, sexuality and religious beliefs (Guy-Shefthall, 2002; Bratlinger, 1985; Jordan, 1968). Scientific racism was born (Gould, 1996).

In 1810, Sarah Bartmann became an infamous example of scientific racism when she was dubbed the “Hottentot Venus” during one of the most prolonged struggles by African peoples against European intrusion. (Guy-Shefthall, 2002; Hall, 1997; Pieterse, 1992; Gilman, 1985). Bartmann was a four-feet-six Khosian woman who was paraded

around for her protruding buttocks and her outsized genitalia after being told she could earn a fortune by having foreigners look at her body. She became a sexual freak show attraction at circus sideshows, museums, bars and universities in London and Paris. In 1816, at the age of 26, she died of smallpox, a penniless prostitute. Her body was dissected and her genitalia preserved in the name of science in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris (Guy-Shefthall, 2002). Finally, in 2002, Bartmann's body was returned to her Khosian people and given a proper burial. After the Cape colony was lost, other Africans were taken back to England to be exhibited as living ethnographic specimens.

African American Portrayals

Whiteness spread to America and flourished in 1619, and with the rise of global capitalism Africans were bought and sold. Thus, early advertising depicted Blacks as slaves and runaway slaves in a demeaning and derogatory fashion. Black female slaves stood naked while owners and overseers described their saleable parts. bell hooks (1992) described the sale of their body parts "as evidence to support racist notion that black people were more akin to animals than humans" (p. 62).

Manufacturers, advertisers, companies and entrepreneurs who had to surrender their "black mummies" (contented maid) and "black Sambos" refused to exterminate such images after the Civil War. Instead, the dominant group ideology reproduced and transmitted these racist images through the mass media by resurrecting them on advertising trade cards, bottles, tins, and dolls. From the end of the slave era to the end of the civil rights movement, early advertising artifacts such as Aunt Jemimas Pancake Mix, Uncle Bens Rice, and Rastus Cream of Wheat served as persistent relics of the past demonstrating that Blacks are inferior and happy to serve their White masters. These

images of whiteness have been marketed into the American mind and have become popular images (Hall, 1997; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995; Kern-Foxworth, 1994; Turner, 1994; Jewell, 1993). In the film “Ethnic Notions,” the director, Marlon Riggs (1996) explains why these images persist today, “When you see a hundred of them in all parts of the country persisting over a very long period of time, they have to have meaning. They obviously appeal to people, they appeal to creators but they also appeal to consumers.”

The civil rights movement transformed the way Blacks were presented in the American mass media and in due course, American advertising. The absence of Blacks in advertising was noted in the Kerner Commission Report and published in 1968. The Kerner Commission concluded that the mass medium dominated by whites would be unable to communicate with an audience that included Blacks because Negro families were told on a daily basis through commercials and programs that they were the have-nots of society. The commission recommended in 1968 that “the Negro performers and reporters should appear more frequently and in prime time and in news broadcasts, on weather shows in documentaries and in advertisements” (Kern-Foxworth, p. 117). The pressure from Black civil rights groups coupled with support from federal officials resulted in the overnight inclusion of Blacks as models in advertising and the rejection of most images that Blacks found objectionable (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). The “Black is beautiful” campaign also pushed Black to become known as something good (Hall, 1997).

Janette L. Dates (1993) notes:

Thus, it was well into the 1980s when the industry began actively to court African Americans as consumers of their products. There are many explanations for this caution, but whatever the complex reasons, the effect was that advertising treated African American citizens as though they were invisible for many years, and then

included them, grudgingly, for a long time almost exclusively, in massive advertising of unhealthy products such as fast food, tobacco and alcoholic beverages. (p. 461)

Entman and Rojecki (2000) explain that media images today contain vestiges of long standing cultural presumptions that idealize whiteness. In some cases, “prior racial formations persist virtually unchanged, and others are transformed in response to globalization, transnationalism and the proliferation of the mass media” (Collins, 2004, p. 55). While the numbers of Black models used in mainstream advertising have increased since the civil rights movement, some of their portrayals remain problematic. Entman & Rojecki (2000) found in their content analysis of television commercials that a more subtle pattern of whiteness emerges: while a Black person appears in about one-third of prime-time ads, they attain less visibility than Whites for luxury products such as perfume and jewelry and fantasy-related products such as vacations (p.166). Whites usually outnumbered Blacks on screen, especially in the use of hand models when White hand models appeared almost five times more than Black models (p. 168). Their findings indicate that a racial divide that still exists in American cultures where Blacks remain once again on the sidelines of the center stage of Whiteness.

In their content analysis, Bowen and Schmid (1997) found that Blacks were more likely to appear as athletes or musicians and featured public service of government sponsored advertising. Whites usually outnumbered minorities within the same advertisement and their relationships were portrayed in formal or work settings with very minimal face-to-face interaction. Blacks were underrepresented in the technical product advertisements in Taylor, Lee & Stern’s (1995), study and they were relegated to minor and background roles in 63.1% of the advertisements. Several persistent, historical

images continue to oppress Black women today: Mammy, Jezebels and Sapphires (Feagin, 2000; Collins, 2000; West, 1995; Jewell, 1993).

Jewell (1993) states:

It is clear that while there are individuals who conform to these traditional cultural images such images are not representative of African American women as a collective. Moreover, one of the most damaging and adverse effects of these images is that they are portrayed with various qualities that are negatively defined by the privileged who have constructed them; yet many of the same attributes are defined positively by African American women. (p. 46)

A Mammy today is a large, Black woman in charge of a large, welfare family. The robust, Black woman is the descendant of the Black mammy - a chubby, contented maid during the days of slavery. This Black mammy can be seen today wearing a bandanna on Aunt Jemima pancake mix and syrup. Conversely, a Sapphire is a verbally abusive, loud woman. She is frequently portrayed as a plus size woman with a brown to dark brown complexion. This representation was reinforced by the nagging wife of Kingfish on "The Amos and Andy" radio show in the 1940s and 50s. A modern day Sapphire, she can be seen as Dr. Miranda Bailey, the chunky, thunderous trainer on the ABC television show "Grey's Anatomy." The ABC website describes Bailey as "a senior resident responsible for training them, is so tough that she's nicknamed "The Nazi." Historically, a Jezebel or "bad-Black-girl" was the closest to the White standard of beauty. She was frequently depicted as a mixed race woman (mulatto) with more European features such as a slender nose, thin lips and straight hair. This image also originated during slavery when a woman's sexuality and reproduction were under almost total control of her White master (West, 1995). Collins (2004) notes that images of a

contemporary Jezebel appears in the mass media worldwide because they are reproduced by Black male artists, producers and marketing executives.

Latino Portrayals

In a 1969 article, sociologist Tomas Martinez documented the following commercials: Grabby Goose chips featuring fat gun-toting, Mexicans; Paco the lazy Latino selling L&M cigarettes and a Mexican bandito spraying his armpits with Arrid deodorant. Latino activists Armando Rendon and Domingo Nick Reyes contended that the media had shifted the demeaning stereotypes it had once reserved for Blacks to Latinos. The Latino protests made the nation's advertisers become aware of the portrayals that Latinos deemed offensive. However, the advertising industry had again neglected as it did with the Blacks, to apply the lessons learned from one group to another racial minority group (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). Relatively few studies detail the advertising portrayals of Latinos yet they are the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S. In television commercials, Latinos, especially when compared to Whites, tend to be portrayed more frequently in blue-collar occupations and less frequently in white-collar occupations (Stevenson & McIntyre, 1995). Czepiec and Kelly (1983) concluded that there were not enough Latino portrayals in the general media to analyze their depictions compared to Anglos. They found only three Latino models in a sample of 234 advertisements with human models. Other researchers (Bowen & Schmid, 1997; Taylor & Bang, 1997; Taylor, Lee & Stern, 1995) also found Latinos were highly under-represented in magazine advertising. Wilkes and Valencia (1989) reported that 6% of television commercials included Hispanics but they appeared mainly in background roles.

Previous academic studies, although limited in number, show some consistency with studies of television and film portrayals that found Latinos to be underrepresented and to some degree stereotyped. Taylor & Bang (1997), found that Latinos were slightly under-represented in business setting in comparison with other minority groups but somewhat over-represented in family settings. Portrayals of Latinos in film have also been found to be problematic, frequently containing stereotypical images. In a comprehensive study of portrayals of Latinos in film, Berg (1990) found that very few non-stereotypical portrayals of Latinos in film (and television) have been consistent with one of six basic stereotypes: El bandito (the Mexican bandit), the half-breed harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady. Today, the Mexican bandit is the Latino drug dealer and gangster in police crime dramas. The rare Latina is downgraded to secondary character as a mother, girlfriend and sassy spitfire (Tamborini, Mastro, Chory-Assad & Huang, 2000). In Mastro and Behm-Morawitz's (2005) study of Latinos in primetime television, the authors found that Latino men and women were depicted as lazy and less articulate than Blacks and Whites.

Asian American Portrayals

Asian American groups protested to bring changes in the way they were portrayed in the mass media. Asian Americans were featured in racially offensive television and print advertisements such as "ancient Chinese laundry secret." Asian female models appearing in commercials were frequently portrayed as seductive China dolls with long straight hair and bangs, a narrow slit skirt and small dark eyes. One airline targeted Anglo men by claiming that its passengers would be under the care of a Singapore flight attendant (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). While scholars have noted that the media often

portrays minorities and women in a derogatory fashion, one possible exception is the Asian American “model minority” image. This image stereotypes Asian Americans as over achievers in education, business and work. Paek & Shah (2003) found in their quantitative analysis of magazine advertisements that Asian Americans are often depicted as highly educated, proficient with technology and affluent. Taylor & Lee (1994) also found that Asian models appeared more frequently in advertisements for technology-based products. While Asians appear regularly in business settings they were seldom shown in other settings. In Taylor & Stern’s (1997) study of 1,300 prime time television commercials, Asian male and female models were over-represented appearing in 8.4% of the commercials when compared to the population (3.6%). However, Asian models were more likely than members of other minority groups to appear in background roles.

Native American Portrayals

Like Blacks, the representations of Native Americans can be traced back to their first encounters with the Europeans when Natives were considered “biologically and morally ‘inferior’ to the more civilized explorers. The newcomers viewed the Indians as “Noble savages” (Hess, Markson & Stein, 1995). Bird (1999) posits that the work of early anthropologists among Native American peoples was essential in codifying the idea of the American Indian as the “primitive other.” While the Noble savage is not as prominently displayed as before, stereotypical images of Native Americans are represented in popular culture and serve as a reminder of an oppressive past. The automobile industry still sells Jeep Grand Cherokees, Pontiacs and Dakotas. Sports teams still carry racialized nicknames such as the Atlanta Braves, Kansas City Chiefs and

Florida State University Seminoles. And the Land O' Lakes maiden still sits in the refrigerated section of the grocery store (Merskin, 2001; Wilson & Guterrez, 1995).

Teen Magazine Advertising

Popular culture, in this case advertising, transmits ideologies related to White supremacy and Black inferiority (Dates & Barlow, 1993) while turning huge profits in the U.S. capitalist society. The advertising industry projects the particular class interests of the ruling White elites who dominate corporate America. The structure of the board of directors in the corporate community is 95% White and at least 90% male (Domhoff, 1998.) While the workplace is more diverse than before the civil rights era, institutional color blindness within the corporate community plays a key role in leaving minorities at the margins of the advertising industry. A fundamental misleading notion in color blindness is the common belief that all Americans share the same social experience (Smith, 2004). The few minority men and women who lead the corporate community perpetuate this fallacy. They share the same perspectives as White male directors because they tend to have a lighter skin color, similar class and comparable education levels (Domhoff, 1998). Therefore, the advertising images, rather than completely depicting the experiences of minorities, reflect White familiarity (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995).

The corporate rich have enough power to set the parameters under which other groups and classes must operate (Domhoff, 1998) because America's teenagers have more money to buy products than ever before. In PBS Frontline's documentary "The Merchants of Cool," teenagers are referred to as "corporate America's \$150 billion dollar dream" because businesses such as MTV, Madison Avenue and dream makers of Hollywood are trying to make a profit off impressionable young people who want to be

cool.” (Dretzin, 1999) While the documentary did not address the issue of whiteness, it demonstrates the power of the corporate rich to sell teenagers whatever ideas and products it chooses.

The corporate rich have a huge market to present their racial ideology because the audience for teen magazines grows every year. Teen magazines serve as a guidebook on acceptable appearance, gender roles and relationship formation in adolescence, replacing parents and augmenting or surpassing peers as primary information sources (Duke, 2000) The three most popular teen beauty magazines based on circulation, *Seventeen*, *YM* and *Teen People* (Advertising Age, 2003) generated an advertising revenue of \$297,863,000 million in 2002 (Advertising Age, 2003a). Bettig and Hall (2003) note, “Advertising is not only an economic institution operating for the benefit of a few major corporations and their owners, it is also an ideological institution that supports and negates certain ways of thinking” (p. 5). Companies are able to easily target the teenage consumer, through beauty and fashion magazines, because adolescence is a time of self-reflection and self-definition (Ward, 2004).

Of the fourteen million girls between the ages of 12 and 19 in the U.S., it is estimated that about half read *Seventeen*. According to Mediamark Research (2003) the circulation for *Seventeen* magazine is 6,967,000 and 4,809,000 for *YM* magazine. Although the readers are predominantly White, teen beauty magazines also have a significant readership among girls of color. *Seventeen* reaches 44 percent of “ethnic females twelve to nineteen” (defined as African American, other race or from a Spanish speaking household.) *YM* reaches 34 percent of these ethnic females (Duke, 2000).

White Beauty Standards

Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2000) explains how White beauty oppresses minority women as beauty is evaluated through an examination of race, gender and sexuality. White and Black women represent opposing poles in binary thinking with Latinas, Asian American women and Native American women competing for positions in between. It is hopeless to try to escape the controlling image that does not represent minority women when they look in the mirror. A minority woman is not White. She is not beautiful because she does not possess the controlling image of White skin nor straight hair. Historically, the images in beauty magazines reflected the White standards of feminine beauty when the preference for light skinned models and actresses was prominently displayed and reinforced by the media (Collins, 2004; Sahay & Piran, 1997; Dates, 1993; Strutton & Lumpkin, 1993; hooks, 1992; Jackson, 1992; Russel, Wilson & Hall, 1992; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Chapkis, 1986; Rodin, Silberstein, & Stregel-Moore, 1984). Previous studies indicate a disproportionately large percentage of advertisements with Black models possessing features that are more Caucasian than Negroid (Brown 1993; Strutton & Lumpkin, 1993). hooks (1992) indicates that when fashion catalogues began to include minority women, they selected bi racial or light skin Black women, particularly with blond or light brown hair. “The non-white models appearing in these catalogues must resemble as closely as possible their White counterparts so as not to detract from the racialized subtext” (p.72). In this case, the racialized subtext conveys a message of colorblindness. In race discourse, color blindness means that people pretend not to observe or recognize race difference (Smith, 2004). It becomes difficult for the teen magazine reader to discern racial difference because the White standard of beauty is prevalent within magazines.

Skin color stratification which embodies the difference between lightness and darkness of skin tone, is a significant sociological issue. Prior to the Civil War, social status among Blacks in the United States was tied to skin color because free Blacks were more likely to be light skinned than were enslaved Blacks. Light skinned Blacks enjoyed more privileges because they were more likely to be related to their White slave owners and favored with better positions and educational opportunities (e.g. Hunter, 2002; Hunter, 1998; Makkar & Strube, 1995; West, 1995; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1986). Today, light skin Blacks continue to enjoy more privileges. Hunter (2002) found that beauty as defined by light skin works as capital and as a stratifying agent for women in the areas of education, income and spousal status. Her analysis showed that light skin directly predicts higher personal earnings and higher spousal status of African American women. These findings are consistent with Hughes and Hertel's (1990) study, which found that Blacks with light skin have a higher socioeconomic status and have spouses with higher socioeconomic status than Blacks with darker skin.

While upward social comparisons to conventional beauty standards may cause a woman to feel negatively about herself, research suggests that self-evaluations for certain social groups do not experience unflattering social comparisons the same way (Evans & McConnell (2003). Previous research indicates that Black teenage girls do not identify with the thin, White beauty ideal (Kaplan & Cole, 2003; Duke, 2000; Milkie, 1999; Parker, Nichter, Nichter, Vuckovic & Sims, 1995) yet they read teen beauty magazines. In her study of middle class Black and White readers of the three most popular teen beauty magazines, Duke (2000) found that White girls were unaware of any racial bias in

the magazines. In contrast, Latina adolescents in Ecuador held the White beauty ideal, but they were able to distance themselves from the media images like the Black girls did (Casanova, 2004). Goodman's (2003) research held that Latina women resisted the thin, mediated ideal more than White women did. In Poran's (2002) study of Latina, Black and White women, Latina women tended to have the lowest body satisfaction and the highest awareness of consumerism in relation to the beauty standard. No study could be found on Asian or Native American teenage girls and beauty. However, a very limited number of studies on Asian women shed light on how female Asians interpret the White beauty ideal. Japan began changing its notion of feminine beauty due to Western influence as early as the Meiji period (1865-1910). The Japanese had always valued White skin but American women had even lighter skin than the Japanese. All of a sudden, Japanese women wanted the appearance of American women: the hair, clothes, facial features and bodies of these Western women (Iijima-Hall, 1995). Evans and McConnell (2003) found that Asian women were more likely to accept mainstream beauty standards, like White women do, and experience greater dissatisfaction with their bodies than Black women. The authors suggest this is a growing trend associated with the more frequent incidences of body image disturbances, such as eating disorders, over the past two decades. Sahay & Piran (1997) indicate that the desire to be light skinned was higher the darker the South Asian-Canadian females perceived their skin their skin to be. The uses and gratifications approach is frequently suggested as an appropriate method for study of magazines particularly targeted towards adolescents (Arnett, Larson & Offer, 1995). Readers use the magazines to gratify certain needs but they don't all interpret the advertisements the same – even within the same race.

Rubin (2002) explains:

Uses and gratifications sees communication influence as being socially and psychologically constrained and affected by individual differences and choice. Variations in expectations, attitudes, activity and involvement lead to different communication behaviors and outcomes. Personality, social context, motivation and availability – based on culture and economic, political and social structure all impact the possible influence of the media and their messages. (p. 538-539)

In Kaplan and Cole's (2003) qualitative study of White, Latina and Black girls who read *Seventeen* magazine, they found that the Black girls were often depicted as more masculine than the White models. One Black girl observed that there was an overall lack of Black representation in the magazine and complained that the magazine was "for white people. See there are no articles on black people's hair or something like that" (p. 154). Hair texture, a feminine construct that is easily modified, carries ideological and cultural significance (Banks, 2000; hooks, 1992; Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1986; Henriques, 1953).

Russell, Wilson & Hall (1992) note:

Hair texture, like skin tone, carries much social and historical baggage for Blacks. All things being equal, a Black woman whose hair grows naturally straight is usually thought to be from a "better" family than a woman whose hair is very nappy. (p. 90)

The popularity of hair straightening, a chemical process that makes kinky or Negroid hair appear more European or straight, indicates the level to which the Black population is affected by the White standard of beauty (Henriques, 1953). Straight hair is constructed as a sign of femininity and sends a message about social status. Historically, "good hair" has been linked with the light skin middle class whereas "bad hair" with Blacks who occupy a lower status. Some authors, such as Orlando Patterson, (1982)

claim hair texture has continuously been more significant than skin color in racial politics. When models with straightened or lightened hair appear in high culture teenage beauty magazines it signifies that White beauty is a commodity available for purchase.

CHAPTER III

Research Questions and Methodology

Research Questions

(Questions 1-3 adapted from Taylor & Bang, 1997)

This study will pose research questions aimed at developing a preliminary base of knowledge about advertising portrayals of minorities in teen magazines. The first research question examined in this study involves the level of representation of minorities in magazine advertisements. Frequency of appearance is evaluated by means of the proportionality criterion, which states that a minority group's representation should approximate its proportion of the U.S. population. Thus, Blacks will be judged underrepresented if they appear in fewer than 11.9% of magazine advertisements, since they compose that percentage of the U.S. population, according to 2003 U.S. Census data profiles.² Hispanics will be considered underrepresented if they appear in fewer than 13.9% of magazine advertisements. Asians will be assessed underrepresented if they appear in less than 4.1% of the advertisements. American Indians will be judged underrepresented if they appear in less than 0.7% of magazine advertisements.

RQ1: Is the proportion of magazine ads portraying minority models higher or lower than the population of minorities in the U.S. population?

The second research question examines the roles played by minority models in the advertisements. Even if minorities are adequately represented, if models are displayed in

² Census data are based on 2003 American Community surveys. The 2003 American Community Survey universe is limited to the household population and excludes the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability.

background roles, it may leave an impression on readers that the group is less important than others.

RQ2: When minority models are present in a magazine ad, do they appear most frequently in prominent roles?

The next two research questions explore whether minorities are stereotyped in magazine advertising. Prior research indicates that some of the commonly held stereotypes of Hispanics and Blacks are poor. In order to assess whether these stereotypes are reflected, the following research question is put forward:

RQ3: What is the cost of the products that minority models advertise and what product categories do these models represent?

The setting of the advertisements will be analyzed to measure whether minorities tend to be depicted in certain types of settings. Previous studies demonstrate that minority models are frequently used in outdoor settings which suggests they are primitive. With the exception of Asians, minorities are portrayed in business settings in less than 35% advertisements (Taylor & Bang, 1997).

RQ4: What are the settings of teen minority models portrayals?

The historic standard of Elizabethan beauty is reflected today in the number of successful light skinned minorities. They have features such as straight or highlighted hair (Sahay & Piran, 1997; Dates, 1993; Brown 1993; Strutton & Lumpkin, 1993; hooks, 1992; Johnson 1985).

RQ5 How is the standard of White beauty displayed in teenage magazines?

Methodology

Sample

The researcher conducted a content analysis of the most popular teen beauty and fashion magazines, (*Seventeen, YM*) based on circulation figures from the advertising industry magazine *Advertising Age* (2003). These magazines were chosen to represent the types of advertisements U.S. teenage girls would typically be exposed to. The months of January, February, March, May, June, July, August, September and December were chosen to yield a sample size of more than 600 advertisements. The fall months of October and November were not selected for analysis because the back to school September issues yield the most ads in an issue per year, so October and November were not needed to reach the sample size. The unit analysis for this study is full page advertisements that contain human models.

Coding Scheme

For the purpose of comparison, magazine advertisements featuring minority models: including Black, Asian, Hispanic and Native American were individually coded and analyzed along with ads featuring Whites. As Wilkes and Valencia (1989) reported, the race or ethnicity of the coders can affect the results, as can gender. Bruner (1957) suggests that coders should represent the medium being studied. Four judges - the author and three female undergraduate students - analyzed the advertisements. The author is Asian, two of the students are White and one student is Hispanic. An African American sociology instructor reviewed the code book and skin tone reference guide with the author. Coders were provided with a code book containing operational definitions for each variable and a skin tone reference guide of the three different skin tones analyzed. The skin tones were analyzed for the following minority models: Black, Hispanic, Asian,

Native American and “can’t tell.” In the skin tone reference guide, the author used photos of dark skin models, actors, actresses and beauty pageant contestants from Africa and the Caribbean for the dark category. The palest minority models represented the light skin category, and medium skin models were categorized as the models between the light and dark categories.

The following variables were coded: (a) race of model, (b) gender of model, (c) skin tone of model, (d) importance or prominence of the model placement, (e) setting of the ad, (f) product category represented, (g) harlot theme as defined by body exposure, (i) straight or highlighted hair, (j) music theme, (k) educated theme and (l) athletic theme (see Appendix A for operational definitions).

The harlot theme was coded by exposed body parts. After the data was collected, the author assigned each model a score depending on the body part exposed. The exposure was ranked then into four categories.

TABLE 1

Scores Assigned to Each Exposed Body Part

Harlot Theme Exposure	Score Assigned
No exposure	0
Shoulders	1
Upper leg	2
Stomach	2
Back	2
Cleavage	3
Buttocks	3

TABLE 2

Categories Assigned to Each Model's Exposure

Harlot Theme Exposure	Score Assigned
No exposure	0
Revealing	1 to 4
Partially Nude	5 to 9
Nearly Nude	10 to 13

The author conducted a pilot study with judges to determine if categories, operational definitions and the skin tone reference guide were well-defined. The judges were trained extensively in coding procedures. Using Holsti's formula, intercoder reliability was satisfactory at .94 (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). The author also established intercoder reliability of .92 with an African American Sociology instructor prior to training the coders.

Data Analysis

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to investigate minority models represented in magazine advertising. Quantitative research will provide a sense of the visibility and characteristics of minority representation. SPSS 11.0 will be used. The statistical tests performed will be frequencies, t-test, cross-tabulations and chi-square analysis. The qualitative research will give an in-depth analysis of implicit meanings related to minority images in advertising. (See Appendix B for coding scheme).

Textual Analysis Guidelines

A textual analysis aims to get beneath the veneer and examine more latent social meanings. This approach often regards culture as a narrative in which particular "texts" or "cultural artifacts" consciously or unconsciously link themselves to substantial issues throughout society.

The numerical results will guide the study and then an in-depth textual analysis will be conducted to note the underlying meanings about minorities that may be revealed by the layout, organization, text and photos of the magazines. Deep reading and interpretation will be necessary due to the intricate nature of magazine advertisements. Ideology is created into and out of language (Grossberg, 1986). Each advertisement will be read as a text to determine what each advertisement tells us about race, social position and what meanings are constructed by the ruling elites made up primarily of White males who run corporate America (Hall, 1997; Domhoff, 1998; Fiske, 1989). The skin tone of the model, the setting and character of the model, the placement of the model and the relationship between race and product category will be examined and so forth.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This content analysis of *Seventeen* and *YM* magazines included a total of 620 full-page advertisements featuring at least one human model. Of the 1,559 models, there were 1,011 White models and 548 minority models. Female models represent 75.9% of the sample.

RQ1: Is the proportion of magazine ads portraying minority models higher or lower than the population of minorities in the U.S. population?

Minorities represent

Minority models in the sample of *YM* and *Seventeen* magazines were overrepresented (35.2%) when compared to the minority population (32.2%) in 2003 U.S. Census Bureau data profiles. Table 1 compares the models by race portrayed in the teen magazine sample with the responses in the U.S. Census Bureau data profile. Black and Asian models had a higher representation in teen beauty magazines than in the United States population as estimated by the U.S. Census bureau. Whites, Hispanic and Native Americans were underrepresented when compared to the U.S. Census Bureau data profiles.

TABLE 3*Minority Representation in Census Data vs. Teen Magazines*

Race	U.S. Census %	U.S. Census %	Teen Magazines %	Teen Magazines n	Percent Difference %
White	67.78	191,768,647	64.85	1011	- 2.9%
Black	11.90	33,677,190	15.72	245	+ 3.8%
Hispanic	13.85	39,194,837	10.26	160	- 3.6%
Asian	4.10	11,604,208	6.61	103	+ 2.5%
Pacific Islander	.13	360,462	Not scored	Not scored	Not scored
American Indian	.66	1,863,268	.64	10	-.02 %
Some other race	.20	572,237	Not scored	Not scored	Not scored
Two or more races	1.37	3,869,036	Not scored	Not scored	Not scored
Can't tell	Not scored	Not scored	1.92	30	Not scored
Total	99.99% ³	282,909,885	100.0%	1559	

³ U.S. Census numbers total less than 100% because of rounding.

RQ2: When minority models are present in a magazine ad, do they appear most frequently in prominent roles?

Light skin models up close

Of the 548 minority models, 59.3% of them appeared in prominent roles within the teen magazine advertisements. There are more prominent light skin models (n=171) than prominent medium (n=108) and prominent dark skin models(n=46). Chi-square analysis revealed that prominent models were more likely to be light skin than medium skin or dark skin ($\chi^2= 72.34$, df 1, $p<.000$).

RQ3: What is the cost of the products that minority models advertise and what are those product categories?

Modeling bougie⁴

Black and Hispanic models appeared in more expensive advertisements than Asians and Whites. T-tests of statistical difference ($p<.001$ for Hispanic models; $p<.004$ for Black models) show that the product costs for advertisements with Hispanic or Black models were significantly higher than Asians and Whites. There was no significant difference between the product cost of advertisements featuring Asian models and White models ($p<.163$).

A cross tabulation test revealed a significant relationship between product cost and advertisements containing minority models ($p=.021$). More than half (55.6%) of the advertisements depicting products that cost \$50 or more contained minority models.

As shown in Table 2, more light skin minority models than medium or dark skin minority models appear in ads for clothes, skin care, makeup, perfume and shoes.

⁴ Bougie: Aspiring to be a higher class than one is. Derived from bourgeois - meaning middle/upper class, traditionally despised by communists.

TABLE 4*Product Category for Light Skin Minority Models*

Product Category	Light Skin Minority Models		Medium & Dark Skin Minority Models		Total %
	%	N	%	n	
Clothes	64.8%	59	35.2%	32	100
Hair Product	50.0%	11	50.0%	11	100
Shoes	66.7%	10	33.3%	5	100
Perfume	80.0%	12	20.0%	3	100
Public Service Ad	58.8%	10	41.2%	7	100
Feminine Products	60.0%	3	40.0%	2	100
Electronics	54.5%	6	45.5%	5	100
Skin Care	57.1%	16	42.9%	12	100
Makeup	65.5%	19	34.5%	10	100
Other	61.5%	40	38.5%	25	100

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The nearly nude advertisement of a very light skin Jennifer Lopez for her perfume “Glow by JLO” was featured in several perfume advertisements featuring light skin models. The analysis of this advertisement is consistent with Collins (2004) argument that Jennifer Lopez possesses fluid ethnicity. Jennifer Lopez moves from Black to White depending on the needs of the situation. In this case, her light skin enhances the slogan “Fresh-Sexy-Clean.” Her hint of Blackness reveals she is a Jezebel. The bad-Black-girl image is appealing, provocative and stimulating (Jewell, 1993).

RQ4: What are the settings of teen minority models portrayals?

Minorities are chillin⁵, but they go to school

There is no significant relationship between models and the setting of the advertisements because of the high number of advertisements (378 of 620 ads) that occur in unidentifiable settings. The data reported as frequencies reveal that minority models (30.0%) are less likely to appear in the workplace than whites (70.0%). But minority models are more likely to appear in leisure places (74.2%) and school (83.3%) than whites. Both groups of models appear in outdoors settings equally.

TABLE 5

The Setting: Minority Models Compared With White Models

Setting	Minority Models		White Models		Total %
	%	n	%	n	
Home	42.9%	24	57.1%	32	100
Workplace	30.0%	3	70.0%	7	100
Leisure Place	74.2%	23	25.8%	8	100
Outdoor	50.4%	67	49.6%	66	100
School	83.3%	10	16.7%	2	100
Other	45.2%	171	54.8%	207	100

⁵ Chillin': relaxing doing nothing special.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Stuart Hall's *Spectacle of the "Other"* (1997) explains that we need difference because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the Other. In an advertisement for "Choices your anti-drug," the minority models are reduced to their very essence when their physical differences from the petite blonde cheerleader are emphasized. Most of models of color are normal to overweight compared to the skinny White cheerleader. The concept of the "Other" is fundamental in marking White superiority in this advertisement. In stark contrast, Black beauty is constructed as inferior because each minority model is doing her part to hold up the White model in top. White girls are generally unaware of any racial bias in teenage beauty magazines (Duke, 2000). In the new racism, a white girl would not be able to construct any sort of racial meaning in this advertisement. It would be perceived as 'normal'.

Stereotypes play an essential role in creating an Otherness that the dominant group uses to build and maintain its own identity. In this advertisement for Adidas Cool Moves Fragrances the Hispanic Dark Lady stereotype is portrayed. Berg (1990) explains that a Dark Lady is mysterious because she keeps a cool distance from White males. The light skin Hispanic model is sexualized in her revealing swimwear yet she is aloof because she is walking ahead of the male and she is not directly looking at him. Her smile indicates her flirtatious nature.

One of the most popular Asian American model minority stereotypes refers to academic excellence. Through the White lens, Asian students study hard, perform in math and science and get into top universities. In an advertisement for Chevy Rewards Scholarship program, figure skating champion Michelle Kwan is studying a textbook

while skating at the rink. The advertisement says “Student athletes have to work twice as hard. Which is why we’ve offered some help.” By featuring as Michelle Kwan as an Asian American, the advertisement contributes to the notion that Asians are driven to succeed in education. The advertisement suggests that Asians are high achievers because Michelle Kwan, an extremely successful figure skater and a student at UCLA, was chosen as the model.

Minority models exposed

A significant difference between a model’s skin tone and body exposure emerged in a Chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 56.1$, df 6, $p < .000$). As presented in Table 4, it is more likely that a White model is not exposing her body, or revealing her body as a sex object. In contrast, it is more likely that a light skin minority model is revealing her body and a medium skin model is exposing her body as a sex object.

TABLE 6

A Model’s Skin Color and Body Exposure

	Light	Medium	Dark	White
No exposure	n = 113 E = 143.06 $\chi^2 = 6.31$	n = 67 E = 96.24 $\chi^2 = 8.88$	n = 40 E = 45.78 $\chi^2 = 0.73$	n = 591 E = 525.93 $\chi^2 = 8.05$
Revealing	n = 127 E = 101.25 $\chi^2 = 6.55$	n = 89 E = 68.11 $\chi^2 = 6.40$	n = 43 E = 32.40 $\chi^2 = 3.47$	n = 315 E = 372.23 $\chi^2 = 8.80$
Partially/ Nearly Nude	n = 35 E = 30.69 $\chi^2 = .60$	n = 29 E = 20.65 $\chi^2 = 3.38$	n = 5 E = 9.82 $\chi^2 = 2.37$	n = 105 E = 112.84 $\chi^2 = 0.54$

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TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Another dimension of Black representation is the sexualized spectacle of the Other. In this advertisement for Lady Enyce, a women's clothing line that caters to minority consumers, a light skin minority model is portrayed as the "bad girl" by giving the camera a seductive look while revealing a hint of her cleavage and stomach. The body is reduced to her saleable body parts: her "good" straight hair (Banks, 2000), her light skin, her thin body and her naked flesh. Her allusion of Blackness moves her from Black to White and back again. She is a modern day Jezebel or bad Black girl.

RQ5: How is the standard of White beauty displayed in teenage beauty magazines?

White Beauty on Display

The White standard of beauty is prominently displayed in teen magazines with 38% of minority models in advertisements conforming to the White standard of beauty – light skin, straight hair and thin body. Light skin minority models represent half of the ads (50.2%), medium skin models represent one third (33.8%) and dark skin models represent one-sixth of the models (16.1%).

As illustrated in Table 5, chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between thin body and light skin tone; thin body and dark skin tone; straight or highlighted hair and skin tone; both characteristics and skin tone. The α level was set at .01 because Bonferroni's correction was used to protect against multiple tests.

TABLE 7*White Standard of Beauty and Skin Tone of Minority Models*

	Light	Medium	Dark
Thin Body	$\chi^2 = 5.97$ df = 1 p = .014	$\chi^2 = .33$ df = 1 p = .566	$\chi^2 = 6.71$ df = 1 p = .010
Highlighted or Straightened Hair	$\chi^2 = 74.55$ df = 1 p = .000	$\chi^2 = 15.26$ df = 1 p = .000	$\chi^2 = 19.05$ df = 1 p = .000
Both Characteristics	$\chi^2 = 57.56$ df = 1 p = .000	$\chi^2 = 16.66$ df = 1 p = .000	$\chi^2 = 262.11$ df = 1 p = .000

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The media's preference for light skin models is shown in an ad for Playtex tampons where a female biracial model is prominently displayed next to a White male model. Two dark skin models, a male and a female, are out of focus in the background. The analysis of this advertisement is consistent with hooks' (1992) observation that dark skin models are not considered beautiful because their features are distorted. The biracial female is only legitimate because she is standing next to a White male. Her hair may be braided but it signifies "good" because it is straight (Banks, 2000).

CHAPTER V:

Discussion

Importance of Study

This study adds to the body of literature on race and the media because there has been little scholarly research on the portrayals of minorities in beauty magazines, particularly teen magazines. This content analysis broadened the knowledge on minority portrayals in teen beauty magazines by defining the White standard of beauty in terms of the skin tone, hair type and body shape then analyzing the minority models in the sample of teen beauty magazine advertisements.

While a content analysis cannot determine media effects, this study examined the portrayals of minorities through the textual analysis and also considered the broader social meanings implied within the advertisements.

“The American house of racism has been remodeled somewhat over time – generally in response to protests from the oppressed but its formidable foundation remains firmly in place.” (Feagin, 2000)

This study offers support for the emerging theory of new racism within the context of White beauty. It sets up a theoretical framework of color blind ideology and ventures into assessing the role the advertising industry plays in cultural hegemony, White identity and ideological struggle within popular culture.

Minorities represent

When Blacks appear in advertisements, they are usually outnumbered by Whites (Entman & Rojecki, 2000) or they are relegated to background roles (Bowen & Schmid, 1997).

The results indicate an increase in the use of all minority models in mainstream advertising, particularly among Hispanics and Asians. While previous studies found Asians portrayals to be quite small, their numbers were overrepresented (6.6%) when compared to U.S. Census estimates (4.1%) in this study. This could be partially due to an expansive Neutrogena advertising campaign that features Kristin Kreuk, a light skin, Asian American actress. Even though Hispanic models are under-represented in teen beauty magazines, this study suggests a rise in the use of Hispanic models in mainstream advertising. In Taylor et al. (1995) content analysis, Hispanics represented 4.7% of the sample and 9.0% of the population. In this study, Hispanic models were used in 10.3% of the ads compared to an estimate of 13.9% in the U.S. Census. The high number of Jennifer Lopez's clothing and perfume advertisements may have contributed to the increase in Hispanic model representation. Blacks continued to show gains in their presence in magazine advertising since the civil rights movement by surpassing U.S. Census estimates. Based on proportionality criterion, Blacks (15.7% of the sample vs. 11.9% of the population estimate) were overrepresented in this sample.

Light skin models up close

Findings from the present study suggest that skin tone affects the role of the model. From the perspectives of new racism's color-blind ideology, it appears that minority models merit their prominent role because of an increase in the number of minority models featured in prominent roles. This increase suggests minorities are given equal opportunities if not more opportunities and share the same social experiences as Whites. Bowen & Schmid (1997) noted that less than 25 % of the ads in their study contained prominent minority models. In the present study, 59.3 % of the minority

models were used prominently; however, prominent models were more likely to be light skin than medium skin. In the theoretical framework of color-blind ideology, these findings suggest a race neutrality within the teen magazine advertisements. The light skin tone of these models reflects a racial hierarchy where White beauty is viewed as superior. These light skin models can pass for White, move to Black and shift back to White again depending on the circumstances. There are no pure forms of popular culture because popular culture whether Black, White, Latino or Asian exists in a contradictory space. “What we are talking about is the struggle over cultural hegemony, which is these days waged as much in popular culture as anywhere else” (Hall, 1992). Jennifer Lopez’s transformation over the past decade from a dark hair Latina in her debut movie “Selena” to a bronzy blonde in the new release “An Unfinished Life” represents pressure for minorities to conform to the majority identity. Jennifer Lopez’s look is a partial synchronization of her Puerto Rican roots conforming to the latest Eurocentric trends on 5th avenue. Should JLO refuse her Puerto Rican heritage or the White standard of beauty? Hall (1992) explains you can have a joint identity instead of having two opposed identities in a binary opposition because fusing our identities does not exhaust them.

Modeling bougie

RQ3 probed the extent to which the cost and categories of the products advertised in teen magazines varied by the race of the model. The results suggest that the poorest minority groups, Blacks and Latinos, modeled advertisements for the most expensive products. Conversely, no statistically significant difference was found between the advertisements portraying the wealthier groups: Whites and Asians. This finding reflects

the tri-racial hierarchy coined by Bonilla-Silva et al. (2003), where Asians are part of the honorary Whites, above the Blacks and dark skin Latinos.

Wilson & Gutierrez (1995) suggest:

Prestige appeals are used in advertising to all audiences, not just minorities. But they have a special impact on those who are so far down on the socioeconomic scale that they are hungry to anything that will add status or happiness to their lives and help them show others they are “making it.” (p. 290)

The struggle over cultural hegemony is played out within the advertising industry when advertisers use minority models to market the high/popular culture distinction to teenagers. Celebrities of color such as Beyonce Knowles, Jennifer Lopez and Vanessa Williams sell expensive products to teenagers while marketing a dual identity of the White upper class. They have adopted a Eurocentric look by lightening and straightening their hair and wearing designer clothes. Their media appearances become a sight of strategic contestation within popular culture because (Hall, 1996) these minority celebrities have an essence of Blackness while their clothing and hairstyles signify whiteness.

Minorities are chillin' but they go to school

The findings related to the settings of advertisements featuring minority models represent a paradox. One of the most common stereotypes is that minorities (except Asians) are lazy welfare recipients. The settings in this study perpetuate that stereotype by suggesting that minority teenagers are less likely to work than white teenagers and, minorities spend their time hanging out in leisure places. These settings become controlling images with the minority models at the site of struggle. On another side of the struggle, minority adolescents appeared in more advertisements in school settings. The

overabundance of advertisements depicting students of color at school could create White resentment and hostility about affirmative action. This is troublesome because racial problems exist on college campuses.

Lewis et al, (2000) state:

Though the specific legal and administrative issues surrounding affirmative action have changed shape throughout the years, the widespread perception that minority student admissions and advancement are due primarily to unearned preference and only minimally, if at all, to talent persists (p 82).

The inconsistency of minority models going to school without doing anything constructive with their leisure time such as holding a job contributes to the notion that minorities “get all of the breaks“ because they are over-privileged.

Minority models exposed

The representation of the Black female body is a highly contested site of meaning inside and out the Black community. “African American women still struggle with its representation, vacillating between the poles of sentimental normalization and the flaunting of eccentricity” (Peterson, 2001). Of major concern in the present study is the sexualized spectacle of minority models. There is a statistical difference between the White model who is not exposing her body and the light or medium skin model who is revealing her nakedness. The covered up White model cannot be considered beautiful without the Other, the minority model who bares her skin. This representation contains vestiges of the past when Black female slaves stood naked on the slave auctioning block, and her owner described her body parts. As sexualized images continue to permeate society through the media, minority women will persist in feeling “Unpretty,” as

described by a Black female hiphop group, unless they conform to the White standard of beauty.

White Beauty on Display

New racism is reflected in the pages of teen beauty magazines in a subtle manner that seems ordinary and common to White teenage girls because they do not recognize any racial bias in beauty magazines. While minorities are visible in teen magazines, they are stripped of any form that would threaten the position of the elites by adopting the White standard of beauty. The results of **RQ5** are consistent with Duke's (2000) qualitative study, which noted that images of African American girls and women in mainstream teen magazines closely reflect the White standards of attractiveness. As the dimensions of White beauty change in today's multi-racial society, the findings in this study also represent a transformation. The significant relationship between highlighted or straightened hair and skin tone is consistent with Collins' (2004) proposal that within the framework of the new color-blind racism, hair texture is very important. A minority woman can "work" her Blackness in a variety of ways, including highlighting or straightening her hair to appear more White or letting it grow out naturally to look more Black. When females of color such as Jennifer Lopez shift their identification between the White standard of beauty and their minority heritage they contribute to the ideological struggle over race. Hall (1986) explains using Gramsci's work, that the nature and value of this ideological struggle transforms popular ideas such as racism and the 'common sense' of the masses.

Meaning Behind the Results

While content analytic research in this study quantifies media portrayals and the textual analysis examines the advertisements more deeply, one weakness of this mixed method design is that the results are frequently subject to many interpretations. For example, one might argue that the findings on the overrepresentation of minority models paint a picture of racial inclusion in the U.S. society. Moreover, it could be argued that Blacks and Hispanics model more expensive products than Asians and Whites because a reader is color-blind and willing to buy a product from any model – White or non-White. If these interpretations are accurate, perhaps this study does not have anything to do with racism at all.

Although these alternative explanations may seem possible, they do not sufficiently account for the results found in this study. Collins (2004) writes that the new racism depends immensely on the mass media to proliferate the ideologies needed to validate racism. The advertising industry manufactures the consent that makes the new racism seem a normal part of everyday life. White teenagers who do not recognize the privilege of their skin color will not notice any sort of racial bias in teen beauty magazines, just as Duke (2000) found in her study. In color-blind ideology, the presence of minority models, no matter how light their skin and straight their hair, sends a message that minorities have every opportunity to model on the pages of teen magazines.

Another cause for concern is the thesis that Blacks and Hispanics appear in advertisements for more expensive products than Asians and Whites because any reader is willing to purchase a product from any color model. This assumption is problematic because Blacks and Latinos have median family incomes well below national averages,

but the advertising industry attempts to persuade them to purchase a lifestyle many cannot afford. Wilson & Gutierrez (1995) note, “For both Blacks and Latinos the slick advertising approach often means selling high-priced, prestige products to low-income consumers who have not fully shared in the wealth of the country in which they live.” The rich and famous lifestyle promoted by a \$56 bottle of Miami Glow by JLO, Eau de Toilette Natural Spray and a \$79 JLO Cuffed Crop Jean is far removed from the majority of Blacks and Hispanics, yet Jennifer Lopez and national advertisers attempt to lure these minority audiences because “whiteness has cash value” (Lipsitz, 1998). This phenomenon reflects the split image of the advertising industry when African Americans are a targeted consumer group yet the empowered White male decision makers remain distanced from the social concerns relevant to minorities (Dates, 1990).

Limitations of the Study

A few limitations should be contemplated in understanding these results. First, the present study was limited to the magazine advertisements containing human models within *Seventeen* and *YM* magazines, which leaves open the possibility that other magazines, particularly magazines targeting a minority audience such as *Black Girl* magazine, may contain different portrayals. Second, while the U.S. Census Data Profiles represent an actual response from an individual, **RQ1** compares a response with a coder’s interpretation of a model’s race. The undergraduate coders and the researcher attend a predominantly White university. The Whiteness of this institution could have affected their interpretations of the advertisements. There was not a Black coder because Black students only represent 0.6 percent of the student body at the researcher’s university. Even if the author did find a Black student living in Utah Valley to assist in the coding,

there is a chance the student would have culturally White student of African descent because they have been socialized to be White because they belong to a White church, were raised by a White family or both. Smith (2005) clearly notes “just because a person is phenotypically Black (having all the physical markers of Blackness) does not mean that she or he identifies, understands, and resonates with the larger interests with Black Americans as a whole.” (p, 445) However, intercoder reliability of .92 was established between the author and a Black BYU sociology instructor who mentored the author and also assisted in the creation of the skin tone reference guide. Third, minority female and White male data were not organized in SPSS to observe the relationship between these two groups of models. If the data were set up to examine minority female models and White male models, then a more comprehensive study of race, class and gender could have been conducted. These limitations suggest the value in following up with another study, which would include more diverse coders, additional magazines that cater to the minority population and a different spreadsheet.

Future Research Studies

While media effects cannot be concluded from a content analytical research study, the results raise a few questions that could be used to further study this area.

For example, how do adolescent females, White and non-White, interpret new racism in magazine advertising? How are minority celebrities portrayed in teen beauty magazines? What is the difference in cost between products modeled by minorities and Whites? How is the tri-racial hierarchy reflected in teen beauty magazines?

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APPENDIX A

The Operational Definitions (Adopted from Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995; Wilkes & Valencia, 1989)

- I Importance of the representation (Inter-coder reliability coefficient: .94)
- ◆ Prominent role: a character who is most important, shown in the foreground or shown holding a product
 - ◆ Assisting role or Background role: a character who is assisting in the major role. These characters are not spotlighted in the advertisement and do not hold the product. A character who is not important to its theme or layout; one out of the crowd.
- II Setting
- ◆ Home recognizable as a residence, room, garage, yard, home apartment, or driveway or parking space
 - ◆ Workplace: factories, sales or office rooms, and retail settings in which consumers are depicted inside
 - ◆ Leisure place: places where people have fun, vacation, or enjoy themselves, such as hotels, restaurants, parks, movie theaters
 - ◆ Outdoor: include forest, rivers, ocean, fields or sky as well as street, public roads, sidewalks or pathways
 - ◆ School: inside a classroom, gym, library, halls, locker room, or schoolyard
 - ◆ Other: any other setting not listed above: not able to recognize
- III Educated Theme
- Presence of Books, Computer, Calculator
- IV Music Theme
- Presence of Cds, Cassettes, Records, Music Phone, Stereo, Boom box or Models Dancing
- V Athletic theme
- Models participating in sports in athletic attire.

APPENDIX B

Coding Scheme For Teen Magazine Ad Study

Magazine: _____ Issue: _____ Year: 2003

Page _____

Product Advertised: _____

Cost of Product:

Less than \$10 \$11 – \$25 \$26 – \$50 \$50 and above

Setting:

Home Workplace Leisure place Outdoor School

Other: any other setting not listed above: not able to recognize

Number of Whites in ad: _____ Number of Minorities in ad: _____

MODEL #1 (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

Gender: Female Male

Race: White Person of Color

Minority Group: Black Hispanic Asian

Native American Can't tell

Anglicized Features:

Skin Tone: Dark Medium Light

Straight or Highlighted Hair: Yes No

Thin Body: Yes No

Importance of Representation:

Prominent role

Assisting or Background role

Harlot Theme as defined by body exposure:

Shoulders

Buttocks

Cleavage

Upper Leg

Stomach

Back

Music Theme: Yes

No

Educated Theme: Yes

No

Athletic Theme: Yes

No

APPENDIX C

Tri-Racial Society

“WHITES”

WHITES

NATIVE AMERICANS

ASSIMILATED LT SKIN LATINOS

SOME MULTIRACIALS, FEW ASIAN-ORIGIN

“HONORARY WHITES”

LIGHT SKIN LATINOS, MOST MULTI-RACIAL

CHINESE, JAPANESE, KOREAN, MIDDLE EASTERN, ASIAN INDIAN

“COLLECTIVE BLACKS”

BLACKS, FILIPINOS, VIETNAMESE, HMONG

LAOTIAN, DARKSKIN LATINOS, NEW WEST INDIAN AND AFRICAN

IMMIGRANTS

RESERVATION BOUND NATIVE AMERICAN